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**ALLIANCE LEADERS SHOULD LEAD THEIR ALLIANCES –
A RESEARCH BASED OPINION ON THE US ROLE
IN SUPPORTING UKRAINE’S DEFENCE AGAINST RUSSIA**

The purpose of this essay is to complete a short examination of aid that Ukraine has received since the outbreak of the Russian Full-Scale invasion in February 2022. While humanitarian and military aid will be discussed, the deeper purpose of this work is the take a look at how alliance leadership has worked during this time frame. Alliance in this case means the west, as led by the United States. This includes NATO but also Ukraine itself as well as other allies globally.

The United States has been broadly supportive of Ukraine, particularly since the beginning of the current war in 2014 with the illegal Russian invasion of the Donbas

and Annexation of Crimea. This has included significant support since the expansion of the war with Russia's full scale invasion in February 2022, with the most recent event being the congressionally mandated provision of over \$60 Billion in support in April 2024.

The US also fills a special role as the lead of the western alliance, and in this light US support or lack thereof can have significant consequences. The main three examples of this are not all positive, but do represent the centrality of Washington's role. One case from 2022 was the effort by Poland to provide MiG 29 fighters to Ukraine. The second was the US using its diplomatic power and committing to provide its own supplies in order to break the logjam on provision of modern tanks to Ukraine in winter 2022-2023. The final example is the long delayed provision of US support to Ukraine in Spring 2024.

Quite simply, to say it again, the point of this essay is that the US is the alliance leader in the war to defend Ukraine. When it acts, others act. It provided an onus of security for those, especially in the Baltic States, whom it promises protection. It needs to consistently act like a leader in order to reassure allies and partners and achieve the desired end state of continued weakening of Russia and Ukrainian victory.

Prelude – 2014 to 2022.

Ukraine's military suffered for over twenty years in the long peace that followed the end of the Cold War. It famously lost its nuclear capability, but also found itself left with whatever equipment happened to be at any given military facility when the Soviet Union collapsed. Following Russia's invasion of the Donbas and seizure of Crimea in 2014, Western support to Ukraine played a critical role in building up Ukraine's capability to defend itself against further aggression (Galbraith, 2022).

From 2014 to 2016, the focus was primarily on non-lethal aid, including items such as body armor, communications equipment, and medical and combat medical assistance. But this changed as the conflict evolved and Ukraine began to focus on developing its armed forces in response to the growing Russian threat. Clearly lethal weapons with a primarily defensive focus began to be provided. Counter mortar radars and Javelin anti-tank missiles were sent with the purpose of helping Ukraine to address key imbalances,

especially counter artillery and counter tank systems, a trend which, with anti-air systems added, continues to the present. The Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, which helped Ukrainian forces improve their basic military skills and operational effectiveness, was established in this time frame (Atlamazaglou, 2023). Training focused on combat and using the new systems but also on countering corruption in the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense to ensure that aid was used properly (Atlamazaglou, 2023).

Unsurprisingly, the lead up to war saw a further increase both in the amount of and types of US support to Ukraine. The UK ramped up support, often more publicly and with less reticence than the US Javelin missiles were augmented with AT-4 antitank systems, Carl Gustav Recoilless Rifles, small arms ammunition, and Stinger anti-aircraft systems. Some of these systems were being delivered even as Russian forces crossed the border on February 24, 2022, and there are numerous stories of Ukrainian soldiers literally assembling weapons to YouTube instructions even as Russian forces attacked them.

In summary of the early period, Ukraine should have received a lot more than it got. But, it can be fairly said that the equipment Ukraine received helped to get it through the crisis of the early months of the invasion. Up until this point, assistance was primarily from the US and UK (not dismissing other bilateral efforts). But things would change after January 24.

The War Expands, and so does support.

The Russian invasion brought rapid and broad support, led by the US and the UK, but with significant augmentation by Poland and the Baltic States, all states with a frontline on Russia, Belarus, or Ukraine, and who were frequent victims of Russian provocation and hybrid warfare. April 26 saw the first meeting of the Ukraine Contact group, which began with 41 member states, meeting at the US Ramstein Air Force Base in Germany. The Contact Group is voluntary, but membership increased to 54 countries by February 2023.

In addition to more and more modern weapons, massive training programs were established outside of Ukraine in order to train the army on how to use the new weapons. Another initiative was to encourage former Warsaw Pact members to

contribute Soviet era weapons, which were numerous, and which would require little re-training for Ukrainian forces to operate (Gould, 2022).

Weapons continued to flow, with the US eventually providing HIMARS mobile Multiple Rocket Launcher Systems, Bradley Infantry Fighting vehicles, and ATACMs mid-range and long range rockets for use in the HIMARS systems. Air defense was augmented by Patriot and various European Systems, as was field artillery. As will be discussed below, modern armor was eventually provided, and not only have older Soviet Aircraft been provided, but modern Western Aircraft have been promised.

Brief Case Study – Polish Mig 29s for Ukraine, or not.

Front line nations scrambled to provide immediate support to Ukraine as it faced the Russian invasion. Poland emerged as a key player in these efforts, offering its older MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine in order to replace aircraft lost in combat (Gould, 2022). But, understanding the risks of Russian retaliation implied in directly supplying the aircraft to Ukraine, it instead offered to give the aircraft to the US to then transfer to Ukraine, offering to send the fighters to Ramstein for this purpose. Since these were front line service aircraft for Poland, Warsaw hoped to then receive modern F-16 Fighters to replace its lost MiGs (Ukraine war, 2022).

Unfortunately, Spring of 2022 was too early in the conflict for the US or many NATO alliance members to accept the risks implied in directly supplying the aircraft to Ukraine, and so US officials began to vocalize every potential problem with such a transfer, killing the deal before it could take place, with Polish interest waning when it became clear that in spite of statements to the contrary by US Secretary of State Blinken claiming to support such transfers, it was not willing to do so itself (Phillips, 2022). On one hand, this was sheer cowardice on behalf of the Biden administration, on the other, even now, in 2024, when F-16s have been promised by many NATO allies, the actual mechanics of delivery have not been worked out.

Brief Case Study – How a dozen M1 Abrams kicked loose hundreds of Leopard IIs.

Ukraine showed remarkable resilience in the first year of the war, stopping the Russian offensive and then reclaiming large areas of its lost territory. It was assumed

that 2023 would be a year in which Ukraine would counterattack and at least isolate Crimea from the Donbas, if not win the war outright. Obviously the Ukrainian Army would need the right equipment to do the job.

Many countries in the Ukraine Contact group were willing to contribute Leopard II tanks, though all were not of the most recent variants. Leopards, with relatively low maintenance requirements, rugged build, and regular fuel, seems perfect for the Ukrainian's needs (Jordans, 2023). However, Berlin spent the fall of 2022 coming up with excuses for why it could not send its own tanks, or tanks in the manufacturers care, and forbade international owners of the tank from sending it on their own.

Whereas the Polish MiGs provide a negative example of what can happen when the alliance leader will not lead, Germany's ultimate decision to provide Leopard II tanks is a positive in the other direction. Much like Poland, Germany simply did not want to stand alone against Russia. Berlin's reluctance stemmed from concerns about Russia's reaction. Before acting, the German government wanted assurances that the US would also contribute heavy tanks to Ukraine, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz emphasizing that the approach needed to be coordinated and not bilateral (Picheta, 2023).

So what happened? Two things, one confirmed and one conjecture, which could constitute a "Carrot and Stick" fashion. The "Carrot" was the announcement by the White House that the US would send 31 Abrams tanks, thus sharing the risk of providing tanks (Ott, 2023). The UK also pledged independently to send Challenger II tanks. This is in spite of serious issues with the M1 in terms of Ukrainian service. It is an excellent vehicle, but very much a "Rich Man's" tank, highly consumptive of supplies and maintenance.

The purported "Stick" was a diplomatic note to many holders of Leopard tanks promising to make good any money lost in trade with Germany if they decided to donate Leopards without Berlin's consent. The effort succeeded, with Germany deciding to donate an initial 14 Leopard 2's, also allowing international holders of the tank to donate it without risk of sanction from Berlin. Thus began the "Tank Coalition" which has provided both excellent tanks and training in Germany for Ukrainian crews

(Adler, 2023). In this fashion, under US leadership, one of the best examples of alliance coordination in the Ukraine was achieved.

Brief Case Study – 6 dry months: Prelude to the April 2024 vote of support.

On October 6, 2023, Hamas launched a viscous attack on Israel, resulting in the greatest massacre of Israelis since the Holocaust. Another result was that the US Congress became completely and thoroughly distracted from pending legislation to put Ukraine into the budget, promising a massive new injection of equipment, if ever the bill could be passed. As it happened it would take over six months for that to happen. And so the last case study is also one of a failure of alliance leadership. But in this case, the allies began to step up and fill the gaps left by the US pullback.

European countries have pledged over \$89 billion in support to Ukraine, with about \$31 billion of that in military support (Total bilateral..., 2024). The EU as an institution has provided 6.1 billion Euros this far to in military equipment through the European Peace Facility, while the Council of Europe established a 5 billion Euro Ukraine Assistance fund in March 2024 (Ukraine Assistance..., 2024). In January and February 2024, during a very bad period for Ukraine’s defenders, European countries contributed 6 billion Euros in primarily military aid (Statista.com). These commitments reflect Europe’s recognition of the geopolitical stakes and the importance of maintaining stability in the region. European leaders understood that a strong Ukraine was essential for regional security and global balance. At the time Ukrainian President Zelensky was openly warning the world that without more help, his country could lose the war, and was already having to ration shells on the battlefield (Porter, 2024).

The State of International Support in February 2024 (With the new US money included:

Country	% GDP	Military (bn EUR)	Humanitarian (bn EUR)	Financial (bn EUR)
Australia	0.04%	0.51	0.08	0
Austria	0.17%	0	0.06	0.68
Belgium	0.20%	0.86	0.05	0.18
Bulgaria	0.31%	0.24	0	0
Canada	0.31%	1.93	0.37	3.45

Croatia	0.42%	0.19	0.08	0
Czech				
Republic	0.51%	1.29	0.05	0
Denmark	1.38%	4.78	0.24	0.12
Estonia	1.55%	0.49	0.05	0
Finland	0.74%	1.8	0.15	0.09
France	0.14%	2.69	0.36	0.8
Germany	0.36%	10.04	3.05	1.41
Greece	0.07%	0.13	0	0
Hungary	0.03%	0	0	0
Iceland	0.16%	0	0	0
Ireland	0.02%	0	0.06	0.04
Italy	0.09%	1	0.32	0.41
Japan	0.13%	0	1.02	4.84
Latvia	1.14%	0.38	0.01	0
Lithuania	1.22%	0.65	0.07	0
Luxembourg	0.23%	0.16	0.02	0
Netherlands	0.54%	3.85	0.57	0.72
Norway	0.44%	0.84	0.35	0.77
Poland	0.68%	3	0.38	0.95
Portugal	0.03%	0	0	0
Romania	0.05%	0	0	0
Slovakia	0.63%	0.67	0.01	0
Slovenia	0.14%	0	0.01	0
South Korea	0.03%	0	0.27	0.29
Spain	0.07%	0.33	0.08	0.52
Sweden	0.55%	2.74	0.16	0.34
Switzerland	0.11%	0	0.69	0.1
Turkey	0.01%	0	0	0
United				
Kingdom	0.31%	5.27	0.55	3.28
United States	0.70%	100.08	2.53	21.47

Source: Kiel Institute for the World Economy (IFW Kiel)

Conclusion

This report has attempted to shine some light on the US role as alliance leader in leading support for Ukraine against Russian aggression. Background on the types of support given from 2014-2022 was provided, along with three brief case studies on key moments highlighting the impact of US decisions for or against support. Although there have been promising improvements in independent European support, particularly in the six-month drought in US support following the Hamas assault on Israel in October 2024, the cases demonstrate clearly the centrality of the US in both direct aid to Ukraine and as an implied “Top-Cover” for other countries to provide support. Americans should note with pride but that many countries in Europe were willing to increase support during the critical gap before the April congressional vote.

Taking into account the relative dearth of up to date academic writing on this issue, there is a lot more that can be done with this work. Every single case and facet of this report deserves a full paper, or more, of analysis. Much is unsaid, such as the level of UK support, which has not waited for the US or needed US assistance (Of course the UK, and France, are independent military powers with their own nuclear deterrents, which makes a big difference!) And yet with all of that said, the point is very clear. The United States remains an indispensable power, globally but especially in Europe. Its decisions must be consistent, decisive, and supportive. Even in an election year. Even when the US wants more than anything else to look inwards and to fight each other. America’s friends are counting on it!

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MAPPING THE STATE OF EXEMPTION IN UKRAINE (2022-2024)

1. Introduction

According to Carl Schmitt, an examination of the historical development of dictatorship reveals its classification into two distinct forms: commissarial and sovereign. A sovereign dictatorship employs a crisis to invalidate the current constitution, with the aim of creating a state in which a constitution deemed by the sovereign dictator as authentic becomes feasible. Conversely, a commissarial dictatorship seeks to reinstate order to facilitate the normal functioning of the existing