

SCEEUS REPORT
NO. 6, 2026

SCEEUS STOCKHOLM CENTRE FOR
EASTERN EUROPEAN STUDIES

The Missing Piece in Nordic–Baltic Security: Ukraine as a Natural Ally

19 May 2026

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Executive summary

- Ukraine should be seen as a natural continuation of Europe's north-eastern flank. Given Ukraine's battlefield experience and the shared assessment that Russia is a persistent threat, closer cooperation beyond existing bilateral security agreements would be of great added value for the Nordic-Baltic (NB8) countries.
- Sub-threshold warfare would be a promising area for closer NB8-Ukraine intelligence sharing and response cooperation. Military officer exchanges would foster a shared strategic culture and help the NB8 gain first-hand experience of Ukraine's uncrewed systems and drone warfare.
- Institutionally, the lowest-hanging fruit would be to upgrade Ukraine's enhanced partnership with the Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) to full membership. In the longer term, the NB8 (or JEF) countries and Ukraine should initiate the establishment of a European Defence Council, outside of EU and NATO structures, as a political forum for like-minded countries to coordinate defence and security cooperation in Europe, which would be open to other countries to join at a later stage.

Introduction: We are all in the same boat

Since Russia launched its full scale invasion, Ukraine has been a security provider rather than only an aid recipient. Four years of full-scale war has ushered in a new generation of warfare. Ukraine's battlefield experience, combat innovation and growing defence industrial potential should be far more deeply integrated with Nordic-Baltic (NB8) partners through co production projects, bilateral security agreements and wider cooperation formats that strengthen the defence of European democracies against the persistent Russian threat.

The synergy for strategic alignment between Ukraine and the NB8 countries is remarkable. All are small or medium sized democracies. Five of the nine – Ukraine, the Baltic states and Finland – have faced Russian aggression in the past century, and therefore share a similar historical memory. Ukraine's resistance has delayed, disrupted and degraded Russian military capabilities that would otherwise pose a direct danger to the Baltic Sea region, the High North and the wider Euro Atlantic space.

At the same time, Moscow's war effort is being reinforced by a web of supporting states. Belarus serves as a border ally and China is extending its global reach. Together, these dynamics underscore the growing strategic interdependence between Ukraine and the NB8. The battleline now stretching from the Black Sea to the North Sea underscores the urgency of deeper political, economic and security coordination in response to a potentially approaching, even larger war.

Shared Strategic Interests and Threat Assessments

While Ukraine is already in the midst of a hot war with Russia, all European states, including the NB8, are being subjected to Russian [sub threshold warfare](#). As [Ukraine anticipates](#) either a prolongation of the current phase of large scale hostilities for at least another year or their renewal following a ceasefire or peace deal within two to five years, the NB8 must prepare for protracted [sub-threshold warfare in the region](#), with a risk that this might morph into an [undeclared war](#).

Russia is incurring human and economic losses on a scale that would be unbearable for most countries as its [offensive in Ukraine stagnates](#). Despite economic pressures and more than a million dead or wounded, however, [multiple European intelligence services now believe](#) that Russia could be ready to test NATO's Article 5 before 2030. Some public estimates narrow the window to the more [immediate future](#). Given that the Russian regime could suffer a political backlash after the end of the war, or amid its lack of success in Ukraine, it may not wait long before launching a limited operation in the Baltic states or synchronising escalation with China, should Beijing decide to move on Taiwan.

NB8 Country Profiles

Group	Country	Population (m)	Military Personnel (Active / Reserve)	Border with Russia (km)	2025 defence spending ¹
Nordic states	Denmark	~5.9	~16,000 + 13,400 active home guard / ~30,000 home guard reserve	0	≈ EUR 13 bn
	Finland	~5.6	~30,000 peacetime, including conscripts, 280,000 wartime / 870,000 total reserve	~1,340	≈ EUR 8 bn
	Iceland	~0.39	0 / 0	0	< EUR 0.5 bn
	Norway	~5.5	~27,000 / ~40,000 home guard	~196	≈ EUR 16 bn
	Sweden	~10.6	~20,300 / ~29,100 including home guard	0	≈ EUR 15 bn
Baltic states	Estonia	~1.3	~4,200 active duty, including Defence League + 4000 supplementary / ~78,800 (total mobilisable force ~230,000)	~324 (Russia)	≈ EUR 1.5 bn
	Latvia	~1.9	~7,870 + 10,000 national guard / ~38,000	~283 (Russia) + ~173 (Belarus)	EUR 1.5 bn
	Lithuania	~2.8	~13,500 + ~19,000 paramilitary Riflemen's Union / ~100,000	~276 (Russia/ Kaliningrad) + ~680 (Belarus)	≈ EUR 3.5 bn
	Ukraine	~32.0	~1,000,000 (wartime)	~1,974 (pre 2014 baseline)	≈ EUR 64 bn (wartime, thanks to foreign budgetary aid)
	Russia	~138	~1,320,000 / ~2,000,000		≈ EUR 140 bn (wartime)

Russia's military capability as a shared long-term threat

Russia's official "national defence" budget of approximately €140 billion significantly understates the real cost of its war effort, as large sums are routed through ostensibly civilian headings such as infrastructure, high technology programmes and social support payments. Recent assessments, which draw on analysis by the [German Foreign Intelligence Service](#), suggest that, once these hidden lines are included, Russia could in practice be spending up to 66 percent more on defence than its published figures indicate.

1. NATO. "Defence Expenditure of NATO Countries (2014–2025)", August 28, 2025. <https://www.nato.int/en/news-and-events/articles/news/2025/08/28/defence-expenditure-of-nato-countries-2014-2025>

According to assessments by [Ukrainian military intelligence](#), Russia planned to produce 57 new combat aircraft (Su 57, Su 35, Su 34, Su 30), nearly 250 new T 90M tanks, around 1,100 new BTR 3 and BTR 82A armoured personnel carriers and 365 new artillery systems in 2025, alongside the modernisation of thousands of existing platforms. In parallel, Moscow intended to manufacture almost 2,500 precision-guided munitions – including Iskander cruise and ballistic missiles and *Kinzhal* hypersonic missiles – and to sharply increase production of unmanned systems, including up to 2 million FPV drones and about 60,000 long-range and decoy strike unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) (e.g. Geran and *Garpriya* types). While a large proportion of this output would be consumed in Ukraine, the scale and composition of production strongly suggest that a percentage is being stockpiled that could support potential follow on operations against NATO.

Thus, while the intelligence services of the NB8 countries generally indicate no immediate risk of a full-scale invasion in their public reports, they consistently identify Russia as a major threat, albeit with varying degrees of severity. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania openly define Russia as a long term existential threat; [Latvia's State Defence Concept 2023–2027](#), for example, warns that the danger from Russia could grow rather than recede in the coming years. The Nordic countries are on the same page. While most of the official reports by the Nordic countries indicate that a direct invasion by Russia is unlikely in the foreseeable future, defence spending and civil preparedness efforts are being sharply increased. The Finnish Security and Intelligence Service consistently labels Russia the most serious threat to Finland's national security with “[no improvement in sight](#)”, citing espionage, influence operations and other hybrid threats.

However, a [2026 report by the Estonian Foreign Intelligence Service](#) offers an alternative perspective. It argues that while President Putin has, through systematic repression, manufactured an illusion that there is no alternative to him and that regime change would mean chaos, no leader is truly irreplaceable. The war against Ukraine has imposed severe hardship on Russian society, testing the self image of Russians as “masters of suffering” and underlining that their capacity to endure pain is not without limits.

Russia's objectives in the Baltic theatre

Following Finland and Sweden's NATO accession, linked to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia reviewed its [Baltic–Scandinavian macro region concept](#), which fuses the Baltic Sea region and Scandinavia into a single strategic theatre, often branded the “Greater Baltic”. [Russian analysts](#) frame this as a new type of macro region in a polycentric order, stressing dense security, economic and political linkages among the Nordic and Baltic states, and borrowing EU macro regional language while recasting the area as a unified arena of strategic competition with the West. Moscow also uses this label to cloak renewed outreach to, and influence over, [regional researchers, experts and policymakers](#) under the guise of neutral regional cooperation.

In military terms, Russia sees its Kaliningrad exclave as an anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) asset that can hold much of the southern and central Baltic region at risk. However, thanks to the improved defensibility of the Baltic states now that Finland and Sweden are in NATO, Kaliningrad could become a vulnerability that is difficult to sustain through the Suwałki corridor between Lithuania and Poland that connects the Russian exclave with Belarus. Kaliningrad hosts layered air and missile defences (S 300/S 400), coastal Bastion P anti ship systems with P 800 Oniks missiles, as well as combat aircraft capable of contesting airspace over Poland, Lithuania and large parts of the Baltic Sea. In a crisis, Russia would want to use this A2/AD bubble to restrict NB8 and NATO air and naval movements, delay reinforcement of the Baltic states and enable selective escalation or blockade tactics in the Baltic Sea. However, Finland and Sweden's NATO membership means that Russia must now think more about defending Kaliningrad than the offensive opportunities the exclave used to offer.

At the same time, Belarus has become an extension of Russia's Western Military District and a platform for pressure on the Baltic states and beyond. Since 2022, Minsk has deepened the integration of its armed forces with Russia and accepted [deployment of the Russian nuclear capable Oreshnik system](#). Minsk removed its commitment to “nuclear free” and “neutral” status in 2022, providing Moscow with additional escalation options. This extends the range of threats that can emanate from Belarus.

In terms of defending against future Russian aggression, the shift to low mass, cheap strike capabilities seen in Ukraine is of interest, given the opportunities it opens up for small and medium-sized states with limited resources. Ukraine's use of maritime drones to push back at the Russian Black Sea Fleet, force the withdrawal of major surface combatants from Sevastopol and repeatedly strike targets, such as the landing ship Novocherkassk and the patrol ship Sergey Kotov, has clearly demonstrated to maritime nations that unmanned systems can be a superior tool for deterrence and sustained offensive operations. NATO has already [experimented](#) in this area to detect maritime hybrid threats in the Baltic Sea through the [Task Force X](#) uncrewed systems initiative.

Similarly, swarming first person view drones on land and loitering munitions show that low cost precision assets can systematically attrit artillery, air defence and logistics nodes that were once protected by traditional force advantages. This was starkly illustrated by Estonia's large scale Hedgehog 2025 exercise, where Ukrainian drone units acting as the opposing force used dense UAV reconnaissance, electronic warfare and the AI enabled Delta battlefield management system to "destroy" two NATO battalions in a day, leading NATO commanders to describe the outcome as "[shocking](#)" and warn that NATO is not prepared for a high intensity drone centric fight. Ukraine's knowhow in anti-drone warfare has also been widely recognised in the [US war against Iran](#).

Ukraine has emerged as a strategic source of high-value battlefield data on defence AI, which is vital in the new arms race. On 12 March 2026, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence introduced a [controlled access framework](#) allowing partners to train AI models on real combat datasets without transferring data outside of Ukrainian custody, providing millions of annotated combat frames while retaining sovereign control. This has created a "win-win" dynamic whereby partners gain unparalleled battlefield data while Ukraine accelerates its own technological capabilities. Governments and defence firms should prioritise structured partnerships with Ukraine, integrating its datasets into R&D pipelines and recognising it as a primary data provider for next-generation combat AI.

Risks in the High North theatre

The Arctic is central to Russia's long term economic and strategic planning, with the Northern Sea Route (NSR) and energy resources at its core. [Russia's 2020 Arctic strategy](#) for the next 15 years emphasises military modernisation, the expansion of Arctic capable forces and integrated command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR) to secure control over the NSR and deter "foreign military aggression" in the region. However, the war in Ukraine and western sanctions have taken their toll on Russia's Arctic ambitions. In June 2025, Ukraine succeeded in attacking the [Arctic Olenya airbase](#), where Russia had relocated its Tu-95M strategic bombers at what it assumed to be a safe distance from Ukraine. In August 2025, it was reported that a Russian shipyard had to [cancel the building of two new icebreakers](#) due to construction delays, foreign component shortages and the impact of western sanctions.

Despite the challenges Russia faces in its Arctic build-up, the region's strategic centrality for the Kremlin in terms of both energy resources and power projection exposes the Nordic countries to Russia's strategic interests. This makes the whole [Nordic-Baltic region a potential frontline](#) in a conflict with Russia. Russia's Northern Fleet, based in the Kola Peninsula, depends on access through the GIUK (Greenland-Iceland-UK) gap to reach the broader North Atlantic and threaten transatlantic sea lines of communication. Moscow's aim is to erode NATO's ability to monitor and control this chokepoint, using undersea, air and influence operations, so that its submarines and surface combatants can operate more freely against NATO shipping and reinforcement routes. In the High North, Moscow is increasingly treating [Svalbard and the surrounding waters](#) as a pressure point. Russian officials and media have [questioned the archipelago's legal status](#) and Norwegian sovereignty under the Svalbard Treaty.

Moreover, Russia's ostensibly civilian oceanographic and other research vessels are a central tool in its campaign against NATO linked maritime infrastructure in northern waters. Operating [under scientific cover](#), these dual use platforms map seabed topography and survey cables, pipelines and offshore installations, expanding Russia's options for coercive leverage and deniable sabotage in, or prior to, crisis or conflict. This "[military-civil fusion](#)" is also part and parcel of Chinese activities in the Arctic.

Sub-threshold warfare: To be or not to be at war?

The Danish Straits are a vital chokepoint for Russian seaborne exports from the Baltic, including oil and oil products that are now increasingly moved by a 'shadow fleet' of poorly regulated, often uninsured tankers in order to evade sanctions. Since 2022, [Russia had earned about \\$450 billion](#) from global fossil fuel exports prior to the Iran war that prompted the oil price to peak, with a significant contribution made by the shadow fleet. More effective [measures](#) against the Russian shadow fleet in the Baltic Sea is an ongoing process that the Baltic and North Sea countries are working on.

Due to its geographical proximity to Russia, the NB8 is one of Moscow's most natural targets for [sub-threshold operations](#). The Baltic Sea has seen an unprecedented number of incidents involving [damage to undersea cables](#) in recent years, as vessels linked to the Russian shadow fleet and other commercial vessels drag their anchors over energy cables and pipelines. Across the NB8, [global navigation satellite system \(GNSS\) jamming and spoofing](#) have shifted from episodic nuisance to a persistent feature of the security environment. [UAVs and military aircraft](#) routinely probe or approach national airspace and critical border areas, while naval and auxiliary vessels challenge maritime boundaries and loiter near key infrastructure and sea lines of communication. In parallel, state sponsored and proxy cyber actors conduct near constant campaigns against government, energy, transport and information systems in the NB8 countries and Ukraine, keeping national authorities in a state of heightened alert without crossing the threshold for open armed conflict. Russia also instrumentalises migration as a pressure tool; for example, by orchestrating movements of migrants directly across the Russian border or through Belarus, prompting Lithuania, Latvia and Finland to close or heavily restrict parts of their borders with Russia and Belarus.

While the NB8 countries are frontrunners in Europe when it comes to resilience-building, Ukraine is currently experiencing massive challenges, with its critical infrastructure under Russian missile and drone attack on an almost daily basis. There is considerable synergy between the long-term experience of the NB8 with improving energy infrastructure and supply resilience that can help Ukraine transform its energy infrastructure from a centralised legacy system to wider use of renewables, and the many lessons to be learned by the NB8 from Ukraine's wartime challenges in protecting critical infrastructure. The same applies to a host of other hybrid threats, ranging from cognitive warfare and influence campaigns to closing legal loopholes that Russia can use to its advantage.

A war of narratives

[Cognitive warfare](#) is another important aspect of Russian aggression, and Ukraine is a longstanding primary target. In the NB8 region, the Baltic states are somewhat more vulnerable than their Nordic neighbours with regard to Russian propaganda efforts due to the enduring social, economic, informational and familial links to Russia among Russian-speakers, which can be exploited for influence.

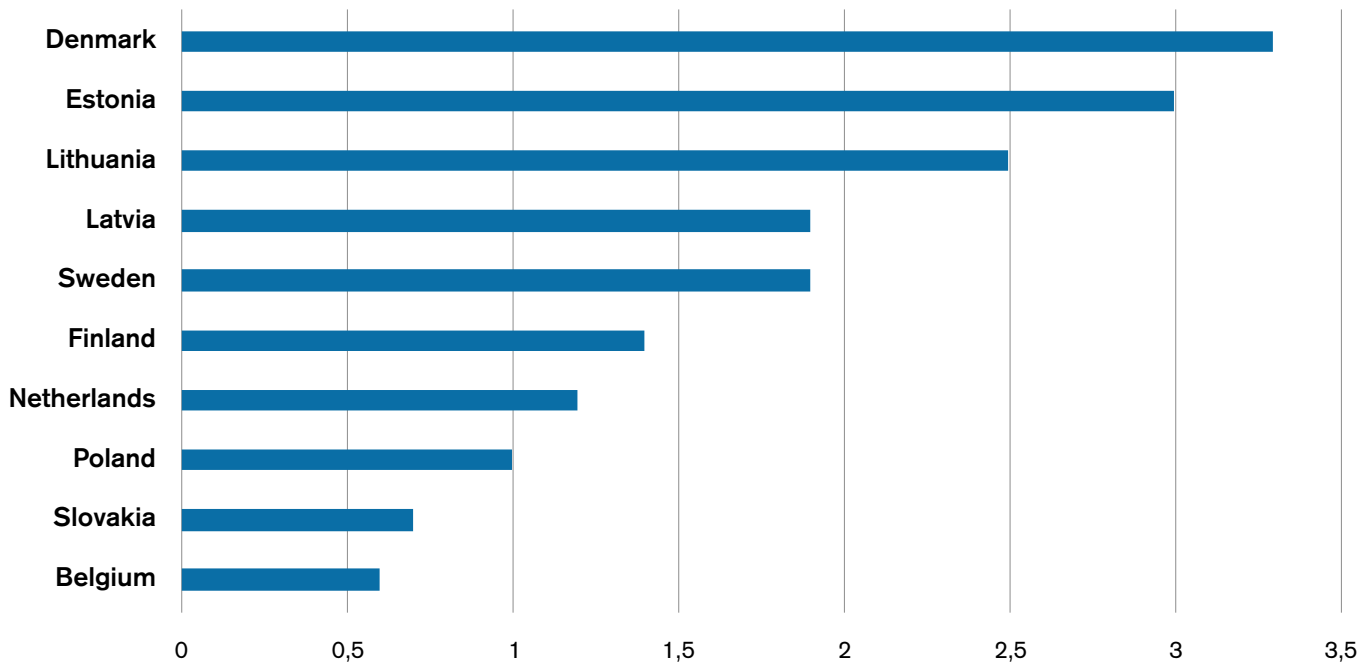
For example, [Lithuania's 2025 National Threat Assessment](#) identifies foreign influence and the recruitment of individuals with pro-Russian views as a likely risk over the next 3–5 years, highlighting the potential for information operations, hybrid threats and societal divisions to emerge through Russian-language media and diaspora networks. By contrast, the Nordic states are somewhat better protected thanks to their high levels of social cohesion, strong institutional trust, and generally higher levels of media literacy and civic education, as well as the lack of Soviet occupation heritage. Nonetheless, Russian officials are targeting for example [Finland](#) with similar narratives to those used against Ukraine in preparation for the full-scale invasion.

All the NB8 countries and Ukraine are being subjected to continuous information operations that, depending on the target, question NATO's credibility, exploit existing political and social fractures, or groom populist and radical forces. These narratives are carefully tailored to each national context but form part of a coherent strategic effort to erode trust in democratic institutions, exhaust public support for Ukraine and undermine collective defence.

NB8 cooperation with and support for Ukraine

Public opinion in the NB8 countries remains strongly supportive of Ukraine, even as debates intensify over costs and burden sharing. This creates favourable ground for political decisions in support of Ukraine. According to the most recent [Kiel Institute for the World Economy](#) update, six of the eight NB8 countries rank as leading bilateral donors to Ukraine worldwide when measured as government support as a proportion of GDP, both including and excluding their imputed share of EU level aid, for allocations between 24 January 2022 and 31 December 2025. Norway, Sweden and Denmark also feature in the top 10 for bilateral military aid in absolute terms, while Finland is ranked 11th.

Top 10 Ukraine bilateral aid, % of GDP



Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy Ukraine Support Tracker, data from 24 January 2022 to 28 February 2026.

Governments justify this generosity not just as moral solidarity, but as hard nosed self interest. If Ukraine falls, they would have to fight a larger Russian army strengthened by the Ukrainian [population from the occupied territories](#).

Support for Ukraine among the Nordic states is among the most robust in Europe, reflecting both limited Russian leverage over domestic political actors and broad cross party consensus in favour of Kyiv. Even the right wing parties that have been Moscow's priority targets for influence operations, and whose members have expressed sympathetic views about Russia or at least scepticism about confronting the Kremlin, have largely aligned themselves with mainstream pro Ukraine positions since 2022. In the Baltic states, pro-Russia sentiments have failed to gain mainstream prominence in the political landscape, despite Russian efforts to appeal to the Russian-speaking population.

Assessment of Measures Taken to Support Ukraine after Russia's Full-scale Invasion and Perspective of Continued Support.

Question: The EU has taken a series of actions as response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. To what extent you agree or disagree with each of these actions taken. (%)

Respondent-Country	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(5)	
	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree	Agree	Disagree
EU 27	73	22	57	39	77	22	59	35	81	17
Denmark	89	7	89	8	94	5	74	21	93	5
Estonia	68	24	64	31	72	25	58	35	80	17
Finland	89	7	88	10	93	6	74	18	95	4
Latvia	72	19	67	26	83	13	65	26	87	10
Lithuania	82	13	77	19	85	13	71	23	88	10
Sweden	91	7	93	6	97	3	83	12	98	1

Measures

- (1) Imposing economic sanctions on Russian government, companies and individuals
- (2) Financing the purchase and supply of military equipment to Ukraine
- (3) Providing financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine
- (4) Granting candidate status as a potential Member of the EU to Ukraine
- (5) Welcoming into the EU people fleeing the war

Source: Standard Eurobarometer 103 - Autumn 2025.

Cooperation frameworks and agreements

All the NB8 countries signed bilateral 10 year security assistance agreements with Ukraine in 2024, aligned with the G7 Vilnius framework but short of mutual defence pacts.² While these instruments fall under security assistance rather than hard security guarantees, they lock-in multi year military, financial and political support and thus provide a much more predictable framework than ad hoc aid for planning Ukraine's defence and reconstruction, as policymakers increasingly accept that the war will continue through 2026 and beyond.

These agreements should not be viewed as one way aid provision. Ukraine has become a co developer of systems that will eventually underpin defence and deterrence in the Baltic Sea and the High North – from counter drone networks and battlefield management tools to new concepts of multi domain defence.

Nordic governments have developed two distinct models for funding Ukraine's defence industry. The [Danish model](#) channels money directly into Ukrainian production by reimbursing contracts between the Ukrainian state and its own manufacturers. Kyiv identifies priority projects, while Danish experts vet companies and deals. Funds from Denmark's Ukraine facility, partner contributions and interest on frozen Russian assets are then used to pay for Ukrainian made howitzers, drones, anti tank and anti ship missiles and other systems. By early 2025, this mechanism had financed [roughly €600 million](#) in equipment and was being emulated or adapted by other partners, such as Canada and the Netherlands, as a template for turning procurement budgets into capital for Ukraine's defence industry.

[The Finnish model](#) foresees use of national funds to place orders with Finnish defence companies for systems earmarked for Ukraine, while also de-risking Finnish commercial engagement with Ukraine through export credit tools. In 2025, Helsinki launched a [€660 million programme](#) by which the Defence Forces' Logistics Department procures artillery ammunition, drones, engineering and naval capabilities from domestic industry for transfer to the

2. See the table in the annex.

Ukrainian Armed Forces. In parallel, a €30 million EU backed export guarantee pilot with Finnvera and the EIB Group supports Finnish small and medium-sized enterprises trading with and investing in Ukraine, thereby tying Ukraine's wartime needs to the long term expansion of Finland's industrial base.

In November 2025, the NB8 defence ministers announced a joint [\\$500 million package](#) for Ukraine to be channelled through NATO's *Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List* (PURL), specifically to purchase urgently needed US made air defence systems, artillery, missiles and other key capabilities. Individual NB8 countries and smaller groups have contributed to the PURL scheme in a number of rounds. [Denmark, Norway and Sweden were among the first](#) countries to use the new mechanism.

Ukraine's integration into minilateral formats

Beyond bilateral tracks, Ukraine is increasingly being woven into the same multilateral frameworks that structure NB8 security cooperation. Nordic defence cooperation (NORDEF) has opened doors to practical collaboration on logistics, host nation support and joint exercises, where Ukrainian participation – currently limited and ad hoc – could be expanded and regularised. In EU and NATO settings, NB8 states have consistently been Ukraine's most active advocates, pressing for more ambitious sanctions, shadow fleet targeting, critical undersea infrastructure protection and clear accession pathways.

However, the most prominent example is [Ukraine's integration into the Joint Expeditionary Force \(JEF\)](#). All eight NB8 states are core members of the UK led JEF. In late 2025, they backed a move to grant Ukraine enhanced partnership status, making it the first non JEF member to be integrated into this framework. For Ukraine, this upgraded status means regular participation in JEF defence minister meetings, involvement in exercises across the Nordic Baltic region and closer cooperation on critical underwater infrastructure, drones, battlefield medicine and counter disinformation, as JEF nations explicitly seek to learn from Ukraine's frontline experience.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Europe's north-eastern flank runs from the Norwegian High North, down the long Finnish-Russian Border, the Baltics, and through Poland into Ukraine. The Russian full-scale war against Ukraine has made it clear that [Europe's defensive perimeter](#) encompasses Ukraine, and that Ukraine will have to be a core part of Europe's future security arrangements. From the NB8 countries' perspective, creating a credible security arrangement that includes Ukraine, based on the mutual security guarantees envisaged in the Latvian-Ukrainian bilateral security agreement, is crucial.

Ukraine's assessment of the Russian threat is that it is permanent and existential. Russian imperialism is a source of perpetual aggression as Moscow is not seeking a limited settlement over Donbas, Kyiv or even the full territory of Ukraine, but the restoration of a sphere of domination over half of Europe and Central Asia that resembles its former imperial and Soviet reach. This assessment is widely shared by the NB8 countries – not just the Baltic states, which have recent memory of Russian occupation, but also the Nordic countries, all of which view Russia as a long-term threat.

Ukraine's war experience has been a valuable lesson for the NB8 countries on implementation of [NATO's Article 3](#), which requires its members to build their own capacity to resist armed attack through "continuous and effective self help and mutual aid". By sharing frontline experience in high intensity, unmanned systems centric warfare, electronic warfare, air and missile defence, critical infrastructure protection and societal resilience, Ukraine now functions as a key source of practical knowledge on strengthening readiness and war fighting competence on NATO's eastern and northern flanks. Ukraine's unmatched expertise is widely recognised in Europe and the Middle East, as the multitude of [European companies that have established co-production with Ukrainian counterparts](#) shows. Combining the technological and industrial strengths of Ukraine and the NB8 will also help to accelerate progress on electronic warfare, counter UAV systems, secure communications and cyber tools – all important aspects of countering ongoing sub-threshold warfare.

Regional mini-lateral cooperation formats, such as NB8+Ukraine politically and the JEF-Ukraine enhanced partnership militarily, offer venues for pragmatically deepening Ukraine's integration with the countries that are most willing and committed to do so. Ukraine's full EU integration remains politically contested and will take time despite [creative ideas](#) to unlock the accession process. NATO, in turn, is in flux due to the uncertainties in the transatlantic relationship caused by the Trump administration and a shift to much greater European responsibility, including in the command structure.

Despite their remarkable efforts, the NB8 countries are too small to decisively change Ukraine's fate alone. For one, the combined population of the eight Nordic and Baltic countries is less than Ukraine's. While various coalitions of the willing are the best way forward for Ukraine's gradual integration into European structures and standards, in the absence of a short-term institutional anchoring, the focus should remain on Ukraine's full membership of a reformed NATO or a European alliance that emerges from its remains. At the same time, increased cooperation helps Ukraine's NB8 partners to adapt to the new challenges of unmanned systems warfare. Through minilateral cooperation, the NB8 countries can in their turn help Ukraine overcome obstacles to its EU integration process and test pragmatic solutions for integrating Ukraine into future European defence solutions.

Recommendations

- Expand military officer exchanges between the NB8 and Ukraine to deepen practical defence cooperation beyond bilateral security agreements and assistance. This will help build a shared strategic culture and to foster "human interoperability". Invite Ukrainians to regular red teaming exercises to train NATO troops on uncrewed systems, electronic warfare and the Ukrainian battlefield management system Delta, among other things.
- Enhance NB8-Ukraine intelligence cooperation, focused on structural indicators of Russian readiness (battlefield data from Ukraine, military district reform, northern force build-up, infrastructure expansion).
- Cooperate with Ukraine on the development of a response strategy to Russia's sub-threshold warfare by domain and develop pre-war and sub-threshold-related communication strategies that balance warning and societal stability, avoiding over-reassurance while preventing panic. Coordination centres that include Ukrainian staff could ensure a more efficient response to Russian provocations.
- Establish joint centres of excellence linking Ukrainian battlefield problems with NB8 academic and industrial capabilities, and promote two-way academic mobility and problem-oriented research cooperation between academic institutions and think tanks in Ukraine and the NB8 countries.
- Upgrade the JEF-Ukraine enhanced partnership to full membership for Ukraine. The JEF framework is the best available short-term solution for Ukraine's integration into a European security architecture, as it was designed to include Finland and Sweden before they became NATO members.
- In the longer term, the NB8 (or JEF) countries and Ukraine should initiate the establishment of a European Defence Council (EDC) outside of EU and NATO structures, as a political forum for like-minded countries to coordinate defence and security cooperation in Europe. The EDC should be open for other interested and like-minded countries to join.

NB8–UKRAINE BILATERAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENTS: SUMMARY

Agreement (title and signature date)	Financial commitments	Military commitments	Political commitments	Other key commitments	Post-agreement updates
DENMARK³					
<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long Term Support between Ukraine and Denmark (23 February 2024, Lviv)</i>	Long term macro financial and reconstruction support, €8.5bn in military support for 2023–2028	Focus areas: air force and air defence; maritime security; demining technology and drones; and other key capabilities and urgent needs in Ukraine, as well as training and defence industrial cooperation; urgent consultations in case of renewed aggression.	Support for EU and NATO integration; support of Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions and reparations, critical infrastructure protection, cyber and information security	Delivered F-16s and additional armoured equipment; co-led the Aviation Capabilities Coalition and joined the Armoured, Artillery, Drone, Maritime Capabilities and Air Defence coalitions; formalised and expanded the Danish model; deepened defence-industrial cooperation through the Ukroboronprom-Weibel Scientific memorandum; supported demining through joint initiatives and Hydrema localisation. ⁴ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism; invested in Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Fund; one of the founders of EU4Reconstruction. ⁵
FINLAND⁶					
<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long Term Support between Ukraine and Finland (3 March 2024, Kyiv)</i>	Multi year financial and reconstruction support; four-year military support plan	Focus on ammunition, land, air, sea, cyber and electromagnetic, and space domains; ongoing military aid packages; training; participation in capability coalitions and defence industrial cooperation; commitment to urgent consultations.	Backing for EU/NATO path, support of Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions and accountability of Russia, support for energy, environmental and infrastructure resilience	Joined the Danish model, EUMAM, INTERFLEX, the IT Coalition, the EU frozen-assets/ERA framework, the coalition for a Special Tribunal, the coalition for the return of Ukrainian children, and the Nordic-Baltic Brigade; signed a defence industry memorandum with Ukraine; launched programme to procure weapons for Ukraine from Finnish industry; allows use of transferred weapons for strikes on Russian territory. ⁷ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; Demining Coalition; formally launched the Shelters Coalition for Ukraine. ⁸

3. "Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long-Term Support between Ukraine and the Kingdom of Denmark", Office of the President of Ukraine, February 23, 2024, <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ugoda-pro-spivrobotnictvo-u-sferi-bezpeki-ta-dovgostrokovu-p-89185>

4. Cherniavska D., F-16 fighters, Leopard tanks and the "Danish model" of defense investment: how Denmark supports Ukraine, Dnistrianskyi Center, March 14, 2025, <https://dc.org.ua/news/vynyschuvachi-f-16-tanky-leopard-i-danska-model-investyciy-v-opk-yak-daniya-pidtrymue-ukrayinu>

5. Cherniavska D., Дайджест виконання двосторонніх безпекових угод (листопад 2025), Dnistrianskyi Center, January 23, 2026, <https://dc.org.ua/news/daydzhest-vykonannya-dvostoronnih-bezpekovyh-ugod-lystopad-2025>

6. Office of the President of Finland, "Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long-Term Support between the Republic of Finland and Ukraine", April 3, 2024, <https://www.presidentti.fi/en/agreement-on-security-cooperation-and-long-term-support-between-the-republic-of-finland-and-ukraine/>

7. <https://dc.org.ua/news/spilnyy-oboronnyy-zavod-pidgotovka-ukrayinskoyi-brygady-ta-regulyarna-vijskova-pidtrymka-yak-finlyandiya-dopomagae-ukrayini>

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ICELAND ⁹					
<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long Term Support between Ukraine and Iceland (31 May 2024, Stockholm)</i>	At least 4 billion ISK (c. €27 million) per year in 2024–2028; further support beyond 2028 framed politically rather than as fixed totals	Non lethal and niche military-related support (training, demining funding, strategic airlift contributions), consistent with Iceland's lack of standing armed forces.	Political advocacy; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions, economic recovery and resilience, including Arctic/North Atlantic security linkages	Co-led the Demining Coalition; joined the Danish model, aligned with the EU decision on using profits from frozen Russian assets; supported training under Operation Orbital and joined the Nordic-Baltic Brigade; also channelled support through NATO's Comprehensive Assistance Package and the UK-led International Fund for Ukraine. ¹⁰ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package. ¹¹
NORWAY ¹²					
<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long Term Support between Ukraine and Norway (30 May 2024, Stockholm)</i>	NOK 75 billion (c. €6.4 billion) under the Nansen Support Programme for 2023–2027; extra NOK 50 billion (c. €4.4 billion) added in March 2025 ¹³	Major multi year military aid (e.g. at least NOK 13.5 billion in 2024); continued arms deliveries, focused on maritime security; integrated air and missile defence, and combat aircraft; training, and defence industrial cooperation.	EU/NATO integration; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions and reparations; critical infrastructure protection; humanitarian demining and medical treatment	Expanded support under the Nansen Programme; joined the Aviation Capabilities Coalition, EUMAM, Interflex, the Danish model, the Nordic-Baltic Brigade, the coalition for a Special Tribunal and the coalition for the return of Ukrainian children; financed Patriot and IRIS-T support, F-16 weapons and spare parts through JUMPSTART; and joined the JEF's Nordic Warden monitoring mechanism. ¹⁴ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; signed an agreement to launch production of Ukrainian drones in Norway; hosted and supported a combat search-and-rescue course for the Ukrainian Air Force. ¹⁵

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SWEDEN¹⁶

<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation between Sweden and Ukraine (31 May 2024, Stockholm)</i>	Total aid for 2022–2026 at least SEK 105 billion (more than €9 billion), SEK 75 billion (c. €6.5 billion) in military aid annually for 2024–2026; aid increased with each new package	Provision of advanced systems (e.g. ASC 890 AEW&C aircraft, tank and artillery packages); ongoing arms deliveries, training and defence industrial cooperation.	Strong backing for EU/NATO accession; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions and legal accountability, economic recovery, critical infrastructure protection, cyber and industrial cooperation. Strategy for reconstruction and reform cooperation with Ukraine 2023–2027, 6 billion SEK (c. € 500 million)	Announced four post-agreement military aid packages; joined the Drone Coalition, IT Coalition, Tallinn Mechanism, Czech ammunition Initiative, the Danish model, EUMAM, INTERFLEX, the EU frozen-assets/ERA mechanism, Demining coalition and the Nordic-Baltic Brigade; financed 30,000 drones, 18 Archer howitzers and five ARTHUR radars; committed ASC 890 aircraft, Pbv 302 APCs and CB90 boats; and expanded defence-industrial cooperation with Saab, BAE Systems Hägglunds and Nammo. ¹⁷ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; hosted and supported a combat search-and-rescue course for Ukrainian Air Force. ¹⁸
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ESTONIA¹⁹

<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation and Long Term Support between Ukraine and the Republic of Estonia (26 June 2024, Brussels)</i>	Pledge to allocate at least 0.25% of GDP annually to military support in 2024–2027 (c. €450 million), plus broader long term assistance	Focus on Ukraine's most urgent needs such as artillery and strike systems, as well as ammunition, unmanned systems, electronic warfare, information and communication technology (ICT) and other capabilities. Long term military assistance with artillery systems, ATGMs, missiles and mines, Carl Gustaf systems, grenade launchers, UAVs and EW equipment; training and IT coalition support; defence industrial cooperation.	Support for EU and NATO membership; strategic dialogue; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula	Cooperation on sanctions, reparations, hybrid threats, cyber and information security, reconstruction and infrastructure protection. €56 million for development cooperation and humanitarian support to Ukraine in 2024–2027.	Delivered additional Mistral MANPADS, artillery systems, anti-tank weapons, Mamba armoured vehicles, drones and patrol boats, while also providing radars, field hospitals, IT equipment, rations and medical support; invested in Ukraine's defence industry; joined the IT Coalition; continuing training, cyber, hybrid-threat and rehabilitation support for Ukrainian personnel. ²⁰ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; signed a digitalisation cooperation memorandum with Ukraine and the UK. ²¹
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LATVIA²²

<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Latvia (11 April 2024, Riga)</i>	Pledge to allocate c. 0.25% of GDP annually to military support in 2024–2027; long term financial and reconstruction support	Continued delivery of heavy equipment, artillery and training, and participation in capability coalitions; commitment to consult and support Ukraine in case of renewed aggression; aim to get Ukraine's military capabilities to such a level that, in the event of external military aggression against Latvia, Ukraine is able to provide effective military support.	EU/NATO integration; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula	Sanctions, accountability, economic recovery, cyber and information security, defence and security sector reforms, maritime security, energy, digital sector, agriculture and forestry, demining, critical infrastructure protection and hybrid threats.	Co-led the Drone Coalition with the UK; joined the Czech ammunition initiative, EUMAM, the Nordic-Baltic Brigade and the Demining Coalition; supplied drones, NBS air-defence systems and other equipment; invested in Ukrainian drone production and joint defence projects; continued large-scale training, including for UAV operators; allows all the weapons it provides to be used for strikes on Russian territory. ²³ Joined the Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; signed a memorandum on defence-industrial cooperation with Ukraine on joint research and innovation. ²⁴
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LITHUANIA²⁵

<i>Agreement on Security Cooperation between Ukraine and the Republic of Lithuania (27 June 2024, Vilnius)</i>	Pledge to allocate c. 0.25% of GDP annually to military support; significant long term financial and reconstruction support	Continued substantial military aid (air defence, artillery, armour), training and joint projects, support for reforms, defence industrial cooperation. Development and strengthening of the trilateral Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade LITPOLUKRBRIG.	Political support for EU/NATO membership; support for Ukraine's Peace Formula, as well as law enforcement and justice, and anti-corruption reform	Sanctions, reparations, hybrid threat and cyber cooperation, and reconstruction assistance.	Delivered new air-defence, EW, M113 and ammunition packages; joined the Drone Coalition, co-led the Demining Coalition, joined the IT Coalition, EUMAM, Interflex, the Nordic-Baltic Brigade, the Danish model, Ukraine2EU, the coalition for a Special Tribunal and the coalition for the return of Ukrainian children; contracted for nearly 5,000 FPV drones; invested €10 million in Ukrainian long-range weapons production. ²⁶ Joined Prioritised Ukraine Requirements List mechanism and joint NB8 Package; one of the founders of EU4Reconstruction and hosted Maple Arch 2025 through the Lithuanian-Polish-Ukrainian Brigade format; the first state after Ukraine to formally notify the Council of Europe of its intention to join the Special Tribunal. ²⁷
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