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Explaining third-country participation in CSDP missions: the case of the association trio – Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the factors underpinning third-country participation in EU military and civilian missions, by focusing on one particular category of CSDP participating non-EU states, namely the Association Trio - Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. While these three states share several characteristics, including their form of association with the EU, their engagement in the Eastern Partnership, a similar geostrategic environment and common security threats, the extent of their CSDP involvement varies widely. The article explains this variation through a combination of third country-specific and EU-level variables, against the background of the broader post-Cold War security environment and the three countries' deepening integration with the EU. The role conceptions of the three countries stand out as a variable providing an accurate expectation of their foreign policy behaviour, anticipating Ukraine's prominent role in peacekeeping, Moldova's low-key involvement as a neutral state and Georgia's prioritisation of NATO. At a more practical level, the variation among the three countries' contributions to CSDP missions is to be understood in light of their human and financial resources, institutional capacities and adequacy of legal frameworks, as well as the EU's selective opening up of missions to third countries and the highly competitive selection process for civilian personnel.

Introduction

While benefiting from limited policy visibility and academic interest, third-country participation in Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions by the European Union (EU) is far from being a negligible phenomenon. Since the first CSDP mission in 2003, more than 45 third countries have participated in EU-led missions (European Parliamentary Research Service 2022). In addition to contributions from all EU candidate countries, as well as all non-EU NATO members, CSDP missions have also attracted the participation of the USA and even Russia, rising powers such as Brazil and South Africa, and distant states such as New Zealand. These contributions are not insignificant, at times amounting

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to up to 10% of the total number of personnel deployed (Ganslandt 2013, p. 174). On occasions, third countries have been among the largest contributors to particular missions – Turkey, for example, ranked second in terms of the personnel deployed to EUFOR Althea in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2013 (Tardy 2014, p. 1).

It is not difficult to see why the EU welcomes third-country participation: without compromising its decision-making autonomy, the Union benefits from enhanced military and civilian capabilities that its member states do not possess or are unwilling to commit; external contributions also confer greater legitimacy and visibility to EU international action, at the same time as strengthening the political significance of collective action as a result of extended multilateralism (Toro 2010, p. 344). However, despite these incentives towards external participation in CSDP, the EU exercises selectivity when extending invitations to third countries, as well as in the process of selecting non-EU civilian personnel. At the same time, it is not clear why third countries seek to participate in CSDP missions and relinquish a degree of control to an institution that excludes them from decision-making. This implies not only the acceptance of EU practices by third countries but also a degree of subordination to the EU (Tardy 2014, p. 4). Recent efforts by the EU to facilitate third-country participation in CSDP missions – such as the EU Military Committee (EUMC) recommendation of January 2021 to develop criteria for such participation, and to create a CSDP "partners consultative mechanism", as well as enhancing information-sharing with third countries (European Parliamentary Research Service 2022) – suggest that the EU is taking steps to re-balance these relationships, but it remains to be seen how effective these will be.

In light of these constraining circumstances both on the part of third countries and the EU, this article aims at shedding light on one central question: what factors shape third-country participation in CSDP missions? In its empirical focus, the research question limits itself to a focus on the so-called Association Trio (AT), composed of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. This is because the AT is a self-contained category of CSDP contributing states which share relevant features but display considerable variation in CSDP participation. Though, unlike Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova have been bestowed the status of candidate country by the EU as recently as June 2022, the three states share several characteristics, ranging from their similar Association Agreements (AAs) with the EU and their engagement in the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP), to a similar geostrategic environment and common security threats, the most prominent of which is Russia, as exemplified by its 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, its territorial occupation of 20% of Georgia, and its support for the Moldovan separatist region of Transnistria. Yet, and despite these commonalities, the extent of these countries' CSDP involvement varies widely. This article explains this variation through both EU- and third-country-specific variables. Specifically, it argues that the different role conceptions and levels of resources of the three countries, in addition to the EU's selective decision-making processes, account for their varying degrees of CSDP contributions.

The limited academic and policy literature on this topic suggests several drivers for third-country CSDP participation, such as security interests, the attainment of operational experience and the desire to influence EU policies (Tardy 2014, p. 1-2), an interest in upgrading relations with the EU (Soler I Lecha 2010, p. 240; Toro 2010, p. 326), and positive perceptions of the legitimacy and appropriateness of EU security and defence policies (Barbé 2009, p. 844). While such contributions provide insightful accounts of third-country participation in CSDP, they amount to a disparate, predominantly

descriptive and under-theorised body of literature which does not offer a systematic understanding of third countries' motivations or the EU-related factors that shape external CSDP contributions. This article does not purport to offer a theory of third-country participation in CSDP but rather seeks to provide a framework that elucidates the kinds of structures, processes and interactions which bear on CSDP contributing decisions in the three countries under study, thus improving understanding of the variation between their CSDP participation. This is in line with recent peacekeeping scholarship which has acknowledged the illusory nature of aspiring general theories of peacekeeping contributions (Bellamy and Williams 2013, p. 4–5; Koops and Tercovich 2016, p. 604). In keeping with the tenets of this literature, this article distinguishes between factors that predispose countries towards peacekeeping in general, and CSDP participation specifically, and factors that influence particular contribution decisions (Bellamy and Williams 2013, p. 18). As far as the Association Trio is concerned, the post-Cold War security environment and the deepening process of integration with the EU predisposed them towards CSDP contributions, but actual participation in CSDP missions has depended on third country-level factors such as role conceptions and peacekeeping resources, and EU-level factors such as the Union's CSDP decision-making process. In considering both third-country- and EU-level factors, this article argues for the importance of both the demand and supply for peacekeeping.

The literature that this article draws on has provided multi-factorial explanations for states' decisions to take part in peace missions, straddling several fields and disciplines, including International Relations, Foreign Policy Analysis and European Integration Theory. As such, the theoretical framework developed here seeks to contribute to this multi-disciplinary scholarship on states' peacekeeping contributions and third-country CSDP participation, from a position of theoretical eclecticism (Lake 2013). The factors advanced as explanatory variables for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova's contributions to CSDP missions derive from social constructivist (role conceptions), (neo-)realist (material resources; regional security environment) and institutionalist (CSDP decision-making processes) assumptions, illustrating the complexity of real-life foreign policy decisions.

The article relies on qualitative methods, including a thorough review of primary sources, such as EU and third-country official documents, and most importantly interviews with EU and third-country stakeholders. It incorporates findings from four interviews with EU officials, five interviews with AT stakeholders and four interviews with other third-country officials, totalling 13 semi-structured interviews conducted in English in Brussels and over the phone, between March 2018 and November 2022. The use of stakeholder interviews has been key to informing the process-tracing methodology underpinning this article, while at the same time supporting the theorising of third-country participation in CSDP by Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova. By selecting interviewees from the AT countries, other third countries and the EU itself, it has been possible to substantiate both the third country- and EU-level explanatory variables that the article puts forward. The article proceeds as follows: the following section reviews the state of the art in the literature which seeks to explain peacekeeping contributions, whilst the subsequent section summarises the AT countries' contributions to CSDP; finally, the third section brings together several third country-specific and EU-level variables as an explanatory framework for the variation between AT countries, at the same time as discussing the broader systemic environment in which AT CSDP participation takes place.

State of the art: explaining peacekeeping contributions

Most of the academic scholarship investigating the determinants of states' peacekeeping contributions focuses on UN operations. The literature exploring states' motivations for contributing troops to peacekeeping operations (PKOs) has operated largely within the realist/liberal dichotomy, supplemented by several approaches that admit to the possibility of mixed self-interested and altruistic motivations (Bellamy and Williams 2013, p. 14).

Realist-inspired accounts hold that states provide peacekeepers for self-interested reasons, a formulation that conceals a wide variety of rationales, ranging from the classical realist impulse to cumulate power to the systemic imperative of enhancing security. Thus one of the most pervasive self-interested motivations for contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions has been identified as the attainment of international prestige and power (Neack 1995). Security-seeking motivations, buttressed by concern with the effects of instability spill-over, conflict diffusion, refugee flows or trade disruption, also feature prominently in peacekeeping analyses (Findlay 1996).

On the other hand, those who attribute altruistic motivations to troop-contributing states embrace a cosmopolitan ethics that views peacekeeping missions as primarily designed to maintain peace and defend humanitarian and democratic principles (Elliott and Cheeseman 2004). Liberal accounts, for instance, emphasise the importance of democratic peace theory and liberal institutionalism in explaining peacekeeping contributions: troop-contributing countries are more likely to be democratic (Andersson 2002) and support multilateral cooperation because it spreads the risks and costs and offers advantages of scale and efficiency (Abbott and Snidal 1998), and not necessarily because it offers direct payoffs.

Cutting across the realist/liberal divide and drawing on more complex panoply of motivations are two approaches that have contributed richly to the debate on peacekeeping contributions. The first one is public goods theory, which maintains that states can produce collective goods through self-interested behaviour (Bobrow and Boyer 1997; Bove and Elia 2011). The theoretical foundation of these studies is the joint product model which emphasises the existence of both public benefits (in the form of reduced violence and enhanced security and stability) and private, contributing country-specific benefits deriving from peacekeeping (Sandler 2017). As far as the latter are concerned, a wide range of benefits have been identified, covering various self-interested motivations. Contributions to UN missions are incentivised by troop earnings (Bove and Elia 2011), a factor which is, however, not relevant for non-UN PKOs where troops are not financially compensated. An additional material, power-enhancing benefit is the opportunity for in-field training, particularly for less developed countries with poorly trained and equipped militaries (Sandler 2017, p. 1888). Positional goods which result in less tangible advantages can also act as a significant inducement for PKO participation, as Lebovic (2004) found to be the case for democratic countries which tend to send more peacekeepers than non-democracies to reinforce their international status. Security-seeking contributors, on the other hand, can be motivated by benefits such as increased stability in their respective neighbourhood. Indeed, one of the most robust explanations for why states choose to intervene is proximity to a conflict (Bove 2011).

The second body of literature that has engaged with countries' motivations for contributing peacekeeping troops by bridging the divide between realist and liberal

considerations addresses the role of "middle powers" and "small states" in international politics. The specific type of capabilities middle powers possess, as well as their preference for acting diplomatically, within multilateral fora, qualify them as highly suitable peacekeeping contributors. While contributing to international peace and stability, they also derive self-regarding benefits from peacekeeping, such as an elevated status in the international system which is hoped would boost their prestige and influence (Cooper 1997, p. 5). Although subject to more constraints than middle powers as far as foreign policy choices are concerned, small states are also believed to share the former's preference for international cooperation through multilateral institutions as a way to advance their interests. Support for cosmopolitan principles and international law, coupled with small states' "perception of vulnerability" (Katzenstein 2003, p. 11) to security challenges in their environment, has meant that PKOs acquired special appeal for small states seeking to act "smartly" to maximise influence (Haugevik and Rieker 2017, p. 216).

Other explanations underline the role of material factors as relevant for shaping troop-contributing decisions. For instance, the size and quality of a country's military can provide both opportunities and constraints for participation (Daniel et al. 2008, p. 39). Resource scarcity imposes significant limitations on countries' potential contributions but, at the same time, peacekeeping missions can also offer training opportunities and "invaluable overseas experience" for personnel (Findlay 1996, p. 9) and an elevated role to militaries lacking raison d'être under conditions of peace (Whitworth 2004, p. 25).

As already suggested, the literature engaging with third-country participation in CSDP missions is limited and, to the extent that it exists, it explores single case studies or adopts largely descriptive approaches. As a long-standing contributor to CSDP missions, Norway has been argued to provide "troops-for-influence" (Græger 2008, p.97) in an (unsuccessful) attempt to acquire an informal say in EU policy-making. The same rationale of "buying status and influence" has been detected with respect to Iceland's participation in CSDP missions (Bailes and Thorhallsson 2006, p.334). Turkey's main motivation for participating in peace operations has been linked to its "ideational need to be recognised as a member of the Western international community", but also to security rationales (Tarik Oğuzlu and Güngör 2006, p.472; 477), though its quest for decision-making power in CSDP remains a contentious issue for both parties. As a more recent contributor to CSDP missions, Australia has arguably been motivated by the interests and values it shares with the EU, but also more concretely by previous cooperation of Australian personnel with EU member states' military and civilian staff in the context of NATO-led operations (Matera 2018). Two notable recent strands of literature that take issue with third-country participation in CSDP are the post-Brexit scholarship which has focused on exploring a prospective role for Great United Kingdom in the EU's security and defence policy (MartillSus 2018; Wessel 2020; Whitman 2020) and the closely related emerging scholarship that sees third country CSDP engagement as an instance of external differentiated integration (Groenendijk 2019; Svendsen 2022). These studies have tended to take interest in the practical and institutional modalities of third-country participation in CSDP, going beyond contributions to CSDP missions and including also engagement with the European Defence Agency (EDA) and the European Defence Fund (EDF), and in this sense speak only very generally to the topic explored by this article. An exception is Svendsen (2022) who understands third-country association in EU security and defence as a function

of the domestic level of politicisation and the EU supply side (p. 7), a distinction that also informs the theoretical framework developed by this article. More specifically, this article explains variation in the CSDP participation of AT countries through a theoretical framework which distinguishes between the demand and supply of peacekeeping. This approach resonates with scholarship which holds that the key to understanding peacekeeping contributions is the interaction between the demand for peacekeeping and the supply of troops (Bove 2011, p. 26). Despite being faced with similar systemic pressures, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia have engaged to different degrees with the CSDP. This variation is best explained by the interaction between the EU's opportunities for and constraints on external participation, and third-country-specific factors such as role conceptions and peacekeeping resources. Before engaging in an analysis of the variables which account for variation in AT countries' CSDP participation, the article will first offer a brief outline of their respective contributions.

The contribution of the association trio to CSDP missions

Of the AT countries examined here, Ukraine, already before the outbreak of its full-blown war with Russia, had the most developed level of cooperation with the EU in the area of foreign and security policy. A cursory look at Title II (covering political dialogue) of the AAs concluded with each of the AT countries suggests that the scope and depth of foreign and security policy cooperation with Ukraine exceeds the one envisaged for Georgia and Moldova. In addition to promoting "convergence on foreign and security matters", a provision present in all three AAs, the agreement with Ukraine sets out specifically the objective of Kyiv's "ever-deeper involvement in the European security area". Also, Ukraine's AA is the only one that contains a dedicated article (Article 5) on "Fora for the conduct of political dialogue", underscoring the special status of Ukraine among eastern neighbours as the only one with annual summits with the EU. It is thus not surprising that Ukraine was for a long time the only eastern neighbourhood contributor to CSDP missions, in addition to its participation in EU Battle Groups.

Ukraine sent peacekeepers to the EU Police Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (EUPM BiH) from January 2003 until December 2005. From February 2006 until December 2007, and then again in April and June 2009, a total of 10 Ministry of Internal Affairs representatives were deployed to contribute to the renewed EUPM BiH. Ukraine also contributed to the police mission EUPOL PROXIMA in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. As far as military missions are concerned, Ukraine contributed to EUNAVFOR Atalanta, deployed off the coast of Somalia to fight piracy. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, Ukraine maintained its troops at the operation's headquarters, but withdrew its frigate "Hetman Sahaydachny" (Emerson and Movchan 2016, p. 29). Ukraine is also the only AT country that has participated in EU Battle Groups (in 2011, 2014,2016, 2018 and 2020), with continued contributions despite the conflict in the Donbas (Aydın-Düzgit et al. 2021).

Georgia and Moldova, on the other hand, only started contributing to CSDP missions in 2014, following the signing of their respective AAs, with very different degrees of engagement though. Georgia became one of the most active and substantial contributors to CSDP within a very short period. In June 2014 Georgia engaged in EUFOR RCA and deployed one light infantry company in the mission theatre (the second largest

contingent after the French) for six months. After the mission mandate was extended, Georgia continued its participation with two platoons from December 2014 and concluded its participation in March 2015. In October 2015, an immediate Reaction Team of 5 was deployed to the Central African Republic to participate in EUMAM RCA, completing the mission in July 2016. In addition, Georgia has contributed a force of 35 to EUTM RCA in February 2017 and has so far carried out 12 rotations, planning to continue its participation until the mandate of the mission expires. Finally, Georgia has also made more limited contributions, such as the deployment of a liaison officer with EUTM Mali in January 2016, whose task was to coordinate cooperation with different missions on the ground and with international and non-governmental organisations, and the appointment of a Georgian civilian Human Resources officer in the EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) to Ukraine in September 2015.[1]

Moldova, on the other hand, has so far contributed rather marginally to CSDP: it provided a total of eight experts to the missions EUTM Mali and EUTM RCA between 2014 and 2020. The military expert deployed in the latter had already been participating in EUMAM RCA before the operation became EUTM Mali, hence operating under two different mandates.

The association trio and their predispositions towards CSDP engagement

The post-Cold War security environment

To understand the AT's foreign policy orientations more generally, and their approach to peacekeeping in particular, it is important to grasp the systemic shifts following the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Buzan 2007). The newly gained independence of these three post-Soviet states raised fundamental dilemmas regarding their role in the post-Cold War security environment, none more consequential than the choice between a "Western" and an "Eastern" foreign policy course (Minasyan 2012). As they attempted to negotiate their positions in the international system, they all sought to achieve a balance between forging closer links with the West and not antagonising Russia. The challenge of maintaining such a delicate balancing act resulted in distinct policy choices for the three countries. Ukraine and Moldova both embraced a policy of neutrality which was mainly directed at keeping them outside the Tashkent CIS Collective Security Treaty (Kuzio 1998, p. 12), rather than forging a non-aligned foreign policy. While Kyiv has pursued a multi-vector foreign policy that allowed for the possibility of NATO membership, Moldova's constitutionally enshrined commitment to neutrality has precluded it from aspiring to join the Alliance. Georgia, on the other hand, has been decidedly less ambiguous about its goal to become a NATO member, a foreign policy course that has been maintained by successive governments despite growing domestic polarisation.

At the same time, the new geopolitical post-Soviet context placed these countries in distinctly fragile positions. In Moldova and Georgia, emerging territorial disputes were instrumentalised by Russia to foment dissent and weaken the newly independent states. For Ukraine, Russia's reluctance to accept it as a fully sovereign state cast doubt on its borders' viability. In line with the expectations of the small state literature, their precarious strategic positions pushed all three countries towards the "Western" international community (Katzenstein 2003, p. 11). Participation in peacekeeping missions was seen as a way to demonstrate solidarity with Western ideals of peace and stability, at the same time as

establishing a foreign policy identity distinct from Russia's. More strategically, contributions to international peacekeeping were supported as they were perceived as generating political, material, or reputational benefits. For Ukraine, international peacekeeping was a useful instrument to achieve several foreign policy goals: enhancing its international image, being accepted as a legitimate and resourceful member of the international community, demonstrating its Western credentials, as well as more specific objectives such as gaining a non-permanent seat on the Security Council on two occasions (2000-01, 2016–17) (Oksamytna 2016). For Georgia, cooperation with NATO and participation in the Alliance's out-of-area operations was seen as paving the way for eventual membership. Tbilisi's substantial contributions to the war efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq were thus primarily meant to mobilise US support for NATO membership but were also underpinned by an expectation that the West would reciprocate by supporting Georgia in addressing its territorial disputes (Ó Beacháin and Coene 2014, p. 934). In addition, both Ukraine and Georgia saw the operational advantages of contributing to peacekeeping, such as troop training and interoperability with other NATO members (D'Anieri et al. 1999, p. 260). Moldova, on the other hand, has not resorted to peacekeeping as a relevant foreign policy instrument and has so far only modestly participated in UN, NATO, and EU operations.

Deepening integration with the EU

Relations with the EU have been less controversial – domestically, but also vis-à-vis Russia, at least until 2022 – than potential NATO membership, given the relatively low profile of the Union as a security actor. For Ukraine, the CSDP was an extension of NATO and therefore warranted a degree of engagement, while Georgia was until recently disinterested in participating in EU civilian and military missions, instead focusing entirely on strengthening cooperation with NATO and the USA. The signing of AAs between the EU and the three eastern neighbours in 2014 would, however, change the opportunity structure for foreign policy cooperation.

These agreements have modified the framework of cooperation between the EU and the three countries by creating additional incentives for deeper engagement across various policy areas. The AAs aim to establish not only close political association and economic integration but also closer foreign and security cooperation between the AT and the EU. The preambles to all three AAs envisage strengthened cooperation in the area of Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and CSDP, while Articles 7 specifically refer to practical cooperation in conflict prevention and crisis management, in particular with a view to the possible participation of Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova in EU-led civilian and military crisis management missions and relevant exercises and trainings. While the AA provisions do not amount to a legal obligation to participate in CSDP missions – underlined also by the specification that any such participation is to take place on case-by-case basis and following possible invitation by the EU – the three countries consider they have a political responsibility to demonstrate solidarity with EU crisis management policies (Interviews 1, 3, 6). At the same time, the fact that participation in CSDP missions is part of the developments assessed in the implementation of Association Agendas, suggests that the EU itself considers this form of cooperation as an indication of the countries' willingness to develop closer relations with the EU.

For Moldova, its symbolic participation in CSDP missions is to be understood as a commitment to fulfilling the (political, rather than legal) obligations undertaken under the AA, as well as a political message of solidarity with EU values (Interview 1). Despite its neutrality and limited military and crisis management capabilities, Moldova considers it important to send a signal of political willingness and support to the EU, thereby solidifying its case for a future potential EU accession. A similar motivation underscores Georgia's contribution to CSDP missions since 2014. Unlike Moldova, Georgia has been a long-standing active contributor to NATO PKOs and thus has highly skilled military forces, which inevitably raises the question of why it has not already expressed the will to participate in CSDP missions before 2014. While the explanation most probably lies with Georgia's strategic preference for NATO as a security actor, the decision to start contributing as of 2014 can only be understood in the context of intensified foreign and security policy cooperation brought about by the signing of the AA. Similar to Moldova, Georgia's promptness in initialling its CSDP engagement points to a strategic approach by the then government to act on its new obligations and thus deepen and broaden the process of integration with the EU. In addition, Georgia also appears to be motivated by a desire to be seen in Brussels not only as a receiver of European security policy but also as a contributor (Interview 3).

On the other hand, Ukraine has effectively suspended its CSDP involvement. This is due to several factors, most importantly Russia's annexation of Crimea in March 2014, followed by the war in the Donbas region, which rather quickly put a serious strain on the country's resources. Interestingly, it was not necessarily the availability of military forces or civilian personnel which hampered Ukraine's contribution to the CSDP, given that it continued to participate in UN and NATO peacekeeping missions, but rather the financial costs incurred by EU missions (Interview 6). As already noted, the EU requires contributing states to cover the costs of deploying their forces, as opposed to UN missions. Although Ukraine's CSDP contributions have been put on hold, the start of the Donbas war, and most certainly Russia's invasion in 2022, have heightened the importance of security cooperation with the EU. Therefore, Kyiv has been pursuing boosting military and technical cooperation through an agreement with the European Defence Agency (Emerson and Movchan 2016, p. 32) and has continued to participate in an EU Battle Group as recently as 2020.

Beyond the systemic incentives which motivate middle powers and small states to engage in peacekeeping as a way of alleviating security challenges and facilitating regional integration, what explains the different ways in which Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova have contributed to CSDP missions? As already indicated, the concrete ways in which the AT has contributed to international peacekeeping, and CSDP missions in particular, diverge significantly. As the remainder of the article will show, this can be explained by their different role conceptions and the varying levels of national resources, as well as the EU's selectivity in choosing third-country partners.

Third-country-level factors shaping CSDP contributions

Role conceptions

The self-images, or role conceptions in the vocabulary of role theory, of third states are to be understood as the policymakers' definitions of the appropriate orientations of their state towards their external environment and, according to Holsti (1970), they determine

foreign policy behaviour. It can therefore be expected that the extent and nature of the AT's CSDP contributions is shaped by their self-images with respect to their role in international security.

Ukraine sees itself as an important peacekeeping actor, a role conception that is underpinned both by normative and political considerations. On one hand, as a founding member of the UN, Ukraine considers peacekeeping as an important instrument for the maintenance of international peace and security. This is reflected in the country's 2016–2017 Security Council term which identified eleven priorities, four of which were related to peacekeeping and conflict resolution (Oksamytna 2016). On the other hand, Ukraine believes that engagement in peacekeeping provides political advantages, such as strengthening its international reputation and image (Interview 13). Ukraine's vast military inheritance following the demise of the Soviet Union has fostered the self-image of a military power that could play an important role in international and regional security (Interview 12). In 1991 Ukraine acquired possession of the world's third-largest nuclear arsenal, ca. 40% of the USSR's former armed forces personnel and equipment and large stocks of Soviet strategic reserves (Polyakov 2004, p. 6). These resources left a strong imprint on Ukrainian policymakers' understandings of their country's regional and international role as a military power and peacekeeping actor. Ukraine's role conception as a "great power" in the early days of its independence, followed by that of a "bridge" between East and West (Chafetz et al. 1996), contributed to an elevated perception of peacekeeping as an activity that could increase Kyiv's international authority and allow it to reap the benefits of political and strategic links with the West. Hence, the importance of participating in peacekeeping as widely as possible, including cooperation with the UN (as the largest European contributor to UN operations in the mid-2000s), NATO (Ukraine is the only country to have participated in every NATO operation) and eventually the EU's CSDP.

Ukraine's role conceptions of "big power" and "regional leader", which were most strongly articulated by the country's first President Leonid Kravchuk, and later on that of a "bridge" between NATO and Russia, supported by his more cautious successor Leonid Kuchma (Kuzio 1998, p. 13), shaped Kyiv's broad conception of peacekeeping as a useful foreign policy instrument and the adoption of a multi-vector foreign policy direction. Already from the mid-1990s Ukraine worked towards reducing tensions with Russia and strengthening links with the West (D'Anieri et al. 1999, p. 207). The announcement in 2002 of its intention to join both the EU and NATO created a context favourable to intensified security cooperation, including through peacekeeping contributions. Ukraine participated for the first time in a CSDP mission (EUPM Bosnia) in 2003 and contributed to NATO's ISAF in Afghanistan and the US-led coalition in Iraq in the early 2000s.

Unlike Ukraine, Moldova is a small, neutral state with limited capabilities which does not aspire to military power status. Neither does it see itself as a relevant peacekeeping actor, given the absence of a long experience of participation in peacekeeping and its modest contributions so far. When it comes to its foreign policy and role in international security, Moldova's dominant role conception is that of a neutral state. This has increasingly started to be seen as an opportunity rather than a constraint on its potential contribution to international stability. Nonetheless, Moldovan officials have often resorted to the "small state" and "neutral" images to justify Chisinau's limited involvement in international peacekeeping, linking these to the country's limited financial and human resources (Interview 1). At the same time, the discourse on peacekeeping that has

emerged over recent years has emphasised Moldova's aspirational role as a "contributor to the existing security architecture" (Military Doctrine of Republic of Moldova 2013), in contrast to the country's more inward-looking foreign policy stance of the early post-Cold War era. This shift in role conceptions favoured a gradual, albeit small-scale, involvement in UN and NATO operations as of 2002/03, followed by CSDP missions starting with 2014 (Lozovanu 2015).

Georgia's post-independence military experience could not be more different than that of Ukraine. While the latter emerged as the world's third-largest armed power (Poly-akov 2004, p. 7), after the collapse of the Soviet Union Georgia was left with virtually no military. This vacuum of centralised military power and the fragmentation of military forces operating under various command chains played an important role in the escalation of the conflicts in Abkhazia and South Ossetia. When the Georgian army was finally rebuilt, it was the USA which essentially turned it into an effective military force through a wide-ranging training and equipment American-funded program (Welt 2021, p.19–20). This set of circumstances has led Georgia to cast itself primarily as a Euro-Atlantic ally, rather than a military power or a peacekeeping actor in its own right.

Following the 2003 Rose Revolution, the new ruling elite articulated two main foreign policy roles for Georgia – "beacon of liberty" and "net-security contributor" – both of which referred to Tbilisi's relation to the USA, the latter of which had emerged as the country's main socialiser on the international scene (Nilsson 2019, p. 7–8). Georgia's substantial participation in NATO operations must be understood against this background, particularly when contrasted with the conspicuous absence of involvement in UN peace-keeping and the slow emerging cooperation with the EU's CSDP. NATO membership has been a long-standing objective of Georgian foreign policy, with dialogue and cooperation deepening after the coming to power of Saakashvili's vocally pro-US regime. The August 2008 war with Russia compounded Georgia's sense of urgency in joining NATO, and the country has since been constantly pushing for a clear path to membership. Since 1999, Georgia has participated in NATO's peacekeeping operation in Kosovo (KFOR) and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan – as one of the largest non-NATO troop contributors – and continued to be involved with the follow-on NATO-led mission to train, advise and assist Afghan forces until 2022.

Given the Georgian forces' high degree of interoperability and extensive peacekeeping experience (Emerson and Kovziridze 2016, p. 27), it is puzzling that it did not participate in any CSDP operation until 2014. While adopting the role conception of a "net-security contributor" to the Euro-Atlantic community, there is no doubt that this self-image involved a ranking of security actors which effectively conceived of the EU as "second only to NATO" (Ó Beacháin and Coene 2014, p. 935). At the same time, in light of its domestic security challenges, Georgia prioritised security cooperation with the USA and NATO, perceived as the only actors able to offer protection against Russia's aggressive foreign policy (Interview 8). Ukraine, on the other hand, despite priding itself in being the only partner country that has participated in all NATO operations (Oksamytna 2016), has had a much more ambiguous foreign policy orientation, with NATO membership not representing – at least until February 2019 – an undisputed foreign policy goal. Georgia's perception of the most immediate threats facing it is said to be shifting, from a conception of hard security to a more nuanced understanding of hybrid threats – something which Tbilisi allegedly acknowledges the EU to be better suited to tackle than NATO (Interview 7).

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This brief overview of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia's dominant role conceptions is consistent with the specificities of the three countries' CSDP contributions and usefully underlines the broad tendencies to which actors are predisposed to as a result of systemic predispositions. Thus, Ukraine's long-term participation in EU civilian and military missions, as well as Battle Groups, is suggestive of the country's peacekeeping and military ambitions which precede the acceleration of the integration process with the EU. Moldova's small-scale and, for now strictly civilian, CSDP contribution follows logically from the country's self-image as a neutral state with limited capabilities and peacekeeping experience. Finally, Georgia's CSDP engagement is to be seen in the context of its prioritisation of cooperation with the USA and NATO and a parallel process of deepening foreign and security policy cooperation with the EU.

National resources

The resources required from prospective third-country CSDP contributors revolve around the availability and skills level of military forces and civilian personnel, the ability of the state to financially support their deployment, the availability and preparedness of military and logistical equipment, but also the existence of adequate institutional capacities and legal frameworks. While the AT shares challenges related to the adequacy of their civilian crisis management personnel, the state of their military forces varies more significantly. Ukraine and Georgia have been long-standing participants in UN and NATO missions and their armed forces have been undergoing sustained reforms in line with NATO standards. Moldova, on the other hand, has been a modest contributor to UN missions and, while currently undergoing a modernisation process of its defence forces, has not made this a priority. By way of comparison, whereas Ukraine deployed at some point in the mid-90s up to 2500 troops in UN peacekeeping missions, Moldova has up to now deployed a total of 77 troops in UN operations. Given the specifics of their military capabilities, it is obvious why Moldova has never participated in military CSDP missions, while Ukraine and Georgia have been active contributors. It remains to be seen whether the June 2022 Council Decision to provide assistance to the Moldovan armed forces, against the backdrop of Russia's war in Ukraine, will turn Moldova into a more active CSDP contributor. Georgia has prioritised military over civilian missions, while Ukraine has also been engaged in several EU Battle Groups. As their institutional capacities improve with respect to civilian crisis management capabilities, the AT is likely to increase its contributions to civilian missions as well. Georgia, for example, is working towards improving its potential contribution to civilian CSDP missions by, inter alia, establishing a pool of trained civilian candidates (Emerson and Kovziridze 2016, p. 27).

In addition to the availability and skills level of military forces and civilian personnel, third countries must also be able to financially support their deployment. This distinguishes the EU and NATO from the UN, as the former expect contributors to cover the costs of participation themselves, whereas the latter offers monthly reimbursements for peacekeepers and also provides compensation for the use of equipment, thus representing a source of revenue for both governments and individual service members. Given the significant financial costs incurred by the deployment of personnel in CSDP missions, this factor is of significant relevance for the AT, in light of their limited security and defence budgets. The prohibitive costs of providing personnel and equipment to CSDP

missions was, for instance, behind Ukraine's inability to contribute to EUFOR Chad/RCA. In 2007–2008, Ukraine offered to contribute a military hospital to the operation, but required additional financial support to purchase adequate equipment for the specific area of deployment; as the EU's financing mechanisms did not allow for this type of financial support, Ukraine was ultimately unable to participate (Interview 12).

Third countries which contribute to CSDP missions are typically expected to "assume all the costs associated with […] participation in the operation unless the costs are subject to common funding" (Official Journal of the European Union 2005). This can range from the costs incurred by seconded personnel (salaries, insurance) to equipment and transport. To encourage and support enhanced AT contributions to CSDP missions, several EU member states at the time (Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, the UK and Slovakia) established an EaP Trust Fund in 2014 which can cover certain, though not all, expenses related to their participation. For instance, the Fund can cover insurance expenses for personnel, but salaries and equipment must be covered by the third-country national government. An additional way for the EU to support the participation of third countries which face financial challenges has been via member states, such as for instance France providing strategic lifting for Georgian troops.

A further third-country-level factor that can influence the willingness and ability of non-EU members to contribute to the CSDP is the existence of adequate legal frameworks. This refers to both frameworks regulating cooperation with the EU and adequate domestic legislation regulating the participation of national forces and personnel in CSDP missions. As far as the former are concerned, the two options provided by the EU – ad-hoc agreements concluded for each individual mission and Framework Partnership Agreements (FPAs) – are meant to provide wide-ranging possibilities for third-country participation in CSDP. All AT countries have concluded FPAs with the EU. The first was Ukraine which in 2005 adopted both an FPA and an agreement on security procedures for the exchange of classified information (Emerson and Movchan 2016, p. 29). Moldova and Georgia signed FPAs with the EU in July and November 2013, and concluded agreements on exchanging and protecting classified information in 2017 and 2016, respectively. The absence of FPAs has been invoked by both Moldova and Georgia as a reason for not participating in CDSP missions before 2014 (Interviews 1 and 3), but strictly speaking there is no reason why their contributions could not have been regulated under an ad hoc agreement, as was the case with Ukraine's participation in EUPM BiH (Bosnia and Herzegovina) in 2003.

What could have indeed represented an obstacle to CSDP participation was the absence of appropriate domestic legislative frameworks regulating the participation of national forces and personnel in international missions, and specifically CSDP ones. In 2012, Moldova had the opportunity to participate in EUCAP Nestor, the EU maritime capability building mission to Somalia, but the possibility never materialised because at the time the country did not have a suitable legal base for its participation in CSDP missions. The legal framework which had covered Moldova's participation in UN and NATO operations was inadequate, as the scope of EU missions is significantly wider than that of any other peacekeeping organisation. As a result, in December 2015 a new law was adopted, creating the necessary legal mechanisms for implementing the 2013 FPA provisions, as well as providing added clarity on the conditions of participation in CSDP missions. Similarly, Georgia also adopted by-laws to allow its personnel to participate in CSDP

missions (Emerson and Kovziridze 2016, p. 26). The absence of domestic legal frameworks specifying the conditions of military troops and civilian personnel deployments can be problematic because the lack of provisions for social benefits can act as a disincentive for potentially interested volunteers, not to mention the legal limbo in which both the third state and its seconded experts or officers find themselves.

EU-level factors shaping CSDP contributions

The EU's decision-making process

The core guiding principle for third-country participation in CSDP missions is the autonomy of EU decision-making, a norm that has proved non-negotiable even in the face of considerable pressure from non-members, such as Turkey, to acquire a more prominent role in the planning and design of missions (Interview 11). The Nice Presidency Conclusions clearly distinguished between missions that used NATO assets and where non-EU NATO members would take part in planning according to NATO procedures, and autonomous EU missions where third countries could merely send "liaison officers […] for exchanges of information on operational planning and the contributions envisaged", but would effectively have no role in the planning process. This distinction proved to be highly problematic for several NATO allies, including the USA (Hunter 2002, p. 112). In practice, this effectively means that third countries have no input into the decision-making process leading up to the deployment of a CSDP mission and cannot shape the nature or mandates of missions, given that formally they do not take part in the drafting of the concept of operations (CONOPS) or the operation plan (OPLAN) (Tardy 2014). These decisions are the exclusive competence of the Council and the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and only after the operational planning has been completed can non-EU members be informed of the details of CSDP deployments with the sole purpose of enabling them to determine the details of their potential contribution. In other words, the EU's implementation of third countries' participation in CSDP missions is very much in line with a "take it or leave it" approach (Interview 4) whereby non-EU members can only accept or decline EU invitations for contributions.

In addition to preserving the autonomy of its decision-making process, the EU is also keen on maintaining its right to decide which third countries will be extended an invitation to take part in a specific operation (Toro 2010, p. 332). Understanding why the EU chooses to involve certain third states and not others in specific CSDP missions is a challenging exercise, as the process through which these decisions are made is highly politicised, lies exclusively within the remit of member states, and lacks transparency. As a matter of principle, no country is by default excluded from potential participation (Toro 2010, p. 327) and general criteria include the availability of specific resources, history of participation and declared willingness. Nonetheless, delicate political considerations and sensitivities often result in the EU extending invitations for third-country CSDP participation on a selective basis, or even not opening up at all certain missions to external participation, as the conspicuous case of Operation Sophia illustrates.[2] But even once a decision to invite a particular third country is made, and the latter informs the EU of its proposed contribution, the Union can still refuse participation based on an assessment of the offer made. Thus, regardless of whether a third country has the political willingness

or resources to contribute to a given CSDP operation, it is ultimately the EU that decides whether an invitation for participation is extended. Moldova, for instance, was never invited to participate in the EUAM in Ukraine on the grounds of an unwritten rule that third countries should not participate in CSDP missions deployed in a neighbouring state (Interview 1). The EEAS, for its part, argues that the EU itself "does not invite third countries, but responds to requests for participation" (Interview 8), a nuance meant to shield the EU from political controversy but which does little to render the decision-making process in Brussels more transparent.

The personnel selection process in particular is one stage in the planning of a CSDP mission when the EU can effectively refuse certain third country contributions. This is not the case with military missions, where third countries have by and large autonomy for the deployment of their troops, but it is highly relevant in the case of civilian missions where the selection of civilian personnel is conducted by the EU and is very competitive. This represents a constraining factor for the AT's contributions to EU civilian missions, given that all three countries are in the process of reforming their own judicial systems and law enforcement agencies and are recipients of EU security sector and rule of law assistance themselves. In practice, this means that the AT countries often do not have the institutional capacity or appropriate expertise required by civilian CSDP missions, or, when they do propose civilian experts, the latter cannot compete with higher skilled and more experienced experts of third countries such as Norway or Canada. For instance, there have been multiple calls for Georgian participation in EUAM which Tbilisi responded to positively, but nobody at the time except for one human resources management expert passed the selection (Interview 3). This issue, however, is not confined to the AT and has also been faced by countries with much more substantial peacekeeping experience, such as Switzerland whose proposed contributions to EULEX Kosovo and EUAM have not been accepted (Interview 9). Such rejections have occasionally been received rather negatively, with some third countries perceiving them as a political message that their participation is unwanted (Interview 10).

The EU's calls for contributions are first open to EU member states and only if there are unoccupied vacancies, these are open to third-country contributors. Certain positions are reserved for EU nationals, such as the Commander of the Operation and the Head of Mission, as well as other high-ranking positions and any post related to financial operations (Interview 1). The countries with the largest contributions are allocated the highest ranking positions, but third countries' contributions are more often than not small-scale and, therefore, they rarely qualify for these coveted posts. Understandably, member states opt for the "best" positions, leaving the more difficult, niche posts, or the mundane ones[3] to be offered to third countries. The selection procedure itself is problematic, as third countries are only given a short time to make their proposals, something which is invariably a challenge for most of them (Interview 2). All in all, the EU's CSDP decision-making and planning process presents several firewalls which can prevent third countries from participating in those CSDP missions of their choice, with their selected personnel in the preferred roles and according to their timeline. This "take it or leave it" or "one size fits all" approach often poses significant obstacles in the way of effective third-country participation in CSDP missions, and the AT, while not exclusively, is nonetheless disproportionately affected by the specificities of the process in light of scarce resources.

Conclusion

This article has sought to explain the variation in the CSDP contributions of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. It found that despite similar systemic incentives which predisposed the three countries towards participating in peacekeeping as a way of alleviating security challenges and deriving political benefits, the timeline and extent of engagement of each of the three eastern neighbours with the CSDP differed significantly.

The post-Cold War security environment predisposed all three AT countries towards international peacekeeping contributions as a way to demonstrate solidarity with Western ideals of peace and stability, at the same time as establishing a foreign policy identity distinct from Russia's. The deepening of the European integration process through the signing of AAs provided Georgia and Moldova with the needed political incentive to start contributing to CSDP missions. It remains an open question whether Ukraine had responded to the systemic pressures of strengthened integration similarly to Georgia and Moldova – by intensifying its CSDP participation – had it not faced the extraordinary circumstances that Russia's aggression exposed it to since 2014.

The role conceptions of the three countries provide an accurate expectation of their foreign policy behaviour, anticipating Ukraine's prominent role in peacekeeping, Moldova's low-key involvement as a neutral state and Georgia's prioritisation of NATO, now complemented with a parallel engagement with the CSDP. At a more practical level, the variation among the three countries' contributions to CSDP missions is to be understood in light of EU - and third country -level variables. The EU's selective opening up of missions to third countries and the highly competitive selection process for civilian personnel has created different opportunities for participation for the three AT countries. Moldova has been disproportionately affected by the competitiveness of the personnel selection process and has therefore had fewer chances to participate. Georgia's predominantly military contributions have not been affected by this since the selection procedures for military forces are different and allow for third-country autonomy. Finally, the extent of participation of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in CSDP has also been shaped by their human and financial resources, institutional capacities and adequacy of legal frameworks. The absence of domestic legislation regulating the participation of personnel and troops in international missions (CSDP ones in particular) in Georgia and Moldova has to some extent made it difficult for the two countries to become involved in the CSDP, while Moldova's limited military capacities are related to the country's preference for civilian contributions.

Interviews

Interview with an official at the Mission of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union, 20 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 1)
Interview with an official at the Mission of Canada to the European Union, 20 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 2)
Interview with an official at the Mission of Georgia to the European Union, 21 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 3)
Interview with an official at the Mission of Norway to the European Union, 21 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 4)

Interview with an official at the Mission of Ukraine at the European Union, 22 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 6)

Interview with European External Action Service official, 22 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 7)

Interview with European External Action Service official, 23 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 8)

Interview with an official at the Mission of Switzerland to the European Union, 23 March 2018, Brussels (Interview 9)

Phone interview with European External Action Service official, 13 October 2020 (Interview 10)

Phone interview with Advisor to a Member of the European Parliament, 15 October 2020 (Interview 11)

Phone interview with former Deputy Minister of Defense of Ukraine, 8 June 2022 (Interview 12)

Phone interview with former Permanent Representative of Ukraine at the UN, 6 July 2022 (Interview 13)

Notes

1. The information on Georgia's CSDP contributions has been provided by Georgia's Permanent Representation to Brussels.
2. Operation Sophia was not open to third country participation allegedly because Greece and Cyprus opposed a potential Turkish contribution. Certain third countries, such as Norway, would have been willing to participate but were never asked as the EU decided to avoid political tensions by not opening up the missions to non-EU contributions, in an approach qualified by third country representatives as "one size fits all" (Interview 4).
3. For instance, driver positions often remain unoccupied because third countries themselves do not see the value of such a contribution and would like to be able to contribute more meaningfully (Interview 1).

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Disclosure statement

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