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POLICY BRIEF

THE SECRET BATTLEFIELD: HOW THE EU CAN HELP GEORGIA, MOLDOVA, AND UKRAINE PROTECT AGAINST RUSSIAN SUBVERSION

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SUMMARY

- Although military force is never off the table, Russian espionage and subversion pose the most sustained threat to Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. This makes these countries' intelligence and security services their front-line defenders.

- The EU has given Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine extensive assistance on the legal and political side of intelligence reform. But it has been hesitant to engage in systematic programmes intended to support these Eastern Partnership states' efforts not only to reform but also to strengthen these agencies.

- The EU should pursue such measures, and should consider concluding a new intelligence and security compact with these three countries. This would both strengthen their ability to defend themselves and demonstrate the EU's commitment to operating as a credible security partner.

- Such programmes would have to combine political reform and technical and operational capacity building, drawing on the experiences and strengths of EU member states' intelligence services. These programmes should be coordinated through suitable EU structures, both in Brussels and on the ground in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine.

Introduction

Yes, it's important to have the right laws in place. But unless the [EU] is willing to help us defend ourselves on the secret battlefield, then for now I'd prefer it if they kept their lectures to themselves.

— Ukrainian Foreign Intelligence Service officer, 2021[1]

Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have all experienced Russian military aggression, whether directly or by proxy. While such a future threat to Chisinau appears to have receded, Tbilisi and, especially, Kyiv still live under its shadow. In late 2021, Russia assembled its forces on Ukraine's borders, causing great international concern about a possible invasion. While this worry is understandable, it is also more important than ever to support these states' intelligence services, to help them defend themselves against the hybrid tactics preferred by Moscow.

In terms of addressing threats from Russia, overall Ukraine has taken the most dramatic strides so far: reform of its military is one of the successes of the post-Maidan era. The quarter of a million members of its armed forces are increasingly well trained and equipped. They would not be able to prevent Russia from using its military superiority to launch punishing attacks – but they would make it difficult and, above all, costly for Moscow to mount any major assault intended to take and hold territory. In Russia itself, the population are unenthusiastic about such military adventures, and the Kremlin is preoccupied with preparing the ground for the 2024 presidential election. It is, therefore, unsurprising to hear one well-connected Russian defence analyst conclude that: "Russia could take a bite out of Ukraine, but not without breaking teeth," even if it is still by no means impossible that the Kremlin might consider the gains worth the costs.[2]

More broadly, the expensive impasse in Ukraine's Donbas region, Western sanctions, and signs of growing resentment among its neighbours at its imperial attitudes appeared in 2021 to temper how far Russia was prepared to go to impose and maintain its hegemony over most of post-Soviet Eurasia. More recent events around Ukraine may indicate that this was merely temporary, but these constraints have likely still influenced Russia's calculus on how to prevent Eastern Partnership states' closer integration with the European Union and NATO, even if not its commitment to this goal. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine all have Association Agreements with the EU and are formally committed to joining the union. Georgia and Ukraine are also pursuing NATO membership, although Moldova is constitutionally neutral and, therefore, has no plans to join the alliance. However, there

are no firm dates yet for when any country may be allowed into these organisations.

In the meantime, Moscow seeks to prevent such developments. Despite concern about the chances of a Russian military invasion of Ukraine or elsewhere, direct military action is often the Kremlin's last resort rather than its first. Arguably, the Russian government prefers the use of covert political "active measures" to pursue its goals. These include espionage, subversion, disinformation, and corruption. Russia's multiple intelligence agencies and a range of "political entrepreneurs" are either directly tasked with these activities or operate autonomously, seeking to win the Kremlin's favour. This creates a complex, multi-dimensional, and rapidly evolving security challenge.

This is not simply a problem for the target countries themselves. Instability and the spread of Russian influence challenge the EU's Eastern Partnership goals of "promoting democracy, good governance and the rule of law", to quote the EU's high representative for foreign and security policy, Josep Borrell. This situation undermines the EU's credibility in the Eastern Partnership region and elsewhere. It also brings into question its capability to be a serious security actor. Inevitably, this drives countries in the region to place greater focus on NATO, seeing it more and more as the sole credible guarantor of their sovereignty.

In this context, helping front-line Eastern Partnership countries such as Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine develop their intelligence and counter-intelligence services and capabilities is at least as essential as providing military and diplomatic assistance. These countries are already working on legislative reform, and are also undertaking practical bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the EU on specific issues such as intelligence-led policing of drug trafficking, people trafficking, and financial crimes. However, the EU currently has no overarching strategy for, or any clear approach to, coordinating this sort of activity or bringing its member states' intelligence agencies together to support their counterparts in Eastern Partnership countries.

This paper draws on lessons from past US and western European cooperation with intelligence services in central European countries and some former Soviet states to recommend how the EU and its members should engage with the services of Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. It draws not just on historical assessments but also on interviews the author carried out for this project with country experts and intelligence officers from Western countries and from Eastern Partnership states themselves. The paper takes account of these states' particular needs, and the inevitable challenges in intelligence cooperation, along with the practical measures and political conditionalities necessary to minimise these challenges.

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The challenge of intelligence reform

There is a consensus in Georgia, Ukraine, and – to a lesser degree – Moldova that Russia poses the main threat to their sovereignty and stability. In his latest report to parliament, Grigol Liluashvili, head of the State Security Service of Georgia (SSSG), named Russia as his country's top challenge. Ukraine's Foreign Intelligence Service (SZV) has identified the main threats as "Russia's aggressive policy towards the internal socio-economic and political processes in Ukraine [and] the Kremlin authorities [sic] attempts to undermine the basis of support provided to our state at the international level".

However, the intelligence sector in these states is both a key asset and an obstacle for Eastern Partnership countries in their efforts to combat Russian covert operations. On the one hand, effective intelligence and counter-intelligence agencies are crucial to these countries' national security, given that they are primary targets and sometimes even laboratories for Russian subversive tactics. On the other hand, while they have at times shown themselves to be extremely capable, these agencies – still heavily influenced by the structures, cultures, and methods they inherited from the Soviet KGB – can be ineffective, heavy-handed, untransparent, and vulnerable to corruption, Russian penetration, and political abuse. Legacies of militarisation and impunity are still deeply encoded in their institutional culture and training. These agencies' remits often unhelpfully mix law enforcement, counter-intelligence, and sometimes espionage missions.

This helps explain why most European countries have shied away from working with them on any more than a token and advisory basis. And this is despite the existence of bodies such as the South East European Military Intelligence Chiefs' Forum, whose members include not only EU states such as Croatia and Slovenia but also aspirants such as Moldova and Albania. Another such body is the International Advisory Group, which was established in Kyiv in 2016 by the European Union Advisory Mission (EUAM), the EU delegation, the NATO Liaison Office, and the US embassy. However, while this group performs valuable work helping Ukraine on the legislative aspects of intelligence reform, it does not assist the country on the operational dimension. This is left to bilateral relationships, first and foremost with the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. But that is a mistake: the experience of those countries indicates that one can – with certain levels of precaution and conditionalities applied – work with those agencies. This should therefore be conducted on a wider basis both by individual member states and the EU as a whole. Such forms of cooperation can then become tools for exercising influence on these agencies and pushing them to reform. By doing more of this in the future, EU member states would demonstrate their willingness and capacity to work on security issues in the Eastern Partnership region. It would also help these states accept that NATO

membership need not be the only way to ensure their security.

The current opportunity

As noted above, various bilateral intelligence-related agreements and joint projects exist between particular EU member state agencies and Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine. These tend to relate to law enforcement work, counter-intelligence, and cyber-security. They are often quite limited in scope, and are strictly bilateral in nature. Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine also have agreements with Europol, and liaison officers in that organisation. However, across the region, this is a propitious moment for the EU to develop a collective intelligence partnership with these three states.

When Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, asserted earlier this year that "there is no alternative to the reform of the [Security] Service, and there will never be," he committed Ukraine to serious intelligence reform. He also dismissed a number of key figures within the SZV and the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). This was in preparation for the final passage of a law that would reduce the size of the SBU and, in particular, transfer the investigation of organised and financial crimes to a new Bureau of Economic Security (BES), as well as the National Anti-Corruption Bureau and the National Police. This is therefore a good opportunity for Europe to support a country of which Borrell has said "your security will be our security" and seize a moment when Kyiv is likely to be especially receptive to partnership and advice.

In Moldova, just weeks before incoming president Maia Sandu took office at the end of 2020, parliament made attempts to strip her of control of the Security and Intelligence Service (SIS; also widely known as the SIB, from its title in Russian). The law passed, but a legal ruling declared it unconstitutional in April 2021. Ironically, this incident pushed the question of reform of the sector up the political agenda, with protesters taking to the street in support of the president. At her speech commemorating the SIS's thirtieth anniversary, in October 2021, Sandu singled out the need for both practical and political reform of the service. But, while the SIS regularly engages in trilateral meetings with the European Union Border Assistance Mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM) and Ukraine's SBU (most recently in June 2021), there is little wider cooperation at the level of EU institutions rather than individual member states. This is despite the current government clearly wanting to do more in this regard. In the words of one foreign ministry figure, "it's not just about improving our security, it's about another way to show Europe we're serious about the relationship." [3] A more active EU presence on this issue would not only address concerns about the supposed 'neglect' of the country by the West, a perception exploited by disinformation spread by Russia and its proxies; it would also take advantage of a singularly promising political situation.

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Meanwhile, in Georgia, there are widespread concerns about democratic backsliding, as well as an alleged resurgence of Russian influence via the ruling Georgian Dream party, which its opponents accuse of being too accommodating to Russia. But, rather than put the EU off, these factors should motivate it to act. As in Moldova, this would help see off critics' accusations that the West has "abandoned" or "deceived" the country. (Even essentially pro-Western Georgian interlocutors feel let down.)[4] While Georgia has long focused hard on joining NATO, this moment of renewed debate about its strategic direction gives the EU an opportunity to present itself as a credible security partner, not just an economic and cultural one. Besides this, recent revelations about the scale of surveillance carried out by the SSSG on targets ranging from journalists to diplomats – as well as the agency's decision to sign an agreement to cooperate with the Belarusian KGB – have again highlighted the need for reform. The reasons for the EU to get more closely involved are, in this light, stronger rather than weaker.

An intelligence and security compact

To begin to address the problems these Eastern Partnership nations are facing and help them make progress, the EU as a bloc should agree on an intelligence and security compact with the three countries. This would create a new way for the EU to cooperate with them. Among other advantages, it would help all sides move beyond the question of NATO membership. From the EU's and its partners' point of view, such a compact would also play to strengths that European countries all too often forget they have, while attending to starkly obvious European weaknesses. For example, European intelligence agencies, individually or even together, cannot compete in purely quantitative terms with the gargantuan US intelligence community. But, in many ways, that is a perverse advantage: they have had to learn how to leverage relatively limited resources to develop niche capabilities (such as Dutch cyber-intelligence), challenge the Russians in tradecraft (which Estonian counter-intelligence excels at), and put a greater premium on collaborative ventures (even if, ultimately, the US tends to be the dominant power in any partnership).
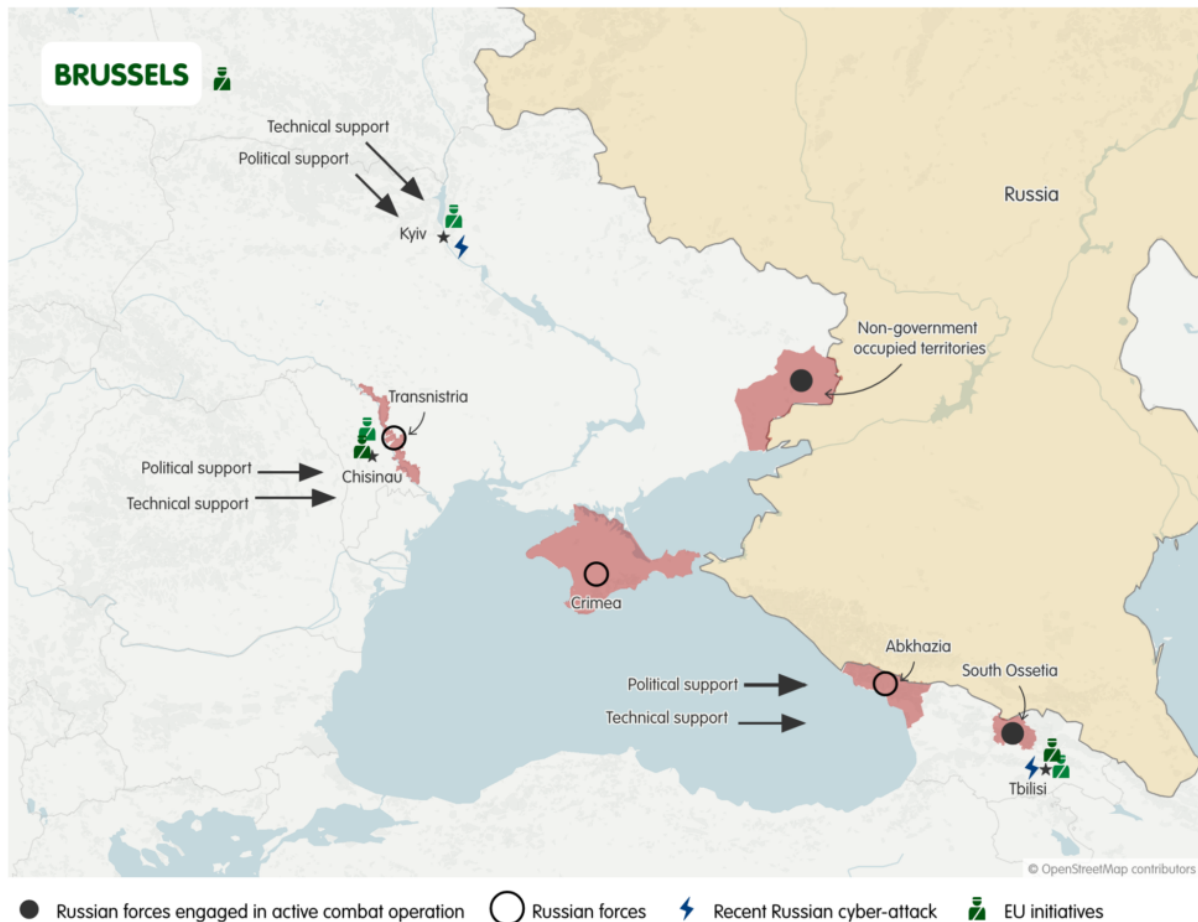
These experiences are much more relevant to Eastern Partnership countries than anything the US can offer. This approach would be especially valuable if the EU ensured that its partner states benefited from the wealth of experience that belongs to central European and Baltic countries' agencies, which have successfully navigated the democratic reform of their security structures in recent decades. As part of such a compact, the EU could offer intelligence sharing and assistance in developing practical capacity, which is extremely important in a time of Russian adventurism. It could also help ensure that this process leads to meaningful reform that, ultimately, prompts security agencies to buttress rather than undermine transparency and democracy.

At the same time, Eastern Partnership intelligence agencies could provide their European partners with the benefits of their own experiences and collection operations, while the compact and its associated programmes would be an example of the EU becoming a serious security actor – and doing so in a way that accorded with its values and interests alike. It could also provide a focus for better intelligence cooperation within the bloc as a possible by-product – something that remains a serious problem, in part again because many agencies are more interested in partnering with the US or the UK than with each other. Developing such cooperation would demonstrate the ways in which burden sharing within the Western alliance could mean more than just buying more tanks and recruiting more soldiers. As noted, it would also help Western states show Eastern Partnership countries that there was more to security partnerships than NATO.

Political recommendations

The need for intelligence reform in legal and political terms has long been recognised both within the region and by the EU. But this is easier to articulate than execute. While Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine all routinely express a commitment to meaningful change, this is very much an unfinished process. Legislative oversight and a fundamental assessment of long-term structural needs tend to take second place to technical upskilling and cosmetic changes to legacy agencies. The EU can play a positive role here, especially if it is able to turn the enhanced assistance it would provide through the compact into a reward for progress.

Proposed Eastern Partnership initiatives

Technical support
Political support
BRUSSELS

Kyiv

Russia

Non-government
occupied territories

Transnistria

Political support
Technical support
Chisinau

Crimea

Abkhazia
South Ossetia
Political support
Technical support

Tbilisi

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● Russian forces engaged in active combat operation ○ Russian forces ⚡ Recent Russian cyber-attack EU initiatives

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Encourage fundamental reform

The first and perhaps most politically sensitive aspect of this new relationship would be not just to provide assistance but also to encourage these states to enact truly fundamental reform of their intelligence services. They need to aim to: strengthen public accountability; address tendencies within agencies towards acquiring excessive competences and allowing overlap with other law enforcement agencies; and combat corruption more aggressively. The EU needs, of course, to approach this with tact and sensitivity, and acknowledge the very real progress that these countries have already made. It should not present the offer as a crude bargain of 'resources for reform'. The EU also needs to do this in partnership with local constituencies advocating such changes, from individual legislators to civil society – such as the more than 20 Ukrainian civil society organisations that joined with Human Rights Watch this year to petition parliament for changes to the Law on the Security Service of

Ukraine.

Nonetheless, to a greater or lesser extent, all three countries' intelligence and security communities are still works in progress. The EU should not accept the usual responses – from both the agencies in question and other defenders of the status quo – that the current models function well enough, or that it is impossible to carry out major reform in a time of "war." Indeed, it is precisely because of the current 'political war' being waged via Russian "active measures" that reform is so urgent and important. As the EUAM has noted,

> Countering Russian hybrid efforts in Ukraine requires quality rather than quantity of SSU staff. Focusing on developing human resources, technology, know-how, and international cooperation is key to an effective security service. Being big can be a disadvantage as it means greater bureaucracy, inefficiencies, and ineffectiveness. The reform and modernisation of the SSU would make it more capable of countering threats to Ukraine, including from the Russian services.

Deal with corruption – properly

It has become a cliché to observe that the security institutions of Eastern Partnership states are still dogged with serious, perhaps even endemic, corruption, and that something needs to be done about this. This has not been tackled systemically and systematically. One SBU insider grumbled that "anti-corruption operations have just become another racket: pay to keep your job," while a Georgian counterpart likewise claimed that "if you're caught, it's because you just didn't pay off the right [boss]." [5] This creates significant operational vulnerabilities given that, these days, Moscow relies on money rather than ideology to recruit most of its assets. But it also creates serious barriers to agencies based in the EU engaging in closer practical cooperation with their counterparts in Eastern Partnership states. One Italian AISE (foreign intelligence) officer who had worked with the Moldovan SIS (and was broadly very supportive of deeper assistance) admitted that "there were some things we simply could not pass on, especially when it related to major criminal operations, as we could not trust it not to be sold."[6]

There are already projects that aim to address corruption, but they often do so only in general terms – and many merely genuflect towards also cleansing the security and intelligence sector. Examples of this include the EU-Council of Europe 'Enhancing the systems of prevention and combating corruption, money laundering and terrorist financing in Georgia' programme, which is part of the EU-Council of Europe Partnership for Good Governance. The EU needs to drive up the expectations and

standards of these forms of cooperation.

Mind the gap

Embarking on a process of reform invariably creates capacity gaps; one Moldovan officer asked: "What do you guys think will happen if we're all busy reapplying for our jobs and designing new logos? The Russians would have a party."[7] It is certainly true that care would need to be taken to prevent dangerous lapses in security during reform – one SSSG officer turned to an admittedly extreme example to make his point, observing that it was not possible to reform his service the way Georgia's traffic police were reformed in 2004, with the entire force being sacked and then reconstituted.[8]

It is correct that reformed services will be more efficient ones, but it is also understandable that there will be serious and credible concerns about the interregnal period. As this should concern EU states as well, it is all the more important that they provide reform-minded Eastern Partnership nations with assistance to bridge these gaps. Making this a coordinated EU mission under the terms of the compact would help coordinate such support. This could include enhanced intelligence sharing, reorientated technical intelligence gathering to provide greater coverage of partner countries during a transition, and even the secondment of personnel to assist on the ground.

Build on examples of success

It is a challenge in every system to bring democratic accountability and adequate internal controls to institutions that handle classified material and are covert by definition. Nonetheless, there are particular issues for nations still building their democracies and agencies that are influenced, however lightly, by the political culture of the Soviet KGB. Corruption, impunity, and politicisation remain problems within Eastern Partnership states. Countries that have managed similar transitions are in a good position to provide meaningful assistance in this cultural and political reform.

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For example, despite the repeated – if rarely credible – criticisms that President Milos Zeman has levelled at the Czech Security Information Service (BIS), the formation of the agency is widely regarded as an example of a successful democratic intelligence transformation that married accountability and effectiveness. This is something recognised within the Eastern Partnership region; one Ukrainian former SBU officer described the BIS as "the best example of not a post-Soviet but a non-Soviet central European service". What he meant was that the agency had managed to develop without in any way absorbing or adopting the political culture of the old Czechoslovak StB (State Security).[9] Likewise, Estonia's Välisluureamet (Foreign Intelligence Service) and Kaitsepolitseiamet (Internal Security Service) are both extremely capable and subject to serious democratic control. These agencies are often relatively small, though. Therefore, it would place a heavy burden on their resources to provide sustained and serious assistance to their Eastern Partnership counterparts. But other nations in the EU could, in turn, provide support to such agencies in the bloc, to enable them to continue to carry out such work with their Eastern Partnership counterparts.

Technical recommendations

Intelligence and security services in Eastern Partnership countries tend to be highly skilled in human intelligence and counter-intelligence tradecraft, but lag in their technical capabilities and certain areas of collection and analysis. Developing the technical capacities of these nations' security services is at once an easy and difficult task. It is easy in that their personnel are often hungry for such assistance, whether in the form of modern equipment or additional expertise. It is hard in that the desire to help will inevitably be balanced with the donor nations' security concerns, such as those set out earlier about how much intelligence it is safe to share. While the skills and capacities that would be extended to Eastern Partnership states would essentially come from member states, the EU itself would, under the terms of the compact, act as both broker and coordinator, minimising overlap, matching potential providers to needs, and possibly supplying resources to ensure a degree of equity of commitment. Some EU intelligence agencies may be disproportionately able and willing to assist, but not at the expense of their budgets and duties.

Promote the training of officers – and embed them in Western agencies

There is a definite role for the EU to play by providing both resources and curricular guidance for Eastern Partnership agencies' training for their security officers. But a powerful means of building on this would be to offer both opportunities in European programmes and expanded scope to embed officers from partner agencies in their own. There are, of course, serious potential security concerns, especially with the latter, but there could be significant advantages too. It would nurture personal and professional connections, which could help future relationship building on both sides. It would also demonstrate that this is not a wholly one-way street: officers from services in Eastern Partnership

states have their own strengths and experiences – not least from facing high-tempo and aggressive Russian operations – which can be of great use to their EU counterparts. In the future, Eastern Partnership services may also be granted access to the proposed Joint European Union Intelligence School agreed under PESCO (Permanent Structured Cooperation).

Boost signals intelligence and cyber-intelligence

Signals intelligence requires extensive investment in equipment as well as skills. Cyber-intelligence can be more parsimonious, but it nonetheless benefits dramatically from a substantial critical mass of both types of investment. These are areas in which Eastern Partnership services tend to be limited. For example, Georgia's Data Exchange Agency and Ukraine's SCIP (often known as *Derzhspetszviazok*) are essentially defensive cyber-security organisations rather than cyber-espionage services. The SBU and the SIS have dedicated cyber-intelligence sections; the SSSG has this activity on paper, but the agency is "nowhere near being able to operate to professional standards yet," according to one source. [10] This is not to single out Georgia, though. Ukraine is regularly subject to Russian state or proxy cyber-attacks that are beyond the present capacity of the SCIP and the SBU to prevent. Likewise, according to Elena Marzac, executive manager of the Information and Documentation Centre on NATO in Chisinau, "it is too early to talk about the existence in Moldova of an integrated and effective national mechanism for preventing and combating cybersecurity incidents and cybercrime."

While any support in the form of training or resources would be useful, the EU and its member states could be of most help by providing intelligence products – anything from detailed strategic analyses to transcripts of communications intercepts – and by supporting cross-border intelligence and counter-intelligence cooperation. This would allow Eastern Partnership states to benefit from both a division of labour and the synergies between agencies. It would strongly illustrate the fundamental moral of the compact: it is not so much, or simply, a question of the EU seeking to secure Eastern Partnership states so much as helping them to secure themselves.

Provide financial intelligence

The three Eastern Partnership states in question are formally committed to fighting corruption and financial crimes. They are all members of institutions such as Moneyval (the Council of Europe's Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism). Nonetheless, practical progress is often limited – as much by a lack of political will and the power of oligarchs in each country as by a lack of capacity in areas such as countering money laundering and deep and big data mining and analytics (identifying trends and anomalies in the large amounts of raw information available to modern states). This is of particular concern to both the states in question and to the EU: not only are almost all financial crimes transnational, there are also clear links between them and subversive actions by hostile intelligence services.

In part, this is a question the EU needs to address at home. It is still behind the curve on adopting common and stricter rules for financial transparency and countering white-collar crime. The

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burgeoning scandal around German payments company Wirecard – a formerly prestigious enterprise allegedly used for sanctions busting and financing covert intelligence operations – should serve as a warning signal. The EU needs to strengthen cooperation between intelligence services and financial investigators. It should seek not only to export its upgraded regulations to Eastern Partnership countries and work more closely with local investigative agencies but also to support their own intelligence-led capacity to combat such crimes.

Help to analyse analysis

One recurring complaint from European services sharing experiences and intelligence products with Eastern Partnership counterparts is that, while they are often energetic and efficient in collecting intelligence, the analysis they develop from it is too often simplistic, politicised, or simply lacking in methodological rigour. A typical comment, from a German BND officer seconded to the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN), in this case specifically about materials provided by Ukrainian services, is that "we too often have to kind of reverse-engineer the reports, identify what the actual intelligence is, and draw our own conclusions – we can't rely on the analysis."[11]

An associated issue is the handling of open-source intelligence – material that is generally available, from social media posts to media accounts – which is an increasingly crucial aspect of intelligence work in today's information-saturated world. Open-source intelligence is especially susceptible to being used to reinforce prevailing narratives and favour politically convenient ones, which means that its analysts need to be properly trained and motivated to avoid these particular risks. Open-source materials generated by independent investigations of Russian operations in Donbas, for example, are especially widely used by Ukrainian intelligence services and strategic communications departments alike. However, one Ukrainian intelligence source acknowledged that the use of open-source intelligence by the SBU and the SZV is still "quite primitive: people do a Google search and call it [open-source intelligence]" analysis, and simply pick and choose those findings that fit their preferred narratives.[12]

Many European services have already put a great deal of effort into developing their own capacities in analytic tradecraft and open-source intelligence collection and handling. Assisting Eastern Partnership services in these areas would provide significant benefits to the states in question and would boost their agencies' credibility with their partners, as well as their capacity to share intelligence products on a more equal basis.

EU-specific recommendations

Serious and sustained capacity building will demand long-term commitment and investment. EU countries will have to be willing to take a leap of faith by providing greater access to services in which they may not yet have the greatest confidence. They will need to be willing not just to work with a new generation of intelligence officials – who will be the next cohort of leaders – but also to provide

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training and secondment opportunities to them. Meanwhile, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine are keen on cooperation, but they cannot passively expect to be upgraded. They need to be ready to put resources and political capital into long-term institutional reform, as well as to revise everything from their own training programmes and personnel management systems to recruitment and career paths. To this end, these partnerships between the EU, its member states, and Eastern Partnership countries will have to take on an institutional form.

Set up advisory missions in Georgia and Moldova

In Ukraine, the EUAM has proved invaluable in liaising with local civil security services on their needs, as well as in assessing the progress (and, unfortunately, sometimes regression) of intelligence reform. Building on the EUAM's experience, the EU could establish similar missions in Tbilisi and Chisinau, essentially to provide strategic-level guidance and practical advice, training, and equipment in support of the reform agenda.

Establish EU Intelligence Liaison Offices

The advisory missions are essentially political institutions, and are not engaged in the day-to-day application of intelligence and counter-intelligence tradecraft. To this end, there would be value in setting up separate EU Intelligence Liaison Offices in Kyiv, Tbilisi, and Chisinau, perhaps initially appointing an INTCEN liaison officer within the respective EU delegations. As well as providing a contact point and assessing the needs of partner agencies, they would work with existing EU institutions in the field – such as EUBAM, which supports operations against the smuggling of drugs, people, and tobacco, and which has an intelligence component. The EU Intelligence Liaison Offices could also work with the Frontex-led Eastern Partnership Risk Analysis Network regional border intelligence sharing community (of which all six Eastern Partnership countries are members). There is already a web of bilateral agreements between Eastern Partnership security and law enforcement agencies and their EU counterparts (including, for example, a recent pact agreed between Italy and Ukraine on operational police intelligence sharing). These liaison offices, or officers, could also contribute to avoiding gaps and minimising duplication of effort – something that is certainly a problem in security assistance to Ukraine.[13]

Establish an Eastern Neighbourhood Intelligence Support and Coordination Cell

As a counterpart to new missions and personnel operating in Eastern Partnership states themselves, an Eastern Neighbourhood Intelligence Support and Coordination Cell in Brussels would provide the EU with a hub to coordinate assistance and facilitate practical exchanges of intelligence. This could also help channel funds to member states' bilateral and multilateral intelligence partnerships with Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, and also enhance the trilateral sharing of information and expertise between these three states. While there are already such relationships (especially between Ukraine

and Moldova), they are neither as developed nor as systematic as they should be. The EU could play a valuable role in brokering and supporting these relationships.

About the author

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Acknowledgments

[1] Telephone conversation with a mid-ranking SZV officer who has experience of working in Brussels and is now based in Kyiv, October 2021.

[2] Conversation with a Russian defence analyst, Moscow, February 2020.

[3] Interview with a senior official in the Moldovan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Chisinau, October 2021.

[4] Telephone interview with a Georgian think-tanker based in Tbilisi, October 2021.

[5] Conversation with a serving operational-level officer in the SBU's Main Directorate for Fighting Corruption and Organised Crime, Kyiv, December 2017; conversation with a Georgian SSSG officer, Tbilisi, October 2021.

[6] Text-message exchange with an AISE officer based in Rome, October 2021.

[7] Telephone interview with a desk officer with Moldova's SIS Chisinau Territorial Directorate, October 2021.

[8] Telephone conversation with a Georgian SSSG officer, Tbilisi, October 2021.

[9] Conversation with a former senior officer in the SBU, Kyiv, December 2017.

[10] Email exchange with a Georgian security analyst working on intelligence-related issues in Tbilisi, October 2021.

[11] Conversation with a BND officer, Brussels, June 2016.

[12] Telephone interview with a former SBU officer now living in Lviv, October 2021.

[13] A point made by a Ukrainian participant at ECFR webinar on 'Security needs in Ukraine,

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Moldova and Georgia,' 9 November 2021.

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