

PEACE AND SECURITY

# ANALYSIS OF THE BILATERAL UKRAINE-MOLDOVA RELATIONS: PROBLEMATIC AND PROMISING DIMENSIONS OF COOPERATION

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The challenges caused by the Russian war against Ukraine simultaneously opened the window of opportunities for the acceleration of the European integration of Ukraine and Moldova: both countries were granted the EU candidate status and benefit from European support.



Bilateral cooperation in the economic, energy, and environmental domains can be boosted by joined efforts of Kyiv and Chisinau with the support of the EU but this process has to be calibrated through the lens of war against Ukraine and its implications for the region.



Security issues remain prioritized for both Ukraine and Moldova and in line with tackling emerging challenges, protracted issues have to be reconsidered (including rethinking of the Transnistrian settlement process)



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## Introduction

The relations between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova have never been simple. The countries faced different phases, ups and downs, competition and cooperation. Both countries had a chance to compete for the status of the Eastern Partnership front-runner as well as for the status of most corrupted country in the region. Transnistrian problem in the Republic of Moldova has many features which used to be similar to situation in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts of Ukraine until February 24, 2022 (industrial regions of both countries where Russia fueled separatist moods and further backed separatist movements by Russian army, although there were no explicit and extreme ethnic, religious or other division lines with the mainland). Nowadays both countries also suffer both hard and soft security threats caused by Russia and at the same time both have the EU candidate status.

European ambitions of both the governments and the Presidents of both countries gave an impetus for closer cooperation and setting new cooperation tracks. The President of Moldova Maia Sandu was among the state leaders who visited Ukraine already after the beginning of a full-scale invasion and immediately after the European Union made a historic decision to grant Ukraine and Moldova the status of EU candidates in June 2022. According to Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine and Moldova should strengthen cooperation in the humanitarian sphere, economy, energy, politics, cross-border cooperation, as well as cooperation in the security sphere, which is now a priority<sup>1</sup>. Later, on December 6, in Kyiv, Prime Minister of Ukraine Denys Shmyhal met with the Prime Minister of the Republic of Moldova Natalia Gavriluța. The parties discussed joint steps towards European integration, countering Russian aggression and information propaganda, cooperation in energy, logistics, and trade and economic partnership<sup>2</sup>. The Governments of Ukraine and Moldova agreed to coordinate integration into the European Union, cooperate on air defense issues and improve border control. Ukraine and Moldova will continue to remove administrative and procedural barriers for the free movement of people and goods

between the two countries. It is also expected that by mid-2023 an agreement on construction of a road bridge across the Dniester on the common border will be concluded. The parties also agreed to intensify the dialogue format in the Ukraine-Moldova-Romania triangle<sup>3</sup>.

Apart for the fruitful bilateral dialogue both countries have strong people-to-people ties. According to the public opinion poll conducted by Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” in partnership with the Representation of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine in the period of October 13-31 2022, 15% of Ukrainians visited the Republic of Moldova before February 24, 2022, whereas 50% of Moldovans visited Ukraine. Interestingly, over 70% of Moldovans assessed their attitude towards Ukrainians as positive or very positive before February 24, 2022. After the start of Russian full-scale invasion this number decreased but still remains high, over 60%. Nearly 90,000 refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine have chosen to stay in Moldova, where they received a warm reception from the country<sup>4</sup>. The ties between the representatives of civil society of both countries are also strong. They interact under umbrella of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. Another format of cooperation is Ukraine-Moldova Expert Forum designed to discuss the burning issues of bilateral relations. It deals with the challenges that both countries face and find common solutions. The First forum was organized in 2017. Since that time there were a lot of changes in both countries: they have the status of the EU candidate states and face the challenge of the Russian war against Ukraine, which has an impact on the Republic of Moldova. Such circumstances create challenges and opportunities and provide the preconditions for strengthening old and launching new cooperation tracks.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/glava-ukrayinskoyi-derzhavny-zustrivsyia-z-prezidentom-moldovi-76081>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/ukraina-ta-moldova-domovylysiia-spiivpratsiuvaty-v-pytanniakh-ppo-ta-pokrashchyty-prykordonnyi-kontrol-denys-shmyhal>

<sup>3</sup> <https://ukranews.com/en/news/900057-governments-of-ukraine-and-moldova-agreed-to-coordinate-integration-into-eu-and-to-cooperate-in-air>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/budapest/whats-new/WCMS\\_858984/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/budapest/whats-new/WCMS_858984/lang--en/index.htm)

## 1

## FIVE "E" PRIORITIES FOR BILATERAL COOPERATION

In 2017 when the first Ukraine-Moldova Forum was launched the experts focused on the discussion of four priority fields of cooperation. They were economics, ecology, energy, and ethnic minorities. These priorities still remain valid and important for the bilateral and regional cooperation. Nowadays they are also supplemented with another track - cooperation in the domain of European integration, since both countries were granted the EU candidate status. Besides, due to the Russian war against Ukraine security of the region is getting prioritized not only by Ukraine and Moldova but also by the regional and global actors.

### 1.1 FIRST E - ECONOMICS

The Russian war against Ukraine has caused significant problems for Ukrainian economics. According to recent World Bank estimates, recovery and reconstruction needs across social, productive, and infrastructural sectors total at least \$349 billion, which is more than 1.5 times the size of Ukraine's pre-war economy in 2021. Economic activity will remain deeply depressed through next year, with minimal growth of 0.3% expected in 2023, as energy price shocks continue to impact the region<sup>5</sup>.

Although Moldova is not directly involved in the war it also has faced negative economic consequences. At the end of August the Moldovan government revised its 2022 economic growth forecast to zero from the previous 0.3%, pointing to the negative impact of the war in neighboring Ukraine and rising global energy prices. The inflation forecast for 2022 had been raised to 29.5% from the previous of 21.9%<sup>6</sup>.

According to the public opinion poll conducted by Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" in partnership with the Representation of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine in the period of October 13-31 2022 more than 80% of people

in Moldova feel the consequences of Russia's war against Ukraine. 73% of respondents in Moldova feel rising prices for utility services and energy, 68% feel rising prices for goods and deterioration of purchasing power, 27% complain on loss of opportunity for free trade with Russia.

However, there is some positive news as well. Despite all the difficulties both countries remain important trading partners. For 9 months of 2022, the trade turnover between our countries increased by 16% and amounted to \$805.8 million. The export of Ukrainian goods increased by almost 15% – to \$708.9 million, while import by 25.7% – to \$96.9 million<sup>7</sup>.

The close ties between the governments of the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine create opportunities for the new economic projects, although none of them will be fully operational without the proper process of recovery of the Ukrainian economy. It is suffering from the Russian blockade of Ukrainian ports, constant missile strikes targeting critical infrastructure objects, deficit of electricity and water supply, heating and a tremendous security deficit for civilians working at enterprises.

However, while facing this challenge, Ukraine demonstrated its resilience and now is focusing on looking for alternative solutions. One of them is a "Grain from Ukraine" initiative which was recently presented by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Following the first International Summit on Food Security with regard to the implementation of the Ukrainian humanitarian initiative Grain from Ukraine, about \$150 million, which will be used to purchase food for countries in Africa and Asia suffering from hunger, have been raised. The President reported that today more than 20 states and the European Union are financially participating in this initiative, and more than ten states are preparing to join it. He offered the partners of Ukraine to choose the form of participation in the program that would meet the existing conditions themselves<sup>8</sup>.

5 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/10/04/russian-invasion-of-ukraine-impedes-post-pandemic-economic-recovery-in-emerging-europe-and-central-asia#:~:text=According%20to%20recent%20World%20Bank,pre%20war%20economy%20in%202021>

6 <https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/moldova-cuts-2022-economic-growth-forecast-zero-2022-08-24/>

7 <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/ukraina-i-moldova-maiut-vykorystany-novi-mozhlyvosti-i-aki-nadaie-krainam-status-kandydata-v-ies-iulii-svrydenko>

8 <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/iniciativa-grain-ukraine-pidkreslyuye-globalnu-rol-ukrayini-79473>

Moldova also remains an important partner since it is a direct neighbor of Ukraine and alongside other countries it can be and should be considered as a partner for building new transport chains and new routes for the export of Ukrainian goods. This is quite important from the perspective of bilateral cooperation and further multilateral and regional cooperation. Besides, the candidate status of both Ukraine and Moldova opens new opportunities for inclusion into the other groups of countries and other initiatives, which are active in the region. And here, first and foremost, the Three Seas Initiative should be considered. There is a will and there is a strong message from the Three Seas countries, in particular from the leading countries like Poland (but also from Romania), that both Ukraine and Moldova are welcome to the projects of the Initiative<sup>9</sup>. The fact that the next summit of the Three Seas Initiative will take place in 2023 in Romania should be considered as an opportunity for the enhanced cooperation and, arguably, membership bids of Ukraine and Moldova.

Also, smaller cooperation formats can be of added value. On September 15, 2022, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and European Integration of the Republic of Moldova, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania, as well as the Minister of Energy of Ukraine, the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Infrastructure and Regional Development of the Republic of Moldova, the Minister of Energy of Romania met for the first informal Ministerial Meeting in this format in Odesa. This ministerial-level meeting is the first of its kind in the history of the trilateral Ukraine-Republic of Moldova-Romania relations. This triangle has potential to be a success both in economic terms and in terms of enhanced political solidarity in the region.

Raising awareness on the potential of trilateral cooperation can be of added value, since according to the public opinion poll conducted by Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” in partnership with the Representation of Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Ukraine, 20% of respondents in Moldova, 12% of respondents in Romania and only 7% of respondents in Ukraine are aware of the format. However, out of those who know nothing about it, 28% of respondents in Moldova, 39% in Romania and 47% in Ukraine would love to know more about it. Therefore, filling the Initiative with substance as well as raising awareness of its potential can be of added value.

## 1.2 SECOND E - ENERGY

Since March 2022 the power systems of Ukraine and Moldova are fully synchronized with the Continental European network. The relevant decision was approved by the association of system operators ENTSO-E on March 11, 2022. The process of inclusion into the European network was accelerated by the Russian war against Ukraine.

<sup>9</sup> <https://3seas.eu/about/joint-declaration-of-the-seventh-three-seas-initiative-summit?lang=en>

However, there are still challenges caused by extensive dependence on Russian gas supplies. Starting from 2021 Russian Gazprom was explicitly trying to force Moldova into signing a new contract to purchase gas at sky-rocketing prices. Russia was taking advantage of a gas monopoly (Russia has a 50% controlling stake in Moldova’s state gas company Moldovagaz. Moscow-loyal economic agents in Transnistria control other 13.44% stake, while the Moldovan government has just 35.33%). The Moldovan government expected the EU and Ukraine to help the country. Gas could reach Moldova through reverse flows from Ukraine and Romania while Poland and Slovakia could also supply the commodity. Besides, Moldova had reserved more than 200 million cubic meters of gas in Ukrainian storage facilities for the winter 2022/2023<sup>10</sup>. In November 2022, Gazprom accused Ukraine of keeping gas supplies destined for Moldova, and that it could start reducing gas supplies to Moldova that pass through Ukraine although both Ukraine and Moldova denied any accusations. “Gas blackmail is an established Russian practice that the Kremlin continues to use for geopolitical purposes,” Ukrainian Energy Minister German Galushchenko wrote in a statement to Reuters.<sup>11</sup>

The situation went even worse after numerous Russian missile and drone strikes aimed at Ukrainian critical energy infrastructure. In October 2022, after Russian missile strikes Ukraine had to cut its electricity exports to Moldova. On November 15, 2022, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova faced blackouts across the country after Russia launched more missile strikes on Ukrainian energy infrastructure which resulted in automatic disconnection of electricity grids.

Besides, another problem is dependence of the Republic of Moldova on electricity supplies from Transnistria. The Cuciurgani-Moldavskaya GRES gas-fired power plant (installed capacity of 2 520 MW), owned by the Russian company Inter-RAO and located in Transnistria, covers up to 80% of consumption.<sup>12</sup>

On the top of these problems Moldova is experiencing a 200% increase in electricity prices and 34% inflation, forcing the average Moldovan to spend up to 75% of their income on energy utilities.<sup>13</sup>

Romania is a country that can be helpful for both Ukraine and Moldova in this regard. Actually, Romania already promptly reacted to energy crisis in Moldova by allowing Moldova to import electricity at a capped price, while Romania itself subsidized the difference between the Romanian spot price. At present, 90% of Moldova’s domestic electricity demand is being met by Romania.

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.euractiv.com/section/global-europe/news/moldova-accuses-russia-of-energy-blackmail-ready-for-any-scenario/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/moldova-accuses-russia-energy-blackmail-ready-any-scenario-2022-11-23/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.iea.org/reports/moldova-energy-profile/market-design>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-ukraine-invasion-is-fueling-an-energy-crisis-in-neighboring-moldova/>

Also, on November 27, 2022, the state-owned energy trader JSC Energy Company of Ukraine imported non-commercial amounts of electricity from Romania in a test mode. As the energy company has pointed out, the import of electricity may become an additional instrument of stabilising Ukraine's energy system.<sup>14</sup>

However, the key problem for the imports of electricity from Romania is poor connectivity. Moldova possesses one singular high-voltage 400kV line, which runs from the Romanian border town of Isaccea through Transnistria which makes it vulnerable to sabotage by Russian proxies in the region. Part of the line goes through the territory of Ukraine, which means that it is subject to Russian attacks as well.

However, Ukraine also established closer ties with Romania in terms of electricity supplies, which potentially can develop into bilateral and trilateral formats with the engagement of the EU. Apart from the traditional energy projects the window of opportunity for the enhanced cooperation in green energy projects opens. Both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova should put eggs into different baskets and to focus on alternative sources of energy to assure not only political and military resilience, but also energy resilience.

### 1.3 THIRD E - ECOLOGY

The Russian war against Ukraine resulted in enormous damage to environment. With Russia's extreme violence still ongoing, it is early to make comprehensive assessment of the environmental damage. Movements of large-scale military vehicles and explosives are damaging habitats both inside and outside protected areas. Fires sparked by attacks have already damaged over 100,000 hectares of natural ecosystems, according to satellite data from the European Forest Fire Information System. The State Forest Resources Agency of Ukraine has already recorded 78 times more fire incidents than during the same period last year. According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, at least 900 protected areas together covering 1.2 million hectares or 30% of all protected areas in Ukraine have been affected by shelling, bombing, oil pollution, and military maneuvers.<sup>15</sup>

Because of the war, more than 6 million Ukrainians have limited or no access to clean water, and more than 280,000 hectares (nearly 692,000 acres) of forests have been destroyed or felled, according to the World Wildlife Fund. It has caused more than \$37 billion in environmental damage, according to the Audit Chamber, a nongovernmental group in the country.<sup>16</sup>

At least 14 Ramsar sites - valuable wetland areas that have been internationally recognized according to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands - are under threat of destruction (Ukraine currently has 50 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance out of which 22 are close to the war sites<sup>17</sup>).

Constant strikes on refineries, chemical plants, energy facilities, industrial depots or pipelines have caused air, water and soil pollution by toxic substances. Many of these issues have a negative trans-border impact.

Same is true for the Cobasna ammunition depot (controlled by Russian troops) often referred to as one of the largest if not the largest ammunition depot in Eastern Europe located in Transnistria. Bearing in mind the impossibility of monitoring, depots of the armaments have become the matter of serious trouble for international community and the official government of the Republic of Moldova. Moldovan authorities repeatedly warned that the part of armament and ammunition kept in Cobasna was produced even before the World War II. Therefore, a danger of its explosion exists that could result in technological disaster affecting not only Transnistria and Moldova but also the neighboring countries, because the territory from 500 to 3000 square km could be affected<sup>18</sup>. That's getting topical in the context of emerging risks of incidental detonation of armaments (with potential damage to a gas transit pipe that lays in the North of Moldova not far from Cobasna). The consequences of such explosion could be compared with the Hiroshima explosion by amount of mechanical damage<sup>19</sup> and definitely may have trans-border effect.

Apart for the newly emerging problems there are protracted issues still to be solved e.g. Ukraine's plan to expand the Novodnistrovsk hydropower complex which caused concern in Moldova. The hydropower complex launched the fourth of seven planned turbines producing electricity. It is already the largest hydropower complex in Europe and the sixth largest in the world. Moldova complains that although Ukraine's plans for the Novodnistrovsk power station don't drain the Dniester, they may eventually degrade the quality of its water, and the high fluctuations in water levels may generate micro-droughts.<sup>20</sup>

Nowadays, the issue is less vocal but anyway, it has to be discussed in a very transparent way. If there are still obstacles to the common understanding of the situation, both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova have to take the opportunity of being EU candidate states and engage the EU in the process of settling all the possible disputes, and all the issues that remain unresolved.

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2022/11/28/7378328/>

<sup>15</sup> <https://wwfcee.org/our-offices/ukraine/assessing-the-environmental-impacts-of-the-war-in-ukraine>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/a/ukraine-war-s-environmental-toll-to-take-years-to-clean-up/6831343.html#:~:text=Because%20of%20the%20war%2C%20more,to%20the%20World%20Wildlife%20Fund>

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.ramsar.org/wetland/ukraine>

<sup>18</sup> [https://www.irf.ua/files/eng/text\\_eng.pdf](https://www.irf.ua/files/eng/text_eng.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dw.com/en/transnistrias-explosive-inheritance-from-the-soviet-era/a-18886862>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.veridica.ro/en/editorials/why-kiev-dniester-energy-plans-endanger-moldova-and-romania>

Also, post-war reconstruction has to be comprehensive, it requires well-coordinated and well-funded effort. It ought to include effective and well-designed environmental component that should take into account reforming public environmental administration in both Ukraine and Moldova, assure climate mitigation and adaptation policy, sustainable use of natural resources, restoration and development of protected areas with the engagement of the relevant EU institutions and experts.

## 1.4 FOURTH E - ETHNIC MINORITIES

The issue of ethnic minorities and minority statuses is a multifaceted problem for the bilateral relations. What also matters is political behavior of minorities. Ukrainians are the largest national minority in Moldova and represent almost one-third of the population of Transnistria.<sup>21</sup> However, many Moldovan experts criticize Ukrainian activists of Transnistria for servility towards separatists, neglecting individual freedoms and being focused purely on ethnographic sentiments.<sup>22</sup> The same is arguably true for the Russified Ukrainians of the right bank of Moldova<sup>23</sup> who allegedly supports pro-Russian forces in the Republic of Moldova and remain vulnerable to Russian narratives. In this regard the task for Chisinau and for Ukraine as a kin-state is assuring proper education, invigorating critical thinking and providing Ukrainian minority with the right messages and explaining to them that Ukrainians can and should be patriots of Ukraine and the host state.

There were also problems with a Moldovan minority in Ukraine. There is a constant and protracted discussion whether the Moldovan minority is Moldovan or Romanian. Since there is a relative consensus that there is no Moldovan language, it is not settled even in the Republic of Moldova yet, and the Constitution refers to Moldovan language<sup>24</sup> and the respective disputes poison the relations in the Ukraine-Moldova-Romania triangle. This issue is to be discussed in a very transparent way and to be solved either in bilateral or in trilateral format.

## 1.5 FIFTH E - EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

On June 23, 2022, the EU leaders meeting in the European Council agreed to grant Ukraine and Moldova EU candidate status.<sup>25</sup> Nowadays both countries have to use it to a full scale, not only for their own purposes, but also for

supporting pro-European activists in Georgia - the country belonging to the Associated Trio<sup>26</sup> which failed to get the candidate status. The leadership of Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova should keep in mind that first it was a trio, that created the preconditions for moving ahead with the European path and besides the fact that the government of Georgia faces serious criticism from the European structures, civil society, activists, and opposition - they all deserve to remain in the focus of the European Union and candidate states. The task for both Moldova and Ukraine is to keep European attention on Georgia.

Also, the process of European integration and accession may be helpful in solving all the above-mentioned areas: economics, energy, ecology, and ethnic minorities' issue

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.ecmi.de/infochannel/detail/ecmi-minorities-blog-romanians-and-moldovans-in-ukraine-and-their-kin-states-engagement-before-and-after-the-war-towards-a-triadic-partnership-for-effective-minority-protection>

<sup>22</sup> [https://www.irf.ua/files/eng/text\\_eng.pdf](https://www.irf.ua/files/eng/text_eng.pdf)

<sup>23</sup> [https://gazeta.ua/articles/world-life/\\_ukrayinska-diaspora-mozhe-stati-pidmogoyu-dlya-rosijskoyi-agenturi-v-moldovi-analitik/682380](https://gazeta.ua/articles/world-life/_ukrayinska-diaspora-mozhe-stati-pidmogoyu-dlya-rosijskoyi-agenturi-v-moldovi-analitik/682380)

<sup>24</sup> [https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Moldova\\_2016?lang=en](https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Moldova_2016?lang=en)

<sup>25</sup> <https://euneighbourseast.eu/news/latest-news/european-council-ukraine-and-moldova-granted-eu-candidate-status/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://mfa.gov.ge/News/%E2%80%8Bsaqartvelom,-ukrainam-damoldovam-evrointegraciis.aspx?lang=en-US>



## 2

## SECURITY FIRST

On December 19, 2022, the chief of the Information and Security Service of Moldova (ISS), Alexandru Mustiata, came up with the statement on the high risks of Russian invasion in Moldova in 2023.<sup>27</sup> The director of the ISS noted that the Russian Federation aims to create a land corridor to the Transnistrian region, which remains relevant even today. A new Russia's offensive in this direction may occur as early as 2023. Its implementation also depends on the development of events in the war in Ukraine.

Preventing such scenario and ensuring positive developments in Ukraine is the key task for both countries and for the EU. Failure to tackle the risk of further Russian invasion will put on hold the reforms, destroy the economics and energy sectors, and cause deterioration of situation in most if not all of the areas described in this paper. As rightly mentioned by the ECFR experts: "In a victorious Russia, imperialism and militarism would provide a unifying narrative bonding the Russian elites and society. Such a state would be an even more dangerous neighbor than its current incarnation."<sup>28</sup>

Therefore, strengthening security and resilience remains a high priority and Ukrainian victory is essential in this regard. However, there are also other areas where cooperation can be enhanced and new vision of the situation should be applied.

First, the vision of the Transnistrian settlement has to be reconsidered. Both Moldova and Ukraine should be ready for the window of opportunity that may open and think of the re-integration plans based on the new realities. However, for elaborating the respective plans it is necessary to admit that the existing negotiations format which includes Moldova, Transnistria, OSCE, Ukraine and Russia (with the EU and the US in the capacity of observers) has to be reshaped in accordance with the situation on ground. Bearing in mind Russian aggression as well as the announced plans to make a corridor to Transnistria via the territory of Ukraine-

<sup>29</sup> Moscow totally lost the attributes of the mediator and guarantor of the Transnistrian settlement. This reality has to be officially reflected. Also, the OSCE's capacities are limited. Part of the challenge facing the OSCE at present is that the organization takes major political decisions by consensus, meaning that Russia (like every other participating state) has effective veto power.<sup>30</sup>

At the same time the EU's status of observer should be reconsidered. Nowadays the EU plays an immense role in supporting both Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Such approach corresponds with the European Commission's initial intention to boost the EU's role on the world stage. Since the EU's efforts stretch far beyond the observer's role this new reality also has to be reflected in the respective documents.

Furthermore, the EU should consider drawing up security agreements with Moldova and Ukraine at least to be able to assure joint planning between European armed forces and the Ukrainian and Moldovan defense institutions and intelligence units as well as to tackle soft security threats. Both Kyiv and Chisinau should make sure that Georgia is not left behind, and to persuade Brussels that otherwise the EU risks the outbreak of Russia's new wars against an associated democratic country that clearly made its European choice.

Combining the efforts of Ukraine, Moldova and the EU in the security domain, alongside with enhancing cooperation in the economics and energy domain and promoting environmental agenda will be the key to success of both countries on the European path and will strengthen their resilience vis-à-vis Russia.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.euointegration.com.ua/eng/news/2022/12/19/7152756/>

<sup>28</sup> <https://ecfr.eu/publication/in-europes-defense-why-the-eu-needs-a-security-compact-with-ukraine/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://blacksea-caspia.eu/en/russian-military-announced-plans-secure-land-corridor-crimea-and-border-transnistria>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb009-seven-priorities-preserving-osce-time-war>



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Bilateral cooperation in the economic, energy, and environmental domains can be boosted by joined efforts of Kyiv and Chisinau with the support of the EU but this process has to be calibrated through the lens of war against Ukraine and its implications for the region.



Security issues remain prioritized for both Ukraine and Moldova and in line with tackling emerging challenges, protracted issues have to be reconsidered (including rethinking of the Transnistrian settlement process)