

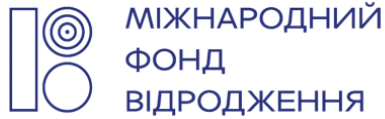


POLICY PAPER

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT A STRATEGY

WHO ARE UKRAINE'S
STRATEGIC PARTNERS?

HANNA SHELEST



STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT A STRATEGY

The research is conducted by the Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" as a part of the Think Tank Development Program supported by The International Renaissance Foundation.

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3MICT

Introduction

4

WHAT DOCUMENTS SAY

6

CRITERIA OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

9

REALITY TEST

12

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

19

Introduction

The legislative and doctrinal definition of Ukraine's strategic partnership has always been flawed. The lack of clear criteria and approaches to defining strategic partnership was aggravated by the divergence in definitions in different documents and layered over circumstantial definitions by heads of state. In Ukraine's foreign policy, the concept of strategic partnership was never properly finalised, leading to an excessive expansion of the list of Ukraine's "strategic partners" in the past.¹

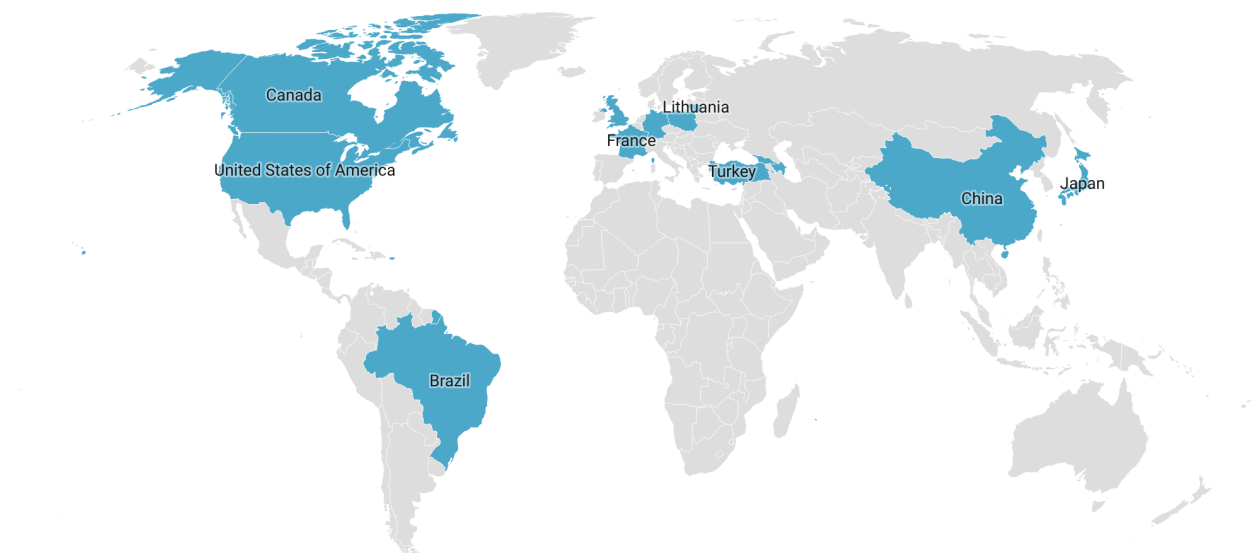
In the early 2000s, almost 40 countries could be considered strategic partners of Ukraine based on statements from different officials.

The problem was that neither reality of bilateral relations, nor agreements, or domestic regulatory documents backed the "strategic" status for most of them. Ukraine did not have an approved foreign policy strategy, and the documents that did exist only defined the foundations of foreign policy while not setting actual priorities.

The change of doctrine in recent years based on a number of approved domestic strategic documents — including the National Security Strategy and the Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine — and a well-defined foreign policy course were expected to add clarity to the criteria for Ukraine's strategic partnership. On the contrary, these new documents expand nominal categories of partnership, leading to a lack of a clear vision or hierarchy of relations and adding unnecessary semantics without proper definition.

Ukraine's Strategic Partners

As identified 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy



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Comprehensive cooperation of strategic nature, strategic partnership, special partnership, global partnership — these are just a handful of definitions used by the authors of strategies.

This research will not look at strategic partnership with the EU and NATO — integration into these two international organisations is determined as Ukraine's key foreign policy vector. Instead, this research will focus on bilateral relations with individual countries that the respective strategies list as Ukraine's strategic partners. This research attempts to analyse possible criteria for strategic partnership and the vision of the key features of strategic partnership in Ukraine and to test it against the *status quo* based on selected criteria.

WHAT DOCUMENTS SAY

The 1993 Verkhovna Rada Resolution on the Main Areas of Foreign Policy of Ukraine² was essentially the first document of independent Ukraine that outlined the key priorities and substance of Ukraine's foreign policy. Among other things, it offered the following definition of Ukraine's strategic partners:

"Foreign policy efforts should constantly aim at having the neighbouring countries to form a reliable belt of peace and stability around Ukraine. In this context, every state Ukraine shares a border with is its strategic partner."

As of 1993, only the neighbour-states along Ukraine's border were considered strategic partners. The resolution marked no difference between the different neighbour-states. Africa, Asia, and Latin America were described as "strategically important", but no countries there were mentioned as strategic partners.

The **2010 Law of Ukraine on the Fundamentals of Domestic and Foreign Policy³** was the next document that defined the key vectors of foreign policy. Amended in 2014-2018, it remains in effect to this day. Apart from cementing what is known as Ukraine's "non-bloc status", the original version of the law did not identify any vector as strategic.

The 2015 National Security Strategy⁴ was the first document after the Revolution of Dignity and the declaration of a clear-cut European and Euro-Atlantic course that offered some understanding of which countries were determined as Ukraine's strategic partners. It listed the US and China as strategic partners to different extents:

"Globally, Ukraine looks at deepening strategic partnership with the US as a guarantor of international security in the Euro-Atlantic space based on the US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership from December 19, 2008, as its key foreign policy priority. Ukraine will aspire to strategically develop partnership interaction with other states that are key centres of influence, including China."

Other regions were outlined in general phrasing without singling out specific countries or relations of higher priority.

For now, we can look at the **2020 National Security Strategy and 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy** as the two current documents that define the fundamentals of Ukraine's foreign policy and clearly list the countries characterised as Ukraine's strategic partners. Both documents divide countries into groups, applying different

² Verkhovna Rada Resolution on the Main Areas of Foreign Policy of Ukraine, 2.07.1993, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/3360-12#Text>

³ The Law of Ukraine on the Fundamentals of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1.07.2010, <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/2411-17#Text>

⁴ Presidential Decree No287/2015 On the National Security and Defense Council Decision on the Strategy of National Security of Ukraine dated 6.05.2015, 26.05.2015, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/2872015-19070>

terms to them. None of the two strategies defines the difference among these groups. Moreover, some countries ended up in different groups in these two strategies.

The 2020 National Security Strategy of Ukraine⁵ outlines two groups of the countries of strategic importance for Ukraine. Art. 35 names the first group as it highlights

*“comprehensive cooperation with the United States of America, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Federal Republic of Germany and the French Republic that is of **priority and strategic nature** for Ukraine and is aimed at strengthening the guarantee of independence and sovereignty, contributing to Ukraine’s democratic progress and development.”* Art. 36 describes the second group as *“Ukraine will develop a **strategic partnership** with the Republic of Azerbaijan, Republic of Georgia, Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Poland, and the Republic of Turkey to protect its national interests and strengthen regional security.”*

On the one hand, the **2021 Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine⁶** expands and updates the list of Ukraine’s strategic partners. The section titled *Developing bilateral relations. Relations of priority nature and strategic partnership* defines five different types of strategic relations covering 13 countries, including the US, the UK, Canada, France, Germany, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania, Poland, Turkey, China, Brazil, and Japan. On the other hand, the document multiplies definitions without clear differentiation of *strategic partnership* categories.

The Foreign Policy Strategy confirms the list of countries with which Ukraine has priority strategic relations. These include the US, the UK, Canada, Germany, and France (Art. 99). A section titled *Relations of priority strategic nature and the strategic partnership* seems to offer a hierarchy of strategic relations when some are of a higher priority than others. Further on, the strategy offers additional definitions of partners, using *special partnership* for Canada or *global partnership* for Japan. India is in that section too, even though relations with it are not described as strategic in the rest of the text.

While China, Brazil, and Japan are not in the main list of strategic partners in any of the two Strategies, the authors of the Foreign Policy Strategy ascribe a strategic role to these countries:

“according to international treaties, Ukraine will develop a strategic partnership with China, global partnership with Japan, and strategic partnership with Brazil” (art. 124).

⁵ Presidential Decree No392/2020 On the National Security and Defense Council Decision on the Strategy of National Security of Ukraine 14.09.2020, 14.09.2020, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/3922020-35037>

⁶ Presidential Decree No448/2021 On the 30.07.2021 Decision of the National Security and Defense Council On the Foreign Policy Strategy of Ukraine, 26.08.2021, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/4482021-40017>

Art. 4 of the Strategy says that “foreign policy efforts will focus on developing strategic relations with the key partners on the international arena, primarily the EU, NATO, and their member-states.”

This wording leads to the question: do we see every EU and NATO member-state as a strategic partner of Ukraine, or do we only see them as such in the context of their membership in these organisations?

The Strategy lists plans to accomplish strategic partnership with Moldova and Romania.

Art. 135 says that “the main priority in relations with Moldova is bringing them to the level of strategic partnership, including as part of Eurointegration aspirations of both states.”

Romania was included in the list of the countries that are already identified as Ukraine’s strategic partners:

“Relations of a strategic partnership with Azerbaijan, Georgia, Lithuania and establishing such relations with Romania are important factors of stability in Central and Eastern Europe, the region of the Sea of Azov, the Black Sea, the Baltic Sea, and the Mediterranean Sea, and an important element of European security architecture” (Art. 116).

CRITERIA OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

While these two documents have added clarity on strategic partners, they also led to additional questions.

The first question is about the criteria for qualifying countries as strategic partners.

The Foreign Policy Strategy formally defines the criteria used to choose the countries with priority strategic relations.

Art. 96 says that “the system of priority strategic relations with other countries is developed based on the priorities of foreign policy and is reflective of the special scope and nature of cooperation based on mutual interests and values of democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights.” Art. 97 specifies that “the key elements of the system of priority strategic relations are bilateral cooperation in political, security, and military spheres that is aimed at countering the aggression of the Russian Federation and strengthening resilience, among other things.”

Further analysis of relations with 13 countries (Table 2) listed as strategic partners in the Strategy shows that cooperation in the security sphere and countering Russia’s aggression, as highlighted by Ukraine, are the most challenging elements in terms of implementation.

An expert discussion⁷ identified some expectations that Ukrainian professionals have for strategic relations with partners. The expectations they mentioned were analysed and systematised into a number of criteria. The experts generally agreed on some of these criteria and had an intense debate about others.

The following **criteria** were mentioned as **possible for strategic partnership**:

- signed documents on strategic relations;
- assistance and support in countering Russia’s aggression on the international arena;
- the lack of concealed destructive influence from the partner;
- systemic support in multilateral platforms via international organisations;
- de facto concurrence of the partners’ key interests;
- sanctions against Russia;
- level of vulnerability of strategic partnership to the change of political elite in both countries;
- military-technical cooperation and respective security agreements;
- signed free trade agreements.

⁷ The author of this research held an online expert discussion in October 2021.

It is hardly possible or reasonable to define strategic partnership with all of these criteria. This may mean that Ukraine will end up with no strategic partners. For example, the US has no FTA with Ukraine. But economic cooperation alone cannot be an indicator of strategic partnership. Based on Ukraine's national interests, the security component is often equally or more important or illustrative.

European and Euroatlantic integration are clearly defined as Ukraine's national interests. Therefore, can Ukraine define support for its EU and NATO membership as a criterion for a strategic partnership? Can it expect countries like China or Brazil to support this? Probably not. What about the situation where some European countries officially do not deny future membership for Ukraine, but de facto see this as untimely and do not contribute to the integration process? Is this sufficient to remove such a country from the list of strategic partners?

The Foreign Policy Strategy lists "mutual interests and values of democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights" as criteria. But speaking of proximity in democracy and respect for human rights, for example, with China defined in the Strategy as a strategic partner, would be strange.

In previous years, different experts tried to formulate their definitions of strategic partnership. In 2011, the National Institute for Strategic Studies experts proposed "a type of interstate relations built as a consistent system of interaction of states in pursuit of common strategic objectives, interests and goals. By contrast to allied relations, a strategic partnership does not call for a strict system of political, economic, humanitarian or security commitments".⁸ It is hard to agree with this definition of strategic partnership. Firstly, allied relations primarily imply military and security tracks of relations. We say "NATO allies," but not "EU allies." Secondly, this definition of strategic partnership excessively expands the list of possible partners without offering a clear understanding of what common strategic tasks they have and how these tasks are determined.

Another definition of criteria for strategic partnership offered by experts in 2005 implies that "real strategic partnership is developed on a progressive parity basis in two and more spheres of cooperation, with existing practices and mechanisms of coordination. It is stipulated in certain interstate documents."⁹ This definition can also be now argued against. Firstly, further analysis (Table 2) shows that Ukraine has "certain interstate documents" with just three out of 13 countries identified as strategic partners in the respective Strategies. Secondly, parity is an arguable element. The element of mutuality in strategic relations calls for serious analysis on its own. It is worth considering that not all countries have the practice of identifying others as strategic partners or designing national strategic documents that could serve as

⁸ B. Parakhonsky, H. Yavorska, *Strategic Partnership of Ukraine. An analytical report*. National Institute for Strategic Studies 2011, <http://old2.niss.gov.ua/articles/600/>

⁹ Ihor Ivanovych Zhovkva. *Strategic Partnership in Foreign Policy of Ukraine*. PhD dissertation: 23.00.04 / Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University. - Kyiv, 2005

models in this context. Generally, when it comes to determining strategic partners, we rather see Ukraine's unilateral vision of a possible role of partner-states in its foreign policy.

REALITY TEST

Ukraine's relations with the 13 countries mentioned as strategic partners in the Strategies examined above were analysed following nine criteria (see Table 2 for the detailed analysis):

1. agreement on strategic partnership;
2. statement/declaration on strategic partnership or a framework agreement where relations are deemed as strategic;
3. having a strategic bilateral entity;
4. being among the top 15 partners for Ukraine in trade in goods in 2020;
5. being among the top 15 partners for Ukraine in trade in services in 2020;
6. military or security assistance to Ukraine;
7. support of the UN General Assembly resolutions on the problem of the militarisation of Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and on human rights in Crimea;
8. FTA with Ukraine; and
9. sanctions against Russia.

This analysis did not cover the important criteria of having no implicit destructive influence from the partner. Assessing the scale of “destructiveness” is subjective and may lead us into the trap of defining the partner's actions from the Ukrainian perspective exclusively. For example, Ukraine sees the ongoing construction of the Nord Stream 2 as destructive and a potential threat to its national interests. The German government sees this as purely economic and not targeted against Ukraine. While we do not assess Germany's rationale, we can ask the following question in the context of this analysis: can such conduct of Germany, coupled with the actions in favour of Ukraine's energy independence and a green transition, serve as a reason for taking a country out of the list of strategic partners?

The first criterion of **having an agreement that clearly outlines the strategic nature of relations** between states proved the most challenging one. Ukraine has signed just three agreements that are international legal acts with a clear definition of the strategic level of Ukraine's relations with a third country. These include the US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership (2008¹⁰ and updated in 2021¹¹); the UK-Ukraine political, free trade and strategic partnership agreement¹² (2020); and the

¹⁰ US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership (19.12.2008), https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/840_140#Text

¹¹ US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership (10.11.2021), <https://www.state.gov/u-s-ukraine-charter-on-strategic-partnership/>

¹² Political, Free Trade, and Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ukraine (08.10.2020), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukukraine-political-free-trade-and-strategic-partnership-agreement-cs-ukraine-no12020>

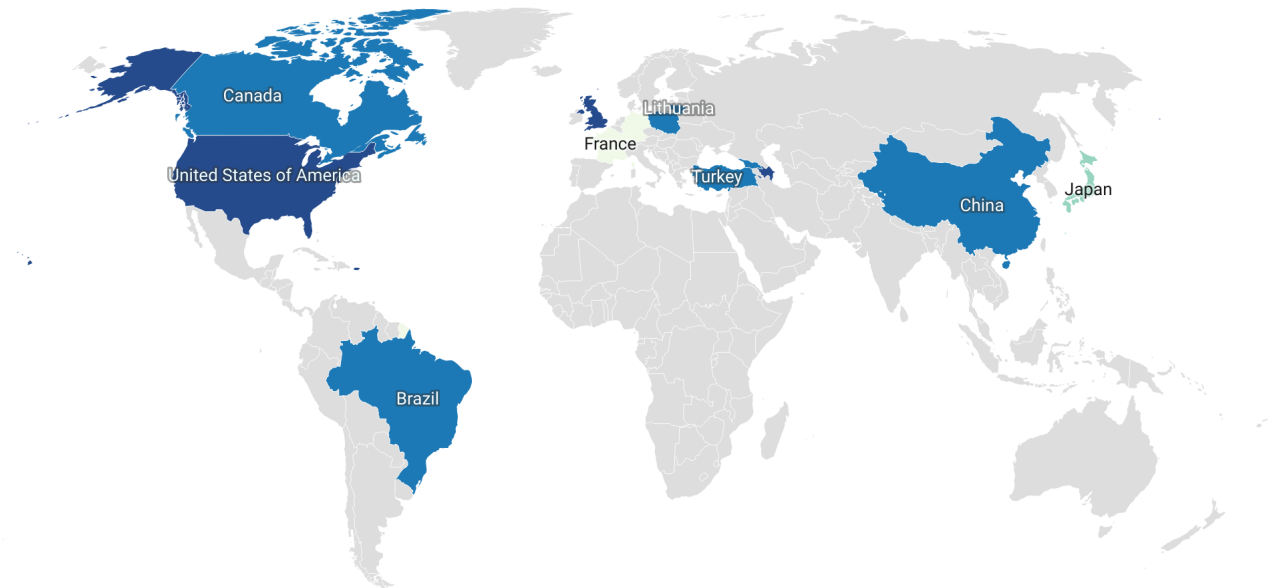
Agreement on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan¹³ (2000), where Art. 1 states that

“parties to this Agreement will develop their relations as friendly states on the basis of strategic partnership looking into the 21st century.”

Agreements that outline the strategic nature of relations with partners

As identified 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy

■ No agreements signed ■ Joint Declarations ■ Declarations on strategic partnership ■ International legal acts



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Declarations on strategic partnership with other countries remain at the level of statements, and most date back to the early 2000s. The texts are not publicly available. For example, Ukraine has such joint declarations with Canada from 1994, Poland from 1996, Azerbaijan from 2004, Brazil from 2009, Turkey from 2011, China from 2011, Georgia from 2017, and Lithuania from 2019. It has a Joint Declaration on New Partnership in the 21st Century with Japan from 2005 and has no similar declarations with France and Germany, which raises more questions about how mutual the definition of relations with them as strategic is.

Most of these declarations on strategic partnership remain at the stage of statements. In 2010, then-president Viktor Yanukovych and China's leader Hu Jintao signed a Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and Ukraine on the comprehensive

¹³ Agreement on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan (16.03.2000), https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/031_025#Text

enhancement of China-Ukraine relations of friendship and cooperation.¹⁴ Among other things, it says that

“the parties will take joint efforts to fill bilateral relations with strategic substance and launch and develop relations of strategic partnership.”

Meanwhile, the 2014-2018 Program of Developing Strategic Partnership Relations between Ukraine and China remains non-public, as does the information as to why a similar document for the next period was not signed after 2018. Moreover, while some other documents refer to the respective “directives,” as they are cited in the text, no text of the “directive” is available on the Verkhovna Rada’s website. One example is a Joint Declaration on the establishment and development of strategic partnership relations between Ukraine and the People’s Republic of China, to which the Program of Ukraine-China Investment Cooperation in Agriculture from 2017 contains a reference¹⁵.

Having a **high-level entity for interaction between states** can be an additional factor illustrating the strategic status of relations. For now, just four countries have a high-level strategic bilateral entity with Ukraine:

- Turkey: High-Level Strategic Council between Ukraine and Turkey (level of presidents) and Quadriga, a format of bilateral interaction under the 2 foreign ministers + 2 defence ministers’ formula;
- Lithuania: Council of Presidents;
- Georgia: Ukraine-Georgia High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council;
- The US: Strategic Partnership Commission.

Support in international organisations and support of the sanctions policy is extremely important in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. Most of the 13 countries we analysed have supported both the sanctions policy and the annual resolutions. Some countries listed as strategic partners are not members of the Council of Europe or the OSCE, so this analysis does not cover these organisations. Instead, it considers voting on the annual UNGA resolutions on the Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine) and on the Problem of the militarisation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

¹⁴ Joint statement on comprehensive enhancement of the level of China-Ukraine relations of friendship and cooperation between the People’s Republic of China and Ukraine, 02.09.2010, <http://ua.china-embassy.org/rus/zwxg/t737970.htm>

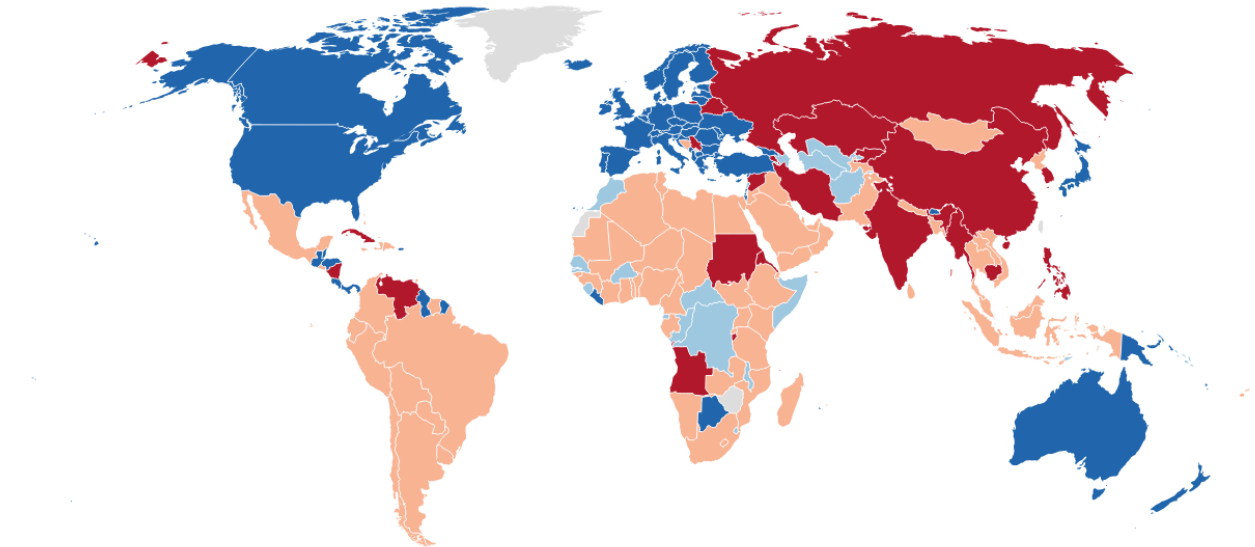
¹⁵ Program of Ukraine-China Investment Cooperation in Agriculture, 2017, https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/156_004-17#Text

In 2020¹⁶, 10 out of 13 countries supported both resolutions. Brazil abstained both times, China voted against them every year, and Azerbaijan was absent at the voting.

In 2020, 10 out of 13 strategic partners supported Ukrainian resolutions in UN

UNGA resolutions on the Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine) (2020)

■ Against ■ Abstained ■ Didn't vote ■ In favour



Brazil abstained both times, China voted against them every year, and Azerbaijan was absent at the voting

Source: OOH • Created with Datawrapper

It is important to understand that domestic problems condition the stance of some countries, as in the case of China or by concerns about damaging relations with Russia as in the case of Azerbaijan, rather than by an anti-Ukrainian approach.

The situation around sanctions against Russia for its aggression in Eastern Ukraine and attempted annexation of Crimea is equally ambiguous. Brazil, China, Turkey, and Azerbaijan were among the countries that did not support sanctions against Russia. Turkey stands out in this list as it provides security assistance to Ukraine and condemns any actions linked to the occupation of Crimea while refusing to impose sanctions because of its economic interests and concerns about seriously damaging relations with Moscow.

¹⁶ Situation of human rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine : resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2020, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3894858?ln=en> та Problem of the militarization of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine, as well as parts of the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov: resolution / adopted by the General Assembly, 2020, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3893734?ln=en>

Security cooperation and **security and military assistance** amidst the Russia-Ukraine war is another criterion. It was not assessed from the perspective of the scale of assistance or the funds spent, as this is the result of the partners' capacity. Instead, the analysis focused on the intensity and the quality of this cooperation and assistance.

The key providers of security and military assistance to Ukraine include the US (arms, training, advisors, financial support for reform of Ukraine's Armed Forces, etc.); the UK (training, Navy development, construction of naval bases and missile boats, etc.); Canada (UNIFIER mission, among other things); Lithuania (the first country that approved the provision of lethal weapons to Ukraine, etc.); Poland (training, reforms on the way to NATO, joint Ukraine-Lithuania-Poland brigade, etc.), and Turkey (joint production of drones and over 30 agreements in the military sphere, etc.). Georgia is a recipient of assistance, yet it is also actively engaged in joint security events and initiatives, especially the Black Sea and NATO-related ones. Japan finds options to help Ukraine in the area of defence too, including with the healthcare capacity of Ukraine's Defence Ministry, nuclear security and more.

The situation with France and Germany is ambiguous. On the one hand, these countries avoid providing military assistance to Ukraine. On the other hand, they engage in providing security assistance to Ukraine beyond NATO from time to time. France provides assistance and cooperates with Ukraine on developing coastal defence, while Germany engages in cybersecurity, military medical assistance, border management, and demining. Both countries are in the Normandy Four talks on resolution in Donbas, which is often seen as a reason for their reluctance to provide more serious military assistance to Ukraine so that they do not lose the status of mediators.

Azerbaijan, China, and Brazil do not provide security assistance to Ukraine. Moreover, according to the data of Ukraine's Defense Ministry,¹⁷ Ukraine and China do not have security cooperation, and their trade in arms is of a commercial rather than strategic nature.

As Ukraine's foreign policy shifts more to the economic dimension, trade and free trade agreements could be seen as an important element of a country's status as a strategic partner.

Ukraine currently has **free trade agreements** with Canada, the UK, and Georgia. As part of multilateral initiatives, Ukraine has free trade agreements with France, Germany, Poland, and Lithuania under the EU and with Azerbaijan under GUAM.

¹⁷ The official reply of the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine to the inquiry of the Ukrainian Prism Council of Foreign Policy on Ukraine's security cooperation with individual countries as of October 2021.

Out of 13 strategic partners, Ukraine had no FTA with the US, China, Japan, Brazil, and Turkey. Negotiations with Turkey have been ongoing, and statements¹⁸ have been made that an FTA is 90-99% ready for seven years now.

Six out of the 13 countries covered by this analysis, including the US, Germany, France, Poland, Turkey, and China, were among Ukraine's top 15 partners for **trade in goods** in 2020. China topped the list. Seven out of the 13 countries covered by this analysis were in the top 15 partners in **trade in services**. These include the US, the UK, Germany, France, Poland, Turkey, and China. This shows that half of Ukraine's strategic partners are not among Ukraine's key trade partners, while half of Ukraine's key trade partners do not make it into the list of strategic partners.

The table below presents trade in goods and services with the countries listed as Ukraine's strategic partners in the main documents. The table provides data for the past three years, as 2020 cannot be seen as the most indicative year because of the COVID19 pandemic (Table 1).

Table 1. Trade in goods and services, 2018-2020, USD mn¹⁹

Country	2018	2019	2020
USA	5,515.4	6,027.0	6,006.4
UK	2,348.0	2,545.6	2,547.3
Canada	527.2	434.5	403.7
Germany	8,235.5	9,251.8	8,267.7
France	2,229.9	2,546.4	2,374.2
Azerbaijan	861.4	820.4	729.2
Georgia	680.4	667.7	572.4
Lithuania	1,296.2	1,661.0	1,345.9
Poland	7,433.1	8,095.2	8,057.4
Turkey	4,631.6	5,716.4	5,436.9
China	10,084.4	13,178.0	15,739.8
Japan	990.9	1,237.3	1,277.7
Brazil	2,799.5	2,884.6	2,807.3

¹⁸ Kuleba speaks of the timeframe for signing the long-awaited FTA with Turkey, Yevropeiska Pravda, 29.10.2021, <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/news/2021/10/29/7129631/>

¹⁹ All data is based on the official statistics provided by the State Service of Statistics of Ukraine <http://ukrstat.gov.ua/> and the State Customs Service of Ukraine <https://bi.customs.gov.ua/uk/trade/>

The scale of trade offers a good illustration of why economic relations alone cannot be key in defining strategic partnership even if foreign policy takes an economic focus. It depends on the market conditions that can change under certain circumstances — as illustrated by some countries amidst the pandemic — and on the capacity of the market — even if Georgia and Lithuania exclusively focus on Ukraine in their international trade relations, they will not be able to reach the scale of China. It can also be an issue of a small range of items, such as fuels, that can create an impression of intense economic contacts thanks to their high price.

INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

Most of Ukraine's current strategic partnerships are of quite a declarative nature. Different interpretations and definitions do not deliver clarity or possible certainty about a nominal hierarchy of Ukraine's strategic partners.

The analysis of the current stage of Ukraine's relations with the 13 countries listed as strategic partners in the National Security Strategy and Foreign Policy Strategy shows a strong accent on economic and security cooperation. Support for Ukraine within international organisations and countering Russia's aggression are still the weakest elements of the partnership. At the same time, security is not always synonymous with military or military technical cooperation and providing the respective assistance to Ukraine.

Announcing some countries as strategic partners "in advance" devaluates relations with other countries that constantly prove their strategic partnership with both declarations and specific cooperation or assistance to Ukraine.

The "soft" criteria listed in the documents, including values, democracy, and human rights, remain the basis of Ukraine's chosen foreign policy course and integration aspirations rather than an important fundamental element of strategic partnership.

Without defining the criteria for strategic partnership as clearly as possible or at least explaining clearly how one type of partnership is different from another, Ukraine will find it hard to not just establish its foreign policy priorities but, more importantly, to communicate them to its strategic partners. At the same time, it is important that Ukraine's partners see such relations as strategic too.

Strategic partners of Ukraine as listed in the 2021 Foreign Policy Strategy and compliance with suggested criteria for strategic partners

Table 2

 Search in table

Country	Does it have a strategic partnership agreement with Ukraine?	Is there a statement/ declaration on strategic partnership or a general agreement where relations are deemed strategic?	Is there a bilateral strategic entity?	Does the country support UN GA resolutions on the problem of the militarisation of Crimea and parts of the Black Sea and human rights in Crimea?	Does the country provide military/ security assistance to Ukraine?	Does it have a FTA with Ukraine?	Was it among Ukraine's top 15 trade partners (goods) in 2020?	Was it among Ukraine's top 15 trade partners (services) in 2020?	Has it joined the sanctions policy against Russia?
USA	US-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership (19.12.2008) Updated version (10.11.2021)	Joint Statement on the US-Ukraine Strategic Partnership (01.09.2021)	Strategic Partnership Commission	yes	yes	no	yes, No8	yes, No2	yes
Poland	no	Joint Declaration of the President of Ukraine and the President of Poland (25.06.1996)	no	yes	yes	FTA with the EU	yes, No3	yes, No7	yes
Turkey	no	Joint Declaration on Establishing the High-Level Strategic Council between Ukraine and Turkey (25.01.2011)	High-Level Strategic Council between Ukraine and Turkey	yes	yes	expected to be signed in February 2022	yes, No5	yes, No8	no
UK	Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ukraine (08.10.2020)	no	no	yes	yes	Political, Free Trade and Strategic Partnership Agreement between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Ukraine (08.10.2020)	no, No17	yes, No3	yes
Lithuania	no	Joint Declaration of the Presidents of Ukraine and Lithuania (12.05.2008) Joint Declaration on the Development of Strategic Partnership between Ukraine and Lithuania in 2020-2024 (27.11.2019)	Council of Presidents	yes	yes	FTA with EU	no, No21	no, No31	yes
Georgia	no	Declaration on Establishing Strategic Partnership (18.07.2017)	Ukraine-Georgia High-Level Strategic Council	yes	yes	Free Trade Agreement Between the Government of Ukraine and the Government of Georgia (05.05.1996)	no, No34	no, No37	yes
France	no	no	no	yes	yes	FTA with EU	yes, No12	yes, No13	yes
Canada	no	Joint Declaration on Special Partnership between Ukraine and Canada (31.03.1994)	no	yes	yes	Canada-Ukraine Free Trade Agreement (11.07.2016)	no, No60	no, No27	yes
Germany	no	no	no	yes	no	FTA with EU	yes, No2	yes, No4	yes
Japan	no	Joint Declaration of Ukraine and Japan on New Partnership in the 21st Century (21.07.2005)	no	yes	yes	no	no, No20	no, No61	yes
Azerbaijan	Agreement on friendship, cooperation and partnership between Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan (16.03.2000)	Joint Declaration of Ukraine and the Republic of Azerbaijan (03.06.2004)	no	absent from the voting	no	Agreement on the Establishment of the Free Trade Agreement among GUAM Member-States (28.11.2002)	no, No31	no, No44	no
China	no	Declaration on Establishing and Developing Strategic Partnership Relations between Ukraine and China (20.06.2011)	no	against	no	no	yes, No1	yes, No12	no
Brazil	no	Joint Declaration of President of Ukraine V. Yushchenko and President of the Federal Republic of Brazil L. L. da Silva (02.12.2009)	no	abstained	no	no	no, No50	no, No71	no

Source: Policy paper: STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITHOUT A STRATEGY - Created with Datawrapper