



Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

The Successes, Failures, and Future
Prospects of US and EU Support Models

Marianna Fakhurdinova

ABOUT CEPA

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Cover photo: Photo: A Swedish-made Archer self-propelled howitzer of Ukraine's 45th separate artillery brigade fires at Russian positions in the Donetsk region, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, December 16, 2023. Credit: REUTERS/Thomas Peter.

Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Introduction	4
Funds Allocation: US and EU Aid Commitments to Ukraine.....	6
Aid Execution: US and EU Programs, Funds, and Authorities	18
From Ramstein to NATO: Evolution of Formats	41
Conclusion	49
About the Author	52
Acknowledgments.....	52
Endnotes	53

Executive Summary

1. Western policy toward Russia's war in Ukraine has been driven by escalation concerns, and therefore has been **reactive and fragmented**.
2. Efforts to allocate funds for Ukrainian military assistance have encountered several problems: **sustainability concerns in terms of long-term funding, slow decision-making, and a decline in political will to provide aid**.
3. With the United States stepping back from its military funding for Ukraine, Europe should develop **innovative strategies to fill the gap**: leveraging frozen Russian assets, utilizing Security Action for Europe (SAFE) loans, committing to regular contributions under the Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List (PURL) initiative, and ensuring long-term support through the Ukraine Assistance Fund.
4. Common challenges across the US and the European Union (EU) in terms of **transferring materiel from existing stocks** are as follows: shrinking aid packages, slow replenishment of partners' depleted stocks, politically driven bans on supplying particular types of weapons, vetoes on funds disbursement, expiration of authorities, and counting errors.
5. Between 2022 and 2024, the US and EU supplied weapons to Ukraine from both existing stockpiles and new production. By 2025, as the stockpiles dwindled, the focus shifted toward **investing in defense industries**, financing domestic production and coproduction with Ukrainian firms, and procuring weapons from within Ukraine through the Danish Model.
6. Key **obstacles to procuring new materiel** from defense companies include the following: poor public reporting on deliveries as opposed to commitments and contracting, long weapons manufacturing times and limited industrial capacity, slow acquisition and bureaucratic procedures in the US and EU, rising prices, and competition among partners.
7. To address problems with both short- and long-term military aid to Ukraine, the author recommends that partners **increase investments** in their own defense suppliers, as well as in Ukrainian military production; transfer decommissioned equipment to Ukraine; **carry out acquisition reform**; unblock European Peace Facility (EPF) reimbursements by switching to voluntary contributions; and appoint a Ukraine acquisitions officer.
8. In 2022–24, to identify and verify Ukraine's needs regarding military assistance, **partners closely coordinated both bilaterally**, through embassies and ministries of defense, **and multilaterally**, through the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (UDCG) on a political level and through the International Donor Coordination Center (IDCC), the Security Assistance Group–Ukraine (SAG-U), and nine capability coalitions on a technical level.

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

9. The risk of decreased US leadership within the UDCG, as well as the need to institutionalize donor coordination and ensure long-term military support for Ukraine, led to a decision to make **NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine (NSATU)** responsible for coordinating security assistance to Ukraine and building Ukraine's future force in terms of integration capabilities. The mission was established in 2025.
10. To ensure long-term military support for Ukraine, NATO member states should approve an **ambitious multiyear fund** worth \$100 billion, with a clear distribution scheme. To ensure that Ukraine's future force is interoperable with the alliance by 2035, partners should prioritize **harmonizing the types of weapons donated to Ukraine**.

Introduction

The United States has embarked on a sustained drawdown in its financial support for the defense of Ukraine, against Russian aggression. At the start of 2026, Ukraine finds itself in a precarious position, making it all the more critical for experts and politicians to address the basic questions of how we got here and what should be done next to ensure the flow of assistance and support to the country.

Whereas the 2024 Washington NATO summit declaration featured a specific commitment to send at least €40 billion (\$43 billion) in military support to Ukraine annually,¹ the 2025 NATO summit in The Hague focused on increasing member states' overall military spending, as the United States pressed its allies to carry more of the burden of collective defense. The 2025 declaration included no clear quantitative benchmark for aid to Ukraine. This outcome confirmed the new trend on both sides of the Atlantic: the US administration under President Donald Trump is moving to reduce its military costs in Europe, and the new European Commission is establishing greater self-sufficiency on security as one of its key priorities. How will these developments influence overall military support to Ukraine?

Since taking office, the Trump administration has made it clear that it intends to take a new approach to the strategic challenges presented by Russia's war in Ukraine. It has questioned the sustainability of uncompensated US grants of support to Kyiv, instead seeking payment for future military aid and even attempting to obtain "reimbursement" for aid that Congress had provided as grants under five funding laws.² While the president's own estimates of the assistance already supplied to Ukraine have been overly inflated, the claims serve to underscore the administration's position that the existing aid model cannot continue.³

The Trump administration has also emphasized the need to pursue negotiations on ending the war, and has at times used its military aid to Ukraine as leverage to seek concessions from either Kyiv or Moscow.⁴ Doubts about Washington's commitment to providing for Ukraine's defense have spurred Europe to assess how it might sustain military support for Ukraine on its own, and to ask what lessons—both positive and negative—can be drawn from the first three years of Russia's full-scale invasion.

During those years, both the US and the EU demonstrated a reactive policy on military support to Ukraine. Their overall strategic goals remained unclear, whether on Russia, on Ukraine's long-term security, or on winning the war per se. In the US, in particular, the absence of a coherent, documented strategy was cited by some lawmakers as a reason not to approve the fifth round of supplemental funding for Ukraine in 2023.

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

Washington and Brussels, for too long, viewed the war through a narrow “bilateral conflict” lens, expecting Ukraine to define the path to victory on its own, even as it remained entirely dependent on external support. Such an approach posed challenges as confrontation between the democratic West and various autocracies became more vivid and the war essentially became a global conflict, with Iran, North Korea, and China providing weapons, personnel, or other material support to Russia. Nevertheless, Ukraine made several attempts to add clarity to its vision for the future, including the 2022 “Peace Formula” and the 2024 “Victory Plan.”⁵

This lack of strategic leadership among Western allies resulted in poor military capabilities, a policy centered on escalation management, and a model of spoon-fed aid delivery—one that allowed Ukraine to survive but not to win. In short, Ukraine’s security assistance turned into a continuous flow of checks that decision-makers had to approve without a clear understanding of the end goal.

This caused significant delays in the delivery of a series of critical military assets, from Javelins and High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS) to tanks, F-16s, and long-range missiles. The delays undermined Ukraine’s battlefield effectiveness and arguably precluded it from achieving operational breakthroughs during key offensives. To Moscow, they likely signaled that the West was unwilling or unable to fully commit.

The era of uncertainty and redlines brought the war to an attrition phase, and led to a scarcity of resources among Ukraine’s partners. Meanwhile, neither the US nor the EU had substantially scaled up its defense industrial base, with procurement remaining slow and bureaucratic.

This report aims to identify what factors—whether a lack of political will or a lack of capacity—have slowed or impeded military aid provision to Ukraine in the past. In addition to illuminating the root causes of previous failures and delays, it assesses current trends and offers recommendations for a future European-led security assistance architecture, one that is proactive, resilient, and independent.

To this end, the paper is divided into three main sections:

- Funding allocation by the US and EU
- Execution of their aid programs
- Evolution of their collaborative formats

Each section takes account of the respective institutional and political actors within the US and EU, as well as the dynamics of relations between the US and Europe, all of which play an important role in strategic outcomes for Ukraine.⁶

Funds Allocation: US and EU Aid Commitments to Ukraine

Decision-making and Timelines

Funds to aid Ukraine are usually appropriated by the legislative bodies (parliaments) of the US and EU and further obligated by the executive branch through government agencies.⁷

In the US, the money is typically allocated in addition to and after the regular budget through supplemental appropriations acts (henceforth referred to as “supplementals”). As a crisis-response mechanism, supplementals are requested by the president and typically drafted and passed without the normal process of review by the congressional appropriations committees.⁸

After being approved by both the Senate and House of Representatives and signed by the president, the draft bills become law, and money becomes available for the implementing agencies until the end of the fiscal year (September 30). In the case of military aid, these implementing agencies are the Department of Defense, the White House, and the State Department. Once they receive the overall funding, they can form and approve smaller packages of aid to be sent to Ukraine.

In 2022–24, the US allocated \$175.1 bn in additional funding in response to Russia’s full-scale invasion through five Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Acts. In 2025, no additional funding of this kind was allocated.

- Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law No: 117-103), March 15, 2022, **\$13.6 bn**
- Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2022 (Public Law No: 117-128), May 21, 2022, **\$40.1 bn**
- Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law No: 117-180), September 30, 2022, **\$12.4 bn**
- Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 (Public Law No: 117-328), December 29, 2022, **\$47.4 bn**
- Ukraine Security Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2024 (Public Law No: 118-50), April 24, 2024, **\$60.8 bn**

In the EU, budgetary decisions on aid to Ukraine are made on two levels: allocations by individual member states and EU allocations through an off-budget mechanism, the EPF, or European Peace Facility.



Photo: (From left to right) António Costa (President of the European Council), Volodymyr Zelenskyy (President, Ukraine), NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and Ursula Von Der Leyen (President of the European Commission) Credit: NATO media library.

In most EU member states, parliaments approve budget requests made by the government, as in the US. Most of them, however, do not face distinct challenges present in the US, such as a bicameral legislature that may have differing or no majorities to support the government's legislation, or a separately elected executive that can veto bills passed by the legislature.

Procedures within EU member states differ slightly from country to country. In some, like the Netherlands, funding for Ukraine is approved as a supplement to the main budget, while in others, like Germany or France, it is part of the regular budget.⁹

At the EU level, the European Council approves the size of the EPF budget (currently for 2021–27). However, the financing comes annually from EU member state contributions based on a gross national income distribution key.¹⁰ In this sense, the EU is not technically financing military aid to Ukraine on its own, since EPF contributions come from outside the EU budget.

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

After funding is approved, the EPF compensates member states for weapons and ammunition donated to Ukraine. Officially, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and security policy (high representative) and the European External Action Service (EEAS) are responsible for further EPF implementation. Yet decisions on the disbursement of funds should also be approved by the 27 EU member states.

In 2022–24, the EU and its member states made available over \$145 bn in financial, military, humanitarian, and refugee assistance to Ukraine.¹¹ By mid-2025, this sum had increased to \$162 bn, which includes \$65 bn in military assistance.¹²

The EU as an institution has approved \$19.7 bn for the EPF by increasing its financial ceiling three times:

- March 2021, **\$6.6 bn**, initial budget
- March 2023, **\$2.6 bn**, first top-up
- June 2023, **\$4.7 bn**, second top-up
- March 2024, **\$5.8 bn**, third top-up, “Ukraine Assistance Fund”

Funds Allocated

Money distribution

In the EU, EPF funds are spent on various needs: military Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) missions and operations, investments in EU military industry, and military support to non-EU countries and international organizations (e.g., the African Union, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Mali, Moldova, and Mozambique).¹³

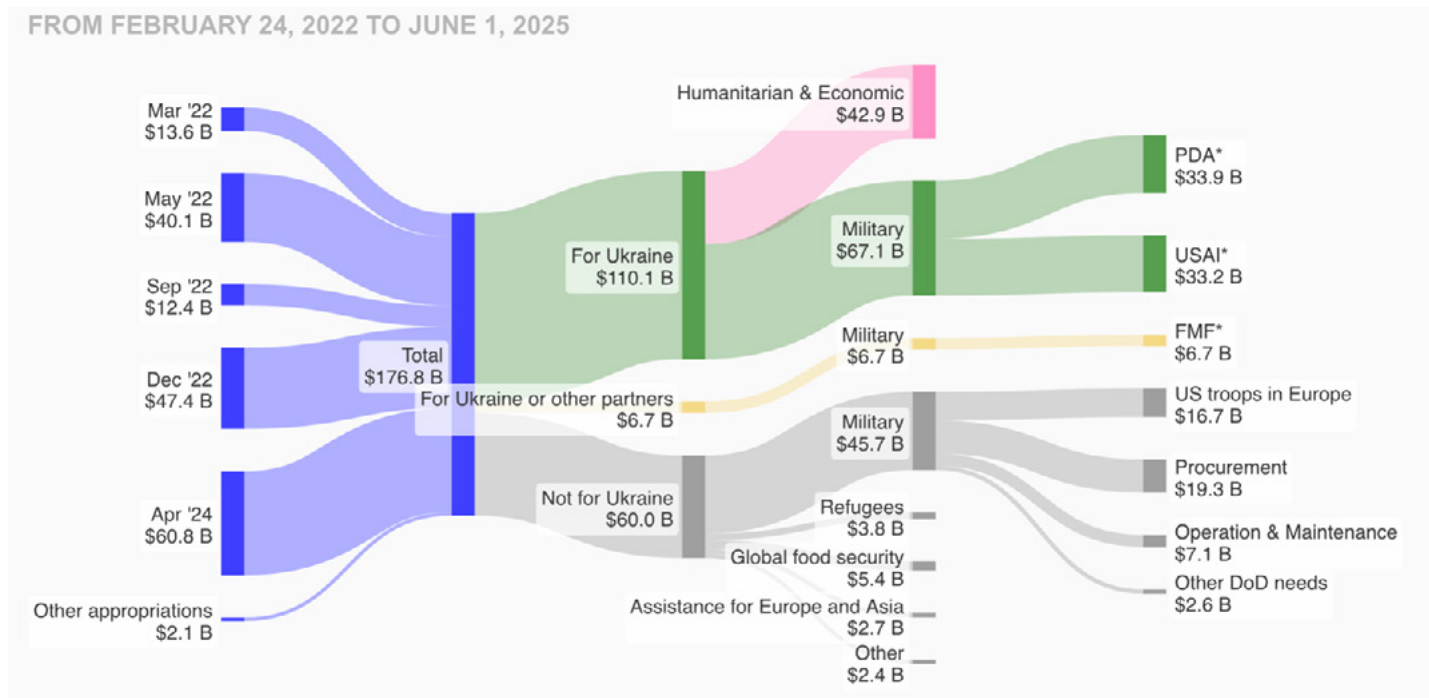
That is one of the reasons why the March 2024 increase to the EPF ceiling, by \$5.8 bn, created a dedicated Ukraine Assistance Fund, ensuring that the money would be earmarked for Ukraine and not spent on other countries.

In the US, a large share of money within supplementals is also earmarked not for Ukraine, but for the US and its partners “in response to the war in Ukraine.”¹⁴ Out of the \$175.1 bn allocated within five Ukraine supplementals, \$60 bn was assigned to support the US military presence in Europe (troops and military bases), extra procurement of weapons for the US Army (not to be confused with replenishment), research and development, assistance to Europe and Asia, and even global food security, among other priorities.

Congressional officials explain that Ukraine supplementals constitute the broader response to the war, not just funding for Ukraine.¹⁵

However, not all of the funds dedicated to Ukraine itself have reached the country in the form of weapons. The sums above pertain to allocations (commitments), but not

US Aid: Ukraine Security Acts



Source: Protect Ukraine Now.

deliveries (execution). Money allocated for Ukraine is not being spent all at once. In the US and most EU member states, funds budgeted are supposed to be spent within one fiscal year, though some countries, such as Sweden and Germany, have worked out long-term financial frameworks for Ukraine.¹⁶

Moreover, budgetary allocations are often reported as aid sent to Ukraine, but the military equipment does not reach Ukraine for quite some time, as deliveries and production might take months or even years (see Chapter 2).

It is also important to note that Ukraine does not receive the funds directly; rather, partner countries use the money to purchase military equipment for donation to Ukraine or provide weapons from their existing stocks, with the allocated funds subsequently used to replenish those stocks.

Comparing US and EU military aid commitments

According to official US and EU sources, as of June 2025 the US had committed \$65.9 bn in military assistance to Ukraine,¹⁷ and the EU had committed over \$65 bn.¹⁸ These figures mostly represent materiel, but also include funds for training and logistics, among other uses (see Chapter 2).

Within the EU, most military aid is supplied to Ukraine by member states, and EPF funds constitute a relatively small part of the total: only \$6.6 bn out of \$65 bn comprises reimbursements to the member states within the EPF.¹⁹ This is because it is faster and more efficient for member states to provide aid bilaterally.

Germany is by far the biggest donor of military aid to Ukraine among the 27 EU member states in value terms, and it is the second largest among all other donors. As of October 2025, it had committed military assistance with a value of \$20 bn,²⁰ together with commitments for future years of \$32 bn.²¹ This is much more than the commitment of the next-largest military aid supplier among EU member states, Denmark with €9.2 bn (\$10.6 bn).²²

The fact that military aid coming from the US is roughly equal to that of the 27 EU member states in value terms might lead to the conclusion that the US is spending much more on aid to Ukraine. Yet when rendered as a percentage of the donor's gross domestic product (GDP), aid commitments by EU member states appear to be somewhat larger than those of the US, at 0.63% and 0.53%, respectively.²³

Aid commitments to Ukraine by the EU as a percentage of GDP were calculated by the arithmetic mean of 27 member states and vary significantly from state to state, ranging from 0.01% from Malta to 2.63% from Estonia. Notably, four EU member states (Estonia, Denmark, Lithuania, and Latvia) provide aid to Ukraine that amounts to more than 1.5% of their GDP. Germany's aid commitments, despite being the largest in value terms, are ranked 12th as a percentage of GDP, at just 0.4%.

While economic and humanitarian aid are beyond the scope of this research, they constitute a tangible share of EU support to Ukraine, and they remain crucial amid a war for the country's survival, addressing needs such as electricity supplies, civilian salaries, and basic provisions for displaced people. The EU has committed over \$92 bn in financial and budgetary support and in humanitarian and emergency assistance to Ukraine,²⁴ while the US has committed \$42.9 bn for humanitarian and economic support.²⁵

Trends and Problems

Instruments for allocating funds to Ukraine were rather successful at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, in both the US and the EU, as crisis-response mechanisms. Yet because they were largely limited to one fiscal year, they lacked sustainability, and decision-making on new funding was slow. The reasons for this situation were manifold.

Politicized process

Support for Ukraine has become politically fraught, meaning decision-making on funding allocations has been rather slow. In the US, the first draft of the fifth Ukraine supplemental was sent to Congress in August 2023 and did not pass until April 2024.²⁶ In the EU, then–High Representative Josep Borrell first proposed the idea of establishing a dedicated Ukraine Assistance Fund within the EPF in July 2023;²⁷ the European Council made its respective decision on the \$5.8 bn in funding for Ukraine only in March 2024.

In the US, the fifth supplemental confronted challenges related to internal US politics, with some members of Congress tying aid to Ukraine to the issue of security along the US border with Mexico, for example. Legislative debates led to months of delay in funding for Ukraine aid, as did the threat of a lapse in ordinary government appropriations and Congress's consequent prioritization of voting for the US budget.

In the EU, debates over funding occurred between Germany and the European Commission. Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton accused Germany in early 2024 of focusing on bilateral military aid commitments to Ukraine instead of supporting joint EU efforts to provide aid to Ukraine via the EPF.²⁸

As the biggest contributor to the EPF at around \$1 bn,²⁹ Germany in turn argued that smaller member states had been using the facility as a way to earn money by providing outdated equipment to Ukraine and claiming reimbursement for it.³⁰

European partners have also been reluctant to approve large multiyear commitments of funds for Ukraine. The EU failed to approve a four-year \$21.4 bn military assistance fund for Ukraine,³¹ and NATO rejected a five-year \$107 bn military fund, instead agreeing on one-year pledges of \$5 bn and \$47 bn, respectively.³² Similarly, EU High Representative Kaja Kallas's attempt in early 2025 to mobilize \$47 billion in fresh EU military aid faltered after member states withheld support.³³



Photo: US Air Force Staff Sgt. Charles Paulson, a munitions systems technician with the 1st Special Operations Maintenance Squadron, inspects 105mm target practice rounds at Hurlburt Field, Fla., May 15, 2018. Credit: US Air Force photo by Senior Airman Joseph Pick via dvids

Accountability ignorance

A lack of understanding among decision-makers on how much money Ukraine actually receives and what funds and authorities exist has contributed to reluctance to provide aid to Ukraine in the past. Congressional representatives, however, confirm that congressional oversight works and that committees of jurisdiction (those responsible for foreign affairs, the armed services, and appropriations in the House and Senate) have been receiving regular reports from the Department of Defense (DoD) on military aid to Ukraine.³⁴

The Ukraine Oversight Working Group, consisting of 20 agencies (including the DoD, the State Department, and US Agency for International Development) and the legislative branch's Government Accountability Office (GAO), was created to coordinate oversight. As of November 2023, there were 96 ongoing or planned audits and reports to monitor and evaluate activities related to the Ukraine response. Thirty-nine of these had been completed and had not identified any significant

diversion, theft, or misuse of US assistance to Ukraine.³⁵ Yet such documents were of little interest to some critics of aid to Ukraine, and it is unclear how many members of Congress would have the will or the time to scrutinize hundreds of pages of rough-numbers reporting.

To cement trust with partners, the Ukrainian parliament also created a temporary special commission to monitor the receipt and use of military assistance from foreign partners in 2022.³⁶ As of November 2024, the European Commission had carried out two comprehensive reports, one in March 2023 and the other in July 2024, and did not find any misspending or violations.³⁷

No strategy for winning the war

The lack of a comprehensive strategy for addressing the Russian war in Ukraine has been used by some members of Congress as an argument for not voting for further Ukraine aid funding. In one instance, an amendment was proposed to the 2024 and 2025 versions of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), calling for a freeze on funds allocated for Ukraine until a strategy “for US involvement in Ukraine” is developed.³⁸

In the fifth supplemental, Congress urged the administration of President Joseph Biden to provide a strategy for US support for Ukraine within 45 days,³⁹ which the administration managed to do after a delay of over three months.⁴⁰ Government officials explained that the delay was caused by bureaucracy, citing the need to organize the strategy and reach consensus among the relevant departments and agencies.⁴¹ Given the classified nature of the strategy, one can rely only on the assessments shared by some congressional representatives, who are of the opinion that it could benefit from more specificity.⁴²

However, an alternative plan proposed by Republican Party leaders in the House of Representatives in late 2023 consisted of three broad steps.⁴³ They included providing critical weapons to Ukraine at the speed of relevance, tightening sanctions on the regime of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and transferring frozen Russian sovereign assets to Ukraine. While a number of Republicans have continued to advocate for these measures, the Trump administration has not pursued them consistently, largely holding them in abeyance as it pursues shifting tactics meant to stimulate peace talks.⁴⁴

Competition and a lack of communication among partners

A lack of communication among Ukraine’s foreign partners has led to conflicting assessments of their respective contributions to Ukraine’s security. This tension is apparent both between the US and Europe and among the EU member states.

At the transatlantic level, the US says the EU must do more to support Ukraine and is not spending enough on collective defense. Overall, the Trump administration seems to want to reduce the expense of US involvement in European affairs—exemplified by the lack of new supplemental funding for Ukraine in 2025⁴⁵—and asserts that the US has been unfairly bearing the cost of Europe's security.⁴⁶

EU representatives in turn note that Europe has incurred major nonmilitary costs, some of which are not tangible for US citizens, as a result of its support for Ukraine's defense. These include general inflation and a rise in energy prices in particular, which increased by up to 60% in some EU countries in 2022, as well as other damage to European economies caused by EU sanctions on Russia.⁴⁷ It is also true that European nations cannot produce high-quality armaments in large numbers at present, as they have systematically reduced their military industrial capacities and the sizes of their combat-capable forces in recent decades.⁴⁸

Within the EU, member states have argued over the fairness of their respective contributions. Then-German Chancellor Olaf Scholz demanded an audit of weapons supplied by EU member states to Kyiv in early January 2024.⁴⁹ Carried out by the EEAS, the audit was classified, but it confirmed that Germany's contribution to Ukraine was the largest among member states.⁵⁰

Such disputes among its foreign partners are not helpful for Ukraine, though a lack of action on one side of the Atlantic has sometimes incentivized the other side to move more decisively. US delays in approving the fifth supplemental created a sense of urgency in the EU. In turn, the EU's approval of \$58 bn in economic funding and \$5.8 bn in military funding in February 2024 helped to influence decision-makers in Congress to vote for the fifth supplemental.⁵¹ The EU's allocation of tangible financing for Ukraine made the headlines and effectively curbed the criticism from the US that Europe was not doing enough.

This method of building confidence could easily backfire, however. If, for example, the EU contribution is increased and praised too much, it might raise even more questions among Americans about why a US contribution is still necessary.⁵²

Different priorities among partners

Delays in aid were sometimes caused by an excess of differing priorities among partners. US decision-makers' view of the strategic picture and security environment is distinct from that of their counterparts in the EU; Washington is not focused primarily on Ukraine, as it gives major weight to security concerns in the Indo-Pacific and other regions.⁵³

The Israel-Hamas war, for instance, has drawn significant attention away from Ukraine for many Americans since October 2023.⁵⁴ The understanding that the US

would not be able to fight a potential war on two fronts has also led it to prioritize the threat from Beijing over that from Moscow and shift resources to the Indo-Pacific. More broadly, there is a societal process of reconsidering the United States' place and role in the world, with the younger generations tending to be more isolationist and less transatlantic in orientation.⁵⁵ In 2025, these trends have been supported by multiple statements from President Trump, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth.

At the same time, the war in Ukraine resonates with Europeans more because they are geographically closer to Russia and therefore face a more immediate threat to their security. And among EU member states, different geographic proximity to the aggressor and different historical experiences lead to a different sense of urgency.

Constituencies' moods

Decision-makers in the US and EU often explain their reluctance to keep supporting Ukraine by citing their constituencies' moods.

A lack of public understanding on how much funding Ukraine actually receives, and how these funds are distributed and translated into military capabilities, makes populations susceptible to various propaganda narratives (e.g., "Zelenskyy is buying yachts").⁵⁶ In the US, the argument that money sent to Ukraine could be better used on roads, health care, and disaster relief at home became more acute after hurricanes struck Florida and other southeastern states in the second half of 2024.

Moreover, since the US and EU are not directly engaged in the fighting in Ukraine, it is increasingly difficult to explain the importance of new aid packages to Americans and Europeans.⁵⁷

That said, recent polling demonstrates that both European and American societies are still willing to support Ukraine. As of June 2025, 58% of Americans believed that the United States should boost military support to Ukraine to stop Russia.⁵⁸ As of April 2025, 59% of EU citizens approved of the EU financing the purchase and supply of military equipment for Ukraine.⁵⁹

Recommendations

For both the EU and US:

- **Confiscate Russian assets.** US and European partners should use frozen Russian sovereign assets more actively to finance military aid to Ukraine, as well as to invest in the Ukrainian military industry, including through the Danish Model (see Chapter 2). The EU has already made available \$3.9 bn generated from immobilized Russian assets,⁶⁰ and it should more actively advance the "reparation loan" proposal to fill the gap left by the US in military



Photo: Senior Airman Jacob Wilcox, 436th Aerial Port Squadron ramp specialist, loads ammunition, weapons and other equipment bound for Ukraine during a foreign military sales mission at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware, Feb 10, 2022. Credit: Mauricio Campino/U.S. Air Force

support for Ukraine. The US should also begin implementing the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity for Ukrainians Act (REPO Act),⁶¹ allowing the transfer of around \$4 bn to \$8 bn in Russian assets frozen in the US to the Ukraine Support Fund.⁶² Congress approved this law in April 2024.

- **Further institutionalize the West's partnership with Ukraine.** Further institutionalization of the partnership between Ukraine and Western countries would help ensure long-term military support for Ukraine. While Ukraine's latest bilateral security agreements (BSAs) with the US, the EU, and EU member states have laid the foundation for 10 years of security cooperation in the military field, they are not legally binding, and related funding for Ukraine is still limited to one-year periods. The US government should consider signing a memorandum of understanding with Ukraine that would complement their BSA and add specificity on the bilateral security cooperation steps to be taken, as suggested by experts at the Center for European Policy Analysis.⁶³

For the EU:

- **Secure long-term support for the Ukraine Assistance Fund.** EU member states should return to the idea of four-year \$23 bn funding for military aid to Ukraine within the Ukraine Assistance Fund. Originally proposed by Josep Borrell in July 2023 and later echoed by High Representative Kaja Kallas in early 2025, when she sought to mobilize a broader \$47 bn EU package that ultimately failed to gain member states' backing, the multiyear initiative faced resistance due to concerns over committing such substantial sums in a single package.⁶⁴ The logic is clear: In contrast to the four-year \$58 bn economic aid within the Ukraine Facility, which comes from the EU budget, the Ukraine Assistance Fund contributions come from member states.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, decisive steps need to be taken to ensure long-term and predictable military support for Ukraine.

For the US:

- **Consider a greater use of loans.** Since the Trump administration has made clear that no new supplemental funding for Ukraine will be available soon, the US should consider offering more military support to Ukraine in the form of forgivable loans. The inclusion of this funding tool helped to secure passage of the fifth supplemental in early 2024.
- **Support Ukraine through the National Defense Authorization Act.** Should the Trump administration ever return to the idea of new funding for Ukraine, making such financing part of the annual NDAA might make aid to Ukraine more sustainable. In contrast to crisis-response supplementals, the NDAA has a regular drafting process. A budget proposal is submitted by the president in February or March and is usually considered by Congress at the start of the next fiscal year on October 1.⁶⁶ The NDAA and its associated defense appropriations bills are also less widely covered by the media and therefore might be less politically fraught than special supplementals, which used to make headlines for providing billions of dollars in aid to Ukraine. Some European countries, such as Germany, Sweden, and France, also make financing for military aid to Ukraine part of their regular annual budgets.
- **Make multiyear appropriations.** To ensure long-term US security assistance for Ukraine, Congress should approve multiyear funds for this purpose, adopting appropriations with an obligation lasting longer than one fiscal year.⁶⁷ A multiyear appropriation would protect funds for Ukraine from frequent politically sensitive voting, and from premature expiration in the event of delays in the execution of defense procurements or difficulties in notifying Congress about proposed extensions.

Aid Execution: US and EU Programs, Funds, and Authorities

Identifying the Need

Decision-making bodies

In the US, while Congress holds power over the budget, the task of executing the transfer of allocated supplemental funds to Ukraine falls on the DoD, the White House, and the State Department. It is their job to communicate with Ukrainians, approve weapons supplies, and form aid packages, among other responsibilities. In the EU, these functions are mostly performed by the ministries of defense of EU member states as they deliver bilateral military aid to Ukraine.

At a higher institutional level in the EU, after the European Council approves funding for the EPF, its further implementation is ensured by the high representative with support from the EEAS. Namely, the clearing house cell within EU Military Staff of the EEAS receives reimbursement requests from member states and determines whether they are acceptable, and whether they correspond to Ukraine's needs.⁶⁸ Since the EPF is an off-budget EU mechanism funded through the 27 EU member states' contributions, decisions on fund disbursements should be approved unanimously.

Communication with Ukrainians

Over the course of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine and its Western partners have managed to build a broad, yet overlapping, system of communication.

Under the Ukrainian legislature, the Chief Logistics Department within the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine is the key body, responsible for identifying the army's needs based on the information received from combat units.⁶⁹ Those requests are collected annually into a single document detailing Ukraine's needs in military articles, which should technically be updated quarterly. Given the intensity of the full-scale war, however, it is being updated constantly.⁷⁰

The Ministry of Defence of Ukraine is responsible for engaging international military assistance and communicating with partners. It shares Ukraine's requests on a day-to-day basis with the embassies of EU member states (military attachés) and of the US (Office of Defense Cooperation) to Ukraine.



Photo: Ukrainian President Zelenskyy in New York with President-Elect Donald Trump. Working Visit of the President of Ukraine to the US. Credit: The Presidential Office of Ukraine via Reuters.

The embassy officials, in turn, communicate Ukraine's needs to their respective military structures. During 2022–24, EU and other European embassy officials relayed such information to the IDCC, and Americans sent it to the Security Assistance Group–Ukraine (SAG-U), a special division within US European Command (EUCOM). Since 2025, NATO has been coordinating aid to Ukraine and has taken over these two donor centers' responsibilities (see more in Chapter 3).

The IDCC, led by the United Kingdom (UK), was responsible for coordinating international military assistance, and its US-led sister organization, SAG-U, handled American aid specifically. In addition to transferring Ukraine's requests to European and US governments, these hubs coordinated military assistance on the ground, including logistics efforts and military training for Ukrainians. The Armed Forces of Ukraine were also represented in the IDCC and SAG-U.⁷¹ Despite the halt on new US military funding for Ukraine, SAG-U still existed as of 2025 and carried out important functions such as intelligence sharing.

To ensure faster communication with partners, Ukraine is also using several types of software. The Korovai platform, developed together by the US, the UK, and Ukraine, allows Ukraine to communicate its list of needs in real time, and partners to receive, process, and track any of those needs.⁷² The NATO system LOGFAS (Logistics Functional Area Services) ensures that partners receive Ukraine's reporting on military aid and its status.⁷³

Problems and challenges

Ensuring that partners' aid provisions meet the needs and demands of Ukraine's military is sometimes challenging, for an array of reasons.

1. **Identifying and prioritizing Ukraine's needs.** Given Ukraine's immense need for military equipment amid the full-scale invasion, it is sometimes challenging for Ukrainian officials to prioritize the most urgent items in communications with partners. The list of high-priority needs presented at the UDCG, for instance, sometimes includes tanks, F-16s, self-propelled howitzers, artillery shells, camouflage nets, and oil, among others.
2. **Communicating Ukraine's needs to partners.** Misunderstandings over why Ukraine needs particular military items often occur because Ukrainians and partners are using different methods of needs identification and different planning models. Ukraine's military uses a linear mathematical approach, calculating how many items a certain unit requires minus how many it already has. NATO member states use a capabilities-based approach (DOTMLPF),⁷⁴ identifying what items, people, training, and facilities are necessary to ensure a particular capability.
3. **Lack of strategy.** At some point, miscommunication occurred between Ukraine and Western partners due to the lack of a shared strategic approach to winning the war. Ukraine argued that it could not work out a strategy without knowing which weapons foreign partners would provide and in what quantities. Western partners, in turn, stated that they could provide weapons once a clear military strategy had been worked out.⁷⁵

After Ukraine's needs are identified and communicated, both the US and the EU use two approaches to provide aid to Ukraine:

1. Sending materiel from existing stocks (short-term aid)
2. Procuring new equipment from military suppliers (long-term aid)

Short-term Aid from Existing Stocks

Programs, funds, and authorities

While this model operated effectively in 2022–24, its use declined in 2025 due to the depletion of partners' stockpiles. Producing new equipment takes time, so donating weapons that partners already possess is the fastest way of sending aid,

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

but the volume is limited by existing stocks. Furthermore, the stockpiled weapons may be old or in need of repair. In some cases, as with older Soviet- or Russian-designed tanks or aircraft, aged equipment may be beneficial because Ukrainian forces have already trained with them or are at least familiar with their systems.

In the US, donations of existing weapons are carried out through the Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) program, which under the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act allows the president to authorize transfers of US defense equipment directly from US stockpiles.⁷⁶

The under secretary of defense for policy in the DoD determines the content of PDA packages, and the White House approves them. The DoD carries out more technical work like determining where to source weapons for Ukraine, while the administration has political leadership and can accelerate bureaucratic processes with sufficient political will.

In its supplemental funding, Congress sets the authority or PDA cap—the maximum monetary value of the existing military equipment that can be sent to Ukraine. The fifth supplemental funding law set this cap at \$7.8 bn for Ukraine, Israel, and Taiwan; the combined cap for all five supplementals since 2022 reached \$31.7 billion.⁷⁷ Real funds are spent by the DoD on buying new equipment to replace the old stocks that were transferred, which is known as PDA replenishment. The fifth supplemental put this sum at \$13.4 bn, and the combined total for all five supplementals since 2022 was \$45.8 bn.⁷⁸

At the EU level, reimbursements to member states for weapons sent to Ukraine from existing stocks are carried out through the EPF. Usually, the EPF does not promote the transfer of particular types of weapons to Ukraine. However, on April 13, 2023, the European Council allocated \$1.1 bn to be reimbursed to member states specifically for ammunition and missiles sent to Ukraine.⁷⁹ This step became one of three in a three-track EU plan to speed up ammunition deliveries and production.

Unlike the US, EU member states do not have formalized programs for sending weapons from their existing stocks, and supply transfers are carried out on an ad hoc basis. However, the way Czechia has sent aid to Ukraine from existing stocks constitutes an interesting example.

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the Czech government, in cooperation with defense contractors, has been identifying which EU and non-EU member states possess weapons that Ukraine needs, negotiating the purchase of those weapons, and sending them to Ukraine as Czech donations in cases where the origin countries prefer not to provide aid openly. Other partners, such as Denmark and the Netherlands, have been covering Czechia's purchase expenses.⁸⁰

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

This program transformed and became more formalized in February 2024 with the creation of a Czech ammunition initiative, in which the Czech government committed to procuring 800,000 artillery shells for Ukraine from non-EU manufacturers—including Turkey, South Africa, South Korea, and Serbia⁸¹—by the end of that year.⁸² The initiative emerged in response to Ukraine’s desperate need for ammunition in the winter of 2023, following US delays in approving the fifth supplemental for Ukraine and EU delays in committing to provide one million artillery shells for Ukraine by early 2024; the EU managed to deliver only half of its target by the deadline.⁸³

European officials argue that the Czech initiative has become more successful than the EU’s efforts because the Czech government cooperates closely with its own defense contractors, which are better connected to partners around the world.⁸⁴ Communication among EU member states is also easier and faster in some cases than that between the EU and its member states—prime ministers can literally message one another on WhatsApp to address urgent needs.

Endorsed by 18 donors, the Czech initiative had secured \$2.3 bn in funding for 500,000 artillery shells for Ukraine as of July 2024.⁸⁵ However, it faced problems with donors delivering on their commitments, and only one-third of the half-million shells had reached Ukraine as of October of that year.⁸⁶ Over time, both the EU and Czech pledges have been fulfilled: in early 2025, the EU reported delivery of a million artillery shells to Ukraine,⁸⁷ and Czechia reported delivery of double its original target of 800,000 shells, despite criticism of its program with respect to cost, quality, and delays.⁸⁸

In 2025, High Representative Kaja Kallas announced a new EU pledge to provide two million additional artillery shells to Ukraine by the end of the year,⁸⁹ and she reported that 80% of the total had been fulfilled as of September 2025.⁹⁰ Czech President Petr Pavel announced additional deliveries of 300,000 shells to Ukraine by the end of 2025.⁹¹

How much donated equipment Ukraine has actually received

As of June 2025, the US had announced 74 aid packages to Ukraine under the PDA program with a combined value of around \$27 bn,⁹² after including accounting errors worth \$8.3 bn.⁹³ As reported by the US Government Accountability Office, by January 2025 approximately \$25.7 bn in defense equipment had been sent to Ukraine, leaving around \$6 bn of authorized value still available.⁹⁴ As of August 2025, total EU military aid committed to Ukraine constituted \$65 bn, with \$6.6 bn mobilized under the EPF.⁹⁵ No public reporting on deliveries is available.



Photo: A serviceman of the 24th Mechanized Brigade named after King Danylo of the Ukrainian Armed Forces loads a shell inside a BRM-1K infantry fighting vehicle before firing towards Russian troops at a front line, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, near the town of Chasiv Yar in Donetsk region, Ukraine, August 17, 2024. Credit: Oleg Petrasiuk/Press Service of the 24th King Danylo Separate Mechanized Brigade of the Ukrainian Armed Forces

Trends and problems

Too little, too slow

One of Ukraine's concerns is that once funding is approved, implementing agencies provide military support too slowly and in packages that are too small. If Ukraine received a single large package of aid, it could better plan military operations based on what it has in stock. It could also concentrate resources to prevent further Russian gains on the front.

Partners argue that sending huge amounts of military equipment in a single package does not necessarily translate into greater military capabilities,⁹⁶ and such an approach would raise questions about Ukrainian absorption capacity. It takes time, for example, to ship the equipment to Ukraine and train personnel to operate certain military items.⁹⁷ Delivering equipment over time can also ensure sustainability and a continuous flow of aid, as well as flexibility in responding to changing battlefield needs.⁹⁸

Alarming decreases in support

In both the US and the EU, aid packages to Ukraine have been fairly regular. US PDA announcements have been occurring twice per month, except for a pause in January and February 2023.⁹⁹ However, over time another trend has emerged: a slower allocation of funds to Ukraine at the legislative level (described in Chapter 1) is being echoed by smaller aid deliveries at the executive level.

The value of aid packages to Ukraine from the US has gradually decreased. In 2022 and early 2023, packages worth between \$600 m and \$800 m were frequent, and the largest, in January 2023, was worth \$2.85 bn. During 2023–24, the packages shrank, so that none of the packages between May and November 2024 exceeded \$425 m.¹⁰⁰

In 2025, no new packages were sent given the absence of new congressional funding for Ukraine. In the absence of such new US funding, researchers at the Kiel Institute recorded a 43% decline in monthly average military aid for Ukraine between the first half of 2025 and July and August of that year, despite European and other partners' attempts to make up for the lack of new US contributions.¹⁰¹

In private conversations and publicly, US experts and officials have often argued that Ukraine's enormous needs have depleted US military stocks to a critical level.¹⁰² Slow replenishment of these stocks therefore causes aid packages for Ukraine to shrink. Europeans also note that although packages are now smaller, they are more regular and sustainable.

Depletion of stocks and slow replenishment

For security reasons, documents containing the minimum stockpile levels needed to ensure military readiness, as well as data on actual stock numbers, are classified in both the US and the EU. Some EU member states have moved to restrict such information since the beginning of the full-scale invasion.¹⁰³ Open-source reports, however, suggest that the US and EU member states still have large amounts of weapons available. For example, as of early 2024 the US possessed thousands of Bradley infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs) and M113 armored personnel carriers (APCs),¹⁰⁴ as well as three to four million 155-millimeter dual-purpose cluster munitions.¹⁰⁵ These are not urgently needed by partners and could be supplied to Ukraine under the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) program for free or for a symbolic price.¹⁰⁶

US officials argue that public reporting is not always accurate. For example, thousands of Bradleys are in depot and not functional. Though they could be refurbished, it would require a costly and time-consuming establishment of new repair lines.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the US has provided some Bradleys to Ukraine for spare

The US Weapons Possessed vs Weapons Provided



Chart: Michael Newton/Center for European Policy Analysis. Source: Protect Ukraine Now.

parts usage, but the number is not significant. Germany's experience, however, suggests that refurbishing Leopard 1A5 tanks is cheaper and easier than providing the newer Leopard 2A6 model to Ukraine.¹⁰⁸

Given the lack of public reporting, it is also difficult to track the state and pace of partners' stock replenishment. From January 2022 to February 2022, the DoD argued that it was not providing PDA aid packages to Ukraine due to a lack of PDA replenishment funds. Again in January 2024, the DoD paused new PDA packages until Congress provided more replenishment funding.¹⁰⁹ However, questions remain as to how critical a lack of funding at that moment was for replenishment, as it would have taken months to conclude contracts with defense companies and years to manufacture the items in question. In any case, replenishment funds cannot be obligated until the original weapons are delivered to Ukraine, and in some cases it takes up to 20 months for a weapons system to be ready for delivery under PDA.¹¹⁰

In early 2024, when PDA packages were paused, the DoD still had around \$8 bn in unobligated replenishment funds, meaning no contracts had been concluded with defense companies.¹¹¹ As of December 2024, the Pentagon had about \$16.1 bn in

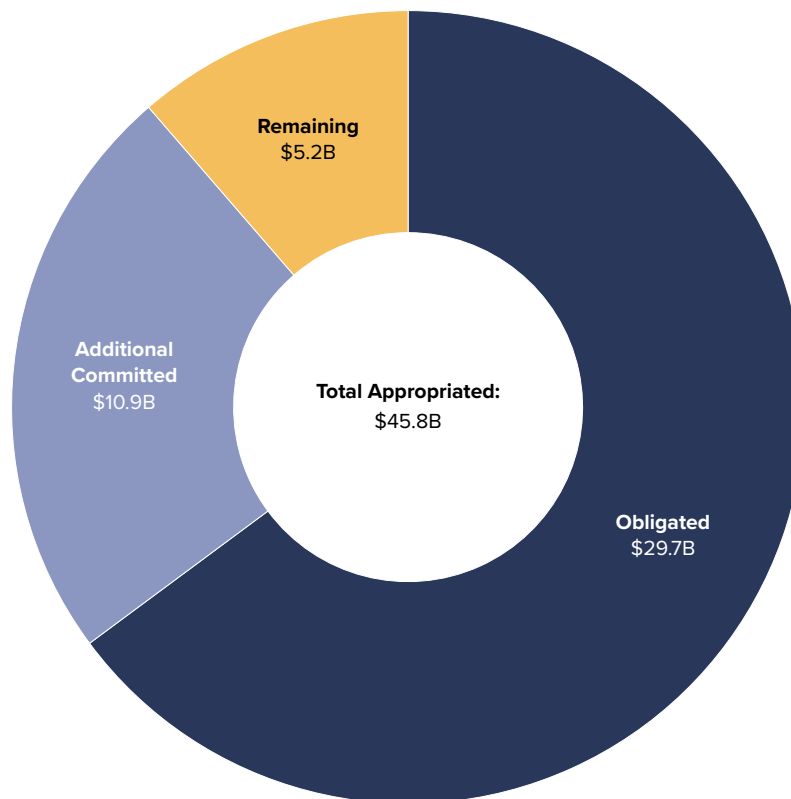
Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

such funds.¹¹² In 2025, no public data on this topic have been made available on the DoD's website.

It is notable that the military items donated by United States to Ukraine were not always vital to US operational readiness, meaning the donations could be replaced with alternatives rather than identical systems. One US government report suggests that the DoD may use PDA replenishment funds for various purposes, including the following:¹¹³

- Buying exact replacements of weapons delivered to Ukraine
- Buying newer, modern variants of weapons delivered to Ukraine
- Investing in the defense industrial base to accelerate the production of weapons
- Reimbursing service costs, including logistics costs associated with PDA transfers to Ukraine, such as operations and maintenance fuel costs to ship equipment overseas

Acquisition Actions - Presidential Drawdown Authority



Obligated = Includes all acquisition-related obligations, including services, transportation, and administrative costs. Additional Committed = Denotes all amounts for which the Department has notified Congress on its intended use. Total Committed Funds are \$40.6 Billion, which includes obligated funds.

Chart: Michael Newton/Center for European Policy Analysis. Source: US Department of Defense, December 2024

According to the US Government Accountability Office, as of May 2025 the DoD still lacked explicit instructions on how replacement needs must be considered, policies to ensure that equipment can be replaced in a timely manner, and updated Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) procedures for large-scale drawdowns. By mid-2025, the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness was expected to issue new instructions to clarify PDA roles, standardize readiness and replacement assessments, and improve management of large-scale drawdowns.¹¹⁴

Political interventions in the process

In the US, though the DoD is responsible for the content of PDA packages, the White House approves them and does not allow the transfer of certain types of weapons due to humanitarian or escalation concerns. These restricted items have previously included, for example, cluster munitions (155-millimeter dual-purpose improved conventional munition shells), which the US began to supply to Ukraine in mid-2023 but later stopped.¹¹⁵ According to some sources, the transfers were halted because US defense companies already had contracts to scrap the stockpiles in question.¹¹⁶

In the EU, politicization of the process has slowed down aid execution. Since the EPF is an off-budget mechanism, decisions on its funds disbursement should be approved unanimously by the 27 EU member states. Hungary has abused its veto power multiple times since May 2023 because Ukraine blacklisted the Hungarian OTP Bank as an “international sponsor of war.”¹¹⁷

Hungarian vetoes blocked three \$580 m tranches of reimbursements to EU member states for Ukraine aid from the EPF, as well as the last top-up of EPF funding worth more than \$5 bn (Ukraine Assistance Fund).¹¹⁸ OTP Bank was eventually removed from Ukraine’s blacklist in 2023, but Budapest maintained its veto, demanding guarantees that the situation would not arise again. As of June 2025, Hungary continued to hold up \$7.6 bn in aid.¹¹⁹

The reasons behind Hungary’s obstructive policies are manifold. The government has leveraged the issue of aid to Ukraine in a bid to boost the domestic popularity of the ruling party, and to extract economic benefits from the EU, such as the release of development funds that had been frozen over concerns about the rule of law in Hungary.¹²⁰ Budapest has also sought to maintain its purchases of cheap Russian energy supplies despite EU efforts to end the trade.¹²¹

Expiration of funds and counting errors

In 2024, \$6 bn in available US PDA funds were on the verge of expiring, but the DoD managed to save them by obligating them to various orders and contracts; Congress did not extend the authority to use the funds during the next fiscal year.¹²²



Photo: A Ukrainian pilot of the 12th Separate Brigade of Army Aviation prepares to take off to carry out a mission in a Mi-24 attack helicopter, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, during military drills Dnipropetrovsk region, June 07, 2023. Credit: REUTERS/Viacheslav Ratynskyi

In 2022, however, \$1.6 bn did expire at the end of that fiscal year (September) because the White House did not notify Congress of its intent to keep using the funds in the 2023 fiscal year. The reasons behind that notification failure—be they bureaucratic or political—remain unknown.

Initially, \$2.1 bn in funds were believed to have expired in 2022, but the amount was adjusted after an accounting error was discovered.¹²³ So far, the DoD has discovered such errors twice: in summer 2023 (\$6.2 bn) and summer 2024 (\$2.1 bn).¹²⁴ It was determined that the Pentagon was overestimating the value of equipment transferred to Ukraine under the PDA, and this enabled the release of additional material. The PDA cap was increased by \$8.3 bn accordingly.¹²⁵

Public reporting does not specify whether weapons sent to Ukraine under the PDA are supplied using the 2024 authority or the corrective recalculation from previous errors. In any case, US officials note that congressional funding and authorities are less of a problem than the country's limited productive capacity to meet the demand for weapons from Ukraine, European partners, and the US military itself.¹²⁶

Long-term Aid: Production of New Weapons

Programs, funds, and authorities

Long-term provision of military aid to Ukraine can be accomplished through the procurement of new equipment from defense companies. But because both contracting and production take time, new weapons reach Ukraine much more slowly than those sent directly from existing stocks.

In the US, aid in the form of new production has been carried out through two programs: the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF).

Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative: Administered by the DoD, the USAI allows the US government to purchase new equipment directly from defense companies and supply the weapons to Ukraine. Slower than PDA but faster than FMF, the USAI enables Ukraine to obtain not only defense articles (including components to support Ukrainian production), but also services, military training, repairs, and maintenance of military equipment.

In 2022–24, USAI authority lasted for one year, meaning funds had to be spent within one fiscal year or they would expire. Given that the production of new military items takes time, USAI funds risk expiration before production is carried out.¹²⁷

Funding for the USAI program across the five supplementals was \$32.7 bn.

Foreign Military Financing (FMF): Administered by the State Department, FMF provides grants and loans to Ukraine, enabling it to buy defense articles and services in the US through the following mechanisms:¹²⁸

Foreign Military Sales (FMS), which allow the Ukrainian government to purchase defense articles, services, and training from the US government, which organizes procurement from US companies; and

Direct Commercial Sales (DCS), which allow the Ukrainian government to buy defense articles directly from US firms, which must still apply to the State Department for the export license.

The main difference between the two FMF mechanisms is that purchasing items through DCS is faster than through FMS, but DCS can only be used for less advanced technologies.

FMF provides flexibility in terms of what can be purchased for Ukraine. However, due to lengthy procedures for negotiation, approval, and coordination among agencies, FMF is also considered to be the slowest program for providing aid to Ukraine.¹²⁹

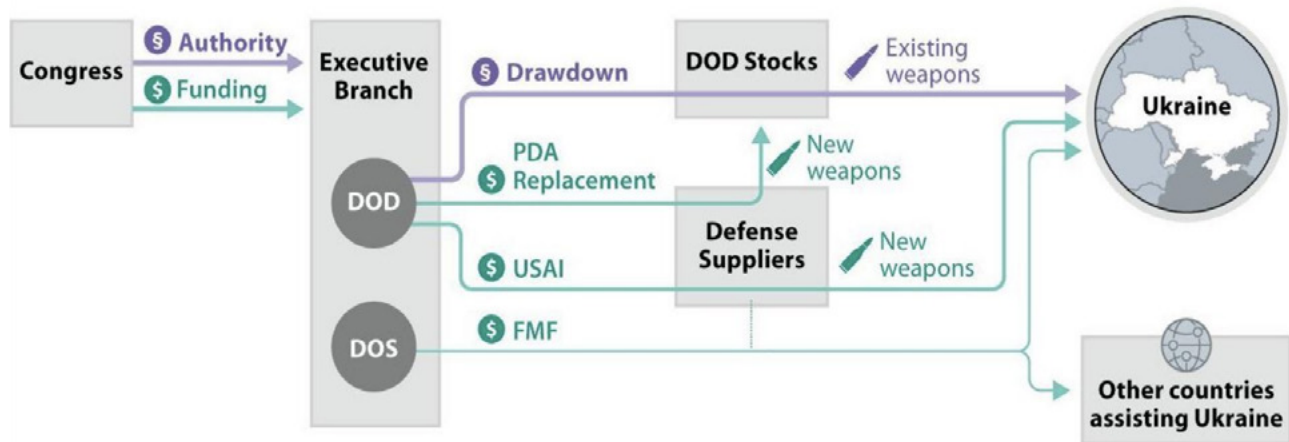
FMF has received less funding than PDF or USAI, amounting to \$6.2 bn out of \$72.2 bn in military aid under the five supplementals.¹³⁰ Yet the FMF authority is unlimited, meaning there is no risk of the funds expiring before the manufacturer is able to produce the weapons under contract.

In terms of communications, under FMF, the Ukrainian government can send requests to purchase particular military items directly to the US embassy, which routes them to US European Command, the State Department, the DoD, and ultimately to defense companies. For the USAI, the DoD usually has more extensive lists of Ukraine's needs and requests that have been acquired through the UDCG (see Chapter 3).

The USAI and FMF have a number of elements in common:

Both the USAI and FMF boost local economies in certain US states and create jobs in the country. Money allocated to aid Ukraine can effectively stay in the US, where it is invested in the US defense industry, with only the end products going to Ukraine. DoD data suggest that multiple US states have benefited from these investments.¹³¹

Selected Funding and Authorities to Aid Ukraine and Replenish US Stocks



Source: Congressional Research Service¹³²

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

Both programs can be used as political instruments to incentivize foreign donors and subsidize their provision of old weapons to Ukraine. As of November 2024, 13 countries had supplied weapons from their existing stocks to Ukraine and were reimbursed by the US government under FMF.¹³³

The USAI and FMF allow investments in Ukraine's own military industrial sector. In May 2024, then-Secretary of State Antony Blinken committed \$2 bn in FMF funds to be invested in Ukraine's industrial base.¹³⁴

In the EU, the EPF finances the procurement of new weapons from defense companies. However, the scope of these investments is relatively insignificant considering that they involve joint production by the 27 EU member states. In May 2023, the EU committed \$1.1 bn from the EPF to the joint procurement of ammunition and missiles from EU and Norwegian military industries, with the goal of procuring a million artillery shells for Ukraine within a year.¹³⁵

On a bilateral level among European countries, purchases from arms producers are not regulated by any one program. Europeans are buying in Europe, the US, and other countries like Israel,¹³⁶ with US firms still accounting for four-fifths of EU military procurement.¹³⁷ The situation changed significantly in 2025, however, with the EU aiming to reorient military procurement toward European producers, reduce dependence on foreign suppliers, and promote joint procurement and industrial cooperation among the member states.

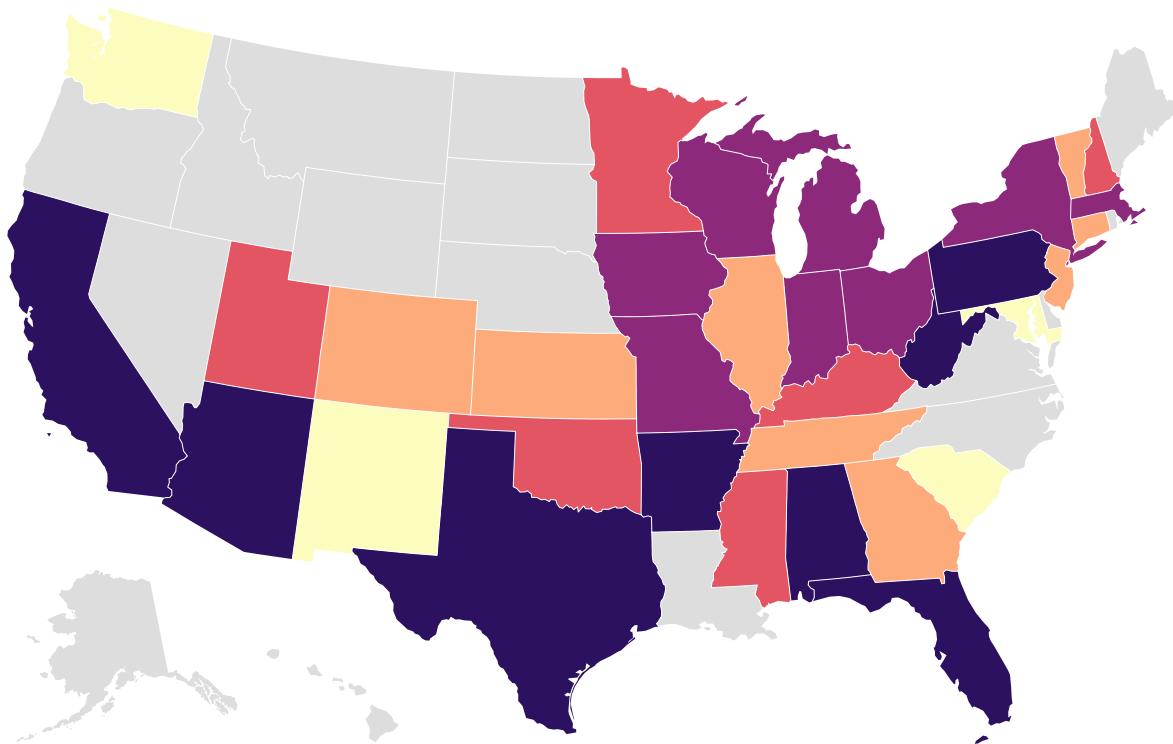
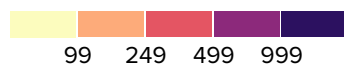
In particular, the **Security Action for Europe (SAFE) instrument** was established to provide **\$175 bn** in loans to EU member states, and this could serve as a potential mechanism for military support to Ukraine in addition to EU rearmament. As of October 2025, 19 EU member states had expressed interest in taking SAFE loans for urgent procurement and longer-term investments in their defense industries, with 13 states indicating interest in including Ukraine in their European Defense Investment Plans for the use of SAFE loans. There are three main ways to engage with Ukraine and its defense industry under SAFE:¹³⁸

1. transfer of existing weapons to Ukraine from EU member states, followed by replenishment of stocks with equipment procured under SAFE financing (similar to the US PDA mechanism);
2. financing production within the EU through SAFE, with subsequent delivery of equipment to Ukraine (similar to the US USAI program); and
3. joint production and procurement involving Ukrainian manufacturers (similar to the Danish Model described below).

Since late 2024, EU member states have procured weapons from Ukrainian producers and donated them back to Ukrainian forces through the so-called **Danish Model**. Under this scheme, the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence acts as an

Investment in the US Industrial Base from Funding for Ukraine

Amount in \$ Million



This map uses data includes USAI obligations and Presidential Drawdown Replacement obligations (Supplementals 1-4), and represents prime vendors and critical Suppliers. Mapped values reflect major systems only; not all funds are reflected. Any decreases from previous publications reflect greater data fidelity/omission of non-major systems.

Chart: Michael Newton/Center for European Policy Analysis. Source: US Department of Defense, December 2024

intermediary, while European countries reimburse existing contracts with Ukrainian manufacturers to produce weapons for the Armed Forces of Ukraine.¹³⁹

This approach enables faster and larger-scale weapons deliveries than comparable European production and helps expand the capacity of Ukrainian defense companies, many of which have been underutilized due to limited funding. In 2024, the Armed Forces of Ukraine received weapons valued at nearly €538 m (\$560 m) through this initiative.¹⁴⁰ Denmark in particular was financing this procurement in part with frozen Russian assets.¹⁴¹

Trends and problems

Untraceable deliveries

As of October 2025, the US had announced 23 military aid packages to Ukraine worth \$34.9 bn under the USAI program.¹⁴² Yet it takes time to procure and produce military items committed to Ukraine under these packages.

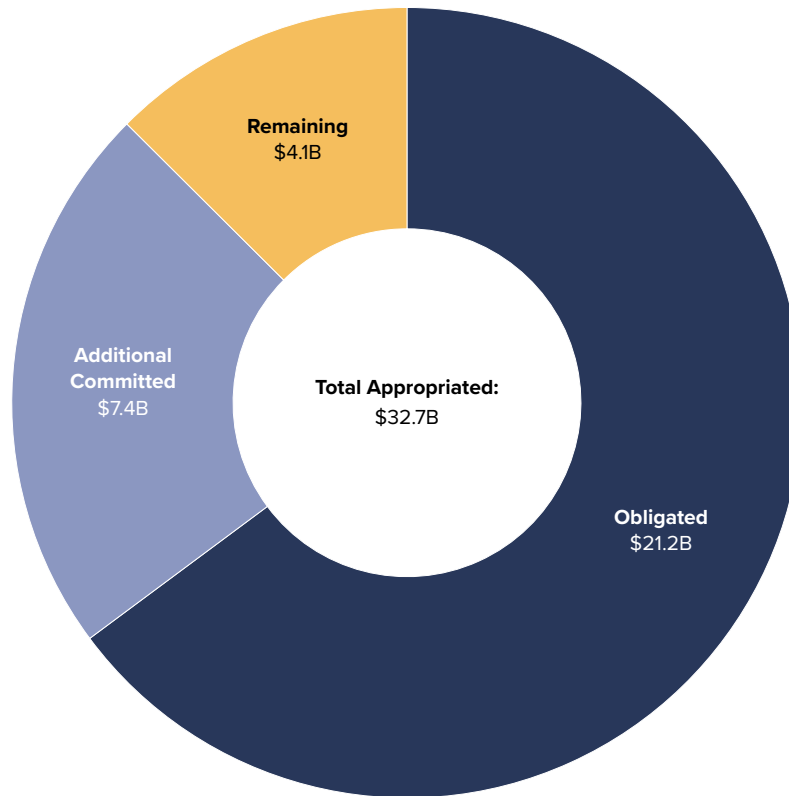


Photo: Ukrainian servicemen ride atop of a tank during drills of armed forces at the border with Belarus, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, near Chornobyl, Ukraine February 3, 2023. Credit: REUTERS/Viacheslav Ratynskyi

According to DoD reporting, as of December 2024, two-thirds (\$21.2 bn out of \$32.7 bn) of the money appropriated for Ukraine had been obligated (contracted).¹⁴³ The DoD has also notified Congress of its intent to use \$9.8 bn but has not yet concluded defense contracts with manufacturers; another \$1.7 bn remained unused. In 2025, no public data on these balances have been made available on the DoD's website.

Meanwhile, there is no public reporting on the extent to which the defense articles contracted under USAI funding have actually been produced and delivered to Ukraine. Ukraine confirms that some deliveries under the USAI have already been made, but the detailed data are not publicly available.¹⁴⁴ Open-source data analysis suggests that the US might have produced and supplied Ukraine with defense items worth at least \$4.2 bn, but these are very tentative numbers; the items in question include M117 Guardian armored vehicles, Abrams tanks, and Ground Launched Small Diameter Bombs (GLSDBs).¹⁴⁵

Acquisition Actions - Ukraine Support Assistance Initiative



Obligated = Includes all acquisition-related obligations, including services, transportation, and administrative costs. Additional Committed = Denotes all amounts for which the Department has notified Congress on its intended use. Total Committed Funds are \$40.6 Billion, which includes obligated funds.

Chart: Michael Newton/Center for European Policy Analysis. Source: US Department of Defense, December 2024

Long manufacturing times and limited industrial capacities

The slow pace of military aid deliveries to Ukraine is in most cases explained by the lengthy production times for military items. It usually takes years to produce more complex assets (e.g., five to seven years for Patriot air-defense missile systems, and one and a half years for National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile Systems [NASAMS]), and months for simpler items like artillery shells.¹⁴⁶ The US and EU defense industries do not have the capacity to meet the demand created by the war in Ukraine, for several reasons.

First, the current US defense industry was not built to supply a years-long war between large states. In recent decades, the US government shaped its industrial base for low-intensity conflict, partly to save money, and partly due to differing views on how modern wars would be fought. It did not anticipate, for example, the need for sustained artillery fire along an extensive and mostly static front line.¹⁴⁷ In 2018, a DoD assessment of the US defense industrial base identified a decline

Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

in US manufacturing capacity as a key risk.¹⁴⁸ Europe, which has long relied on the US in the security and defense field, is in a much worse position: its defense industries are highly fragmented, and 80% of its procurements are made outside the EU, primarily in the US.¹⁴⁹

Second, US military companies are already contracted several years in advance to produce weapons for Ukraine, for US replenishment, and for European partners.¹⁵⁰ Huge demand and over-contracting have caused multiple supply-chain challenges, such as long lead times for the basic materials needed for weapons production. In some cases, the potential lead times between an order and receipt of supplies have increased from 19 to 34 months, for instance because of difficulties obtaining key metals and electronic parts.¹⁵¹

Third, there has been no major increase in the number of production lines, in either the EU or the US, because of underinvestment by governments and businesses. In contrast to Russia, which put its economy and state defense manufacturers on a war footing after the full-scale invasion, military contractors in the US and EU largely continue to operate as private companies pursuing their respective commercial interests. Given that some investments can take five to 10 years to pay off, and government funding can secure only one to two years of investment at a time, private companies do not perceive attractive and secure business models for opening new production lines. Government officials, in turn, point to private industries' underinvestment in capital projects.¹⁵²

Whether the funding in question is governmental or private, the problem in both the EU and the US is an unwillingness to make sacrifices by investing in industries that will not be profitable in the near term.¹⁵³ Even when funds are allocated, expanding production lines takes time, as long as four or five years to build a plant and additional periods to hire and train staff.¹⁵⁴

The US and EU governments did not mount a tangible response to these problems during the first years of full-scale war in Ukraine. Both the US and the EU eventually adopted first-ever defense industrial strategies aimed at boosting the readiness of their suppliers, but they did not materialize until relatively late in the war; the US adopted its National Defense Industrial Strategy (NDIS) in January 2024,¹⁵⁵ and the EU rolled out its European Defence Industrial Strategy (EDIS) in March of that year.¹⁵⁶

In contrast to the \$74.6 bn in combined fiscal year 2024 supplemental and base defense appropriations in the US,¹⁵⁷ European funding for strategy implementation is rather limited: \$2 bn of the EU budget over the period 2025–27.¹⁵⁸ To boost its defense industry, in July 2023 the EU also adopted the Act in Support of Ammunition Production (ASAP), mobilizing funds from the EU budget to ramp up the manufacturing capacities of EU industries.¹⁵⁹ Yet the sum was ridiculously small at



Photo: Ukrainian F-16 fighting aircrafts are seen in the air during marking the Day of the Ukrainian Air Forces, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in an undisclosed location, Ukraine August 4, 2024. Credit: REUTERS/Valentyn Ogirenko

just \$580 m; with co-funding by industries, the total budget will exceed €1.7 bn (\$1.9 bn).¹⁶⁰ In a more robust step in 2025, the EU adopted the new SAFE instrument, allocating some \$175 bn for loans supporting joint procurement of weapons from EU and Ukrainian industries.¹⁶¹

Bureaucratic obstacles to swift acquisition

Time-consuming bureaucratic procedures under FMF lead to slow deliveries of aid. After receiving the letter of request (LOR) from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence or other ministries, the US State Department first assesses the acquisition of each item. Issues under consideration usually include rules related to transferring technology and intellectual property. Only after the State Department authorizes the procurement does the DSCA, within the DoD, coordinate the search for contractors and begin the acquisition process.¹⁶²

Acquisition procedures in the US are generally slow and inflexible, and the need for acquisition reform was already a subject of discussion before Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.¹⁶³ The existing procedures were built for peaceful times and with a focus on eliminating the risk of corruption, among other priorities, with less emphasis on speed or flexibility.¹⁶⁴ Before the current war, the US had not dealt with both large-scale production and such extensive paperwork for many decades.

The NDIS of 2024 aimed to implement flexible acquisition procedures, but there has not been any substantial reporting on progress in this domain.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, in 2022–24 there were no acquisition officers in the Pentagon working specifically on Ukraine acquisitions.¹⁶⁶

Export controls have played a role in slowing down the provision of aid to Ukraine, but some countries have taken steps to address the problem. Czechia, for example, established an interagency standing committee in February 2022, and it is now able to process requests within days, whereas previously such efforts had taken months.¹⁶⁷

Domestic sourcing rules in the EU

The EU's actions to boost European defense production sometimes lead to delays in support for Ukraine. Because the EDIS of 2024 includes a target for EU member states to obtain at least 50% of their defense procurements within the EU by 2030,¹⁶⁸ partners have already begun pursuing this goal within the EU artillery initiative for Ukraine.

Before the EDIS, in 2023, the EU aimed to provide one million artillery shells to Ukraine by March 2024, but the initiative failed, and the target was reached only in December 2024.¹⁶⁹ One of the reasons for the delay was a push by some member states to procure artillery rounds only from EU companies.¹⁷⁰ When it became clear that the bloc could not reach its goal under that constraint, the member states revised their decision.

The EU's desire to channel funds toward its own production is understandable, yet there needs to be a balance between meeting immediate needs with respect to military aid for Ukraine and supporting long-term investment in domestic industrial capacity.

Rising prices

As wars in Ukraine and the Middle East have increased the global demand for military items, prices for these items have risen significantly. For example, the cost of one 155-millimeter artillery shell has risen from \$2,100 to \$8,400 since February 2022.¹⁷¹ In the US, some officials have pointed to alleged overcharging by contractors.¹⁷²

Recommendations

On communication:

- **Communicate threat-based needs.** Systematizing and prioritizing Ukraine's requests for military items is a continuing challenge, since the need for military equipment is constant and urgent. However, Ukraine's needs can be explained to partners as responses to particular threats. In early 2024, Ukraine's Ministry of Defence worked with the IDCC to devise an Operational Force Development Framework—a process for identifying the army's needs on the basis of potential threats.¹⁷³ This strategy has been implemented by the Ministry of Defence in cooperation with partners and should be used more extensively in the future.

On short-term aid:

- **Unblock EPF payouts.** Hungary's blocking of EPF payouts to EU member states for military aid donated to Ukraine is systemic and politically motivated. To unblock EPF reimbursements, EU member states could agree on voluntary contributions, an idea discussed in Brussels in November 2024.¹⁷⁴ However, such a system might not be sustainable, as several EU member states have already been reluctant to make contributions to the fund. A need for alternative financial mechanisms might arise in the future. Among other potential ways of dissuading the Hungarian government from abusing its veto, the EU could move to suspend all funding for Hungary.¹⁷⁵
- **Use SAFE loans to facilitate donations of equipment to Ukraine.** European states should consider donating some equipment from their existing stocks to Ukraine, and then seek SAFE loans to replenish their own supplies. They could also donate a portion of any new equipment procured through the SAFE initiative directly to Ukraine.
- **Transfer decommissioned equipment to Ukraine.** The US EDA program allows the DoD's DSCA to assemble military equipment that is no longer of use to the US military and transfer it to allied and friendly countries for either 5%–50% of the original cost or as a no-cost grant. The US transferred Mi-17 helicopters to Ukraine under EDA authority in 2022, and had transferred Island-class patrol boats and other military equipment in 2015, 2018, and 2019.¹⁷⁶ Though US officials note that the US has been using this program occasionally since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, its use could be increased substantially. Europeans could also follow the example of France in transferring decommissioned military equipment to Ukraine instead of scrapping it.¹⁷⁷

On long-term aid:

- **Expand European participation in the PURL initiative, while considering other mechanisms.** The EU and its member states should continue purchasing American weapons for Ukraine while simultaneously investing in domestic defense production capacity. It is crucial that more European countries join NATO's PURL initiative to ensure a steady flow of US-made weapons (see Chapter 3). European participation in the US FMS program should also be considered as a longer-term mechanism for sustaining Ukraine's defense needs.
- **Invest in Ukraine's military industry.** As of 2024, Ukrainian defense industries were reported to have a potential output of \$18 bn to \$20 bn, but the Ukrainian government could fund less than half of that output on its own.¹⁷⁸ In 2025, Ukraine's defense production capacity exceeded \$40 bn, but 40% of this potential remained underfunded. Crucially, Ukrainian military production is much cheaper than that in the EU or the US, meaning a shift toward production in Ukraine would allow US and European taxpayers to scale back the total cost of direct aid. Europe in particular should increase investments in Ukrainian domestic military production either through the Danish Model or using SAFE loans. This approach would match Europeans' ample capacity for financial support with Ukraine's untapped potential for expanded military production, while also addressing Washington's goal of reducing dependence on US military aid. The resulting EU-Ukraine partnerships could even serve to accelerate the EU's own rearmament efforts.
- **Provide a governmental incentive for defense industries.** Profit-oriented private companies need clear incentives and reasonable expectations of future contracts if they are to open costly new production lines, which can take years to bear fruit. Governments should therefore increase and adapt their investments in new defense industries. Funding laid out under the EDIS and NDIS should be increased. The US federal government also has the authority to seize control of certain aspects of industrial production during emergencies to increase output. This power was considered during the COVID-19 pandemic, for example, to help produce vaccines. Such a move should be considered now to address the need for military production.
- **Reprioritize contracts.** The 1951 Defense Production Act authorizes the president to reprioritize the performance of existing arms production contracts, should it be deemed necessary for national security.¹⁷⁹ In June 2024, the White House initiated a change of production orders under the FMF program, prioritizing execution of Ukraine's air defense munition contracts.¹⁸⁰ This crisis-response measure could be employed in critical situations in the future.



Photo: Ukrainian recruits haul a simulated casualty during training provided by Operation Interflex.
Credit: NATO Flickr

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- **Expedite FMS.** When there is political will, urgent steps can be taken by the US government to expedite deliveries or overcome bureaucratic bottlenecks with respect to foreign military sales. In early 2025, for example, the Trump administration approved nearly \$12 bn in major FMS orders for Israel and invoked emergency procedures to notify Congress of the proposed weapons sales, bypassing the traditional process of review by committee.¹⁸¹
 - **Undertake DoD acquisition reform.** The US should finally carry out reform of its acquisition process, not just to support Ukraine, but also to upgrade its own capacity to respond effectively to future crises. In 2024, after 24 months of research, a special congressional commission issued a 400-page report that outlined numerous options for acquisition reform and improvements to the DoD's budgeting system.¹⁸² These measures should be prioritized and implemented as soon as possible.

From Ramstein to NATO: Evolution of Formats

Ukraine Defense Contact Group

Overview

Initiated by US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, the UDCG (also known as the Ramstein Format) was created in early 2022 to improve communication among Ukraine's partners and coordinate efforts on logistics and training. The UDCG united 57 countries, including the US, EU member states, the UK, Canada, Turkey, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Moldova, and Georgia.

Like the United Nations, Ramstein is a good platform for participants to communicate, present commitments on deliveries, and discuss Ukraine's future needs. Politically, it was designed as a mechanism to keep countries engaged under US leadership; not every country had committed something to Ukraine at every meeting. Under the Trump administration, the US is no longer playing the leading role in the UDCG, although it continues to participate.

Ramstein remains a format for political-level decisions, centered on a "ceremonial" gathering of defense ministers every one or two months, with President Zelenskyy sometimes attending. All the technical work and negotiations behind these decisions in 2022–24 were carried out by the UK-led IDCC. Starting in 2025, this work was largely taken over by the NATO-led NSATU.

The IDCC did not make any decisions, but coordinated assistance daily and was responsible for the transfer of information, logistics, repair, and maintenance. The center had around 200 personnel from 21 nations, including Ukraine, but it suffered from the shortcomings of its ad hoc structure.¹⁸³ The IDCC consisted of liaison officers from the armed forces of different countries who worked on two- or three-month rotations, meaning they often lacked the time to immerse themselves in the relevant processes.¹⁸⁴

As described in Chapter 2, communication with and among Ukraine's partners used to be rather chaotic, with Ukrainians employing special software and sending requests through embassies to IDCC and SAG-U. Yet the lists of requests did not provide a rationale for Ukraine's needs. That is why communication formats like the UDCG have been so helpful.

Trends and problems

1. **Capabilities development.** The IDCC was useful for coordinating logistics, but it needed to focus more effectively on integrating military capabilities.
2. **Future of aid coordination.** The constant rotation of liaison officers within the ad hoc IDCC, as well as the prospect of changes in the US role at the UDCG after the 2024 elections, raised questions regarding the sustainability of future aid flows and coordination among partners.

To address these issues, allies developed the following solutions: dividing UDCG work among capability coalitions and enhancing NATO's role in coordinating assistance through NSATU.

Ramstein 2.0: Capability Coalitions

Overview

Worked out in late 2023 under US leadership, capability coalitions began to operate as subgroups within the UDCG in early 2024. The day-to-day work between Ramstein gatherings, previously carried out by the IDCC, is now technically managed by capability coalitions. They are smaller than the UDCG and constitute a more effective format, as discussions within coalitions are more open.¹⁸⁵

Capability coalitions are meant to divide labor and share burdens among participating states. Coalition co-leads have ownership over their respective spheres, and they are also usually the largest donors within a particular field,¹⁸⁶ but many other states may take part. The drone coalition, for example, has 15 members.¹⁸⁷ Capability coalitions serve the additional purpose of harmonizing military aid to Ukraine and making it more sustainable and consistent.

The following is a list of capability coalitions that specialize in particular dimensions of military aid:¹⁸⁸

- Air force capability coalition, led by the US, Denmark, and the Netherlands
- Armor capability coalition, led by Poland, Italy, and Germany
- Artillery capability coalition, led by the US and France
- Demining capability coalition, led by Iceland and Lithuania
- Drone capability coalition, led by the UK and Latvia
- Information technology capability coalition, led by Estonia and Luxembourg
- Integrated air and missile defense capability coalition, led by France and Germany
- Maritime security capability coalition, led by the UK and Norway
- Electronic warfare capability coalition, led by Germany¹⁸⁹

In contrast to the IDCC, which was mostly responsible for logistics, capability coalitions have two key functions: (1) supporting Ukraine now, during the war, and (2) integrating capabilities and building Ukraine's future force in alignment with NATO standards. In January 2025, in keeping with the Ukraine Compact commitment signed during the 2024 Washington NATO summit,¹⁹⁰ leaders of the capability coalitions—each a compact signatory—developed and presented roadmaps for Ukraine's future force development through 2027.¹⁹¹ This force development process will contribute to the coordination of Ukraine's long-term needs.

Though formally functioning on the level of defense ministers, capability coalitions are run by lower-ranking officials on a day-to-day basis, typically two- to four-star generals or deputy ministers of defense.¹⁹² In 2024, Ukraine's Ministry of Defence created an effective organizational structure to cooperate with partner countries' ministries of defense. Joint working groups have been chaired by a relevant deputy minister of defense, who is assisted by a representative of the armed forces at the command level. The groups also include experts, working as project managers, and interested stakeholders.

Each capability coalition has a regular meeting of the leading countries and participating states at the working level. Every few months, there are internal coalition meetings at a higher level, involving deputy ministers of defense.¹⁹³ In mid-2024, Ukraine and the US also established the Coalitions Leadership Group, a group of 14 coalition leaders meeting on the eve of each Ramstein gathering to share best practices within coalitions and ensure that key messages would be communicated during the Ramstein meetings.¹⁹⁴

Trends and problems

Effectiveness depends on the leading nations

Since the countries co-leading the coalitions are their main drivers, the groups' effectiveness depends on the will and capabilities of these leading states. As for participating states, some are members of multiple coalitions, but they are unlikely to have the capacity to contribute substantially to all of them.¹⁹⁵ Finally, in general, it is difficult to measure whether the continuity of aid flows is ensured in practice by the coalition efforts or rather by bilateral cooperation with key partners.

Constantly changing requirements and the quick pace of war

Developments in the war itself lead to quick changes in Ukraine's military needs. Partners' defense companies, however, have not managed to adapt to the pace of change. This is the case with the drone coalition, for instance.



Photo: A shell with a painted American flag appears side of a Giatsint-B howitzer at a position near a frontline, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, at an undisclosed location in Donetsk region, Ukraine, November 4, 2023. Credit: REUTERS/Alina Smutko

Led by Latvia and the UK, the drone coalition receives a list of technical requirements for an “ideal drone” from the Ukrainian side based on its lessons learned, with respect to flight range, electromagnetic resistance, and types of cameras, among other features. While the UK coordinates management of collective funds by organizing procurement tenders, and companies from coalition member states apply for tenders and produce drones, Latvia is one of the main producers of drones within the coalition.

One of the central challenges the coalition has faced is the fact that required characteristics are constantly changing, and the production lines cannot adjust quickly enough to meet new demands. Increasingly specialized needs, such as those for long-range drones, surveillance drones, and electronic-warfare drones, have only added to the difficulty.¹⁹⁶

Competition and diverging interests among partners within coalitions

According to Ukraine's estimates, even member states in the same coalitions often do not share information with one another on what they are supplying to Ukraine, as they are interested in developing their own industries. Frequently, the types of weapons that partners send to Ukraine do not correspond with Ukraine's needs. Such competition and lack of coordination is not ultimately beneficial to any of the parties.

NATO

Overview

Since 2016, NATO has been supporting Ukraine under the Comprehensive Assistance Package (CAP), which was further strengthened in 2022.¹⁹⁷ It includes capacity-building efforts for Ukraine in the fields of institutional transformation, interoperability with NATO, medical rehabilitation, and demining, and it provides nonlethal aid such as fuel, medical supplies, and spare parts through the Ukraine CAP Trust Fund.¹⁹⁸

Ukraine has also been procuring nonlethal supplies through the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA). Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Kyiv has concluded around 20 contracts with partners via the NSPA. However, very complicated procurement procedures are in place to prevent corruption, and there is a lack of dedicated staff, with only two acquisition officers assigned to manage Ukraine's procurements. A slow pace of contract execution has further contributed to slow deliveries. For example, as of January 2025, Ukraine was still waiting for winter uniforms that were ordered in early 2022, and as of November 2024, only 10% of contracts had been executed and fulfilled with deliveries to Ukraine.¹⁹⁹

Greater NATO engagement was prompted by the delay in the US Congress's approval of its fifth Ukraine supplemental and by the US presidential election in 2024. Given concerns about changes in US leadership within the UDCG under the new administration, the need to institutionalize donor coordination, and internal competition between the UK-led IDCC and the American SAG-U, partners began taking steps to bring the coordination of aid to the NATO level. The 2024 NATO summit in Washington cemented some of these efforts.

First, to ensure sustainability of aid, member states committed to providing a minimum of \$46 bn in both lethal and nonlethal aid to Ukraine from mid-2024 through 2025, with a planned reevaluation of allied contributions at future NATO summits starting at the 2025 summit in The Hague.²⁰⁰ This Pledge of Long-Term Security Assistance for Ukraine did not presuppose, however, that a new NATO fund for Ukraine would

be created. It simply recorded allies' commitments to deliver \$46 bn in military aid either "through NATO, bilateral, multilateral, or by any other means."²⁰¹ Allies were supposed to report to NATO on the support they had delivered twice per year.

Second, NSATU, or **NATO Security Assistance and Training for Ukraine**, took over the leading role in coordinating military aid to Ukraine on the technical level from the IDCC in early 2025. Unlike the IDCC, which was ad hoc in nature, NSATU has a clear mission and structure and is formalized on paper.

Additionally, in contrast to the IDCC, NSATU has a new component beyond training, logistics, and equipment: force development. It will help to work out what the structure of the Armed Forces of Ukraine should be by 2035, what challenges and threats will exist in this planning horizon, and how to increase Ukraine's interoperability with NATO.²⁰² Despite some positive reporting in the media in December 2024,²⁰³ the mission still suffered from a considerable lack of staff in early 2025,²⁰⁴ and it had not become fully operational even as of June 2025.

Meanwhile in 2025, NATO expanded its role in coordinating Ukraine's requests for arms supplies. Following the suspension of new US military donations to Ukraine under the Trump administration in 2025, Ukraine's European partners began purchasing weapons from the US and donating them through NATO's PURL, or **Prioritized Ukraine Requirements List**. Under the PURL system, allies make financial contributions to acquire weapons based on a prioritized list of requirements set by Ukraine and agreed upon with the United States and NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR). Deliveries are then further coordinated by NSATU. As of mid-October 2025, seven European countries had contributed more than \$2 bn through the initiative, while six others expressed interest in joining.²⁰⁵

Trends and problems

Duplication of efforts and ineffective functioning of NSATU

As of June 2025, it remained unclear whether NATO would fully take over the UDCG as a communication platform among donors, or only assume responsibilities at the technical level through the replacement of the IDCC with NSATU. Under the new US administration, the Ramstein format has still been operational, but US engagement remains uncertain. In June 2025, for the first time since the UDCG was established, the US secretary of defense did not attend the Ramstein gathering, but by later in 2025 the US had renewed its participation.²⁰⁶

To carry out Ukraine's force development, NSATU is expected to have capability integration groups within its structure. However, given the existing capability coalitions' ongoing work to build Ukraine's future force, the concern is that similar groups within NSATU will lead to a duplication of efforts.

At the technical level, officers from NATO member states are stationed at NSATU on a rotational basis, typically for six-month deployments. These deployments, while longer than those of the IDCC, often prove insufficient for the officers to fully understand and integrate with the institution's complex systems and operational procedures. As a result, their ability to contribute effectively and build institutional continuity may be hindered.

Insecure funding under the long-term pledge

NATO's 2024 Washington Summit Declaration provided a rather vague description of expected long-term funding, citing "proportional contributions, including by taking into account their share of Alliance GDP."²⁰⁷ As a politically driven signal, the pledge did not establish an enforcement mechanism or a clear burden-sharing scheme.

According to some sources, as of November 2024, NATO allies had carried out at least one round of semiannual reporting. It confirmed that allies had spent \$20 bn, and suggested that six allies had spent much more than they should have under the pledge (including the US, Germany, and the Netherlands), while others had not contributed sufficiently.²⁰⁸ Criticism about an uneven distribution of contributions has persisted.

NATO's 2025 Hague Summit Declaration no longer included a long-term assistance pledge to Ukraine. Instead, it reaffirmed the allies' commitment to continue supporting Ukraine and recommended that direct contributions to Ukraine's defense and defense industry be counted toward allies' pledged targets for overall defense spending.²⁰⁹

Obstacles to force integration and interoperability

Given that both NATO and the UDCG capability coalitions aim to build Ukraine's future force, and that NATO intends to help Ukraine become interoperable with the alliance by 2035, the types of military aid sent to Ukraine need to be harmonized. At present, Ukraine is receiving myriad types of weapons from different countries, without adequate consideration of the long-term interoperability goal. At the beginning of the full-scale invasion, Ukraine was reported to have, for example, 14 variations of howitzers and numerous types of tanks.²¹⁰ These complications must be addressed, though not at the expense of Ukraine's short-term needs and capabilities.



Photo: NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte sits opposite Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
Credit: NATO via X <https://x.com/NATOpress/status/1877395740592345278>

Recommendations

- **Bolster long-term support for Ukraine through NATO.** NATO should reopen discussions on establishing a \$100 bn, five-year fund for Ukraine, supplied by member states according to existing cost-sharing formulas.²¹ This would ensure predictable and reliable security assistance to Ukraine for years to come.
- **Improve NSATU's effectiveness.** NATO member states should consider extending the length of their officers' deployments to NSATU, which is currently six months. Less frequent rotations would likely increase expertise and enhance the effectiveness of the mission.
- **Increase emphasis on maintenance and repair.** It is crucially important to establish additional repair and maintenance facilities for weapons donated to Ukraine, especially given the US leadership's decision in early 2025 to withdraw its Remote Maintenance and Distribution Center–Ukraine from Poland. There is a large pool of damaged Western military equipment in Ukraine that cannot be used or repaired due to a lack of knowledge and repair facilities. This is an area where NATO and European partners in particular could step in.

Conclusion

Political will has frequently been identified as the primary reason for the “too little, too slow” provision of military aid to Ukraine. While it is undeniably true that a lack of political resolve has prevented the timely and adequate delivery of critical capabilities, such as tanks, fighter jets, and long-range missiles, the nature of the problem is more complex. **In 2022–24, the provision of aid was hampered not only by strategic hesitation among Ukraine’s partners, but also by deep-rooted technical and structural challenges within donor systems.**

At the political level, Western allies have been constrained by fears of escalation, diverging national priorities, a reluctance to bear disproportionate burdens of support, and domestic political pressures—all of which have led to overly cautious, often fragmented decisions. This is particularly evident in the incremental nature of support and the continued reliance on escalation-management strategies even as the war evolved into a protracted, high-intensity conflict.

The dynamics of US efforts to supply aid to Ukraine came to be interpreted as a deliberate “spoon feeding” policy, or “salami-slice” approach, which effectively allowed Ukraine to survive but not to win the war. While US officials note that there is no conspiracy to prevent a Ukrainian victory and that partners’ resources are in fact limited, it is very difficult to draw the line between political will and lack of capacity. Some case studies might help. Examples of consequential politically driven decisions, or a lack thereof, include the following:

- Restrictions on supplying cluster munitions to Ukraine
- Limits on deep strikes in Russia using Western-supplied missiles
- US reluctance to provide Ukraine with critical assistance in winter 2023–24 under PDA before the new supplemental package was approved by Congress
- German reluctance to provide Taurus cruise missiles to Ukraine
- US pressure on partners to ban the use of Franco-British Storm Shadow/SCALP missiles on Russian territory
- Temporary halt in US intelligence sharing with Ukraine in early 2025

Not all politically driven decisions have been negative, however. In mid-2024, the US administration made a political decision to prioritize Ukraine-related military production contracts over partners’ contracts under the FMF program.²¹² In mid-2023, despite reaching a critical readiness level, Estonia made a political decision to provide all of its 155-millimeter howitzers to Ukraine.²¹³

Much of the delay and dysfunction has also stemmed from issues **at the executive and technical levels**. Bureaucratic bottlenecks, slow and inflexible procurement systems, the expiration of earmarked funds, accounting errors, and limited institutional capacities have all significantly impaired the ability to scale and sustain military assistance. The defense industrial bases on both sides of the Atlantic have experienced decline after decades of limited investment, and efforts to ramp up production have thus far been too little and too late. Critically, the need for long-term acquisition reform, particularly in the United States, has further slowed the response.

Many of these technical challenges could have been addressed—and still can be—if underpinned by a strategic vision and genuine political will. A wartime logic would require long-term, coordinated commitments and durable institutional structures. Steps in this direction could include the following:

- Comprehensive acquisition reform, including the establishment of dedicated acquisition officers within the US DoD and the NATO Support and Procurement Agency
- The creation of permanent multilateral structures for training and assistance to Ukraine, such as the transformation of the current NSATU or SAG-U frameworks into a standing Combined Joint Training Mission (CJTM-Ukraine)
- Securing multiyear funding commitments, such as a \$23 bn European facility for the Armed Forces of Ukraine or a NATO-managed \$100 bn multiyear assistance package
- Substantial investment in the defense-industrial base across the EU and the US, paired with political prioritization of Ukraine-related military production

As of mid-2025, allied actions remained largely reactive and fragmented. However, the year 2025 featured the initiation of a range of new trends in military support for Ukraine, which have resulted largely from political developments:

The push to use frozen Russian assets to sustain military support for Ukraine

With the US changing its strategic priorities and encouraging Europe to carry more of the burden for its own security, the EU has recognized the need to work out new systems for supplying weapons to Ukraine and financing European defense capabilities. Given that new US supplemental funding for Ukraine appears highly unlikely, the EU should not hesitate to keep purchasing US weapons for Ukraine. Its ambition to increase European industrial capacity will take years to accomplish. For its part, the US should facilitate such purchases by streamlining the FMS process. To finance these and other military acquisitions, the EU should complete and act on its consideration of new approaches such as SAFE loans and the confiscation of frozen Russian assets.

The surge in production among European defense industries

As European partners have largely emptied their stockpiles, they are finally moving to increase investment in their defense industries. However, support for Ukraine should remain the key priority, and it should not be impeded by competition among partners or the ambition to develop domestic production at the expense of Ukraine's immediate needs. Investments in the Ukrainian defense industry, the purchase of weapons from Ukrainian companies under the Danish Model, and the establishment of joint ventures between EU-based and Ukrainian companies should all be scaled up dramatically. Ukrainian-made weapons are cheaper than those produced in Western Europe, and the country's defense manufacturers are generally more motivated and innovative than their Western counterparts. The EU should act decisively to ensure common procurement with Ukrainian firms using SAFE funding.

Renewed international cooperation

International cooperation among partners through the UDCG, capability coalitions, and NSATU has proved to be effective for coordinating logistics and deliveries to Ukraine. Yet competition among partners is still tangible, and the production of certain types of weapons is often driven by parochial national interests rather than a desire to meet Ukraine's specific needs. Some technical issues on the NSATU level—such as how often staff are rotated out—should be addressed. It is also important to keep the US involved and preserve cooperation with SAG-U on sharing intelligence and other activities. The EU will not be able to fully replace US support in the short term. Therefore, joint efforts and constructive dialogue on both sides of Atlantic remain crucial.

In conclusion, nearly four years into the war, the transition to a fully coordinated wartime support structure remains incomplete and presents notable challenges. Defense industries are underdeveloped, planning horizons are short, and critical reforms are either stalled or entirely absent. The situation is clear: **While technical and executive-level issues have significantly hindered military aid to Ukraine, these problems are ultimately symptoms of a deeper cause—the lack of a cohesive strategic vision and consistent political will.** Unless the deficiencies are urgently addressed, Europe and the US risk precipitating not only Ukraine's defeat, but also the erosion of their own security, credibility, and resilience.

About the Author

Marianna Fakhurdinova is a Fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis (CEPA) and Associate Fellow at the New Europe Center (Ukraine).

Her research interests include European security, NATO and EU enlargement, and Ukraine's integration into the EU and NATO. Findings of her papers were published in think tanks and media outlets in Ukraine, the US, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Czech Republic. Among them Washington Post, Forbes Ukraine, EURACTIV, Neue Zürcher Zeitung etc.

Fakhurdinova's previous experience includes work with the Stockholm Center for Eastern European Studies, the Center for Security Studies ETH Zurich, and the Ukrainian embassy in Berlin. She has also been promoting knowledge about the EU among Ukrainians for 4 years as a Young European Ambassador at EU NEIGHBOURS East and is regularly invited by leading Ukrainian universities to give guest lectures on EU and NATO.

Marianna Fakhurdinova holds an MA in European Studies and a BA in International Relations from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv. She has completed the first half of her Fulbright fellowship at the University of Southern California.

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- US National Security Council, US Department of Defense, US Department of State, US Congress, and USAID;
- Ministry of Defence of Ukraine;
- EU Delegation to the United States, European External Action Service (EEAS);
- Embassies of Germany, Sweden, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Greece to the United States;
- Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Latvia;
- U.S. academic institutions and think tanks;
- Ukrainian advocacy groups in Washington, DC

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Wartime Assistance to Ukraine

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Center for European Policy Analysis HQ
1275 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20004

info@cepa.org | www.cepa.org