




e-ISSN 3041-2498

# Public Management and Policy

<https://www.eu-scientists.com/index.php/pmap>



## Transformation of International Assistance to Ukraine into a Security Partnership in Nordic Defence Formats in 2026–2030

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### ARTICLE INFO

### ABSTRACT

#### Research Article

#### DOI:

[10.70651/3041-2498/2026.2.22](https://doi.org/10.70651/3041-2498/2026.2.22)

#### Received:

15 January 2026

#### Accepted:

18 February 2026

#### Published online:

22 February 2026

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The article examines the tendency of international assistance to Ukraine in Nordic formats to evolve into a more complex model of security partnership in the 2026–2030 perspective. It is shown that the shift from predominantly asymmetric support to more sustainable forms of interaction is driven not only by the quantitative expansion of assistance, but also by qualitative changes in the institutional and security environment, including Finland's and Sweden's accession to NATO, the new NORDEFECO Vision 2030, the launch of the enhanced partnership between Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force, and the conclusion of bilateral security agreements between Ukraine and the Nordic states. Based on institutional, comparative, scenario, and analytical-synthetic approaches, and drawing on bilateral security cooperation agreements, NORDEFECO, JEF and NATO documents, governmental decisions on long-term support for Ukraine, and academic studies on regional security, the article substantiates the author's model of security partnership as a multi-level system with five interrelated contours: military-operational, institutional-coordination, defence-industrial and technological, infrastructure-reconstruction, and political-strategic. It is established that security partnership performs three interrelated functions: strengthening Ukraine's resilience, enhancing the security of the Nordic and Nordic-Baltic region, and forming common contours of defence cooperation. The scientific contribution of the article lies in conceptualising the transition from the model of assistance to the model of security partnership, structuring its main components, and developing three scenarios for 2026–2030: inertial, functional institutionalisation, and deepened security partnership. The practical significance of the study for Ukraine lies in substantiating the need for consistent implementation of bilateral security agreements, the development of joint defence-industrial projects, the expansion of practical interaction within existing formats, and the combination of security and infrastructure cooperation mechanisms. For the Nordic states, the findings indicate the growing role of the Ukrainian dimension in the ongoing adjustment of the regional security environment and the broader Euro-Atlantic architecture.



### KEYWORDS

international assistance, security partnership, Nordic countries, Ukraine, defence cooperation, regional security, NORDEFECO, JEF, NB8, scenario analysis.



## Трансформація міжнародної допомоги України у партнерство безпеки в Північних оборонних форматах у 2026–2030 роках

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### СТАТТЯ

### АНОТАЦІЯ

#### Дослідниця

DOI:

[10.70651/3041-2498/2026.2.22](https://doi.org/10.70651/3041-2498/2026.2.22)

#### Отримана:

15.01.2026 р.

#### Прийнята:

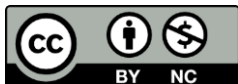
18.02.2026 р.

#### Опублікована:

22.02.2026 р.

#### Авторське право

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У статті досліджено тенденцію трансформації міжнародної допомоги Україні у північних форматах у складнішу модель партнерства безпеки в перспективі 2026–2030 років. Показано, що зсув від переважно асиметричної підтримки до стійкіших форм взаємодії зумовлений кількісним розширенням допомоги та якісними змінами інституційного і безпекового середовища, зокрема вступом Фінляндії та Швеції до НАТО, новою візією NORDEFSCO до 2030 року, запуском розширеного партнерства між Україною та Об'єднаними експедиційними силами, а також укладенням двосторонніх безпекових угод України з державами Півночі. На основі інституційного, порівняльного, сценарного та аналітико-синтетичного підходів, з опорою на двосторонні угоди про співробітництво у сфері безпеки, документи NORDEFSCO, JEF, NATO, урядові рішення щодо довгострокової підтримки України та академічні праці з проблем регіональної безпеки, обґрунтовано авторську модель партнерства безпеки як багаторівневої системи з п'ятьма взаємопов'язаними контурами: військово-операційним, інституційно-координаційним, оборонно-промисловим і технологічним, інфраструктурно-відбудовчим та політико-стратегічним. Встановлено, що партнерство безпеки виконує три взаємопов'язані функції: зміцнення стійкості України, посилення безпеки північного і північно-балтійського регіону та формування спільних контурів оборонної кооперації. Науковий результат полягає у концептуалізації переходу від моделі допомоги до моделі партнерства безпеки, структуризації її основних компонентів і розробленні трьох сценаріїв розвитку у 2026–2030 роках: інерційного, функціональної інституціоналізації та поглибленого партнерства безпеки. Практичне значення дослідження для України пов'язане з обґрунтуванням доцільності послідовної імплементації двосторонніх безпекових угод, розвитку спільних оборонно-промислових проєктів, розширення практичної взаємодії у межах наявних форматів та поєднання безпекових і інфраструктурних механізмів співпраці. Для держав Півночі результати статті вказують на зростання ролі українського напряму у поточному коригуванні регіонального безпекового середовища та ширшої євроатлантичної архітектури.



### КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА

міжнародна допомога, партнерство безпеки, Північні країни, Україна, оборонна кооперація, регіональна безпека, NORDEFSCO, JEF, NB8, сценарний аналіз.

## 1. Introduction

Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has changed the scale of external support and the mechanisms of its organization in the European security space. In 2024-2025, the northern direction ceased to be a set of separate aid packages. Its new configuration was determined by Ukraine's bilateral security agreements with Denmark [4], Iceland [1], Norway [2], Finland [3] and Sweden [5], the joint statement of the fourth Ukraine-Northern Europe summit in Reykjavik [17], the joint statement of the Ukraine-Northern Europe Summit in Stockholm [14], the new vision of NORDEFECO until 2030 [24], as well as the launch of an enhanced partnership between Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force [12].

The restructuring of support means its more and more frequent institutionalization through longer financial programs, defense-industrial cooperation, military interoperability mechanisms and coordination in regional formats, which is confirmed by the continuation of the Nansen Support Program [26], the Swedish multiannual framework for military support for Ukraine [13], the Finnish program of orders for the defense industry in favor of Ukraine [11], as well as the development of the "Danish model" with the transition to production cooperation [10; 20; 21].

In the new conditions, the analytical focus is shifting from a simple accounting of aid packages to the question of the mechanism of its transformation into a security partnership. For scientific analysis, it is important to establish what institutional forms ensure this transition, what levels the new model of interaction covers, and what scenarios for its development are possible in 2026–2030.

## 2. Literature Review

The academic literature on the topic of the article is concentrated around several interrelated lines: the evolution of northern security cooperation, the transformation of foreign and defense policy of the states of the North after 2014 and especially after 2022, the legal logic of new security guarantees for Ukraine and certain bilateral formats of Ukraine's interaction with the northern states. The earliest analytical horizon is set by works that consider northern cooperation as a separate regional phenomenon, which has its own institutional dynamics and is not reduced to either NATO or EU policy. In this vein, O. Kotlyar [18] analyzes the regional cooperation of the Nordic states in the field of security and defense, focusing on its military-political dimension and on the role of the regional format for countries that have long been looking for intermediate mechanisms of cooperation outside the classical logic of bloc accession. A close line of research is developed by A. Musienko [22], who traces the evolution of the Nordic countries' approaches to security and defense cooperation in a broader historical perspective and shows that the current density of interaction has grown not situationally, but from a longer trajectory of regional rapprochement. Taken together, these works are important because they form a historical and institutional prerequisite for the analysis of modern northern formats and allow us to consider the current rapprochement not as a one-time reaction to the war, but as an acceleration of the existing line of development.

A separate block is made up of studies devoted to the northern defense cooperation itself in its modern institutional form. L. Gorbachova and O. Ivasechko [16] specifically focus on the cooperation of the Scandinavian countries within the framework of NORDEFECO and thereby transfer the analysis from the general level of regional interaction to the level of a specific coordination mechanism. Their work is important primarily because it brings NORDEFECO to the center of research attention as a separate tool for security coordination in Northern Europe. A much wider framework is proposed by D. Brommesson, A.-M. Eckengren and A. Michalski [9], who show that during 2014–2023. The foreign and security policy of the Nordic countries has evolved from variability to convergence. Such a conclusion is fundamentally important for the topic of the article, since it allows us to interpret support for Ukraine not as an isolated set of national decisions, but as a manifestation of a deeper process of convergence of threat perceptions, roles and formats of interaction in the northern space.

Modern literature does not present the reaction of the states of the North as homogeneous. M. Migliorati [19] analyzes the long-term political and institutional dynamics of interaction between the Nordic states, the EU-NATO Common Security and Defense Policy from the end of the Cold War to the consequences of the Russian attack on Ukraine. The value of this work lies in the fact that it explains not only the rapprochement, but also the differences in national trajectories: even in the face of a common strategic shock, the states of the North enter a new security architecture through different historical,

institutional and political routes. For the topic of the article, this conclusion is of methodological importance, as it warns against an oversimplified idea of a “single northern model” of support for Ukraine and instead leads to an analysis of a multi-level partnership, in which the general logic of cooperation is combined with nationally specific mechanisms.

The legal and political dimension of the problem is most clearly presented in the work of L. Radovetska [28], devoted to security guarantees for Ukraine in the context of the unlearned lessons of the Budapest Memorandum. The work is important for the article not because it analyzes the northern region as such, but because it shifts attention from political declarations to the issues of normative content and institutional reliability of security guarantees. In this sense, it sets an important theoretical and legal framework for understanding why Ukraine’s new security arrangements with individual states of the North should be considered not as another wave of external support, but as an element of a more formalized and sustainable model of interaction. However, this work alone does not answer the question of how such guarantees are built into regional northern formats and how they relate to NORDEFECO, JEF, NB8, or new mechanisms of defense-industrial cooperation.

The closest approach to the subject of this article is the work of O. Braichevska and I. Sliusarenko [8], which considers political and military-technical cooperation between Norway and Ukraine in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Its strength lies in the transition from the general level of security transformation to a specific bilateral case, where a combination of political support, military-technical interaction and practical cooperation mechanisms can be traced. Such studies are important as an empirical basis for a broader generalization. At the same time, the bilateral format of the analysis has its limits: it does not explain how individual national tracks of support for Ukraine form a multi-level regional system of security partnership.

The available academic literature sufficiently covers the historical background of northern security cooperation, the institutional role of NORDEFECO, the rapprochement and differentiation of foreign and security policy trajectories of the states of the North after 2022, as well as the legal logic of new security guarantees for Ukraine and certain bilateral formats of cooperation with northern partners. At the same time, another issue is much less disclosed: how international support for Ukraine moves from the logic of external assistance to a model of multi-level security partnership, in which Ukraine appears not only as a recipient of resources, but also as a participant in the new institutional, production and strategic security contours of Northern Europe. The article aims to fill this gap. Further presentation focuses on conceptualizing the transition from an aid model to a security partnership model, structuring its main components, and development scenarios in 2026–2030.

### **3. Problem Statement**

The article is aimed at substantiating the conceptual model of transformation of international assistance to Ukraine into a security partnership in northern defense formats in 2026–2030, determining the structural components of this transformation and developing basic scenarios for Ukraine’s further functional involvement in the northern European security, defense-industrial and infrastructure circuits.

To achieve this goal, the article solves the following tasks: to find out the political, security and institutional prerequisites for the transition from the model of unilateral assistance to the model of partnership; to determine the content, levels and mechanisms of Ukraine’s security partnership with the Nordic countries; to characterize the role of NORDEFECO, JEF, NB8, bilateral security agreements and related formats in consolidating a new model of interaction; to develop scenarios for the development of the Ukrainian-Nordic partnership security in 2026-2030; outline practical imperatives for Ukrainian diplomacy and security policy.

### **4. Methods and Materials**

The methodological basis of the article is a combination of institutional, comparative, scenario and analytical-synthetic approaches. The institutional approach is used to identify the role of bilateral security agreements between Ukraine and the countries of the North, as well as the NORDEFECO, JEF, NB8 and NATO formats in the formation of a new configuration of interaction between Ukraine and the Northern European security space. The comparative approach is used to compare different models of Ukraine’s involvement in bilateral and multilateral formats of security interaction, as well as to identify

differences between the logic of external assistance and the logic of security partnership. Thanks to this, it was possible to determine which elements of support are one-time or reactive, and which, on the contrary, form the long-term contours of military, military-industrial, financial and infrastructure cooperation. The scenario approach was used to build alternative trajectories for the development of the Ukrainian-Nordic Security Partnership in 2026–2030. Its application made it possible to assess possible options for deepening cooperation depending on the military-political dynamics, the degree of institutionalization of the agreements reached, the scale of military-industrial cooperation and the degree of functional involvement of Ukraine in regional coordination and interoperability mechanisms. The analytical-synthetic approach provided a generalization of regulatory documents, interstate agreements, government decisions, program statements, analytical materials and scientific papers relevant to the study. On this basis, a holistic interpretation of the transition from the model of international assistance to the model of security partnership has been formed, and its structural components, mechanisms of functioning and promising development scenarios have been singled out.

## 5. Results and Discussion

The transition from international assistance to security partnership is considered in the article as an analytically fixed trend, and not as a complete and universal fact, which was most clearly manifested in the northern direction of support for Ukraine. Within the framework of this study, the model of assistance means a form of external support in which the transfer of resources from the donor to the recipient is decisive, with a situational nature of individual decisions and limited reciprocity of the strategic effect. Instead, the security partnership model relies on a longer horizon of planning, coordination of security interests, coordination of capabilities and the gradual formation of more stable organizational, production and political-strategic ties.

The grounds for such a shift are most clearly traced in the northern and north-Baltic segments of European security. The new vision of defense cooperation of the Nordic countries until 2030 consolidated the intention to deepen coordination in the new strategic environment [24]. Ukraine's bilateral security agreements with Denmark [4], Iceland [1], Norway [2], Finland [3] and Sweden [5] have provided support with a longer political and security horizon. The enhanced partnership between Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force has opened up more regular mechanisms of interaction in the areas of training, critical infrastructure protection, unmanned technologies, combat medicine, and countering disinformation [12]. This direction has acquired additional political formalization through the Ukraine-Northern Europe summits and coordination in the NB8 format [14; 15; 17].

A change in support tools is of particular importance. The extension of the Nansen Program until 2030 [26], the Swedish three-year military support program for SEK 75 billion [13], the Finnish program of orders for the defense industry in favor of Ukraine for EUR 660 million [11], as well as the development of the Danish model with the transition to production cooperation [10; 20; 21] indicate that part of the aid is already being formalized as a longer cycle of financing, production, coordination and capacity building. At the same time, the changes do not mean the complete disappearance of the donor-recipient model. A significant part of the support continues to remain asymmetrical, so it is more correct to talk about the coexistence of the two logics, in which the partner component is consistently strengthened.

In such a framework, it is advisable to define security partnership as a form of interaction in which support for Ukraine acquires a mutual strategic effect. Its first function is to strengthen Ukraine's resilience through military, financial, technological, and institutional support. The second is related to strengthening the security of the northern and north-Baltic regions, for which the level of Ukrainian resilience increasingly affects its own security environment [12; 15]. The third function is to form common contours of defense cooperation, where Ukraine appears not only as an addressee of support, but also as a carrier of combat experience, production competencies and practices of adaptation to a high-intensity war [10; 11; 12]. The three-function design in this article is interpreted as the main difference between a safety partnership and a conventional assistance model.

For further analysis, this model is detailed through a system of individual circuits. Their allocation is based not on an arbitrary grouping of material, but on four criteria: the subject of coordination, the type of capabilities involved, the channel of institutional formalization, and the scale of the security effect. According to these criteria, it is further expedient to distinguish between military-operational, institutional-coordination, military-industrial and technological, infrastructural-reconstruction, and

political-strategic contours. Separation is needed to analytically distinguish different levels of interaction, which in the real process partially intersect, but are not reduced to each other.

In 2026–2030, the subject of the analysis is not the amount of external support as such, but the degree of its institutionalization, reciprocity, and transformation into more sustainable forms of security cooperation. In this sense, the northern direction gives grounds to talk about a transitional model between traditional assistance and a fuller security partnership, rather than about the already completed change from one state to another.

**Table 1. Differences between the International Assistance Model and the Security Partnership Model**

Criterion	International Aid Model	Security Partnership Model	Analytical conclusion
<b>Time horizon</b>	Short- and medium-term support packages prevail	The role of multiannual programs, framework commitments and a longer planning cycle is growing	Transition from reactive support to a longer strategic horizon
<b>The nature of the relationship</b>	The asymmetric format “donor – recipient” prevails	The interdependence of security interests and mutual strategic effect is increasing	The donor logic does not disappear, but is increasingly complemented by partnership logic
<b>Institutional design</b>	A significant part of the decisions is situational or package in nature	Support is more often formalized through bilateral security agreements, expanded partnership with the Joint Expeditionary Force, long-term programs and coordination formats	Cooperation takes on a more sustainable organizational form
<b>Ukraine’s role</b>	Mainly the addressee of the resource support	Partner, carrier of combat experience, participant in production and safety cooperation	Ukraine’s Subjectivity in the Regional Security Environment Is Growing
<b>Main result</b>	Strengthening Ukraine’s defense capabilities and resilience	Strengthening Ukraine, strengthening the security of the North and forming common contours of cooperation	Support acquires a mutual and multi-level strategic effect
<b>The state of the model in 2024–2026</b>	Stored as an important basic support logic	Consistently formed, but not yet completely supplanted by the aid model	It is correct to speak of a transitory, not a completed state

Source: Compiled by the author based on [1–5; 10–15; 17; 20; 21; 24; 26]

The central element of the study is the structure of the security partnership, which should be considered as a multi-level system with five interrelated, but analytically separated circuits. Their allocation is based on four criteria: the subject of coordination, the type of capabilities involved, the channel of institutional formalization, and the scale of the security effect. The combination of criteria gives grounds to talk about an intermediate-level structural model, and not about an arbitrary grouping of material. The number of circuits is determined by the fact that in the available array of sources and practical mechanisms, five relatively stable planes of interaction are traced, which partially intersect, but do not coincide in their direct content. The military-operational circuit is responsible for the ability to use force, the institutional and coordination circuit is responsible for coordinating decisions and support mechanisms, the military-industrial circuit is responsible for the production and technological reproduction of the security resource base, the infrastructure and reconstruction circuit is responsible for the resilience of critical systems, and the political-strategic circuit is responsible for the broader impact of this interaction on the regional security environment.

The first circuit is military-operational. It covers long-term military support mechanisms, training, interoperability, development of individual capabilities and operational interaction practices. It is based on Ukraine’s bilateral security agreements with Denmark [4], Iceland [1], Norway [2], Finland [3] and Sweden [5], which enshrine a longer horizon of military assistance and support for Ukraine’s future defense capabilities. The Enhanced Partnership between Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force, which includes training of the Ukrainian military, cooperation in the field of unmanned technologies, combat medicine, countering disinformation, and protecting critical underwater infrastructure, provides a practical dimension to this context [12]. An additional element here is the decision of the NATO Washington Summit on NSATU as a mechanism for coordinating military assistance and training

for Ukraine on a longer basis [23]. The circuit refers directly to those mechanisms that form or strengthen defensive capabilities.

The second circuit is institutional and coordination. Its content is to agree on policy decisions, support channels, preparation procedures, long-term commitments, and coordination mechanisms. It is not about the final strategic effect and not about combat capabilities as such, but about the organizational stitching of various areas of interaction. NORDEFECO performs an indirect function in this plane, providing a coordinating background for the states of the North themselves [24]. Instead, the JEF, NB8, NATO, and the bilateral framework create channels for Ukraine's more direct involvement in the mechanisms for aligning support, preparation, political decisions, and interoperability [12; 14; 15; 23]. This contour should be distinguished from the political-strategic one: its subject is not the restructuring of the security order as such, but the coordination of tools and decisions through which such restructuring can be carried out.

The third circuit is military-industrial and technological. Its core is joint production, direct orders, technological exchange, investment in production capabilities and the integration of the Ukrainian defense industry into wider defense resilience chains. The Danish agreement with Ukraine provides for support for the development of Ukraine's defense industry through investments, information exchange, joint research, development and production [4]. In 2025, Denmark separately opened the possibility of locating the production of Ukrainian defense companies on its territory and allocated additional funding for this [10]. Finland launched a €660 million program for direct orders of its own defense industry products in favor of Ukraine [11], and the Danish model already in 2024 provided a separate channel for financing the production of weapons for Ukraine [20; 21]. The outline shows how the partnership materializes in the production and technological plane. It differs from infrastructure reconstruction in that it concerns not critical civilian stability systems, but primarily the military-industrial base and military-technological reproduction of capabilities.

The fourth circuit is infrastructural and reconstruction. It connects security with energy, critical infrastructure, digital resilience, logistics and reconstruction. It is advisable to consider it separately from the military-industrial one, since it is not about the production of means of warfare, but about the stability of systems, without which neither defense, nor post-war recovery, nor the normal functioning of the state are possible. The NB8 statement of February 24, 2026 explicitly recorded support for energy supplies, protection and restoration of Ukraine's energy infrastructure, as well as participation in long-term reconstruction and modernization [15]. The JEF separately singles out the protection of critical underwater infrastructure as an area of practical cooperation with Ukraine [12]. In the security agreement with Sweden, support for Ukraine also covers energy, digitalization, reconstruction and institutional resilience [5]. The contour captures the expansion of the security partnership into the plane of stability of critical systems.

The fifth circuit is political and strategic. It no longer reflects the coordination of individual instruments and the work of specific mechanisms, but the level at which support for Ukraine affects the broader security configuration of Northern Europe and the Euro-Atlantic space. NORDEFECO's new vision focuses on strengthening the deterrence and defense of the northern region and the Euro-Atlantic area [24]. The NB8 statement recorded that Ukraine and the NB8 countries act as equal partners, strengthening defense capabilities and resilience to external threats [15]. The NATO Washington Summit emphasized that Ukraine's security is a component of Euro-Atlantic security, and support for Ukraine should be predictable, long-term and coordinated [23]. The political-strategic outline in the article is interpreted as an analytical level, and not as evidence of an already completed restructuring, at which individual mechanisms of interaction begin to influence the broader strategic environment (Table 2).

NORDEFECO sets the coordination background for the states of the North. NB8 reinforces political density and a multi-year support framework. The Joint Expeditionary Force provides practical channels for operational interaction. NATO forms a broader Euro-Atlantic framework for interoperability and long-term assistance. Bilateral agreements enshrine targeted commitments, which together form the structure of Ukraine's security partnership with the states of the North. The logic of the correlation of these contours, as well as the place of institutional frameworks and strategic results in the general model is summarized in Figure 1.

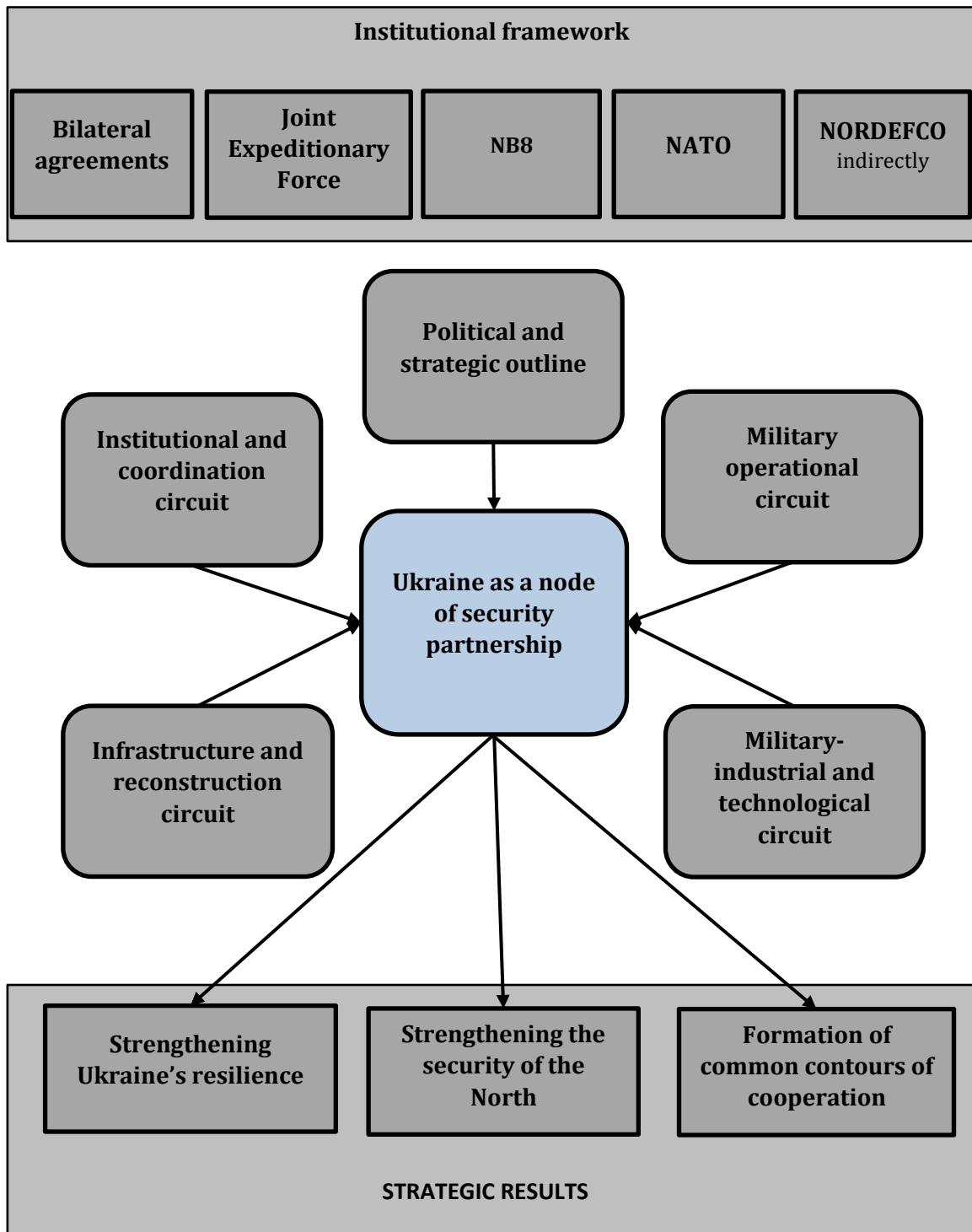
As shown in Figure 1, Security Partnership functions as a system of interrelated levels of interaction, in which coordination frameworks, capability contours and strategic results from a single analytical structure.

**Table 2. Structural Components of Ukraine's Security Partnership with the Northern States**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Contents</b>	<b>Key mechanisms</b>	<b>Formats involved</b>	<b>Strategic effect for Ukraine</b>	<b>Strategic effect for the Nordic region</b>
<b>Military operational</b>	Long-term military support, training, interoperability, combat capability development	Bilateral security commitments, training, coordination of military assistance, practical interaction	Bilateral agreements, Joint Expeditionary Force, NATO	Strengthening the Defence Capabilities, Interoperability and Resilience of the Defence Forces	Gaining combat experience, strengthening the northern segment of deterrence
<b>Institutional and coordination</b>	Agreeing on policy decisions, support channels, preparation procedures and long-term commitments	Summits, joint statements, partnership frameworks, coordination of assistance and preparations	NB8, Joint Expeditionary Force, NATO, bilateral framework, indirectly by NORDEFECO	Functional involvement in coordination and interoperability mechanisms	Densification of interaction in the northern and north-Baltic space
<b>Military-industrial and technological</b>	Co-production, direct orders, defense industry development, technological exchange	Investments, joint developments, financing, placement of production facilities	Danish model, Finnish program, bilateral industrial provisions	Reproduction and expansion of the military-industrial base, less dependence on external supplies	Strengthening the defense industry, security of supply and mutual industrial resilience
<b>Infrastructure and reconstruction</b>	Energy, critical infrastructure, digital resilience, logistics, reconstruction	Energy packages, infrastructure protection and restoration, reconstruction programs, sustainable projects	NB8, Joint Expeditionary Force, bilateral agreements	Strengthening critical resilience and recovery capacity	Increasing Regional Resilience to Hybrid and Infrastructure Threats
<b>Political and strategic</b>	Aligning a strategic vision for security and a broader impact of support for Ukraine on the security environment	Joint statements, framework commitments, long-term security formats	NB8, NATO, bilateral agreements, indirectly by NORDEFECO	Strengthening Ukraine's International Subjectivity and Long-Term Position	Adjusting the security environment in Northern Europe and strengthening joint deterrence

Source: Compiled by the author based on [1-5; 10; 11; 12; 15; 20; 21; 23; 24].

In 2026-2030, several basic trajectories for the development of Ukraine's security partnership with the states of the North are possible. The scenario distinction is based on three variables: the depth of institutionalization of support, the scale of defense-industrial cooperation, and the degree of Ukraine's functional involvement in security coordination mechanisms. The first variable reflects the extent to which support is enshrined in multi-year programs, bilateral agreements, and sustainable interaction formats. The second fixes whether cooperation is moving from the supply of resources to joint production, financing of the defense industry and technological exchange. The third shows whether Ukraine remains mainly the recipient of support, or is gradually joining practical mechanisms of coordination, interoperability and joint decision-making.



**Figure 1. Multi-level model of Ukraine's security partnership with the states of the North**  
 Source: Compiled by the author.

The first scenario is inertial. It corresponds to a combination of low or uneven institutionalization, limited defense-industrial cooperation, and minimal functional involvement of Ukraine in coordination mechanisms. With this development, a relatively high amount of support remains, but its structure remains mainly package, and multi-year frameworks are implemented partially or fragmentarily. Indicators of this scenario would be the dominance of one-off packages over long programs, a low number of joint production projects, slow implementation of security agreements, and the lack of sustainable procedures for regular coordination outside of individual political decisions. The prerequisites for such a scenario may be political fatigue, budget pressure, changes in government priorities in partner countries, or a growing gap between declarations and the practice of implementing

commitments. The positive of the scenario is the preservation of basic support for Ukraine, but the main limitation is related to the fact that Ukraine in this configuration remains mainly the recipient of assistance. The inertial scenario means the stabilization of support without a qualitative transition to a deeper form of security partnership.

The second scenario is functional institutionalization. It corresponds to a medium or high level of institutionalization, a medium or growing level of military-industrial cooperation, and a partial but already regular functional involvement of Ukraine in coordination mechanisms. Such a scenario seems to be the most likely today, since it is directly based on the already recorded decisions of 2024-2026: the extension of the Nansen Program until 2030 [26], the Swedish multiannual framework for military support [13], the Finnish program of direct industrial orders in favor of Ukraine [11], the development of Danish production cooperation [10; 20; 21], as well as the launch of an expanded partnership between Ukraine and the Joint Expeditionary Force [12]. The indicators of this scenario are not just the presence of political statements, but a consistent increase in the number of joint production solutions, stable long-term funding, regularization of practical cooperation in the areas of training, unmanned technologies, combat medicine, protection of critical infrastructure and infrastructure resilience. With this development of events, Ukraine does not become a formal participant in all northern formats, but is becoming more and more deeply involved in their functional mechanisms. It is advisable to consider the scenario as the most realistic form of transition from the logic of support to a more sustainable model of security partnership.

The third scenario is a deep security partnership. It corresponds to a high level of institutionalization, a high level of military-industrial cooperation and Ukraine's expanded functional involvement in security coordination mechanisms. In this case, Ukraine's support ceases to be just a set of long-term programs and acquires signs of a much denser system of joint security cooperation, in which military interaction, industrial cooperation, infrastructure resilience and strategic coordination work in a tighter relationship. Indicators of such a scenario would be established forms of co-production, regular mechanisms for coordinating not only aid but also capacity development, expanding Ukraine's role in security and resilience initiatives, as well as institutional consolidation of a long horizon of interaction beyond the current cycle of military support. However, the scenario should not be interpreted as a directly expected state. Its implementation depends on a high level of political trust, long-term consensus in the states of the North, preservation of the resource capacity of partners and broader Euro-Atlantic dynamics; It is more of a strategically desirable trajectory than the most likely option on the medium-term horizon.

The analytical value of the scenario model also lies in the fact that it allows you to see not only three states, but also possible transitions between them. The transition from functional institutionalization to an inertial scenario is possible in the event of a slowdown in the implementation of bilateral agreements, curtailment or freezing of joint production projects, a reduction in long-term funding, and a return to short, politically dependent packages. Instead, moving from functional institutionalization to a deeper security partnership will require a different set of triggers: stable multi-year funding, expansion of co-production, consolidation of sustainable mechanisms of practical coordination, and a combination of military, industrial, and infrastructural interactions into one longer security logic. The second scenario is the most likely and at the same time a turning point: it can either degrade to an inertial model or become the basis for a deeper partnership.

The comparative analysis suggests that the most likely scenario in 2026-2030 is functional institutionalization, while the most strategically desirable is a gradual transition to a deep security partnership. Such a conclusion is based on the already recorded trends of long-term financing, industrial cooperation and practical interaction [10-13; 26], but at the same time takes into account that none of them by itself proves the completion of the formation of a common security space. The practical task of Ukraine is to consistently transfer the existing formats into more sustainable mechanisms of interaction: through the implementation of bilateral security agreements, the development of joint defense-industrial projects, the expansion of practical cooperation within the Joint Expeditionary Forces, the use of long-term financial programs, and the combination of security and infrastructure initiatives (Table 3).

**Table 3. Scenarios for the development of Ukraine's security partnership with the states of the North in 2026-2030**

Script	Configuration of three variables	Key indicators	Transition Triggers	Consequences for Ukraine	Evaluation
<b>Inertial</b>	Low or uneven institutionalization; limited military-industrial cooperation; minimal functional involvement	The dominance of one-time packages, weak implementation of agreements, a small number of joint production projects; Unstable coordination mechanisms	Political fatigue; budget constraints; slowing down the implementation of long programs; Return to Package Support Logic	Maintaining basic resilience without a deep increase in subjectivity	Risky degradation scenario
<b>Functional institutionalization</b>	Medium or high institutionalization; growing industrial cooperation; partial but regular functional inclusion	Multi-year funding; joint production solutions; regular practical interaction; expansion of resilience and preparatory mechanisms	Positive upward transition: stabilization of financing, expansion of co-production, regularization of coordination; negative downward transition: bureaucratic disruptions, political curtailment, gap between agreements and implementation	Strengthening Ukraine's Subjectivity and Its Functional Involvement in the Northern Security Environment	Most Likely
<b>Deep Security Partnership</b>	High institutionalization; high industrial cooperation; Advanced functional attachment	Established co-production; long and stable security framework; systematic coordination of capacity development; the growing role of Ukraine as a source of security contribution	High level of trust; long-term consensus in the states of the North; institutional consolidation of a long horizon of interaction	Qualitative strengthening of Ukraine's role in the European security environment	The most desirable

Source: Compiled by the author based on [10–13; 15; 23; 24; 26].

## 6. Conclusions

The analysis suggests that in the northern formats of support for Ukraine, there is a distinct tendency to move from a predominantly asymmetric model of assistance to a more complex model of security partnership. The shift is manifested in a combination of long-term security commitments, multi-year financial decisions, expansion of practical cooperation, development of military-industrial cooperation and strengthening of coordination mechanisms. logic, but about the formation of a transitional configuration, in which elements of traditional assistance are increasingly complemented by more stable forms of interdependent security cooperation.

As a result of the study, the author's model of Ukraine's security partnership with the states of the North as a multi-level system structured in five contours: military-operational, institutional-coordination, military-industrial and technological, infrastructure-reconstruction and political-strategic, has been substantiated. Their allocation is based on the subject of coordination, the type of capacities involved, the channel of institutional formalization, and the scale of the security effect. The model makes it possible to consider various forms of interaction as a system of interrelated, but analytically disparate levels, within which Ukraine acts not only as an addressee of support, but also as a functionally significant participant in the new contours of regional resilience.

The scenario analysis showed that the most likely trajectory for the development of Ukrainian-northern cooperation in 2026–2030 is functional institutionalization, while the most strategically desirable is the evolution to a deep security partnership. The conclusion is due to the fact that the

existing practices of cooperation confirm the movement towards longer and more sustainable mechanisms of interaction, but do not yet indicate the completion of the formation of a common security space. Under such conditions, the key practical importance is not the declarative expansion of political formulations, but the consistent translation of the existing bilateral and multilateral frameworks into real mechanisms of coordination, cooperation, preparation, infrastructure resilience and long-term planning.

It is advisable to consider Ukrainian-Northern cooperation as an element of external support for Ukraine and, at the same time, as one of the factors of the current restructuring of the security environment of Northern Europe and the wider Euro-Atlantic space. Further research should focus on the development of indicators for measuring the institutionalization of security partnerships, quantitative monitoring of joint defense-industrial projects, and assessing the impact of infrastructure and sustainable cooperation mechanisms on regional security.

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