RESEARCH PAPER

The new citizen-soldier:

civil society actors driving change in national defence

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Contents

Introduction

This research examines a unique phenomenon: during the largest war in Europe since the Second World War, civil society is playing a critical role in shaping Ukraine's security and defence sector.

Civil society in Ukraine has not merely exhibited strong levels of volunteerism in response to crises. It represents a new state-building model in which society acts as an active player in security architecture. From revolutions to full-scale war, and from procedural adjustments to institutional development, each stage between 1991 and 2026 strengthened Ukraine's capacity to endure, modernise its defence, and build a democratic state — despite institutional paralysis — through the agency of its citizens.

The full-scale war exposed a key underlying Ukrainian structural feature: strong implementational capacity is constrained by an underdeveloped policy formulation cycle. Within this gap, civil society operates not only as an oversight mechanism, but also as a solutions, analytics, and innovation source, directly influencing defence policy. The Ukrainian experience demonstrates a new logic of change — security develops from the bottom up through expertise, solutions testing, and horizontal interaction.

As a result, Ukraine has developed a distinct civic defence sector — adaptive, fast-moving, and results-oriented — which has assumed functions that, in other countries, remain exclusively the responsibility of the state or defence industry. For international partners, this experience provides a 21st-century model - democratic defence as a shared responsibility between state and society.

This analytical and advocacy research paper aims to demonstrate how ideas, actions, and decisions within the civic sector influence institutional decision-making in defence. The research focuses on organisations that promote reforms, produce applied analysis, and conduct international advocacy under wartime conditions.

From over 40 organisations operating in the security and defence sphere, the authors selected 12 for in-depth analysis. These organisations complement the broader landscape alongside others examined in the previous study, namely Come Back Alive Foundation, Serhii Prytula Foundation, Dignitas, Aerorozvidka, and Boryviter. Consequently, this study continues the previously published first series, "Civil Society Role in Ukrainian Defence", which demonstrated the contribution of NGOs to supporting Ukraine's Defence Forces, directly assisting the frontline, strengthening national defence capacity, and substantiating the need for significant increases in international financial support to scale and institutionalise these efforts.

The selection criteria included organisations with a range of thematic expertise and forms of engagement, but all exhibited proven results, as well as systematic engagement with the military, state institutions, and international partners. The study includes organisations operating for more than a decade (CACDS, BRDO, NAKO), as well as those established during the full-scale 2022–2025 invasion (Sahaidachnyi Security Center, Snake Island Institute, Price of Freedom).

Due to security and ethical constraints, the research relies exclusively on publicly available materials. These sources necessarily only partially reflect organisations' actual contribution.

The 12 organisations sampled do not constitute an exhaustive list of Ukrainian defence think tanks and civil society actors. Rather, they form an initial sample that captures key types of expertise, institutional trajectories, and influence models.

Methodologically, the research uses a mixed-methods approach, combining structured and semi-structured interviews with civil society and think tanks experts, a review of analytical and programme materials, case studies, and open-source intelligence (OSINT).

Executive Summary

Ukrainian civil society has become an integral component within Ukraine's defence ecosystem — an independent, flexible, and institutionally capable partner able to generate solutions when state mechanisms lag or suffer from insufficient bandwidth.

Ukraine's experience reveals the emergence of a new social institution — the civic defence sector — whose functions extend far beyond traditional volunteerism and include logistics, innovation, analytics, policy development, advocacy, state interaction, and military training.

1. NGOs as Unique Instruments for Defence Sector Development

Since 2014 — and especially after 2022 — Ukrainian NGOs have driven change in areas traditionally closed to civil society, including defence procurement, transparency and accountability, military training, technological innovation, digital solutions, cyber defence, and anti-corruption mechanisms.

During crises, they delivered speed and quality of response unattainable by the state, while simultaneously building sustainable long-term models.

2. Ukrainian NGOs Possess Advanced Capabilities in Critical Areas

The analysis confirms the professionalism and institutional maturity of organisations working in a diverse range of specialisms, including but not limited to:

- Advocacy and dialogue: cooperation with NATO and EU, defence sector reforms
- Military training and education: instructors' schools, specialist training
- Innovation and technology: drones, command systems, R&D, IT solutions
- Strategic communications: combatting disinformation, cognitive warfare, public opinion
- Humanitarian and psychological support: support for military personnel and their families, rehabilitation and reintegration

These capacities do not merely "fill gaps"; they constitute a systemic national-level resource.

3. High Potential but Threatened Sustainability: Critical Underfunding

Despite its proven effectiveness, the civic defence sector remains financially vulnerable. Declining domestic donations and unstable grant funding puts in jeopardy the capacity built up between 2014 and 2026. In particular, such loss would erode institutional memory, slow reforms, and increase transaction costs for the state.

Potential areas for donor engagement include:

- **Institutional development** — support for new or growing institutions to address gaps identified during the sector mapping process.
- **Capacity building** — investment in leadership development, analytical capacity, and sector-specific expertise within designated organisations.
- **Coalition-building** — support for platforms that bring these institutions together into a unified, functional ecosystem (including coalitions, coordination hubs, and joint programmes).
- **Monitoring, evaluation and knowledge sharing** — funding for joint monitoring, evaluation, and inter-institutional learning processes to enhance the maturity of the overall system.
- **Seed funding for underfunded areas** — identifying thematic gaps (for example, logistics, doctrine development, military education) and funding pilot projects or establishing new institutions in these fields.

4. Demand for Scaling and Trust

Ukrainian NGOs possess unique legitimacy, trust and access: they work simultaneously with the military, state institutions, and society. Their solutions rely on field data and adhere to the highest transparency and project management standards.

The research confirms that:

- The sector is ready for institutionalisation and growth
- NGO models integrate well into state reforms
- NGO investment equals investment in European and transatlantic security
- Real potential significantly exceeds available resources
- NGOs provide an additional entry point for our partners in the knowledge exchange areas and the mutual capabilities strengthening. Alongside the G2G (government-to-government) format, there is engagement in a "government–civil society organisations" format, as well as cooperation between civil society organisations themselves.

For this reason, the document calls for a significant increase in international financial support and stronger knowledge exchange. This support will use the gained experience and strengthen its resilience, professionalism and ability to scale.

1. Civil Society as a Defence Sector Strategic Partner

Since 2014, and especially after 2022, Ukraine has had to rethink every element of its security. Threats evolve faster than regulations. Technology moves faster than institutions. War moves faster than administrative cycles.
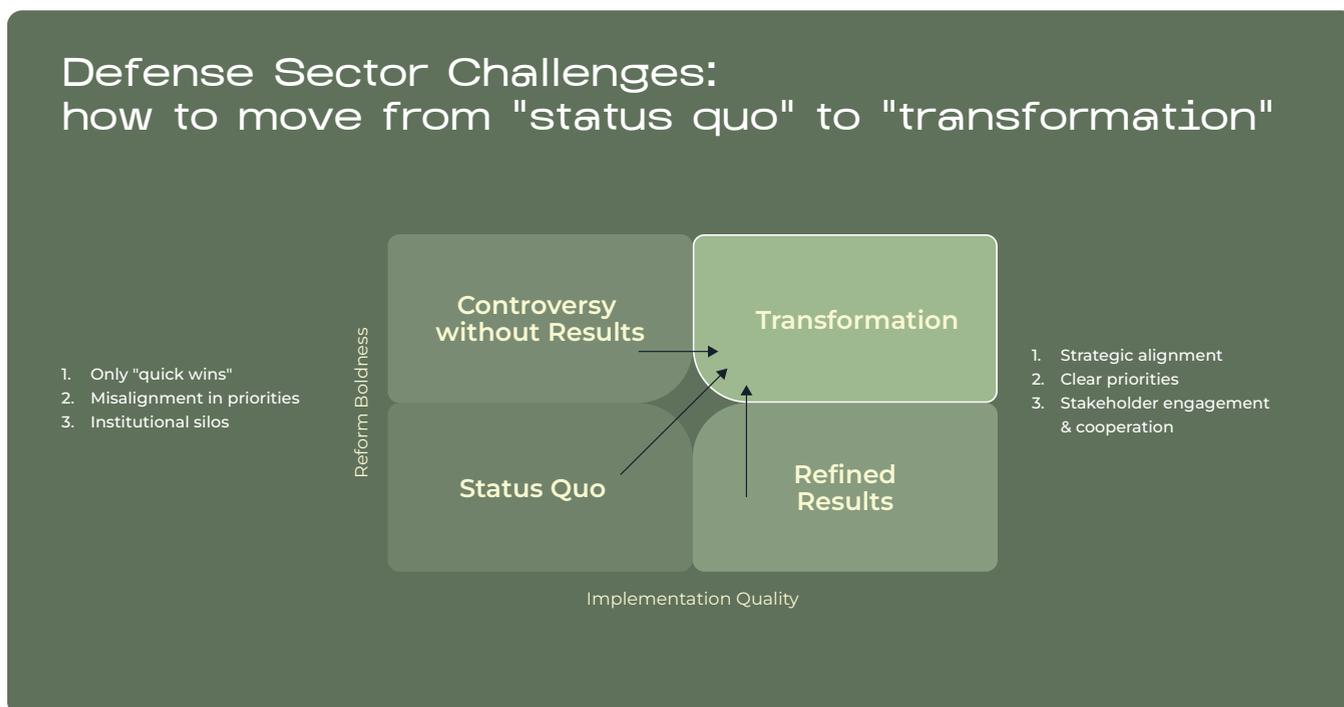
Yet deep transformation remains extremely difficult, even when the political will exists and the war pressure is existential.

The root problem is institutional. As a post-colonial and post-Soviet state, Ukraine inherited a system in which policy formation took place in the imperial centre, while implementation — including rule-making — occurred locally. State institutions did not historically perform the full political cycle: problem identification, options analysis, consultation, decision-making, implementation and evaluation—was never historically embedded within national state institutions.

In peacetime, this produces slow reform. In wartime, it creates strategic vulnerability.

Civilian and military leaders are necessarily absorbed by operational imperatives: conducting the war, coordinating assistance and responding to daily threats. Little space remains for long-term planning, capability development and systemic reform. Even reform-minded teams entering the Ministry of Defence or the Armed Forces operate within narrow "windows of opportunity" before institutional resistance reasserts itself.

In such an environment, change often reduces to legal formalism—the adoption of laws and passing of executive orders—rather than comprehensive governance, culture and capabilities redesign.

Defense Sector Challenges:
how to move from "status quo" to "transformation"

- Reform Boldness
  - Controversy without Results
  - Transformation
  - Status Quo
  - Refined Results
- Implementation Quality

1. Only "quick wins"
2. Misalignment in priorities
3. Institutional silos

1. Strategic alignment
2. Clear priorities
3. Stakeholder engagement & cooperation

For this reason, Ukraine's situation differs fundamentally from that of most NATO member states, and it therefore requires a distinct change theory —both for domestic reformers and for international partners.

Civil Society as Ukraine's Strategic Advantage

Between 1991 and 2026, public trust in state institutions remained consistently low. As a result, horizontal mobilisation—local initiatives, volunteer networks and civic associations—became the primary mechanism for responding to threats.

According to a February–March 2025 Razumkov Centre survey, public trust in the Armed Forces of Ukraine stands at 93.5 per cent; in the State Emergency Service, 85.5 per cent; and in volunteer formations, 85.5 per cent. In August 2025, the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology reported trust in the President at approximately 58 per cent. By contrast, trust in the judiciary and prosecution service remains at around 20 per cent or lower, and in the Verkhovna Rada (Parliament) between 11 and 18 per cent.

Historically, where trust in formal state structures is low or fragmented, citizens rely on social ties, informal associations and horizontal cooperation. During revolutions, societal crises and wartime, these networks have ensured resilience and rapid support for critical sectors.

Systemic change in Ukraine has therefore rarely originated within the state apparatus. Decentralisation, public finance reform, healthcare, anti-corruption policy, public procurement, education and digital governance were driven by coalitions of civic activists, analysts, reformers and international partners. The state followed.

For many years, the security and defence sector remained the final bastion of the old logic—closed, opaque and largely insulated from civilian influence. Russian aggression rendered change unavoidable.

From 2014 onwards, and particularly after 2022, veterans, volunteers, independent experts and grass-roots leaders increasingly filled the policy-making vacuum in the security sphere. They did more than criticise: they designed solutions, participated in working groups and led joint initiatives with the state and international partners. This period can be divided into distinct stages of interaction between Ukrainian civil society and the defence sector.

2. Civil Society Development Stages as a Defence Resource

1. The Revolution of Dignity (2013–2014): The Mature Civic Sector Emergence

The Maidan movement generated a new political culture: self-organisation, horizontal governance, volunteer logistics and security functions. Civil society became an autonomous political actor with its own principles and infrastructure.

2. The War Outbreak (2014): Defence NGOs Mobilisation and the Rise

The Crimea annexation and hostilities in Donbas triggered mass mobilisation. Civil society responded to acute institutional gaps in military support. The first defence-oriented civic structures emerged: Aerorozvidka, Army SOS, volunteer battalions and volunteer logistics networks.

This phase produced two lasting outcomes:

◆ It formed a core of expertise that would drive defence innovation between 2022 and 2025.

◆ It established public trust in civil society as an effective solution source.

A volunteer phenomenon emerged: thousands of people took on the task of supplying the armed forces where the state failed to organise support swiftly.

The first specialised civic defence structures appeared: Aerorozvidka (active since 2014; registered as an NGO in 2020); Армія SOS (2014); Hospitallers, a volunteer medical service (2014); the first tactical training centres, including "Boryviter" (2014–2015 as instructor groups; registered as an NGO in 2022); Ukrainian volunteer army training camps (2015–2016); and foundations supplying military units, such as Come Back Alive (launched as an initiative in 2014; registered in 2015) and Serhii Prytula Foundation (2020). Advocacy organisations also formed, including Razom for Ukraine (2014). Analytical centres working in defence and security followed, notably StateWatch (with a defence focus since 2018), Centre for Defence Strategies (2020), "New Europe" Center (founded in 2017; active on NATO and security issues from 2018 to 2021), and anti-corruption organisations such as Independent Anti-Corruption Committee on Defence, NAKO (2016).

Civil society began to influence reforms in defence procurement and logistics. It provided independent monitoring, expert support, and public internal processes oversight. The civic organisations involvement helped separate lethal and non-lethal procurement categories, increase transparency, clean up procedures, and build trust with international partners.

Volunteer activity evolved into structured organisations with analytical, managerial, and advocacy capacity. Defence and security think tanks emerged. Civic organisations entered the policy cycle, moving from problem identification to solution design and sustained advocacy.

3. The Full-Scale Invasion (2022): Rapid Expansion

New actors are emerging across all areas of the defence sector, while existing initiatives are becoming increasingly formalised. For example, Snake Island Institute (2025) specialises in defence research, international advocacy, and analytical support for Ukraine–US relations. Equally illustrative is the "Serhii Sternenko Community" Charitable Foundation, which has evolved from individual volunteer efforts into one of the influential actors in the field of defence support and Serhii becoming in 2026 an advisor to the new Minister of Defence.

At the same time, there has been rapid growth and institutionalisation among existing charitable foundations and civil society organisations, including the Come Back Alive Foundation, the Serhiy Prytula Charity Foundation, and Boryviter. New, powerful organisations have also entered the scene, such as Victory Drones (2022), Dignitas Fund (2023), alongside hundreds of medium-sized and thousands of small charitable foundations. Civil society organisations are becoming not only assistance suppliers, but also actors shaping defence policy.

Ukraine developed a model without precedent in Europe: defence as a shared function of state and society.

4. The New Defence Ecosystem Formation (2022–2025)

The state institutions, business, volunteers and NGOs synergy created a system in which society functions as a defence base. Civic actors now influence NATO standards, technological solutions, training, fortifications and international advocacy.

Over three decades of independence, Ukrainian civil society evolved from predominantly protest movements into mature institutions. Under full-scale war conditions , it became a central pillar of the national defence ecosystem. War did not weaken society; it accelerated institutionalisation. The state and civil sector learned to act concurrently and in tandem, modernising the security system together.

This experience is unique. Effective cooperation between state and civil society has become a decisive factor in Ukraine's survival and lays the foundation for a new European security model based on partnership, openness and shared responsibility.

Institutionalised cooperation now includes formal mechanisms. A notable example is the Public Anti-Corruption Council under the Ministry of Defence—an independent advisory body whose membership was selected through nationwide voting via the Diia application, with over 30,000 participants.

Public demand for reform also led to the creation of the Ministry of Defence Reform Office, which frequently acts as a bridge between the state, civil society and the defence expert community. Independent experts and NGOs now participate in advisory, supervisory and expert bodies across the security sector, integrating external expertise into strategic planning, procurement reform, anti-corruption oversight and institutional development.
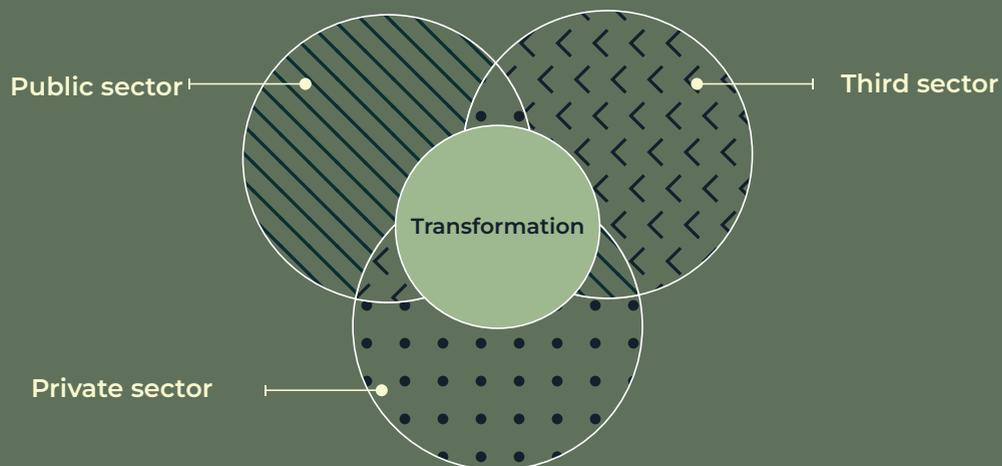
Despite their systemic impact, international support for these actors remains limited. With few exceptions, Western assistance flows almost exclusively through state institutions, overlooking the non-governmental infrastructure essential for sustainable reform.

This is a strategic error.

These actors have demonstrated their capacity to:

◆ develop evidence-based policy;
◆ conduct world-class war scenarios, resilience and the future battlefield analysis;
◆ create horizontal platforms linking the state, military, veterans, experts and partners;
◆ design and pilot new educational and leadership programmes in security.

The Golden Triangle of Partnership:
a driver of successful transformations in Ukraine

Public sector

Third sector

Transformation

Private sector

In the Ukrainian context, they are not mere watchdogs. They are embedded reformers—the most flexible, innovative and value-driven security architecture element.
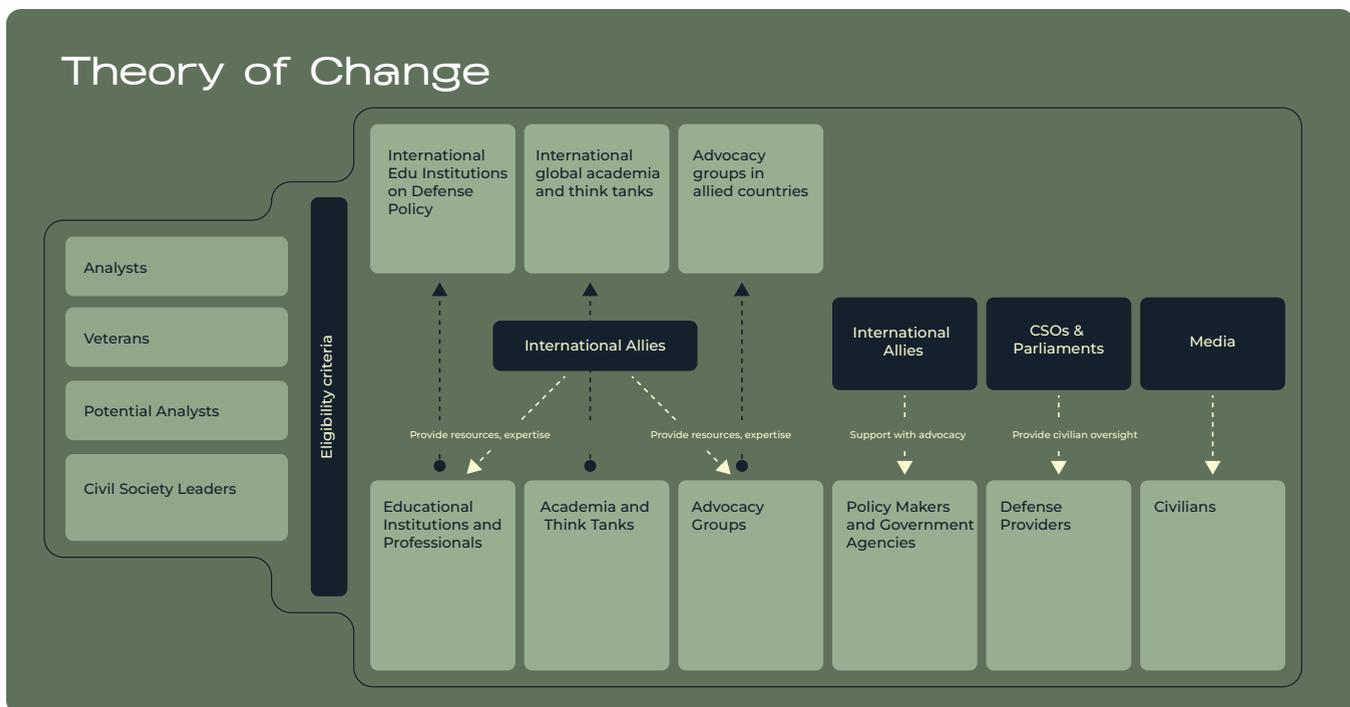
Theory of Change: Bottom-Up Security

The traditional Western reform model, in which the state is the sole change driver, does not deliver results in Ukraine in the short or medium term. A different logic is required—one that recognises the actual role of civil society and builds political capacity from the ground up.

The core theory of change is as follows:

People → Policy → Advocacy → Policymakers → Security Providers → Security Outcomes First, invest in people: veterans, analysts, experts and civic leaders.

Next, develop evidence-based, context-specific policy solutions. Then conduct advocacy grounded in analysis rather than slogans.Thereafter, influence decision-making. Only then will the Armed Forces effectiveness, the defence industry and the broader security system increase.

Theory of Change

This model challenges the state-centric approach. In Ukraine, reform moves horizontally, not vertically. Strengthening non-governmental actors is not an auxiliary measure—it is reform itself.

A critical theory component is the educational institutions and analytical centres development. Without a strong intellectual infrastructure, policy remains reactive, improvised and vulnerable to populism

3. Civil Society Actors Driving Change*[1]

Table of organizations in alphabetical order

BRDO	**CACDS**	**Center for Defence Strategies**	**Frontier Institute**
MoD reforms	Defence Analysis	Black Sea Security	Mobilization
Regulatory Policy	Defence Industry	Defence Analytics	Demography
	Defence Export	Strategic Research	

Frontline Reforms	**NAKO Anticorruption Sanctions Advocacy**	**New Geopolitics Research Network**	**Price of Freedom**
Military Reforms	MoD reforms	Geopolitics	Air Defence
Reforms Enforcement	Regulatory Policy	International Analytics	Advocacy

Pryncyp	**Sahaidachnyi Security Center**	**Snake Island Institute**	**StateWatch**
Veteran Policy	Defence Analytics	Defence Analytics	State Monitoring
Reintegration	Advocacy Defence	Advocacy (USA)	Defence Procurement
	Ecosystem Building		

[1] From over 40 organisations operating in the security and defence sphere, the authors selected 12 for in-depth analysis. The selection criteria included organisations with a range of thematic expertise and forms of engagement, but all exhibited proven results, as well as systematic engagement with the military, state institutions, and international partners.

BRDO (Better Regulation Delivery Office)

brdo.com.ua

About the organisation

The Better Regulation Delivery Office (BRDO) is one of Ukraine's leading policy teams established on 14 December 2015 working at the intersection of defence digitalisation and deregulation. Since the start of the full-scale war, it has focused on helping the Ministry of Defence and the wider security sector replace paper-heavy, fragmented processes with secure, data-driven systems that scale in wartime. It brings together more than 150 experts in economics, law, public administration, sectoral regulation and defence policy. In 2024, BRDO established a dedicated Defence Policy sector, now one of its largest practice areas. It works to simplify regulation and digitalise processes in the defence sector.

Its mission is to design public policy that transforms Ukraine into a European democratic state with effective governance and a strong economy. BRDO focuses on regulatory simplification, digital solutions, legislative harmonisation with EU standards and sustainable development.

Focus areas

- Defence policy
- Regulatory reform
- Agriculture
- Construction
- IT and telecommunications
- Energy

Current activities

BRDO works on legislative reform related to mobilisation, digital military records, procurement and defence industry development, including the Defence City framework.

In partnership with the Ministry of Defence, BRDO has:

- Supported the launch of digital defence services, including the Reserve+ and Oberig (12M registered individuals; 13 state-registry integrations) streamline mobilisation data and updates.
- Assisted in scaling the DELTA situational awareness system.
- Contributed to the creation of the Unified State Register of Service Personnel with a Military ID digital ecosystem.
- Helped implement DOT-Chain Defence, a digital marketplace for transparent accounting and logistics of defence equipment.

Key figures:

- 1 million service personnel use Army+.
- 1,700+ military units use Army+ for submitting reports, 49 report templates and 900,000+ reports processed, saving commanders an estimated 800,000 hours and eliminating up to 20M paper forms annually
- 6 million users have joined Reserve+.
- 10,000+ vacancies are listed for reservists in Reserve+.
- BRDO also develops legislative solutions and conducts analytical and advocacy work in defence reform.

Selected achievements

1. Reserve+ A mobile application used by over six million citizens. It replaces the paper military ID and enables users to update records and apply for deferments online.

2. Army+ A digital service that has streamlined administrative procedures for service personnel, including leave, assignments and assistance requests, significantly reducing bureaucracy.

3. Defence City (2025) A new legal framework for Ukraine's defence industry adopted in August 2025. It introduces tax incentives and simplified export rules to accelerate industrial development and modernisation.

Areas for cooperation

- **Legal "Kung Fu"**: legal support, regulatory and legislative solutions; legal process re-engineering.
- **Digitalisation**: state registers, digital public services, and information protection; IT solutions for logistics, mobilisation, and management; cloud technologies and cybersecurity.

Process Re-engineering:

- procedures simplification and deregulation;
- Military units optimisation and interaction; regulatory instruments analysis to assess their expediency and proportionality;
- regulatory and legislative acts amendments

advocacy in order to accelerate processes; expedited decision-making pathways creation to address critical needs.

Defence Reforms:

- defence and security policy development;
- mobilisation processes, personnel and technological requirements analysis; recommendations preparation for the Government, Parliament, and international partners; expert support for the transformation of the sector in accordance with NATO standards.

"Since the full-scale invasion, we have been developing digital solutions for the defence sector that simplify procedures, remove regulatory barriers, and create opportunities for businesses, primarily within the defence and security sphere. When Ukraine's partners support projects aimed at strengthening our defence capability, it enhances and improves our defence-industrial complex, while also reinforcing the defence capabilities of partner countries. Also, they become acquainted with new technologies that have been tested in combat conditions. The solutions we are developing together will contribute to a shared security shield for Ukraine and its allies within the European Union."

Oleksii Dorogan
CEO, BRDO

Taras Yemchura,
Head of Defence Policy,
BRDO

CACDS (Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies)

cacds.org.ua

About the organisation

The Centre for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (CACDS) is an independent research organisation founded on 6 May 1999. It promotes democratic civilian control over the security sector and produces independent defence analytics. Valentyn Badrak has led the organisation for over 26 years.

CACDS starting point for growth and the influence strengthening were three key factors:

- access to international practices in security and defence research;
- Ukrainian arms market and the systemic defence challenges profound understanding;
- an objective need to establish an independent institution capable of producing high-quality analysis and influencing state defence policy.

Its mission is to produce high-quality independent analysis to support reform, democratic oversight and the development of Ukraine's defence sector.

Focus areas

- Security and defence analytics
- International policy
- Propaganda and counter-propaganda, cybersecurity and media engagement
- Defence industry reform
- Civilian control over the armed forces
- Automation of unmanned systems and AI

Current activities:

- Feasibility study on potential private military companies in Ukraine
- Analysing Russia's economic capacity to sustain long-term war
- Studying technological warfare transformation
- Evaluating Defence Forces of Ukraine reforms to new organisational and staffing structures, how it may secure advantages over the adversary — in particular with regard to manoeuvrability, unit autonomy, and the speed of decision-making.
- Analysing defence-industrial adaptation to the demands of modern war, including the "drone revolution" and public engagement on Ukraine's defence industry agency and strategic autonomy.

Selected achievements

1. In 2017 CDACD acted as one of the founding members of the Public Union "League of Defence Enterprises of Ukraine" (LDEU). This contributed to the industry consolidation that was fragmented and lacked a unified voice in its State dialogue. The League significantly strengthened public–private partnership, securing the participation of private companies in public procurement, support for indigenous developments, and access to external markets. This created the conditions for the emergence of modern Ukrainian unmanned aerial systems, EW systems, protected vehicles, and radar solutions.

2. In 2021 CDACDS established Defense Express, an information and consultancy company. It helped support LDEU activities serving as a key public platform for: weapons reviews; Russian and Ukrainian technologies analysis; strengthening international communication regarding Ukraine's needs.

3. In December 2025, CDACDS, together with theUkrainian National Academy of Sciences, under the leadership of its Vice-President, Academician Volodymyr Horbulin, completed a study examining the 2022–2025 Russo-Ukrainian war impact on conventional weapons on the battlefield.

4. 2019–2020, CDACDS provided information and analytical support to the First Vice-President of the Ukrainian National Academy of Sciences, Academician Volodymyr Horbulin, in the preparation of his book, *How to Defeat Russia in the Future War*

Areas for cooperation

◆ Military-technical cooperation
◆ Joint rearmament and modernisation research

"Over the past decade, we have searched for asymmetric responses to Russian aggression. The war has confirmed that these innovative solutions, as 80–90 per cent of the resistance mounted by the Defence Forces of Ukraine, have been delivered precisely through the innovative solutions described."

Valentyn Badrak,
Director, CACDS

Center for Defence Strategies (CDS)

Центр оборонних стратегій | Centre for Defence Strategies

defence.org.ua

About the organisation

Centre for Defence Strategies (CDS) is an independent Ukrainian analytical organisation that brings together leading Ukrainian and international experts to address urgent security and defence challenges, develop relevant strategies and capabilities, and advance key reforms. The organisation registered as a legal entity on 24 July 2020.

CDS delivers projects that combine analytical and intelligence-informed research, conceptual documents for security and defence institutions, policy recommendations for the Government of Ukraine and partner governments, and advocacy and public engagement aimed at sustaining international support for Ukraine. They have also worked within the Crimea Platform framework and conducted sustained diplomatic, advocacy and strategic communications activities.

Since 2022, CDS has published a daily security brief with a distribution exceeding 2,000 recipients. Between 1,300 and 1,400 readers consult the digest each day — approximately 38,000 per month. Its audience includes globally recognised experts in strategy and military affairs such as Sir Lawrence Freedman and Konrad Muzyka; leading think tanks including the Institute for the Study of War; foreign ministries in the US and the UK; diplomatic missions; foreign military officers; major universities such as Stanford and Columbia; and journalists from global media outlets including The NYT, Agence France-Presse, The WSJ, Financial Times, Bloomberg and Le Monde. Both The Guardian and The Daily Telegraph rely on the digest daily in preparing their coverage.

The Centre's first major output was the Black Sea and Azov Sea region comprehensive security assessment. CDS shared it with Ukrainian Parliament committees, the international expert community, NATO structures and military representatives of partner countries.

Focus areas

- Strategic analytics
- Advocacy and international diplomacy
- Public communication
- Confidential engagement with decision-makers

Current activities

Over the past year, CDS has:

- Developed a new air defence paradigm, elements of which were implemented by MoD and General Staff.
- Proposed an integrated strategic approach to convert battlefield dynamics into political gains.
- Advanced deterrence concepts and future forces, partially shared on RUSI site.
- A pan-European deterrence strategy published in Foreign Affairs magazine that does not treat Ukraine as separate from Europe, promotes deterrence by denial, identifies priority areas for cooperation, and provides the requisite capabilities for such operations .
- Submitted Black Sea strategy recommendations to the European Commission.
- Developed "functional defeat" concept — preventing an adversary from achieving its aims despite retaining significant capabilities. Strategic framework covered in Carnegie article.

1. Prominent media presence: CDS voice is audible and influential, with articles and commentary published in leading publications. Within a relatively short period, it has developed recognised expertise and experience in effective strategic communication.

2. Crimea Platform — Security in the Black Sea Region: an international coordination and consultative format initiated to return the Autonomous Republic of Crimea (and the city of Sevastopol) issue to the international agenda, protect human rights in the temporarily occupied territories, facilitate de-occupation, and strengthen European and global security. Outcomes:

3. Following the August 23, 2021 summit, a permanent office of the Crimea Platform was established in Kyiv.

4. Several thematic conferences have been convened, including the first Black Sea Security Conference on 21 April 2023.

5. The Platform's expert network has advanced recommendations concerning a new security architecture for the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov, with international participation.

6. An international coalition of participating states formed to support Ukraine and condemn the Crimea occupation.

Areas for cooperation

- ◆ Strategic doctrine
- ◆ Black Sea security
- ◆ International defence cooperation
- ◆ Policy recommendations and advocacy

"The Ukrainian expert community and civil society contribute significantly to the security and defence strengthening, as well as to Ukraine's interests advancements in the international arena. They possess invaluable experience and have earned a strong reputation among Western think tanks, political and expert circles, and the media. This experience and activity are directed not only towards the pursuit of their own state's interests, but also towards the Free World reinforcement, of which Ukraine is an integral part."

Oleksandr Khara,
Executive Director, CDS

Frontier Institute

frontier.pro-mova.com

About the organisation

The NGO "PRO.MOVA FRONTIER" (Frontier Institute, FI) focuses on transforming Ukraine to secure its place in the free world. It operates at the intersection of strategic challenges arising from life on the edge of uncertainty and danger. The organisation registered as a legal entity on 7 November 2019.

Publicly, FI presents itself as an independent, cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary centre. It brings together analysts, civil society organisations, businesses, religious communities, public authorities and civic actors to examine strategic challenges jointly and develop responses. It designs solutions to strengthen Ukraine's democracy, security and social cohesion in conditions of high uncertainty and risk.

Its core objectives are to support democracy, social cohesion and transformation, and to increase security and accountability within the public sector.

The Institute established its public defence track in 2024 in response to the need for strategic reflection on the war and its impact on public institutions. It analyses civil–military interaction, studies mobilisation processes, and examines population resilience and human capital as drivers of defence and development.

Focus areas

◆ Security and national resilience
◆ Demography and migration
◆ Transformation of public service

Current activities

In 2025, the Frontier Institute:

◆ Conducted the second mobilisation study phase, examining personal experiences. The EDGE Foundation under the Supporting Adaptive Defence Reforms in Ukraine (SADR) project helped with the study.

◆ Developed a cross-sectoral "Security and Resilience" platform to create solutions that strengthen national defence capacity and endurance in the face of threats.

FI helps security and defence stakeholders broaden their perspective by integrating external contexts and civilian insights.

1. Comprehensive mobilisation study

The Institute conducted an in-depth study of why individuals decide to join the armed forces. It identified key fears and barriers, explained the principle of human-centredness, and demonstrated how the integration of civilian experience reshapes the military.

The study examined citizen–state relations through personal and historical experience and proposed hypotheses on how the defence system can build effective engagement based on societal knowledge.

This work offers tools to develop an adaptive, human-centred model of interaction between the army and society, thereby creating strategic advantage on the battlefield.

2. Strategic dialogue series on demography and migration

The Institute convened hundreds of participants from government, civil society, business, academia and culture to address Ukraine's demographic challenges, assess policy options and evaluate their long-term implications.

Areas for cooperation

◆ Research on national resilience, mobilisation, human capital and citizen–state relations
◆ Cross-sectoral cooperation and expert community-building
◆ Advocacy for security and defence reform

"Security decisions must be properly contextualised; otherwise, the transaction cost of implementation may become prohibitive. The Frontier Institute's task is to reconcile the complexity of different landscapes with the effort required to achieve strategic objectives."

Yevhen Hlibovytskyi,
CEO, Frontier Institute

Frontline Reforms

 FRONTLINE REFORMS

[frontline-reforms](#)

About the organisation

Frontline Reforms is an independent NGO specialising in the strategic security and defence reforms design, advocacy and implementation, grounded in practical experience. Registered as a legal entity on 16 April 2025.

Its purpose is to ensure continuity in systemic change. Its mission is to strengthen societal resilience through effective and sustainable defence reform. In partnership with state institutions, Frontline Reforms implements transformations aimed at reinforcing Ukraine's defence capability.

Focus Areas

- Reform design, advocacy and implementation.
- System-level legal protection of service personnel
- Analytics: Strategic forecasting, research and policy documentation
- Defence Education and Training
- Defence structures institutional strengthening
- Countering cognitive war and influence

Current Activities

Reform

- Drafting modern statutes for the Armed Forces of Ukraine based on field research
- Advancing the AFU's robotic transformation
- Developing solutions to reform military education
- Reforming defence procurement, including anti-corruption initiatives

Legal Protection

- Coordinating the adaptation mobilised personnel course implementation in Armed Forces training centres. Initiated by the Office of the Military Ombudsman
- Recruiting, training and organising lawyers to work with new recruits in training centres

Future Directions

- Artificial intelligence in security and defence
- Training capabilities: professional development programmes for future leaders in the security and defence sector, including veterans
- The cognitive dimension: research on hostile influence targeting specific social groups — women, mobilised personnel partners and families of missing persons etc. State policy recommendations development to counter cognitive attacks

Selected Achievements

1. Study: Strengthening Ukraine's Defence Capabilities through Civil–Military Cooperation in Education

The team completed a comprehensive study examining Ukraine's military education system, current state and development trends . The research covered military academies, reserve officer training departments within civilian universities, and civic and private initiatives.

The analysis assessed the legal and regulatory framework, the educational process set up, civil–military interaction, and the curricula alignment with contemporary security challenges and wartime experience.

The study also examined civil–military education models in NATO member states and Israel to identify the most suitable one for Ukraine. The team cooperated with the MoD Reform Support Office, Ukrainian Reform Support Fund, along with the United Kingdom's Special Adviser on Defence.

2. Adaptation Course for Recruits

Viktoriia Dvoretska, Frontline Reforms Director, coordinates the Military Ombudsman's initiative to introduce the AFU training centres adaptation course, launched spring 2025. Before beginning formal military training, recruits receive instruction in psychological resilience, Ukrainian history, financial literacy, service personnel rights and obligations, and international humanitarian law. The course has demonstrably reduced AWOL rates at the early service stages.

Civil society organisations, state institutions and volunteers contribute to the initiative's design and delivery, including: Boryviter, Pryncyp, Lawyers Hundred, The Ukrainian Red Cross Society, The Azov Chaplaincy Service, The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and others.

Areas for Cooperation

- Security sector reform recommendations development
- Expert support in the defence projects implementation
- Joint advocacy of policy solutions developed with partners
- Co-authored analytical products, research projects and reform roadmaps
- Organisation of consultations, seminars and conferences
- System-level legal military personnel protection through reform rather than individual casework

"Rapid decisions buy time; sustainable reforms win long wars. We focus on long-term outcomes — reforms that establish new rules of engagement and endure changes in political cycles or war phases through institutional continuity and accumulated capacity. Such durable transformations shape defence capability for years and decades. They reduce systemic risk and enable the defence sector adapt to new threats rather than merely putting off the fires."

Viktoriia Dvoretska, Director, Frontline Reforms

NAKO

NAKO
TI UKRAINE · TI-DS

About the organisation

The NGO "Independent Anti-Corruption Commission" (NAKO) specialises in analysing, identifying and mitigating corruption risks, particularly in national security and defence. It registered as a legal entity on 3 January 2019. NAKO began its work in 2016 within Transparency International's Defence and Security Anti-Corruption Programme, where it carried out analytical and expert work to increase transparency in the defence sector.

NAKO's primary objective is to reduce corruption risks in areas critical to Ukraine's national security: defence, security procurement and the transparent functioning of the defence ecosystem. It is neither a law enforcement body nor a state agency. It operates as an independent NGO through research, ratings, analytics and advocacy.

In 2016, with international support, NAKO became the first NGO to engage systematically in defence sector reform and demonstrate that the sector could open itself to anti-corruption oversight. Following Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022, defence became central to NAKO's work and prompted its strategic expansion.

Focus areas

◆ Anti-corruption in security and defence
◆ Good governance
◆ Sanctions policy, including research on foreign components in Russian weapons
◆ International advocacy and Ukraine's reputation protection
◆ Public oversight in defence institutionalisation

Current activities

◆ Anti-corruption analysis and MoD reforms monitoring
◆ Legislative improvements in defence procurement
◆ Corporate governance reform of the defence industry
◆ Identification of foreign components in Russian weapons and support for sanctions enforcement
◆ International advocacy with the US, EU and partners
◆ Strengthening institutional dialogue and public oversight
◆ "Defence Talks" serves as a strategic communications and advocacy platform, opening key issues in Ukraine's defence sector to the international community. Including covering areas of support akin to the Danish model.

Selected achievements

1. Ukroboronprom Corporatisation

initiated a large-scale reform of the country's most toxic and closed defence conglomerate. It has since undergone a transformation from a reputationally compromised state giant into a more transparent and accountable structure. The objective has been to establish an integrity-driven, modern, and efficient defence industry compatible with NATO standards.

A supervisory board was established; annual independent international audits were introduced; corporatisation was carried out, including the transition from a state concern to a joint-stock company; a compliance office and risk management systems were launched; and transparent competitions for senior management positions were implemented with public participation.

This marked the first instance in which Ukraine's defence-industrial complex approximated NATO and EU best practices.

2. Sanctions impact on Russian supply chains

NAKO identified foreign components in Russian missiles, drones and tanks. Objective:

to block technological supply chains to the Russian Federation and to strengthen international sanctions. Over 60 companies cited in its reports were later included in sanctions packages. A direct contribution to weakening the Russian "war machine."

3. 2019 Presidential Questionnaire NAKO

used the presidential election as an opportunity to secure commitments on defence reform. The objective was to integrate key anti-corruption and governance reforms into the candidates' policy agendas.

Actions taken: 16 candidates completed NAKO's analytical questionnaire; the future President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, publicly endorsed the reform-oriented positions.

Impact: a number of these commitments were subsequently implemented, including the MoD Defence Procurement Agency establishment; the state concern Ukroboronprom corporatisation; and the incorporation of defence sector reforms into the official policy of the new Government.

4. "Bohdan" vehicles corrupt procurement and Svinarchuk–Hladkovskyi scheme exposure

NAKO, together with journalists from Bihus.Info, uncovered one of the largest corruption schemes in the country's defence sector. The objective was to halt unlawful procurement practices and ensure accountability for those responsible.

NAKO was the first to include the individuals concerned in its reports and provided journalists with analytical materials. The investigation gained nationwide attention, and the procure-ment was suspended. Oleh Hladkovskyi (formerly Svinarchuk) and his accomplices in the embezzlement scheme became publicly identified as key figures in the case.

The scandal altered the political discourse, undermined trust in the old political elite, and became one of the contributing factors to the electoral changes of 2019. Corruption in the defence sector began to face clear and public societal intolerance.

5. Additionally NAKO was also involved in the Public Anti-Corruption Council under the Ukraine MoD set up

NATO promotion and EU recommendations development on transparency in information classification and state secrets regime reform; support for strengthening parliamentary oversight within the defence sector.

Areas for cooperation

◆ Security and defence sector reform
◆ Security Service of Ukraine and the Ministry of Internal Affairs reforms. Civil service and the sphere of state secrets (in compliance with standards of good governance and human rights).
◆ Sanctions policy
◆ Global governance standards in defence

"A strong, accountable and transparent defence sector in Ukraine is a key pillar of European and Western security and democratic stability."

Olena Tregub, Secretary General, NAKO

New Geopolitics Research Network

newgeopolitics.org

NG

About the organisation

The New Geopolitics Research Network (NGRN) is an independent, non-partisan analytical initiative established on 18 August 2023. It brings together researchers, analysts, journalists and intellectuals to examine transformations in geopolitics, international security and global order. Its mission is to create both offline and online platforms for the ideas exchange, analytical conclusions, and research findings concerning key developments in international politics and the security environment.

The organisation focuses on a comprehensive analysis of the new "hybrid" reality, combining academic approaches with applied policy analysis in the global and regional security field.

In 2024, NGRN co-initiated the Consortium for Defence Information (CDI) with CACDS and Defence Express, evolving into a recognised defence-analytical institution. As a result, NGRN rapidly evolved from a platform for expert exchange into an analytical institution with a well-developed network of partnerships, actively contributing to defence-analytical discourse in Ukraine.

Focus areas

- Analytics: Russian military strategy, war consequences, China's geopolitics, defence technologies, including unmanned systems, space security, and cybersecurity.
- Geopolitics and defence in a broader strategic context.
- Legal and strategic expertise.
- Next-generation warfare and evolving military and geopolitical processes.
- International expert cooperation.
- Media and information security.

Current activities

NGRN analyses long-term scenarios of the Russia–Ukraine war (including political and military forecasts for the US, EU and China. European strategic autonomy (in light of the current NATO crisis). For example, NGRN experts have observed that "European armed forces must have their own command structure… and Ukraine may serve as the vanguard of this new defence architecture."

The network is likewise concentrated on unmanned systems. One of the network director's most recent publications is the Drone-Centric Warfare report (ICDS, January 2025), which examines the role of drones in contemporary warfare. It studies hybrid threats, cyber operations and societal resilience including in cooperation with international partners (for example, projects aimed at countering disinformation and ensuring energy security).

Selected achievements

1. Cooperation with the Romanian think tank New Strategy Center:

Between 2022-2024, NGRN, together with Romanian experts, implemented a number of research projects. These included the first two years of the war in Ukraine analysis, forecasting Russian tactics and recommendations for the European Union, as well as AI impact and unmanned systems on the conduct of hostilities study.

2. Consortium for Defence Information (CDI):

The consolidation of NGRN with CACDS, Defense Express, and other organisations resulted in the Consortium. Since late 2024, CDI has been issuing weekly confidential analytical reports ("Reflections"), which are circulated among the highest levels of military and political leadership.

CDI has published Defence Aspects Vision in the Domestic Victory Plan document, which was submitted to relevant parliamentary working groups. This initiative has already strengthened the link between NGRN and Ukraine's senior military leadership, notably through regular meetings and data exchange.

3. European Drone Consortium:

NGRN participated in an unmanned systems project funded by the Visegrád Group countries (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary) together with Ukraine. The objective is to forecast drone technologies development up to 2040 and to identify risks and opportunities for Ukrainian technologies integration. Although the project remains ongoing, preliminary outputs (including forums and reports) have already received positive feedback within the expert community and are shaping avenues of cooperation between Kyiv, the EU, and NATO in the field of unmanned aerial systems.

4. Educational programmes for young professionals:

In cooperation with leading Ukrainian universities specialising in international relations — including Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv and National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy — NGRN conducted several months-long training courses for aspiring analysts. Participants attended online sessions and research-based practical seminars employing modern analytical methodologies and open-source intelligence tools. The most successful participants received

offers to join permanent analytical teams. This programme fostered the development of analytical skills among young professionals and laid the groundwork for the formation of a new generation of specialists.

Areas for cooperation

- Joint research on military doctrine and defence technology -ranging from the forces employment to the combat formation capabilities and the military equipment requirements.
- Defence industry innovation and development.
- Multinational strategic forums -similar to CDI for the data exchange of and joint strategic documents. Key partners may include countries of Central and Eastern Europe (notably Visegrád and NATO partners), government agencies, as well as universities and engineering companies to facilitate technology transfer.
- Technology transfer partnerships.

"Our think tank regards geopolitics as a comprehensive instrument for analysing global and regional processes. On the basis of political, military, economic, informational, energy, infrastructural, geographical, psychological, and other dimensions, it is possible to crystallise trends for specific countries and regions, as well as individual nations. Such a holistic approach makes it possible to forecast developments not in a linear manner, but with due regard to the maximum range of variable factors."

Mykhailo Samus,
Director, NGRN

Price of Freedom

proof.org.ua

About the organisation

The Price of Freedom is an NGO established on 20 November 2024 to address air defence challenges. It's a response to Ukraine and Europe's systemic vulnerability to aerial threats, in particular the mass missile and drone attacks launched by the Russian Federation. The organisation's point of departure was the recognition that Ukraine's air defence is not merely a matter of national security, but one that directly affects the security of the entire European space.

The organisation emerged at the intersection of civic advocacy, security expertise, and international diplomatic engagement. Its formation drew upon established contacts with military, diplomatic, and governmental institutions, as well as prior experience in mobilising foreign partners in Ukraine support, including the international advocacy experience of its founder, Lesia Orobets.

Focus areas

- Countering aerial threats - drones, missiles
- Safety guarantees for Ukraine via integrated air defence strategy with NATO and EU partners

Current activities

Sky Shield & DroneWall Strategy -the organisation advocates an integrated air defence system combining:
- SkyShield — coordinated protection of Ukrainian (and potentially NATO) airspace
- DroneWall — comprehensive counter-drone defence

Its objective is to demonstrate that protecting Ukraine's airspace also enhances European security.

Selected achievements

1. SkyShield rally in Paris

More than 900 participants attended a major public event supporting SkyShield, increasing political attention in France. The event featured experts, military representatives, parliamentarians, and members of civil society. Impact: The initiative drew the attention of French parliamentarians, who began to advocate more actively for the SkyShield concept. It significantly intensified discussions regarding the importance of protecting Ukraine's airspace — and, potentially, Europe's — in the context of ongoing Russian drone and missile attacks.

This case demonstrates that even civic initiatives are capable of mobilising hundreds of supporters and influencing the political agenda in a key partner country.

2. International advocacy engagement

The Price of Freedom actively communicates its ideas and participates in public discussions involving decision-makers at the level of the EU and NATO. For instance,major international public events (including the Halifax International Security Forum, 2025). Media publications and commentary promoting SkyShield as a European security project. Official updates disseminated via its website and social media platforms.

This enables the organisation to move beyond the confines of Ukrainian domestic discourse and to contribute to European-level security debates concerning air defence and collective security.
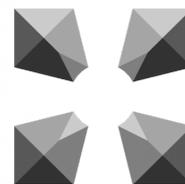
Areas for cooperation

- ◆ Support for Sky Shield and air security **-**Partnership programmes with research centres and defence institutes. Joint analytical outputs assessing air defence systems and models of collective defence.

- ◆ Counter-drone technology research-expert data on technologies, counter-UAV systems, and operational models (DroneWall).

- ◆ EU and NATO advocacy - joint events, round tables, and presentations for the governments and parliaments. Coordinated campaigns aimed at strengthening the SkyShield concept within the security agenda.

- ◆ Strategic communication initiatives - media projects and educational defence initiatives for the wider audience.

"The Price of Freedom in Ukraine is an advocacy think tank working on specific security issues. In the context of ongoing challenges, it is precisely well-founded argumentation and sustained international dialogue that are capable of directly influencing the partners' political decisions,"

Lesia Orobets,
Founder, Price of Freedom

Pryncyp

About the organisation

The Human Rights Centre "Pryncyp" is a civil society organisation that protects the legal rights of service personnel, veterans and their families, and advocates systemic reform in the relationship between defenders and the state. It registered as a legal entity on 23 January 2023.

The organisation emerged in response to Russia's full-scale invasion and the Masi Nayyem, its co-founder, personal combat experience. After being wounded in 2022, he publicly called for institutional — rather than ad hoc — support for military personnel and veterans.

From its inception, Pryncyp prioritised advocacy while building its own analytical capacity to influence defence and veterans' policy. It places the human dimension at the centre of defence reform.

Its mission is to uphold the rights and dignity of service personnel and veterans through analytics, advocacy and legal support.

Focus areas

◆ Military track: human capital development, personnel policy and military careers, healthcare access and fitness-for-service systems, service personnel's rights
◆ Veterans' track: state veterans' policy, with emphasis on healthcare, social protection and justice

Current activities

Pryncyp strengthens defence-oriented human capital through education, advisory support and services for service personnel and veterans. In 2025, it prioritised: patronage services, psychological support for service personnel, military personnel and veterans services digitalisation, state programmes for families of wounded veterans, veterans' healthcare improvement, new veterans' legislation.

A core activity, implemented without donor funding, supports military personnel directly. This includes improving the "wounded pathway", strengthening patronage services and developing digital personnel management tools. The organisation is also expanding psychological support systems for service personnel.

In 2026, Pryncyp plans to launch a government programme to support families providing long-term care to veterans and to introduce comprehensive medical check-ups for veterans. It continues expert work on the draft Code on the Protection of Statehood, Independence and the Status of Defenders, intended as a framework law for a modern veterans' support system.

Selected achievements

1. Military reporting system reform

In August 2024, the Ministry of Defence adopted Order No. 531 "On the Approval of the Procedure for Organising Work with Service Members' Reports within the Ukraine MoD ." It regulates the service personnel time limits for the reports consideration, a prohibition on refusing to accept reports on formal grounds; safeguards applicable to all paper-based reports; rules and obligations imposed on commanders in respect of electronic reports. Pryncyp contributed to drafting and supporting the order. For the first time during the war, service personnel gained a unified, transparent and digital communication mechanism with command structures.

2. National Veterans' Strategy

"Pryncyp", together with its partner civil society organisations — Veteran Hub, Lawyers' Hundred, Opportunity Space, and the Ministry of Veterans Affairs of Ukraine, contributed to the Veterans Policy Strategy development. Its conceptual foundation was the State Veterans Policy Concept presented in 2023.

On 29 November 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine approved the Veterans Policy Strategy to 2030 and adopted an operational action plan for its implementation in 2024–2027. This cornerstone document is intended to deliver comprehensive reform and the sustained development of state veterans policy in Ukraine. For the first time, it formally recognises and provides targeted support for veterans' families.

3. "Legal Navigator" platform

Launched in 2023, this digital platform provides clear legal guidance for service personnel, veterans and their families. It includes a web version and mobile applications. More than 300,000 unique users have accessed the platform. In 2025, Pryncyp launched English, Spanish and Portuguese versions for foreign nationals serving in Ukraine.

4. Pro Bono legal community

Pryncyp developed a targeted online course in military law for lawyers assisting wounded personnel and veterans. Graduates provide free consultations for three months. More than 100 lawyers have completed the programme, delivering over 1,500 consultations and securing substantial compensation payments for service personnel.

Areas for cooperation

- Human capital development and protection in defence - career support, healthcare, especially around disability and injuries, their families support
- Protection of fundamental rights during military service
- Veterans' policy reform
- Digital services
- Defence and veterans' analytics and advocacy

"Russia's existential threat to Ukraine will persist for years. Defence will become the profession of millions. We must strengthen protections for every individual in service, enhance the prestige of military and reserve careers, and ensure dignified reintegration into civilian life."

Liubov Halan,
Co-founder and Chair,
Pryncyp

Sahaidachnyi Security Center

sahasec.org

About the Organisation

The Sahaidachnyi Security Center is an independent Ukrainian think tank, established on 19 August 2024 in response to the urgent need for a new generation of expertise in Ukraine's security and defence sector. It was founded to address a structural deficit in high-quality defence analysis and a persistent failure to recognise Ukraine's decisive role in the European and global security architecture.

The Centre brings together experts with backgrounds in public sector reform, international relations, advocacy and management. As part of Ukraine's civic sector, the team has focused its efforts on transforming the security and defence domain, recognising its central importance to the country's future.

SSC mission contributes to sustainable security in Ukraine and globally. The Centre supports Ukraine in securing its rightful place amid profound geopolitical shifts by advancing policy analysis, advocacy, strategic communications and education as instruments of influence.

The Centre operates at the intersection of institutional development in the security and defence sector and war analysis, including Russia as a strategic threat and total defence approaches. It combines these priorities with strategic international engagement, particularly with the Nordic-Baltic region and the United Kingdom.

Focus Areas

◆ High-quality analysis in defence and international security
◆ International advocacy, with particular focus on Northern Europe
◆ Building a resilient defence ecosystem through education and expert community development
◆ Development of total defence and Russian studies

Current Activities

1. Advocacy

The Centre leads the "North–South Axis: Ukraine–NB8" advocacy initiative, aimed at building a common security platform and deepening defence and technological cooperation between Ukraine and the Nordic-Baltic states. The project includes a series of forums across Northern Europe to examine Ukraine's resistance, defence models, the shared Russian threat and potential joint responses. These forums foster durable political, military and expert-level ties.

A parallel strand counters persistent myths about Russia's war against Ukraine through targeted strategic communications campaigns, including on social media.

2. Research

The Centre analyses the impact of emerging technologies on modern warfare and defence innovation. Particular attention is given to in-depth study of Russia as a systemic threat to both Ukraine and NATO, including grey-zone warfare, potential trajectories of Russian state development, the nuclear dimension of its strategy, and the theory of Russia's terminal defeat.

It also examines the Ukrainian and Nordic defence capabilities and industries integration, developing proposals for deeper joint defence approaches. Additional research focuses on the role of civil society in Ukraine's defence sector and recommendations for international partners.

3. Education

Strengthening the Defence Ecosystem through Education SCC invests in defence education, notably through its flagship course "Defence Sector:

Change Makers 2.0", designed for professionals seeking a structured introduction to defence policy

and terminology. The programme covers military concepts, national and NATO defence planning, defence industry functioning, strategic communications and civil–military relations.

Bilateral Ukrainian–Nordic total defence programmes are also under development.

Selected Achievements

1. Building a Defence Community and a New Generation of Professionals

The Centre brought together more than 300 representatives from the public and non-governmental sectors through its educational, analytical and advocacy projects, forming the nucleus of a new defence community. Recognising that, in wartime, large numbers of civilian professionals without specialised defence education were entering the sector, the Centre launched four targeted educational programmes.

The programmes "Defence Sector: Change-Makers", "Policy Making: From Problem to Solution", and a dedicated youth course established lasting horizontal links between the state, civil society and manufacturers, while preparing a new generation of professionals capable of working on defence policy, reform and analysis at a high professional standard.

2. International Advocacy for Ukraine's Interests

In its first year of operation, the Centre carried out 22 international advocacy missions across 13 countries in Europe and North America, engaging directly with government officials, international organisations, expert communities and the media. More than 6,400 key stakeholders were involved in direct engagement, strengthening understanding of the war against Ukraine as part of a broader threat to European and transatlantic security.

3. The Everywhere-War Tracker and Research on Russia

The interactive platform Everywhere-War Tracker is the first comprehensive database and map to monitor, from 2022, all forms of Russia's sub-threshold (hybrid) warfare against NATO countries. The Tracker clearly demonstrates that cyber-attacks, sabotage, subversion and information operations are not isolated incidents, but elements of a co-ordinated state strategy aimed at undermining Europe's security. It is already being used as both an analytical and advocacy tool in engagement with international partners.

In parallel, the Centre developed comprehensive scenarios for Russia's future up to 2032, which have served as the analytical foundation for a series of closed expert discussions in the United States and across Europe.

4. Contributing to European Security Policy and Building Co-operation with the Nordic Countries

SSC made a direct contribution to the shaping of European defence policy by preparing a Ukrainian analytical submission to the EU White Paper on Security and Defence. The Office of the European Commissioner for Defence Policy requested it and upon the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" invitation. At the same time, it developed one of the most in-depth bodies of expertise in Ukraine on the Nordic countries and models of defence integration between Ukraine and its northern partners. This expertise is now utilised by both public authorities and civil society.

5. Rethinking Civil–Military Interaction and the Concept of Total Defence

The Centre was among the first organisations to conceptualise the unique phenomenon of Ukrainian civil society organisations engaged in supporting the front line and advancing defence reforms, as well as new models of civil–military interaction under wartime conditions. This work resulted in the study "Resilience in Wartime: An Analysis of the Experience of War and the Resilience of Ukrainian Society", which serves as a practical guide for societies in other countries that may face Russia's aggressive policies. It also produced a series of analytical publications mapping civil society actors in the defence sector and offering recommendations for improving international co-operation between

Ukrainian civil society and international partners.

Areas for cooperation

◆ Developing the defence ecosystem through educational programmes for professionals in the security and defence sector and related fields.

◆ Deepening expertise on the NB8 and Northern Europe, and sustaining long-term expert and analytical ties through joint training courses, study visits and defence forums.

◆ Advancing Russian studies and analysis of the Russian threat, including the joint approaches and deterrence strategies development , as well as continued support for the Everywhere-War Tracker.

◆ Researching contemporary warfare, hybrid threats, and the transformation of defence policies and institutions.

◆ Developing total defence approaches in Ukraine, drawing on Ukraine's own experience and international best practice.

"Ukraine is engaged in total war, requiring society as a whole to shift into a total defence mode. In these circumstances, the central task is to deepen integration between the military and civilian components, while strengthening horizontal ties within the community actively supporting the front line and the process of defence reform."

**Lesia Ogryzko,
Director, Sahaidachnyi
Security Center**

Snake Island Institute

snakeisland.org

About the organisation

Snake Island Institute (SII) is an independent Ukrainian organisation strengthening the Ukrainian-American security partnership. It operates through strategic advocacy and diplomacy, battlefield-validated analysis, defence technology testing and innovation, and clear communication of modern defence solutions. It was formally registered on 7 May 2025.

The starting point for the organisation establishment in 2024 was a clear recognition that Ukraine's co-operation with the United States had for years been somewhat ad hoc — lacking strategy and systematic follow-up — which fostered mistrust against the backdrop of Russian propaganda.

The founders' personal experience and understanding of the American context revealed a clear vacuum: while most countries maintain established institutions and professional lobbyists, Ukraine lacked an authoritative point of entry.

Why "Snake"? The symbolism of the name was inspired not only by the island's heroic story in 2022, but also by its broader meaning as a symbol of resistance, strategy and a key security location in the Black Sea.

Research conducted in 2024 confirmed two central hypotheses: first, that a serious institution was needed to work with the United States systemically; and second, that those most trusted in Washington — Ukrainian military personnel — had to be directly involved. This led to the creation of the Snake Island Institute as an effective bridge between Ukraine's defence sector and the United States, representing the interests of the military and working closely with a number of AFU units.

Focus Areas

- Strengthens the strategic security and defence partnership between Ukraine and the United States, transforming Ukraine's battlefield experience into shared practices and solutions.
- Conducts advocacy and diplomacy, including US visits, Congressional briefings and advocacy campaigns to influence political decisions
- Battlefield-validated analysis: produces analytical reports and research grounded in the combat experience of Ukrainian service personnel.
- Defence technologies and innovation: tests technologies in real-world conditions and supports the development of local technological solutions.
- Advocacy: establishes direct channels between key international defence stakeholders, Ukrainian military units, and the defence institutions of partner countries.
- Analysis: assesses capability gaps and emerging technologies, and distills lessons for future military doctrine, drawing on up-to-date battlefield data.
- Defence Tech: produces a monthly briefing — Defence Tech Monthly — covering threats, technological developments, and the operational situation in Ukraine's defence sector.

Current Activities

- Shaping a U.S. strategy on Ukraine and Russia – the team prepares recommendations on how to build a systematic and coherent approach.
- Positioning Ukraine within the U.S. Congress, Senate and Administration – developing concrete proposals on "what to do and how to do it", enabling the United States to make decisions based on clear models and Ukraine's practical experience.
- Analytical research – examining how to structure co-operation, which mechanisms are effective, and what should be adjusted.
- Technology acceleration – fast-tracking the development and deployment of Ukrainian defence-tech

solutions.

- Air defence focus – a strong priority area for advocacy and technical co-operation.
- Fundraising – to increase the Ukrainian military personnel number of visits to the US and other partner countries, and to strengthen their voice on key security platforms.

Selected Achievements

1. In-Depth Analytical Research on Military Achievements

The SII produces applied analysis grounded in the combat experience of Ukraine's Defence Forces. These studies:

- document tactical and operational successes;
- examine why specific decisions proved effective;
- translate battlefield lessons for Ukraine's strategic partners.

The analytical materials are used in advocacy efforts, briefings for international partners, and as a foundation for further technological and doctrinal development.

2. Defence Tech Monthly Digest

Defence Tech Monthly is the Institute's regular analytical publication, combining:

- an overview of key battlefield threats;
- analysis of technological shifts within Ukraine's defence sector;
- monitoring of operational activity and military adaptation.

The digest enables partners to navigate the dynamics of the war swiftly, understand which technologies are scaling and which are falling away, and identify emerging windows of opportunity for co-operation.

3. Battlefield Innovation Showcase

The Battlefield Innovation Showcase was a high-impact event held 25 September 2025, Lviv at which service personnel acted as technology presenters they had developed and tested in combat conditions. Rather than participating as attendees, military personnel took the stage as creators and field-testers of their own technological solutions.

Key outcomes:

- 10 military teams demonstrated innovations developed directly on the front line;
- showcased solutions included drone automation systems, electronic warfare tools, autonomous ground interceptors, and other combat technologies;
- presentations were before a jury of military commanders and defence industry experts.

As part of the competition, USD 22,000 in grants were awarded to accelerate the most promising solutions development and deployment, in co-operation with Defence Tech and the 3rd Army Corps. The event was organised by the Snake Island Institute in partnership with AB3 TECH, Women in Defence Tech, and the 3rd Army Corps.

Areas for cooperation

- Ukrainian–American Security Advocacy: positioning Ukraine as a solutions source rather than merely an assistance recipient, advancing advocacy efforts grounded in military resources and frontline experience.
- Battlefield-Driven Analysis and Strategic Decision-Making: transforming Ukraine's combat experience into analytical products that shape partners' policies, procurement decisions, and technological priorities.
- Defence Innovation: supporting technologies born on the front line rather than in laboratories detached from military feedback.
- Ukraine–U.S. Co-operation Platforms: participation and Ukrainian side engagement in: regular high-level events; closed expert networks; and joint programmes linking the armed forces, business, and analytical communities.

"Snake Island Institute is not just another think tank; it is a mechanism for integrating the front line into international defence policymaking, strengthening Ukraine's position as a strategic actor in transatlantic security."

Maryna Hrytsenko,
Executive Director of the
Snake Island Institute.

StateWatch

About the Organisation

StateWatch is an independent think tank that consolidates public institutions, civil society and international partners, providing influential analysis to strengthen effectiveness and accountability. Date of registration: 26 February 2015.

Over time, StateWatch has evolved into a policy-oriented analytical centre that not only monitors public expenditure but also influences policymaking in the fields of defence and sanctions infrastructure. The organisation has contributed to the establishment of key institutions — from the National Agency on Corruption Prevention to the Asset Recovery and Management Agency — and has supported the implementation of transparency mechanisms, including electronic asset declarations and reforms to recruitment systems within law enforcement bodies.

Among its tangible achievements are the monitoring of defence procurement, assessment of the implementation of state anti-corruption programmes, and analysis of the scale of asset confiscation from the aggressor state, which has secured substantial revenues for the state budget. In this way, StateWatch translates analysis into real-world impact and contributes to building effective and accountable institutions.

Although StateWatch was registered in 2015, the period after 2018 marked a turning point in its development:

◆ 2015 – organisation set up with a focus on local issues Bila Tserkva city;

◆ 2018 – focus grew to national-level issues, accompanied by rebranding and a new strategic direction: defence procurement analysis, state-owned enterprises and the healthcare sector;

◆ Post-2022 – sanctions-focused project Trap Aggressor launch and an OSINT module to analyse Russian assets and sanctions evasion mechanisms, significantly expanding the organisation's role within the security sphere;

◆ 2024 – internal modernisation: the governance model update, analytical team strengthening, and the rebranding beginning — transitioning from a "watchdog" to a classical policy think tank.

Today, StateWatch is a team of more than 20 analysts, combining research, investigations, OSINT and advocacy to strengthen Ukraine's resilience and security.

Focus Areas

◆ Sanctions policy
◆ State-owned enterprises
◆ Defence procurement

Current activities

Defence Procurement Monitoring — StateWatch

◆ Monthly State Rear Operator's procurements monitoring. StateWatch systematically reviews publicly available data, identifying best practice as well as risks, procedural weaknesses and irregularities.

◆ Policy recommendations. The organisation formulates practical recommendations for state authorities to strengthen governance and improve defence sector policy.

Sanctions Programme

StateWatch has developed a unique database of suppliers enabling Russia to circumvent sanctions through third countries.

◆ Sanctions evasion analysis. The team examines circumvention schemes, including complex transnational supply chains.

◆ Data processing and policy recommendations. Large-scale datasets are analysed to identify patterns in sanctions evasion. StateWatch produces comprehensive reports, maps and open databases, along-

side targeted recommendations for Ukrainian and EU sanctions authorities to reinforce restrictive measures against Russia.

- Cooperation with the EU and the United States. Analytical outputs directly support sanctions decision-making processes.
- Asset identification. The organisation identifies European-based assets belonging to Russian individuals involved in the war and maintains an interactive online map tracking these findings.

Engagement with Partners

- Cooperation with embassies, international missions, think tanks and foreign media.
- Exchange of data and analytical findings to enable rapid responses to emerging challenges.
- Joint projects and analytical products with NGOs and research groups.
- Collaboration with Ukrainian and international media to amplify the research and analysis public impact.

Selected Achievements

1. Advancing Reform of Defence Procurement

StateWatch has become a sustained state partner in reforming defence procurement. Since 2023, the think tank has served as an United Kingdom's Special Defence Advisor (SDA) Programme implementing partner.

What has been delivered:

- Thousands of public AFU procurements analysis;
- Comparative institutional analysis of the defence procurement system;
- Support for the development of the PartnerMoD platform to facilitate interaction between the MoD and manufacturers.

Results and impact: StateWatch's recommendations led to concrete institutional changes within the Ministry of Defence — discriminatory requirements in procurement specifications were removed; information on planned procurement nomenclature was disclosed; a department with overlapping functions was reorganised; and digital solutions supported by StateWatch have reduced corruption risks, accelerated processes, and strengthened institutional accountability.

2. Influencing Sanctions Policy Against the Russian Defence Industry. StateWatch conducted a systematic Russian FPV drone manufacturers and the component base underpinning their production study

What has been delivered

- Identified 56 Russian FPV drone manufacturers whose products were documented on the battlefield;
- Supply chains mapping, including the use of foreign components;
- Analytical report submitted to Ukrainian and international partners preparation.

Results and impact: following research publication, a number of identified manufacturers were added to sanctions lists in Ukraine and EU member states.

3. Unique Database on Sanctions Evasion via Third Countries

StateWatch has developed a large-scale analytical database of suppliers and sanctions-evasion schemes.

What has been delivered:

- A unique database of companies and intermediaries supplying goods to Russia via third countries set up;
- Key sanctions-evasion routes (Asia, the Middle East, and certain EU jurisdictions) identified;
- Compilation of a substantial evidence base for further advocacy.

Results and impact: the data are used to support the international sanctions coalition analytically. Materials are being prepared for presentation at the international level, including to high-level EU delegations.

4. Russian Weapons Foreign Components OSINT Identification

StateWatch has conducted OSINT-based analysis of the technological dependencies of Russia's defence-industrial complex.

What has been delivered:

◆ Specialised OSINT unit established;

◆ Russian weapons systems foreign components identification (UAVs, electronics, navigation equipment);

◆ Development of an interactive asset map on the StateWatch website.

Results and impact: StateWatch's analysis is used to strengthen export controls, support the case for new sanctions packages, and inform international partners about vulnerabilities in existing sanctions regimes.

Areas for cooperation

◆ Centralised Defence Procurement: independent monitoring and risk assessment of centralised defence procurement processes. Supplier integrity screening and market analysis.

◆ Policy Advising in Security and Defence: support on defence procurement policy and policy briefs.

◆ MilTech Market Research: Russian and global MilTech markets, Ukraine's UAV, FPV and technology scaling markets, technological trends and vulnerabilities.

◆ Partnerships with Media or Analytical Centres (Visual Track): visual policy briefs, pagers, reports and presentations.

"We support defence procurement reform and analyse sanctions policy against the aggressor in order to counter both internal and external threats to Ukraine."

Anastasiia Khymychuk, Head of StateWatch.