



CENTREPEACE

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CENTREPEACE RESEARCH PROGRAMME I.

Deliverable 3.1

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Acronyms

EU	European Union
EWIS	European Workshop in International Studies
FG	Focus group
MUNI	Masaryk University
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PRIO	Peace Research Institute Oslo
UoH	University of Helsinki



1. Introduction

This report provides an overview of the research activities undertaken for the implementation of security research in Central and Eastern Europe. The evolving security landscape in Europe is marked by unprecedented complexity, driven by hybrid threats, geopolitical realignments, and the transformative impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine. These dynamics challenge traditional security paradigms. Together, the research from the focus groups provides a comprehensive, multi-level analysis of Europe's security environment, bridging academic research with policy relevance.



2. Focus Group 1 – Cognitive Warfare

The evolving landscape of security challenges, particularly in the context of hybrid threats posed by Russia, underscores the critical importance of research in addressing cognitive warfare. Focus Group 1 Cognitive Warfare focuses on two pivotal areas: enhancing security cooperation to encounter cognitive threats and building institutional capacity at the state and regional levels. By examining key regions such as Central and Eastern Europe and the Nordic countries, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining network analysis and discourse analysis, and it illuminates the perceptions of cognitive threats and the principles of security cooperation. By fostering collaboration between leading institutions like MUNI, UoH, and PRIO, this initiative not only advances academic knowledge but also equips policymakers, experts and practitioners with actionable insights to address the challenges posed by cognitive warfare in today's complex security environment. As a result of the project interim meeting in May 2025, the research focus of FG1 is giving more emphasis on linking theoretical debates with practical security cooperation.

2.1. Conducted Research

Currently, FG1 has been running research on civic-military cooperation in the context of cognitive warfare. Based on NATO and EU documents (strategic and conceptual documents), the level of connection between NATO and EU in cognitive warfare-related issues is investigated; the principles of CIMIC (civil-military cooperation, official security concept) are applied. The results will be consulted with PRIO (Giacomo Bruni, Stine Bergensen). The outcome will be an article in an academic journal.

2.2. Upcoming Research

In 2026, the research on national and regional cooperation addressing cognitive threats will be conducted. Based on semi-structured interviews with national stakeholders from Finland, Norway, and Sweden, the research will bring a Nordic perspective on civil-military cooperation on national, regional, and European levels. The respondents will be asked questions covering issues of institutional capacity building at the state and regional levels, the perception of threats in the cognitive domain, and CIMIC principles at the national, regional, and European levels. It is planned to have approximately 10 interviews per country. The results have the potential to serve as a good practice for other regions and EU countries. The interviews will be held in Q1-Q2/2026. The design will be consulted with PRIO and the University of Helsinki. Co-authors are to be discussed. The planned outcome is to have one article published in an academic journal.

3. Focus Group 2 – Defence Industry

Focus Group 2 Defence Industry aims to capture the transformation of roles ascribed to the defence industry by society, as transformation is understood to have a profound impact on national policy and international cooperation. This FG examines this transformation in three dimensions: the theoretical one of burgeoning roles expanding our former understanding of global defence industrial roles; the discourse level of how these roles are shaped and formed in societal debate; and the practical dimensions of impact on policy – namely in defence industrial cooperation, EU initiatives, and the future of European armament capacity. Special attention is devoted to the period of rapid change as a consequence of Russia's aggression in Ukraine.

3.1. Conducted Research

In cooperation between Martin Chovančík (MUNI) and Nicholas Marsh (PRIO), FG2 submitted a proposal for a special issue on the "Reconceptualisation of defence production in Europe" to the top-ranked international security journal "European Security". The proposal was accepted, and they serve as co-editors of the special issue due in 2026, along with Renaud Bellais (from the University of Grenoble), who is a researcher in the field of defence industry. Their joint articles are featured in this special issue, along with contributions from other CENTREPEACE team members – (MUNI) Adriana Ilavská, Oldřich Krpec, and (PRIO) Bruno Oliveira Martins. The group has met on several occasions (Krakow, EWIS, Prague, Brno on this special issue).

Martin Chovančík and Nicholas Marsh are co-producing article on the "New intergovernmentalism turn of the EU in reconceptualising its role in defence". This is a theoretical piece based on evidence from joint research.

Adriana Ilavská, Nicholas Marsh, and Martin Chovančík are producing an article on "Spending" or "Investing" in Europe's Arsenal: Shifting Framing of Defence Industrial Capacity. The article utilised the inter-institutional CENTREPEACE project, as PRIO provided access to the Factiva database. Approximately 14,000 media articles were downloaded, co-coded with the assistance of an LLM, and the text is being finalised into a visualisation of trends on how defence production has been reconceptualised in European media discourse.

Martin Chovančík and Oldřich Krpec (MUNI) are producing an article on European Defence Industrial Cooperation: The Alliance Security Dilemma in Security of Supply Conceptualisations. The article builds on a smaller Factiva dataset, again in cooperation with PRIO, and the larger PARLAMINT dataset to capture the reconceptualisation of 'security-of-supply' by European member states amidst the Ukrainian war and the geoeconomic turn of the EU.

Finally, Martin Chovančík and Oldřich Krpec have made use of the writing workshop organised by PRIO in October 2024 to finalise the submission of the text 'Defence Industrial Patterns in Dependent Market Economies' to the journal Defence and Peace Economics. Currently under second review.

3.2. Upcoming Research

Three articles are in the final stages of production from FG2, as described in Section D1.1. The group submitted two project proposals – Czech Science Foundation and Research Council of Norway, which aim to leverage mutual access to competencies and data.



4. Focus Group 3 – Eastern Partnerships

Focus Group Eastern Partnership explores the Clash of Diffusions within Eastern Partnership nations, where domestic norms promoted by the European Union intersect with authoritarian influences from Russia, shaping the political paths of these regions. Furthermore, FG3 analyses the Strategic Weaponisation of essential resources to demonstrate how commodities can be employed as instruments of influence in the changing geopolitical environment. Finally, the FG delineate the complex Conflict Dynamics in the post-Soviet region, examining how evolving power dynamics and the diminishing influence of Russia may alter conflict patterns, thereby providing insights for EU foreign policy and conflict mitigation. Collectively, these studies offer an extensive insight into the dynamics transforming Eastern Europe, encompassing political conflicts and resource-driven strategies of dominance.

4.1. Conducted Research

FG3 has conducted research in the fields of political changes in Eastern Partnership countries, the leverage of critical resources, de facto states, and Russia's national role and its role as a regional hegemon, which serves as a foundation for upcoming publications. Other than that, FG3 has published a policy memo authored by Zinaida Bechná and Kornely Kakachia. It is titled "The Costs of Georgia's Self-Isolation", published in PONARS Eurasia at the Institute for European, Russian, and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University—a leading Washington think tank that unites experts from the US and the post-Soviet region—was purposefully chosen to disseminate the outreach of the project (Kakachia and Bechná 2025). The memo illustrates how Georgia's democratic backsliding and shift toward authoritarian partners incurs political, economic, and security costs, aligning directly with CENTREPEACE's mission to analyse alignment choices, resilience, and security dilemmas in the Eastern Partnership region.

4.2. Upcoming Research

FG3 plans to publish 4 articles from the conducted research:

The first article written by Vladimir Gel'man (UoH), Zinaida Bechná (MUNI), Katalin Miklóssy (UoH) and Pavel Baev (PRIO) will be titled "*The Clash of Diffusions: The Interplay of Domestic and International Factors of Political Changes in Eastern Partnership Countries.*" The article aims to explain how the interplay between domestic political actors and international influences from the EU and Russia has shaped the divergent trajectories of democratisation and autocratization in Eastern Partnership countries since the 2000s. The roundtable discussion devoted to this research is scheduled to take place within the framework of the Aleksanteri Conference on October 24, 2025. Following this event, FG3 plans to finalise the manuscript and proceed with submission to the journal Democratisation (Taylor & Francis) by the end of 2025.

The second article, being prepared by Martin Jirušek (MUNI) and Veli-Pekka Tynkkynen (UoH), will be "*Risks of Dependence on Critical Raw Materials from China.*" The text will examine the risks of China leveraging its dominance in the production of critical raw materials. The article will be sent to the Journal of Energy Research and Social Science, Elsevier Publishing, by the end of 2025.

The third article planned within the FG3 is „*The Geometry of In-Betweenness: EU Engagement Without Recognition in the De Facto States of Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria*.“ This article will analyse how de facto states in the post-Soviet space—Abkhazia, South Ossetia, and Transnistria—exercise strategic agency under the condition of "strategic in-betweenness," shaped by asymmetrical dependencies, unresolved sovereignty, and limited engagement with global normative actors like the EU. The article is currently in the stage of finalising its theoretical framework and conducting data analyses of strategic documents and press releases through ATLAS.ti. FG3 aims to submit the manuscript to Post-Soviet Affairs (Taylor & Francis) at the beginning of 2026.

The fourth article will be „*Between Influence and Dissonance: Russia’s Evolving National Role in the Armenia-Azerbaijan Conflict Amid the Ukraine War*.“ This article will employ role theory to examine the dissonance between Russia’s self-ascribed national role conceptions (NRCs) and its constrained capacity to enact the role of regional hegemon in the South Caucasus, with a particular focus on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.



5. References

Kakachia, Kornely, and Zinaida Bechná. 2025. 'The Costs of Georgia's Self-Isolation'. Policy Memos | Аналитика. *PONARS Eurasia*, June 2. <https://www.ponarseurasia.org/the-costs-of-georgias-self-isolation/>.

