



**Hermes Institute of  
International Affairs,  
Security & Geoeconomy**

## **OCCASIONAL PAPER 3/2024**

### **The first-Ever EU Security & Defence Partnership with Moldova:**

Enhancing the European security or provoking Russia?

**By**

**Georgios Koukakis**

Research Associate of “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE

**July 2024**

“HERMES” Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy

[www.hermesresearch.eu](http://www.hermesresearch.eu)

Email: [info@hermesresearch.eu](mailto:info@hermesresearch.eu)

**PROVIDING KNOWLEDGE TO THOSE WHO SHAPE THE FUTURE**

## **“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE**

“HERMES” Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy (“HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE) is an independent, non – governmental, non – profit organization, consisting of scholars dedicated in the research and analysis of international affairs in regional and global level. The Institute aims at providing objective, scientific, and reliable research analysis through a variety of studies contributing effectively and constructively in the public dialogue and the evolution of scientific knowledge.

Copyright © 2024

“HERMES” Institute for Foreign Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy

All rights reserved

“HERMES” Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy offers a forum for researchers to express their views freely, thoroughly and well-documented. The views expressed in this occasional paper are those of the author and do not necessarily represent those of the “HERMES” Institute. Occasional Papers aim to contribute constructively in public debate in a wide range of international politics, defense, security and geoeconomy topics.

**Georgios Koukakis**

Research Associate of “HERMES” I.I.A.S.GE

Georgios has graduated from the Hellenic Military Academy (2002), the Hellenic Army War College (2020) and the Hellenic Supreme Joint War College (2023), and holds a Master of Arts in “Governance, Development and Security in the Mediterranean” from the Department of Mediterranean Studies of the University of the Aegean (Rhodes, Greece). His dissertation focused on the prospects of establishing a National Security Council (NSC) in the Hellenic Republic (Greece).

He is also a Senior Analyst in the Center for International Strategic Analyses (KEDISA), and a member of the Hellenic Institute of Strategic Studies (HEL.I.S.S.), ALLILONnet the Global Network of Greeks and Friends of Greece for Solidarity in the Professional Field and the Mercury Negotiation Academy (MNA). He has participated as a speaker in several seminars and conferences regarding international relations in the fields of foreign policy, security and defense.

Many of his articles and research papers have been published in the “Global Security and Intelligence Notes” (GSIN) of the Buckingham Centre of Security & Intelligence Studies (BUCSIS), the “HAPSc Policy Briefs” Journal of the Hellenic Association of Political Scientists, the “NRDC-GR Herald” Journal of NRDC-GR, the “Military Review” Journal of the Hellenic Army General Staff (HAGS), the “Cultural Diplomacy Journal” of the Hellenic Institute of Cultural Diplomacy (HICD), a number of websites such as “Foreign Affairs - The Hellenic Edition”, “Policy Journal”, “Geopolitics & Daily News”, “HuffPost Greece” and “Liberal”.

He is the co-author of the book “National Security: Myths and Reality” (In Greek) that was published in April 2023.

**Email:** [g\\_k\\_koukakis@yahoo.gr](mailto:g_k_koukakis@yahoo.gr)

**LinkedIn:** Georgios Koukakis

## Abstract

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 the European Union signed its first-ever “*Security and Defence Partnership*” with the Republic of Moldova, a former Republic of the “*Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*” (USSR) that declared its independence in August 1991 upon the collapse of the latter. The paper presents the context of this strategic document within the institutional framework of cooperation of the two parts, analyses certain factors related to this partnership, and provides an assessment of the future level of regional (in) security in the context of Russian foreign policy, in order to highlight the emerging dynamics in the field of the European security and defence.

-----

**Key Words:** European Union, Security & Defence, Regional Security, Strategic Compass, Russia, Moldova, Armenia, National Security Strategy, Partnership

## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iii
Table of Abbreviations.....	v
1. Introduction .....	1
2. The EU as a Security Provider .....	2
3. EU - Moldova Relations .....	4
4. The Context of the EU - Moldova Security & Defence Partnership .....	6
4.1 Introducing Part.....	7
4.2 General Framework.....	7
4.3 Areas of Cooperation .....	7
4.4 Way Forward.....	9
5. Analysis .....	9
6. Future Security Considerations .....	11
7. Policy Recommendations .....	16
8. Concluding Remarks .....	16
Reference List .....	18

## Table of Abbreviations

ASAP	Act in Support of Ammunition Production
CARD	Coordinated Annual Review on Defence
CDP	Capability Development Plan
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
DCFTA	Deep & Comprehensive Free Trade Area
DTIB	Defence Technological and Industrial Base
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDA	European Defence Agency
EDIG	European Defence Industry Group
EDIP	European Defence Industrial Programme
EDIS	European Defence Industrial Strategy
EEAS	European Union External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EMAC	EU-Moldova Association Council
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EPF	European Peace Facility
ESDC	European Security and Defence College
EU	European Union
EURDC	EU Rapid Deployment Capacity
EUPM	EU Partnership Mission in Moldova
FAST	Fund to Accelerate Defence Supply Chain Transformation
FIMI	Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HR/VP	High Representative/Vice-President
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NSS	National Security Strategy
PESCO	Permanent Structured Cooperation
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SEAP	Structure for European Armament Programme
S&D	Security & Defence
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

## 1. Introduction

On May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2024 the European Union signed its first-ever “*Security and Defence Partnership*” with the Republic of Moldova (Picture 1) (European Union External Action Service, 2024), a former Republic of the “*Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*” (USSR) – mostly known as the Soviet Union – that declared its independence in August 1991 upon the collapse of the latter (Sukhopara, 2024). According to the official website of the European Union External Action Service (EEAS), the established partnership will allow the two parts to address common security challenges in a joint manner and facilitate the enhancement of the resilience of Moldova and the exploration of new areas of cooperation and dialogue (European Union External Action Service, 2024).



Picture 1: Map depicting the location and borders of the Republic of Moldova

(Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Moldova>)

The aim of this paper is to present the context of the “*Security and Defence Partnership*” between the EU and Moldova, within the framework of the emerging



dynamics in the field of the European security and defence, affected by the ongoing war in Ukraine, and to assess how this situation affects regional security. The value of this research paper lies not only in the fact that it contributes to the existing public discourse regarding the European security and defence, by providing the latest information on the issue, but also because this new partnership affects regional security and great powers rivalry, as it might be perceived by Russia as one more attempt of the West to influence the Russian “*Near Abroad*” states (De Wall, 2024)<sup>1</sup>. The main conclusion is that the Russian invasion in Ukraine on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 was a catalyst factor for the enhancement of the European security and defence, leading to many related initiatives on behalf of the EU, including the aforementioned partnership.

The research method used in the paper is the qualitative analysis, while its structure comprises of a brief analysis of the way that the EU became an ambitious security provider, the presentation of the framework of cooperation between the EU and Moldova, the examination of the context of the 2024 EU - Moldova “*Security and Defence Partnership*,” the analysis of the facts based on the contemporary geopolitical conditions of the security environment and the assessment of the future level of regional (in)security.

## 2. The EU as a Security Provider

The European Union (EU) was founded in 1951 as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), aiming at the enhancement of the solidarity of the European states and the promotion of peace through pooling coal and steel production. In 1957 the ECSC was transformed into the European Economic Community (EEC), allowing its Member States (MS) to expand their cooperation in several fields of the economy, leading among others to a Common Agricultural Policy in 1962 and a Customs Union in 1968 (European Union, n.d.). In 1993 the EEC was transformed into the EU under the Maastricht Treaty, and addressed security issues for the first time, establishing the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) which aims at the preservation of peace and the strengthening of international security (EUR-Lex, n.d.).

In 2003 the EU issued its first European Security Strategy (Council of the European Union, 2022), while in 2007 strengthened CFSP with the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon (Pavy, 2023). In 2011 the EU established the European External Action Service (EEAS) in

---

<sup>1</sup> The term “Near Abroad” was invented by Russia after the collapse of the USSR to describe the “special relations” between Russia and the states that had been former Soviet Republics.

order to implement the CFSP through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) (Krentz, 2023), and in 2016 issued its second security strategy known as Global Strategy (European Union External Action Service, 2019). Since 2003, the EU has established several CSDP missions, demonstrating its enhanced role as far as security is concerned, a role that has been gradually enhanced through time.

On March 21<sup>st</sup>, 2022 – approximately a month after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine – the Council of the EU approved the third security strategy of the EU entitled “*A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union that protects its citizens, values and interests and contributes to international peace and security*” (Koukakis, 2022). Strategic Compass aims to make the EU a stronger and more capable security provider by 2030 by strengthening its security and defence policy (Council of the European Union, 2022), through a plan of action that is structured around the four pillars (Picture 2).



Picture 2: The Four Pillars of the 2022 Strategic Compass of the EU

(Source: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-03-21\\_strategic\\_compass.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2022-03-21_strategic_compass.pdf))

### 3. EU - Moldova Relations

In 2004 the EU established the “*European Neighbourhood Policy*” (ENP) in order to provide a foreign policy framework for the cooperation with its Eastern and Southern neighbouring states (European Union External Action Service, 2021), having as its priorities the promotion of democracy, rule of law, human rights, social cohesion, economic development, security, and migration & mobility.

The bilateral relations of the EU and Moldova (Picture 3) are based on the “*Eastern Partnership*” (EaP), an initiative – and part of ENP – launched by the EU in 2009 to establish a strategic partnership aiming to enhance the political and economic relations between the EU and the following six Eastern European states; Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. (European Union External Action Service, 2022).



Picture 3: Information (factsheet) on the EU - Moldovan Relations

(Source: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/moldova\\_factograph.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/moldova_factograph.pdf))

In the context of EaP, Moldova signed an “*Association Agreement*” with the EU on September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 in order to enhance the political and economic relations of the two parts, also establishing a “*Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area*” (DCFTA) (European Commission, 2016), and on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015 the EU and Moldova established an “*Association Council*” – also known as EU - Moldova Association Council (EMAC) – to oversee the implementation of the respective agreement by holding annual meeting (Table 1). (European Council, 2015)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Meeting</b>	<b>Remarks/Focus of Meeting</b>
2015, March 16	1 <sup>st</sup> meeting	Corruption, justice & financial sector
2016, March 14	2 <sup>nd</sup> meeting	Independence of judiciary & law enforcement agencies, DCFTA, and the Transnistrian conflict
2017, March 31	3 <sup>rd</sup> meeting	Reform process, CFSP, justice, freedom & security, economic & sector cooperation, and DCFTA
2018, May 03	4 <sup>th</sup> meeting	Political association & economic integration, justice, freedom & security, economic & sector cooperation, the EU Global Strategy, Eastern Partnership, Transnistrian settlement and DCFTA
2019, September 30	5 <sup>th</sup> meeting	CFSP, justice, freedom, security, and DCFTA
2021, October 28	6 <sup>th</sup> meeting	Energy, reforms, foreign & security affairs, and Transnistrian settlement
2023, February 07	7 <sup>th</sup> meeting	Reforms, economic & sectoral cooperation, trade, and cooperation & convergence in CFSP
2024, March 21	8 <sup>th</sup> meeting	Moldova’s EU accession process, energy & trade

Table 1: Meetings of the EU - Moldova Association Council (EMAC)

On March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 the political and economic cooperation of the EU and Moldova became even stronger as the latter applied for EU membership, being granted the “*candidate status*” on June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Finally, the EU accession negotiations with Moldova opened on December 23, 2023 (European Council, 2024) marking one of the most important milestones (Table 2) in the relations of the two parts (European Council, 2024), as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova stressed that:

*“European integration is not only a fundamental basis of the internal and external policy of the Republic of Moldova and the Government, but also a major force of political and social cohesion”* (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova, n.d.).

Date	Milestone/Key Event	Remarks
2014, March 14	Visa liberalisation agreement	Entry into force on 2014, April 28
2014, September 01	Signature of the EU-Moldova association agreement establishing DCFTA	Entry into force on 2016, July 01
2016, February 15	Council of EU foreign ministers	Conclusions on the RoM
2018, February 26	Council of EU foreign ministers	Conclusions on the RoM
<b>2022, March 03</b>	<b>Moldova's application for EU membership</b>	
2022, March 16	Synchronization of electricity grids	Ukraine & Moldova
2022, March 17	Status Agreement with FRONTEX	EU assistance to Moldova related to border management
2022, April 04	Adoption EU financial assistance to Moldova	Loans and grants (150 million €)
<b>2022, June 17</b>	<b>Moldova is granted EU candidate status</b>	
2022, July 18	Temporary trade liberalisation measures	Extended until 2025, July 24
2023, April 24	EU partnership (civilian) mission in the Republic of Moldova (EUPM Moldova)	Enhancement of the <u>resilience</u> of Moldova focusing on: (1) Crisis management, (2) Hybrid threats, (3) Cybersecurity, and (4) Countering FIMI
2023, April 28	Adoption of EU sanctions in response to actions destabilising Moldova	Extended until 2025, April 29
2023, May 30	Additional EU sanctions	Destabilisation of Moldova and the undermining of the territorial integrity of Ukraine
<b>2023, December 23</b>	<b>EU accession negotiations are opened</b>	
2024, February 22	Additional EU sanctions	Rule of law, stability & security in Moldova
<b>Note:</b> The cells highlighted in bold letters indicate major steps of the EU accession procedure		

Table 2: Milestones of the EU - Moldova Relations

#### 4. The Context of the EU - Moldova Security & Defence Partnership

The EU - Moldova “*Security & Defence Partnership*” official document is a six pages-long strategic document comprising of an introduction and three main parts that define the framework and the areas of cooperation between the two parts.

#### 4.1 Introducing Part

Its first part of the EU - Moldova “*Security & Defence Partnership*” (pages 1-2), stresses the ongoing threat posed by Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, the close political and economic relations of the two parts, the EU vision set by the 2022 “*Strategic Compass*,” the identification of Moldova’s EU accession as one of the main objectives defined in Moldova’s “*National Security Strategy*” (NSS) issued on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023 (Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova, 2023), as well as the intention to further enhance their cooperation in order to address common challenges in a better way and improve Moldova’s resilience.

#### 4.2 General Framework

Its second part is entitled “*General Framework*” (pages 2-3), highlighting the established institutions that will facilitate the cooperation between the two parts, comprising of the following:

- ✓ The annual EU - Moldova Association Council (EMAC),
- ✓ The annual EU - Moldova High Level Political and Security Dialogue<sup>2</sup>,
- ✓ The annual EU - Moldova Security and Defence Dialogue<sup>3</sup>, and
- ✓ Additional thematic consultations on several fields of cooperation.

#### 4.3 Areas of Cooperation

Its third part, entitled “*Areas of Cooperation*” (pages 3-6), refers to the areas of cooperation as far as Security & Defence is concerned between the EU and Moldova, comprising of the following eleven areas:

- ✓ **EU Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations**, reaffirming Moldova’s participation in CSDP missions and operations and the intention to enhance the military cooperation of the two parts also contributing to the EU Rapid Deployment Capacity (EURDC).

---

<sup>2</sup> At the level of the Political Director of the EU and the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Moldova.

<sup>3</sup> At the level of Head of Directorate/Managing Director.

- ✓ **Countering hybrid threats**, through the EU Partnership Mission in Moldova (EUPM), cooperation with academia and participation in exercises.
- ✓ **Cyber issues**, through cooperation in several schemes and organizations, cyber capacity building with the support of the EU, the functioning of the National Cyber Security Agency of Moldova and implementing the 2023 Cybersecurity Law of the Republic of Moldova.
- ✓ **Capacity building in security and defence**, through the European Peace Facility (EPF) in order for the Moldovan Armed Forces to meet the EU standards.
- ✓ **Strategic communications and countering foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI)**, through information sharing, operational cooperation and the support of the Center for Strategic Communication and Combating Disinformation.
- ✓ **Non-proliferation and disarmament, conventional weapons, including small arms and light weapons (SALW)**, through consultations.
- ✓ **Counterterrorism and preventing/countering violent extremism**, mainly through agencies cooperation.
- ✓ **Consultations on relevant defence initiatives, tools and instruments**, such as the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), between the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the Moldovan Ministry of Defence.
- ✓ **Training and education**, as far as CSDP is concerned cooperating with the European Security and Defence College (ESDC).
- ✓ **Integrated border management**, through the EU Support Hub for Internal Security and Border Management in Moldova (Security Hub).
- ✓ **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda**, implementing the relative Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) in order to promote gender equality.

#### 4.4 Way Forward

The EU - Moldova Security & Defence Partnership's last part entitled "*Way Forward*" (page 6), serves as the document's epilogue, defining that its context is subjected to regular reviewing as far as the areas of cooperation are concerned in order to strengthen the cooperation between the two parts, which will be overseen by the EU - Moldova Association Council (EMAC).

#### 5. Analysis

One of the points that must be highlighted – taking into consideration the issuance of the 2023 NSS of Moldova – is the vital importance of strategy as far as countering security & defence threats is concerned, as through the definition of ends, means and ways in addition to the threat/risk assessment (identification of major security threats) it provides the necessary framework for the implementation of every action plan related to security & defence. At the state level, this is achieved by the issuance of a National Security Strategy, while at the supra-state level by the issuance of a Security Strategy/Strategic Concept (Koukakis, 2023).

Secondly, it must be stressed that resilience is a crucial capacity not only for Moldova but also for every state and non-state actor, as it allows it to successfully address existing and emerging threats of the security environment and seize opportunities to quickly recover from crises. This is highlighted in many strategic documents of regional and international (state and non-state) major actors (Koukakis, 2023), such as the 2022 National Security Strategy of the USA (Koukakis, 2022), France's 2022 National Strategic Review (Koukakis, 2022), Japan's 2022 National Security Strategy (Koukakis, 2022), the 2023 Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (Koukakis, 2023), the UK's 2023 Integrated Review Refresh (Koukakis, 2023), and Germany's 2023 National Security Strategy (Koukakis, 2023).

It is also underlined that the contemporary security threats are differentiated significantly from the old traditional military threats, despite the fact that the use of military force still remains as an integral part of the international disputes and conflicts, as it is indicated by the Russian invasion in Ukraine, the Armenia - Azerbaijan war of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh), the war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, and several other regional conflicts. That is why the "*Security and Defence Partnership*" between the



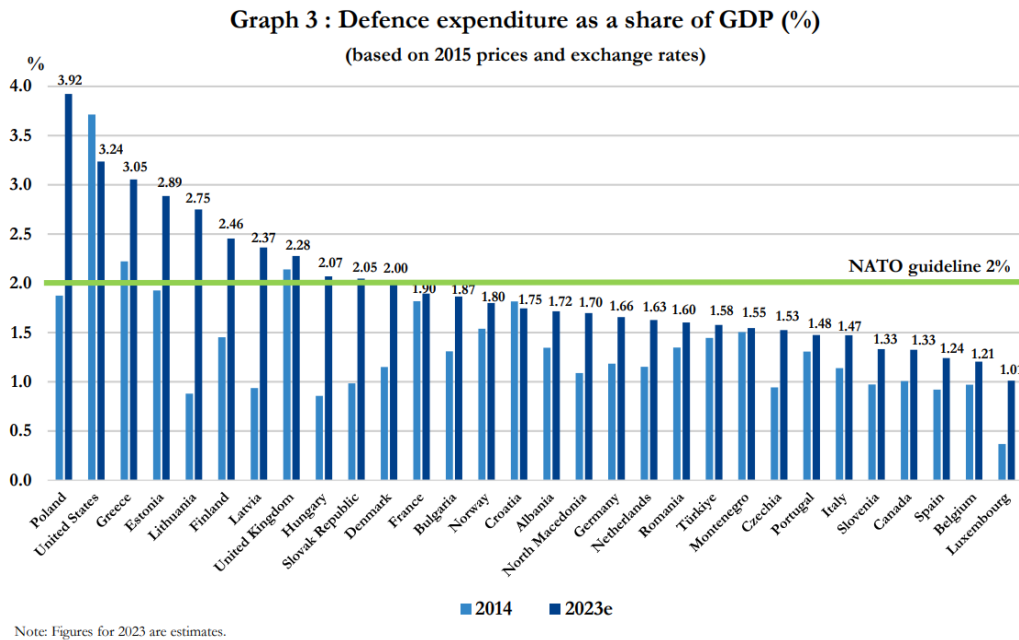
EU and Moldova – besides non-proliferation & disarmament – stresses the need for countering hybrid threats, FIMI, cyber threats, terrorism, violent extremism, and vast migration flows, namely some of the most common contemporary security threats worldwide, and the importance of strategic communications due the latter's ability to facilitate the achievement of various objectives.

Moreover, due to the conditions of the contemporary security environment of polycrises and permacrises (Koukakis, 2023), the effectiveness of the European security and defence is closely related to the collaboration of the European states, regardless of their membership in the EU, as partnerships ensure the increased effectiveness of the actions taken to counter several threats due to the military, economic and diplomatic support, the exchange of know-how, the promotion of innovation through research and development, etc. Therefore, the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) is an essential tool for the protection of the European states.

Another factor that is crucial for the European security & defence is the establishment of a competitive and innovative Defence Industry Technological Base (DITB), an objective that has been set by the EU in its first-ever “*European Defence Industrial Strategy*” that was published on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (Koukakis, 2024). In addition, the EU has developed several ‘toolboxes’ in order to assist its member-states’ efforts to address the contemporary security threats, such as the ‘EU Cyber Diplomacy Toolbox’, the ‘EU Hybrid Toolbox’, the ‘EU Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference Toolbox’ and several other administrative, financial and organizational tools, such as the high-level EDIG, SEAP, FAST, EDIP, CDP, CARD, PESCO, etc.

A sixth point that needs to be highlighted is that the ongoing war in Ukraine was a catalyst for the security & defence sector of many European states, since it has led to the increase (Picture 4) of their defence expenditures - as a share (%) of their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - seeking to modernize their Armed Forces. European states also signed military agreements for mutual military assistance in case of external security threats, such as the “*Agreement between the Government of Hellenic Republic and the Government of the Republic of France on establishing a Strategic Partnership for Cooperation in Defence and Security*,” (Koukakis, 2023), and the “*Agreement between the Government of the Hellenic Republic and the Government of the United Arab Emirates regarding Joint*

*Foreign Policy and Defence Cooperation.*” (Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic, 2022).



Picture 4: NATO member-states’ defence expenditure (2014-2023)

(Source: [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2024/3/pdf/240314-def-exp-2023-en.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2024/3/pdf/240314-def-exp-2023-en.pdf))

Last but not least, it must be noted that training and education are two essential factors contribute greatly in the effective implementation of any reform – such as the WPS agenda – and/or objective, as they affect not only the capacity building process, but also in the development of a (national) security & defence culture, promoting cooperation in several fields between the two parts.

## 6. Future Security Considerations

As highlighted in the “Introduction,” Moldova is a former Soviet Socialist Republic of the USSR (Picture 5), therefore is considered by Russia as one of its ‘*Near Abroad*’ states – a concept that Russia institutionalized by establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus, n.d.) – under the Russian sphere of influence. In fact, the exercise of influence over these states is so important for Russia that the 2023 “*Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian*

*Federation*” contains a ‘Near Abroad’ section in the part ‘V.’ Regional tracks of the foreign policy of the Russian Federation’ state that:

*“The most important for the security, stability, territorial integrity and social and economic development of Russia, strengthening its position as one of the influential sovereign centres of world development and civilization is to ensure sustainable long-term good-neighbourly relations and to combine the strengths in various fields with the CIS member states, which are connected with Russia by centuries-old traditions of joint statehood, deep interdependence in various fields, a common language and close cultures”.*  
(The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2023)



Picture 5: Map depicting the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

(Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Soviet-Union>)

To this end, the aforementioned 2023 “*Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*” defines nine priorities as far as the relations of the ‘*Near Abroad*’ states and Russia are concerned, of which special attention must be given to the following:

**Priority No 1:** Preventing and resolving armed conflicts, improving inter-state relations, and ensuring stability in the near abroad, including preventing the instigation of “*colour revolutions*” and other attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of Russia’s allies and partners.

**Priority No 2:** Ensuring guaranteed protection of Russia, its allies and partners under any military and political scenario in the world, strengthening the system of regional security based on the principle of indivisibility of security and Russia’s key role in maintaining and strengthening regional security, the complementarity of the Union State, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and other formats of interaction between Russia and its allies and partners in the defence and security sphere.

**Priority No 3:** Countering deployment or reinforcement of military infrastructure of unfriendly states and other threats to Russia’s security in the near abroad.

**Priority No 6:** Preventing and countering unfriendly actions of foreign states and their alliances, which provoke disintegration processes in the near abroad and create obstacles to the exercise of the sovereign right of Russia’s allies and partners to deepen their comprehensive cooperation with Moscow.

Taking into consideration the aforementioned priorities set by Russia – despite the fact that Moldova is not a member-state of CSTO – the “*EU-Moldova Security & Defence Partnership*” will most likely be considered by Russia as a violation of the priorities set, as it interferes in the internal affairs of Moldova (priority No.1), contradicts to Russia’s key role in maintaining and strengthening regional security (priority No.2), enhances the military capacity of Moldova (priority No.3) and provokes the disintegration process of Moldova as it creates obstacles to the deepening of its comprehensive cooperation with Russia (priority No.6).

Thus, it is assessed that the “*EU-Moldova Security & Defence Partnership*” – despite the fact that it enhances both the European and Moldovan security – will have a long-term negative impact on regional security, due to the escalation of tension that will bring into

the EU - Russian and Moldovan - Russian relations as it will most likely be perceived by Moscow as one more unfriendly action of the “West.” This must also be considered in the context of the overall EU support to Ukraine and the approachment between the EU and Armenia (Picture 6).



Picture 6: Information (factsheet) on the EU - Armenian relations

(Source: [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/armenia\\_factograph\\_0.pdf](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/sites/default/files/armenia_factograph_0.pdf))

Another important security issue that must be taken into consideration is the relations between Moldova and the Pro-Russian separatist enclave of *Transnistria* or *Transdniestria* (Picture 7), in which Russian military troops are located as a mean to keep this “frozen conflict” under control (Kleff, 2024). In 2006 the Transnistrian authorities had held a referendum in order to gain independence and join the Russian Federation, while in 2014 several concerns had been expressed regarding a possible annexation of Transnistria by Russia after the respective one of Crimea (Gardner, 2014).



Picture 7: Map depicting the location and borders of Transnistria  
(Source: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Transdniestria>)

More recently, on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024 – after the spread of rumors on a second referendum of Transnistria asking again to join the Russian Federation (Barros et al., 2024) – the authorities of Transnistria officially appealed to Russia for protection against Moldova’s economic war that was initiated through the introduction of a new customs regulation (Newsroom, 2024). Consequently, it is assessed that any attempt on behalf of the EU to interfere in any way in the specific issue will definitely provoke Russia and raise the tension in the region.

## 7. Policy Recommendations

Taking into consideration all the factors presented so far, it must be stressed that the EU officials should not underestimate Russia's reaction to its security and defence initiatives regarding the Russian "*Near Abroad*" states, but need to carefully plan their next moves so that they do not have the contrary result as far as regional security is concerned. Although similar partnerships can be established with some of the rest of the EaP states such as Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine<sup>4</sup>, it might be wiser to wait for a while so that they can see how Russia will react and adjust their course of action.

As far as Greece is concerned, it is high time that it issued its own National Security Strategy, following the example of several other actors that did so in 2022 (Koukakis, 2023) and 2023 (Koukakis, 2024). At this point it must be noted that Greece reorganized its national security system in 2019 by transforming its "Governmental Council of Foreign Affairs and Defence" into a "Governmental National Security Council," nevertheless there are many more organizational changes – such as the establishment of several committees, the reinforcement of its personnel, etc. – to be done, in order for it to be fully functional (Koukakis, 2022).

## 8. Concluding Remarks

To conclude, it must be noted that Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022 has acted as a catalyst for the enhancement of the European security and defence, since it has led to many related initiatives on behalf of the EU such as the aforementioned partnership. Moreover, the European leaders have realized that the EU can no longer rely solely on NATO for its security and defence, as Donald Trump's statements regarding the Alliance's future in case he is reelected have already shaken the foundations of the EU - NATO cooperation (Sciutto, 2024). In fact the European Parliament has proposed the establishment of a "*Defence Union*" in order to better address the evolving security and defence threats of the contemporary security environment (European Parliament, 2023), despite the fact that several states have expressed their contradiction to several defence initiatives in the past due to sovereignty issues (European Parliament, n.d.). This was highlighted by Josep Borrell, the EU's High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP), during his latest speech at the "Forum Europa" stating that:

---

<sup>4</sup> *Azerbaijan and Belarus* is assessed that will not be interested due to their close relations with Russia.

*“[...] in the next step, the European project will be very much related with building a common security and defence. [...] But we need to make EU citizens to understand that the US umbrella that has protected us during the Cold War and after, may not stay open all the time. That, maybe, depending on who is ruling in Washington, we cannot rely on the American support and on the American capacity to protect us. We have to build our common defence capacity. We have to take our own responsibility. [...] NATO will remain absolutely irreplaceable. But inside NATO we have to build a strong European pillar [...]”.* (European Union External Action Service, 2024)



## Reference List

- Barros, G., Kagan, W. F., Harward, C. & Evans, A. (2024, February 22). *Warning: Transnistria May Organize a Referendum on Annexation to Russia to Support Russian Hybrid Operation Against Moldova*. Institute for the Study of War. <https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/warning-transnistria-may-organize-referendum-annexation-russia-support-russian-hybrid>
- Council of the European Union. (2022, April 06). *European Security Strategy - A secure Europe in a better world*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/documents-publications/publications/european-security-strategy-secure-europe-better-world/#:~:text=The%20European%20Council%20adopted%20the,approach%20and%20remains%20fully%20relevant>
- Council of the European Union. (2022, March 21). *A Strategic Compass for a stronger EU security and defence in the next decade* [Press Release]. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/21/a-strategic-compass-for-a-stronger-eu-security-and-defence-in-the-next-decade/>
- De Wall, T. (2024, May 16). *The End of the Near Abroad*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2024/05/the-end-of-the-near-abroad?lang=en>
- European Commission. (2016, July 01). *Full entry into force of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova* [Press Release]. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP\\_16\\_2368](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_16_2368)
- European Council. (2015, March 16). *Joint press release following the first Association Council meeting between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova* [Press Release]. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/03/16/first-association-council-meeting-between-european-union-republic-moldova/>
- EUR-Lex. (n.d.). *Common foreign and security policy (CFSP)*. <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/EN/legal-content/glossary/common-foreign-and-security-policy-cfsp.html>

- European Council. (2024, April 24). *Moldova*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/enlargement/moldova/>
- European Council. (2024, May 27). *EU relations with the Republic of Moldova*. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eastern-partnership/moldova/>
- European Parliament. (2023, November 22). *Proposals of the European Parliament for the amendment of the Treaties*. [https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0427\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-9-2023-0427_EN.pdf)
- European Parliament. (n.d.). *Draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe*. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/about-parliament/en/in-the-past/the-parliament-and-the-treaties/draft-treaty-establishing-a-constitution-for-europe>
- European Union. (n.d.) *History of the EU*. [https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu\\_en](https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/history-eu_en)
- European Union External Action Service. (2021, July 29). *European Neighbourhood Policy*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/european-neighbourhood-policy_en)
- European Union External Action Service. (2022, March 17). *Eastern Partnership*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/eastern-partnership_en)
- European Union External Action Service. (2019, December 15). *A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/global-strategy-european-unions-foreign-and-security-policy_en)
- European Union External Action Service. (2024, May 21). *Security and Defence Partnership*. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/moldova/security-and-defence-partnership\\_en?s=223](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/moldova/security-and-defence-partnership_en?s=223)
- Gardner, A. (2014, March 19). *Russia to annex Transnistria?*. Politico. <https://www.politico.eu/article/russia-to-annex-transnistria/>
- Government Gazette of the Hellenic Republic. (2022, March 17). *Νόμος 4913/2022*. [https://www.et.gr/api/Download\\_Small/?fek\\_pdf=20220100060](https://www.et.gr/api/Download_Small/?fek_pdf=20220100060)

- Kleff, L. (2024, May 17). *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Transnistria?*. Center for Strategic and International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-do-you-solve-problem-transnistria>
- Koukakis, G. (2022). Establishing the Greek National Security Council: A Comparative Case Study Analysis with the National Security Council of the United States. *Global Security and Intelligence Notes*, 6. <https://www.doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.2.29309.64481>
- Koukakis, G. (2022). The National Security Strategy of the USA: Background, Recent Developments and Future Considerations Regarding the International Security Environment. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series*, 3(2), 122–132. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.33792>
- Koukakis, G. (2022, April 01). *Προς τα που δείχνει η Στρατηγική Πυξίδα της Ευρωπαϊκής Ένωσης*. Κέντρο Διεθνών Στρατηγικών Αναλύσεων. <https://kedisa.gr/pros-ta-pou-deichnei-i-stratigiki-pyksida-tis-evropaikis-enosis/Koukakis>.
- Koukakis, G. (2022, December 23). *Η νέα Στρατηγική Εθνικής Ασφάλειας της Ιαπωνίας: Ο ρόλος που καλείται να διαδραματίσει στον Ινδο-Ειρηνικό, η στήριξη των ΗΠΑ και η εκτιμώμενη αντίδραση της Κίνας*. Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition. <https://www.foreignaffairs.gr/articles/73958/georgios-koukakis/i-nea-stratigiki-ethnikis-asfaleias-tis-iaponias>
- Koukakis, G. (2023, January 31). *International & National Security strategic documents issued in 2022*. Center for International Strategic Analyses. <https://kedisa.gr/en/international-national-security-strategic-documents-issued-in-2022/>.
- Koukakis, G. (2023). Resilience: Highlighting its Importance for Security and Development through References to (National) Security Strategic Documents of International Actors. *HAPSc Policy Briefs Series*. 4(1), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.12681/hapscpbs.35186>
- Koukakis, G. (2023, April 10). *Πώς βλέπει η Μόσχα τον κόσμο: Το νέο δόγμα της εξωτερικής πολιτικής της Ρωσίας*. Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition.

<https://www.foreignaffairs.gr/articles/74100/georgios-koykakis/pos-blepei-i-mosxa-ton-kosmo>.

Koukakis, G. (2023, May 15). *Η στρατηγική εθνικής ασφάλειας και διεθνούς πολιτικής του Λονδίνου: Πώς βλέπει το Ηνωμένο Βασίλειο τις μεταβολές στο διεθνές περιβάλλον*. Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition. <https://www.foreignaffairs.gr/articles/74157/georgios-koykakis/i-stratigiki-ethnikis-asfaleias-kai-diethnoys-politikis-toy-lond>

Koukakis, G. (2023, June 18). *Η πρώτη «ιστορική» Στρατηγική Εθνικής Ασφάλειας της Γερμανίας: Πώς βλέπει το Βερολίνο τον εαυτό του στον 21ο αιώνα και τι σημαίνει αυτό για τον κόσμο και την Ελλάδα*. Foreign Affairs The Hellenic Edition, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373194953\\_E\\_prote\\_istorike\\_Strategike\\_Ethnikes\\_Asfaleias\\_tes\\_Germanias\\_Pos\\_blepei\\_to\\_Berolino\\_ton\\_eauto\\_tou\\_ston\\_21o\\_aiona\\_kai\\_ti\\_semainei\\_auto\\_gia\\_ton\\_kosmo\\_kai\\_ten\\_Ellada](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373194953_E_prote_istorike_Strategike_Ethnikes_Asfaleias_tes_Germanias_Pos_blepei_to_Berolino_ton_eauto_tou_ston_21o_aiona_kai_ti_semainei_auto_gia_ton_kosmo_kai_ten_Ellada)

Koukakis, G. (2023). *Η Στρατηγική Εταιρική Σχέση για την Άμυνα & την Ασφάλεια μεταξύ Ελλάδας & Γαλλίας: Μία «τεχνοκρατική» προσέγγιση και αποτίμηση του πρώτου έτους ισχύος της*. *Τετράδια Γεωπολιτικής Ανάλυσης και Μελετών*. 6, 75-95. <https://elisme.gr/wpcontent/uploads/2023/08/%CE%A4%CE%B5%CF%84%CF%81%CE%AC%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BF-%CE%9D%CE%BF.6.pdf>

Koukakis, G. (2024, February 27). *National Security, Foreign Policy, Intelligence, Cybersecurity, National Defence, Maritime Security, Risk Analysis and Foresight Strategic Documents Issued by Regional and International Actors in 2023*. Center for International Strategic Analyses. <https://kedisa.gr/en/national-security-foreign-policy-intelligence-cybersecurity-national-defence-maritime-security-risk-analysis-and-foresight-strategic-documents-issued-by-regional-and-international-actors-in-2023-2/>

Koukakis, G. (2024). *The First Ever 2024 European Defence Industrial Strategy: Background, Challenges and Future Considerations Regarding the European Security and Defense*. HERMES Institute of International Affairs, Security & Geoeconomy. <https://www.hermesresearch.eu/occasional-papers-1.html>

- Krentz, O. (2023, October). *Common Security and Defence Policy*. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/159/common-security-and-defence-policy#:~:text=The%20CSDP%20is%20the%20main.strengthen%20international%20peace%20and%20security>
- Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Moldova. (2023, December 15). *The Parliament adopted the National Security Strategy of the Republic of Moldova* [Press Release]. <https://www.army.md/index.php/duhovniceti/inf/kcaptcha/?lng=3&action=show&cat=122&obj=8707>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Belarus. (n.d.). *Commonwealth of Independent States*. <https://www.mfa.gov.by/en/multilateral/organization/list/c2bd4cebfd6bd9f9.html>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova. (n.d.). *Moldova-EU relations*. <https://mfa.gov.md/en/content/moldova-eu-relations>
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2023, March 31). *The Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation*. [https://mid.ru/en/foreign\\_policy/fundamental\\_documents/1860586/](https://mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/fundamental_documents/1860586/)
- Newsroom. (2024, February 02). *Moldova: Breakaway Transnistria asks Russia for 'protection'*. Deutsche Welle. <https://www.dw.com/en/moldova-breakaway-transnistria-asks-russia-for-protection/a-68396033>
- Pavy, E. (2023, October). *The Treaty of Lisbon*. European Parliament. <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/en/sheet/5/the-treaty-of-lisbon#:~:text=The%20Treaty%20of%20Lisbon%20formally,Council%20has%20One%20legislative%20functions>
- Sciutto, J. (2024, February 12). *Trump will pull US out of NATO if he wins election, ex-adviser warns*. CNN. <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/02/12/politics/us-out-nato-second-trump-term-former-senior-adviser/index.html>
- Sukhopara, F. N., Latham, E., Hitchins, K. A. & Buckmaster, B. (2024, June 05). *Moldova*. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/place/Moldova>

Union External Action Service. (2024, April 08). *Defense: Speech by High Representative/Vice President Josep Borrell*. Forum Europa. [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/defense-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-forum-europa\\_en](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/defense-speech-high-representativevice-president-josep-borrell-forum-europa_en)

United States Mission to the OSCE. (2006, July 18). *Transnistria Referendum*. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/e/4/20003.pdf>