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Security Dimension in the Eastern Partnership after Russia's War of Aggression on Ukraine

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Input Paper Ukraine

Obviously, the full-scale war of aggression that Russia launched against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, which has developed into the largest and the most intensive military conflict in Europe since the World War II, has had a dramatic and profound impact not only on the post-Soviet space and Ukrainian-Russian relations, but also on Europe as a whole and perhaps on the global order as well. Russia's full-scale conventional war is transforming modern Europe geopolitically, economically, in terms of energy markets, morally and, without a doubt, with respect to the security sphere. It will not be possible to gauge this war's real consequences for regional and global security until Ukraine has regained its freedom, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, it is already absolutely clear that neither our region nor our world will ever be the same.

One of the important conclusions that can be drawn after the past eight months of full-scale Russian aggression is that the role of EU and NATO should be critically and profoundly rethought and reshaped. In my opinion, the EU and NATO should take on a more substantial role in the transformation process of the post-Soviet space and the Western Balkans. A lack of leadership in this process on the part of the EU and NATO, at least for past 15 years, created a geopolitical vacuum, which was filled and exploited by Russia.

Since 24 February 2022, the EU has made enormous progress in the self-identification process and in developing strategies for the future, including with respect to EU enlargement and security policy. The latest developments have encouraged the EU to consider changing the paradigm for EU enlargement to ensure a practical and proactive approach to the provision of a European perspective for Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and the Western Balkan states.

That a new wind was blowing was apparent on 17 October 2022, when the European Council decided to set up a Military Assistance Mission in order to support Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine)[1]. The aim of EUMAM Ukraine is to contribute to enhancing the military capability of Ukraine's Armed Forces to effectively conduct military operations, in order to allow Ukraine to defend its territorial integrity, effectively exercise its sovereignty and protect civilians. Describing this decision as the EU

[1]Ukraine: EU sets up a military assistance mission to further support the Ukrainian Armed Forces, 17.10.2022, https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/10/17/ukraine-eu-sets-up-a-military-assistance-mission-to-further-support-the-ukrainian-armed-forces/

stepping up support for Ukraine to defend itself from Russia's illegal aggression, Josep Borrell, High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, said, "The EU Military Assistance Mission will train the Ukrainian Armed Forces so they can continue their courageous fight. EUMAM is not just a training mission, it is clear proof that the EU will stand by Ukraine for as long as is needed". Importantly, the EUMAM will ensure coordination with member states' bilateral activities in support of Ukraine, as well as with other like-minded international partners, and will be open to participation of third states.

Also in mid-October, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz called for the enlargement of the European Union, saying that this would allow the EU to remain geopolitically important[2]. „A united European Union of 27, 30, 36 states, with then more than 500 million free and equal citizens, can bring its weight to bear even more strongly in this world," said Scholz. He also called to support more military autonomy of the EU, including coordination in procurement of weapons and equipment, as well as the establishment of an EU rapid reaction force by 2025. „In the future, Europe will need a coordinated increase in capabilities…We must confidently and jointly advance European defence," added Scholz.

The messages sent by the creation of the EUMAM and Scholz's remarks are pretty clear, and could be perceived as pointing the way for actions going forward, not only with respect to the internal transformation of EU but also in terms of regional dimensions of enlargement including with respect to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Western Balkan countries.

Meanwhile, Ukraine has put forth its own views, proposing its own approach with regard to a possible model for regional and international security in a draft document known as the Kyiv Security Compact[3]. This document, published by Office of the President of Ukraine, defines a set of principles that could be applied not only with regard to Ukraine's security and defence but also to a wider context, i.e. for all of European countries that are not members of NATO or the EU.

The principles include, among others:

- High-readiness forces that can effectively respond to aggression.
- A massive joint training programme with international trainers and advisors from the EU and NATO.
- Advanced defensive weapon systems, including air and missile defence, cyber capabilities, advanced radar capabilities.
- Access to EU funding to re-build the national defence industry in line with EU/NATO standards and develop new defensive capabilities with EU member states.
- Territorial defence forces based on the concept of national resilience.

Interestingly, this was not the first time that the idea of a security compact for non-EU countries has been raised. In November 2020, Gustav Gressel and Nicu Popescu published a proposal on what they called the Eastern Partnership Security Compact[4]. Gressel and Popescu proposed that the EU should launch an Eastern Partnership Security Compact, which would align the EU's funds and institutions with the capabilities of those of its member states that are willing to intensify security cooperation in Eastern Europe. It could involve the Permanent Structured Cooperation or, per-

[2]Olaf Scholz calls for bigger European Union, 15.10.2022, https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-olaf-scholz-calls-for-eu-expansion-military-autonomy/a-63452833

[3]The Kyiv Security Compact. International Security Guarantees for Ukraine: Recommendations, 13.09.2022, https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/15/89/41fd0ec2d72259a561313370cee1be6e_1663050954.pdf

[4]The best defence: Why the EU should forge security compacts with its eastern neighbours, 03.11.2022, https://ecfr.eu/publication/the-best-defence-why-the-eu-should-forge-security-compacts-with-its-eastern-neighbours/#the-eastern-partnership-security-compact

haps, a European Commission task force modelled on the inter-agency Support Group for Ukraine. The effort could be funded by a mixture of EU financial and institutional support, as well as through voluntary contributions from member states. The aim of the initiative is to make it much harder to destabilise the EU's neighbourhood through the use of various "hybrid" tactics. The security compact should focus specifically on the following areas: intelligence cooperation; cyber security; soft security and defence cooperation; hard security cooperation; hardware cooperation; cooperation on arms control.

Thus, the draft Kyiv Security Compact and the idea of the Eastern Partnership Security Compact are quite similar in terms of the approaches, directions and tasks identified. Moreover, these ideas clearly correspond to the current and future needs of both the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries, including with regard to the impact of the Russian-Ukrainian war.
Some doubts about the political framework for the implementation of these ideas remain, though. More specifically, I am thinking of questions about the format of the Eastern Partnership and especially the security sector of this project. When discussing the Eastern Partnership, the first question that arises is whether there really is a partnership involved, not in the sense of a formal EU project but rather a partnership that can serve as a framework for cooperation and joint efforts towards alignment with the EU.

Do we really think that there could be a "partnership" between Ukraine, which is being attacked and destroyed by the Russian armed forces, and Belarus, which is allowing Russia to use its territory as a base from which to attack Ukraine? Or between Armenia and Azerbaijan, countries currently engaged in a military conflict with one another? In addition, it is very difficult to find motivations and intentions vis-à-vis the EU that Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia on the one side, and Armenia, Belarus and Azerbaijan on the another hold in common. I think it is absolutely clear that the Eastern Partnership cannot be considered to an active and effective format. It is patently obvious that we will not be able to find ways to deal jointly with security issues with the EaP framework at the present time.

In view of the obvious ineffectiveness of the Eastern Partnership format, the following steps aimed at adapting the EU and the countries of the region to the current situation can be proposed:

- Evaluate at the strategic level the effectiveness and expediency of the Eastern Partnership in its current format.
- Examine the possibility of separating Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as countries that have clear intentions to join the EU, from the Eastern Partnership (we could call them the Eastern Trio).
- Consider, also, the possibility of creating a single format for promoting the EU enlargement process with the participation of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia together with the countries of the Western Balkans. It is obvious that these countries currently have much more in common from the point of view of European integration than do the countries of the Eastern Partnership.
- Begin active work in the security sphere now, irrespective of a possible of political restructuring of the Eastern Partnership.
- The conceptual basis for security cooperation among the EU, the Eastern Trio countries and the Western Balkans could be developed with reference to the Kyiv Security Compact, as well as to the idea of the Eastern Partnership Security Compact.
- In practical terms, the creation of a new security framework could begin on the basis of the Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine), with a subsequent expansion of the scope of this mission to include Moldova and Georgia. If a decision is taken to engage in a similar kind of cooperation with the countries of the Western Balkans, it would be possible to further expand the mission in a manner that takes regional specifics into account.

The restructuring of political formats and fusion of cooperation with the Eastern Trio and Western Balkans would provide us with a tool and a framework that could be used to bring the wider region closer to the EU. At the same time, the EU can play a more active and leading role in facilitating the transformation of Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the countries of the Western Balkans in preparation for joining the EU.

In the field of security, switching from the amorphous and ineffective format of the Eastern Partnership to a framework oriented towards practical cooperation and the completion of concrete tasks would change the spirit of cooperation between the EU and the countries of the region. The creation of the new format based on common motivations, values, aspirations and threat perception, as well as on the ideas of the Kyiv Security Compact, and the Eastern Partnership Security Compact, would mark the beginning of a powerful transformation of the Eastern Trio and the Western Balkans in preparation for their accession to the EU.

At the same time, practical work on specific areas of defence cooperation would create a space with a similar understanding of security threats and ways of countering them not only at the regional level but also from the point of view of strengthening the EU. This is in line with the European Union's urgent needs in the field of security and defence in order to counter and deter Russian aggression.

There would be a dynamic mutual reinforcement: the EU would help the transformation of its future members, and Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and the countries of the Western Balkans would play a positive role in strengthening the security of the European Union. This is the kind of synergy that both the EU and the candidates for EU accession need now.

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