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Ukraine's Growing Importance as a "Security Provider"

The war with Russia has transformed not only the Ukrainian armed forces but also Ukraine's position in the European security system. Thanks to the dynamic development of its defence industry, military technologies, and unique experience gained on the battlefield, Ukraine is increasingly positioning itself not as a recipient of Western aid, but as a partner capable of contributing to European security. This trend is reflected in both military cooperation and the political ambitions of the Ukrainian government.

Development of Ukraine's international military cooperation. In 2026, Ukraine signed more than a dozen agreements, declarations, and packages in the field of defence and military cooperation with partners from around the world. It ceased being merely an aid recipient and began actively exporting its technologies, as it possesses crucial, battlefield-tested knowledge in countering unmanned systems, electronic warfare, and integrated air defence, capable of operating in full-scale conflict. This knowledge is highly valuable for many countries. The armed forces of some countries (e.g., the United States, Germany, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom) are already emulating Ukrainian solutions (e.g., the innovative Delta situational awareness and battlefield management system) by implementing their own command and communication systems based on artificial intelligence and 5G networks.

The most important defence agreements concluded this year include those with the following countries:

- Germany: a €4 billion package that includes the supply of Patriot systems, joint production of ammunition and drones using artificial intelligence. Furthermore, Ukrainian soldiers are providing the German army with knowledge in operating and combating drones, electronic warfare, and using modern command applications (training conducted in Germany).
- Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar: 10-year interstate framework agreements on defence cooperation in counter-drone technologies and air defence systems, also providing for joint industrial projects in the fields of defence and cybersecurity.
- Norway: joint declaration strengthening cooperation between defence industries and creating a framework for the production of Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles in Norway.
- Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia: joint declarations on security and defence, defining the directions of cooperation for the development of a multi-layered air defence system in Europe and supporting the development of military technologies, with particular emphasis on unmanned systems.

Additionally, in 2025, Ukraine initiated talks (including within the so-called Ramstein format) with the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, the Czech Republic, France, Italy, the United Kingdom, Canada, Bulgaria and Poland regarding the launch of joint arms production (primarily ammunition) and the development of unmanned aerial vehicles and electronic warfare systems. It should be emphasized that these agreements often concern not only the development and production of arms technologies but also their export.

Ukraine has already decided to export arms. The dynamic development of the domestic defense industry, forced by the war, has enabled the introduction of the so-called "controlled exports" of surplus production (with the Ukrainian Armed Forces having priority access to weapons). This primarily applies to unmanned systems, electronic warfare systems, and software. The export system will operate based on the so-called "Drone Deals," but

its scope will be limited solely to countries that support Ukraine and do not cooperate with Russia. In May 2026, Kyiv reported that “around 20 states” were in talks.

Cooperation with the European Union. The European Commission also supports Ukraine’s close technological integration with European structures. As part of military cooperation with the European Union, a decision was made, among other things, to include Ukraine in EU air defence and anti-drone systems programs. A key element of these efforts will be the integration of Ukrainian combat experience with European defence systems. The European Commission has recognized that air defence, unmanned technologies, and anti-drone systems are currently a security priority for the entire continent.¹

According to Brussels’ announcement, approximately €30 billion will be allocated to Ukraine’s urgent military needs this year alone. These funds are intended to support, among other things, the development of a common European air defense architecture and the interoperability of systems used by European Union member states and Ukraine.

In this context, it is increasingly emphasized that Ukraine’s rapid adaptation to the demands of modern warfare—especially in the areas of new technologies, artificial intelligence, and industrial production—has transformed European thinking about security. As noted by GLOBSEC President Róbert Vass, one of the key conclusions of the GLOBSEC Forum 2026 (Prague, May 21–23) is that “Ukraine is not anymore just a security consumer, they are a security provider to Europe”. He also added that European countries increasingly need Ukrainian technological and industrial resources – “sometimes more than they [Ukraine] need” Europe.²

Conclusions. For Ukraine, broad-based military cooperation has a primarily pragmatic dimension, as it directly supports the country’s war effort. However, its political significance is equally important. The authorities in Kyiv are increasingly moving away from the narrative that portrays Ukraine solely as a beneficiary of Western aid. Both the political elite’s message and public attitudes demonstrate a growing tendency to portray Ukraine as an independent and important actor in the regional security system. A symbolic expression of this shift is the strengthening of Volodymyr Zelensky’s position, which now appears much stronger than a year ago, when Donald Trump stated during a meeting in the Oval Office that Ukraine “has no cards.”³

Kyiv is consistently trying to convince its Western partners that the Ukrainian state not only survived Russian aggression but also remains capable of actively shaping the security situation in Eastern Europe. This is crucial both for maintaining Western military and financial support and in the context of accession negotiations with the European Union – Ukraine wants to be perceived as a partner, not a supplicant.

This is also reflected in regional policy. The authorities in Kyiv are adopting an increasingly assertive stance toward countries considered part of Russia’s sphere of influence. This is evidenced by, among other things, Sviatlana Tsikhankouskaya’s first official visit to Kyiv in May 2026, Ukraine’s assertive rhetoric toward the Kremlin, and the spectacular airstrikes targeting Russian military infrastructure and targets in the Moscow region. These actions have not only military significance but also political and communications implications, demonstrating Ukraine’s ability to actively influence the security environment.

At the same time, Kyiv is increasingly portraying itself as a “security provider” rather than merely a recipient. In practice, this means striving to become one of the main pillars of Eastern Europe’s security, amid growing uncertainty about the United States’ long-term involvement in European affairs. It is no coincidence that in debates about the continent’s future security architecture, Ukraine is identified as a potentially key participant in projects such as the European missile defence system. From Kyiv’s perspective, it is equally important to limit

¹ In February 2026, the “Action Plan on Drone and Counter-Drone Security” strategy was announced, other programs include Eastern Flank Watch and European Drone Strategy 2.0.

² See <https://www.politico.eu/article/globsec-forum-2026-live-updates/>, access: 23.06.2026.

³ It is worth noting that President Zelensky is taking an increasingly assertive stance in international politics, for example towards the United States, Russia, Belarus, and also Poland.

the possibility of rebuilding Russian influence in the post-war regional order and to counteract attempts by the West to normalize relations with Russia and Belarus without taking into account Ukraine's interests.

Actions taken so far indicate that this strategy is yielding tangible results. Ukraine's invitation to the G7 summit was a political success. Also significant were the discussions held during the summit regarding licensed production of Patriot missiles, securing French support for rebuilding the damaged infrastructure of the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and Switzerland's involvement in the reconstruction of the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra, which was destroyed by Russian attacks.

The political dimension of the declaration adopted by the G7 leaders appears even more important. The document emphasizes support for an independent, sovereign, and defensible Ukraine, while also pointing out that Ukraine's security is an integral element of the security of the entire Euro-Atlantic area. The G7 countries declared further development of cooperation with Kyiv not only in the military sphere, but also in the technological, financial, and institutional spheres. Ukraine, in turn, committed to making a "positive contribution to the security of its partners." Ukraine strives to act not as the object of security policy, but as one of its active co-creators.

Paradoxically, on the one hand, Ukraine remains heavily dependent on Western military and financial support. On the other, it increasingly portrays itself as co-responsible for Europe's security. This image strategy, consistently implemented by Kyiv, is based on real resources and experience, enabling Ukraine to truly strengthen its international position.