## PGMs

### 2NC – Aid Bad – Ukraine

#### US aid specifically to Ukraine makes it worse – justifies more interventions

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The size and scope of U.S. aid to Ukraine is increasing—and with it, the need for oversight and accountability. The Ukrainians are heroically defending their country, and, in support of that struggle, the United States has committed $53 billion through September 30, the end of this fiscal year. Early aid packages included mainly weapons and supplies, but the most recent package has billions of dollars of economic aid. Stronger oversight and controls are needed to ensure the funds are used as intended. Any corruption in handling this aid would undermine the bipartisan support that the aid has received and thereby impair the ability of the Ukrainian people to continue their struggle.

Aid related to the war totals $53 billion: $13 billion in supplemental funding passed in March and $40 billion in the package passed in May. The military component provides thousands of weapons to arm the Ukrainians, from rifles, night-vision goggles, rockets, and artillery pieces to antitank weapons like Javelins. Humanitarian aid covers a wide variety of activities, from global food relief to refugee resettlement.

Unlike earlier packages, the most recent aid package provides large resources directly to the Ukrainian government: $8.8 billion of economic support, $4 billion to purchase weapons, and potentially several billion dollars more in training, law enforcement, and humanitarian assistance funds. Further, the rate at which the United States provides military and humanitarian aid has increased from $150 million a day early on to $310 million per day in the latest aid package. Only part of this goes directly to the Ukrainian government; most aid flows through other institutions, particularly the Department of Defense. Nevertheless, Ukraine is by far the largest recipient of U.S. military and economic aid.

Ukraine desperately needs this economic aid to continue delivering governmental services and rebuild its shattered economy. The war has disrupted its ability to collect revenue, and the military effort has priority on the resources it has. Further, the World Bank estimates that the war will reduce Ukraine’s GDP by 45 percent. However, pouring billions of dollars into a beleaguered country with weak governance can overwhelm its control systems. The $8.8 billion of economic support alone is equivalent to 6 percent of Ukraine’s prewar annual GDP and 30 percent of government spending. The temptation to divert pieces into the wrong pockets will be strong

Corruption has been a real problem in Ukraine, notwithstanding exaggerations by Russia and others. The Corruption Perception Index ranked Ukraine at 122 out of 180 countries globally. Ukrainian oligarchs have dominated economic life, having taken advantage of the chaotic conditions when the Soviet Union collapsed. Frustration with failures and inefficiency in the Ukrainian government got President Zelensky, a political novice, elected in the first place.

Weapons need tracking also. The United States expects that the weapons will go to regular Ukrainian units for combat against the Russian military. However, many militias with questionable political pedigrees have likely arisen during Ukraine’s existential crisis. For example, the Azov battalion, which defended Mariupol, had neo-Nazi inclinations. Such groups are also more likely to abuse civilians and commit war crimes. The United States does not want its weapons arming extremist groups that are only loosely controlled by the government. Further, the United States does not want these weapons used for other purposes, such as suppressing the Russian-speaking population.

U.S. support for Ukraine has been remarkably bipartisan and popular in a political environment otherwise characterized by bitter partisan divisions. The last Ukrainian aid package passed 368-57 in the House and 86-11 in the Senate. Having some of this aid diverted for private uses would undermine this bipartisan support. Even hints of corruption would be damaging

The last aid package does require reporting from the Department of Defense and provides $5 million to enhance oversight in the Department of State. These provisions recognize the problem but may be too limited, given the extent of the aid and its sensitivity.

So, what else might be done? One approach is to enhance existing oversight mechanisms. In May, Senator Charles Grassley (R-IA) wrote a letter to the State Department expressing his concerns and received some assurances of enhanced oversight. Another approach is to create a special inspector general. Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) has introduced a bill to create a special inspector general for Ukraine. Senator Rand Paul (R-KY) tried to create such an organization in the $40 billion aid package, but failed in the face of a desire to move the package quickly.

The scope of the aid is such that a special structure might be warranted. The Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is a useful model. In Afghanistan, rampant corruption and weak governance undermined U.S. counterinsurgency effortss structures could not deal with these problems. Congress established SIGAR in 2008 to provide focus and an independent voice.

SIGAR’s mission is to conduct audits and investigations to (1) promote the efficiency and effectiveness of reconstruction programs and (2) detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse. It provided Congress and the American people with quarterly reports, lessons learned, and special investigations when issues arose. For example, it recently investigated whether Afghan officials fled with massive amounts of cash (they did not).

Current efforts to support Ukraine might benefit from a similar oversight mechanism to ensure that the economic aid goes where it is needed, that arms purchases occur without corruption, and that weapons go to appropriate units. Indeed, with assistance to Afghanistan ended, it might be possible to repurpose some or all of SIGAR to oversight of Ukrainian aid, thus bringing an existing organization and skilled workforce to bear immediately.

An organization like SIGAR provides one further service: an independent assessment of the conflict that offers a useful counterpoint to the optimistic reports often coming from military and governmental headquarters. For example, U.S. officials reported continuous progress in Afghanistan, which SIGAR showed was overly optimistic. The same dynamics may be playing out in the current struggle, where the Ukrainian government has tightly controlled information, making it difficult for outsiders to know what is actually going on.

The consensus is that the war in Ukraine will go on for an extended period. U.S. aid goes through September 30, indicating the U.S. expectation of a protracted conflict. As this aid flows to Ukraine, especially aid in the form of financial support, increased oversight would help preserve bipartisan support for the conflict. This increase in oversight needs to happen sooner rather than later when invevitably, some scandal forces the issue. As John Sopko, head of SIGAR, stated to the Wall Street Journal, “It is really shocking that people are not applying what we learned about the mistakes in Afghanistan to Ukraine.”

#### Aid is really, really bad. Not a question of money

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A dark cloud hangs over the Department of Defense. After the “strategic failure” that was Afghanistan, the department is struggling to figure out how not to repeat it. In particular, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the lead agency for advising, training, and equipping foreign governments, has taken a number of key steps to prevent this from reoccurring. My fellow colleagues in the agency, whose key mission is to build the military capacity of foreign partners, took the collapse in Afghanistan particularly hard. After the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act the agency established certification programs for its workforce and introduced new concepts such as “building capacity” and “full-spectrum capability.” This is in addition to various other initiatives, such as changing security cooperation planning methods and requiring the assessment, monitoring, and evaluation of outcomes. Though these initiatives predate the recent events in Afghanistan, they symbolize a widespread recognition of a problem with how the United States conducts military assistance, a recognition grimly underscored by the collapse of the Afghan security forces in August 2021 and the failures of Iraqi reconstruction.

For years, the United States has struggled with how best to build foreign militaries, with minor successes here and there but nothing substantial over the long term. These noted difficulties have led to what Jahara Matisek has called the “Faberge Egg army problem, an expensively built military … easily broken by insurgents.” Some have argued that to address these poor outcomes the United States should consolidate and simplify the complicated domestic processes used to execute security cooperation, in addition to augmenting programs by building the capacity of formal defense institutions. However, military assistance outcomes will not improve simply by making the foreign military sales process faster or by improving a country’s defense institutions, as argued by Jeremy Gwinn. Many past articles on security cooperation focused on the minutiae of how to improve the process as opposed to asking whether security cooperation is the best means by which to accomplish national security objectives. Security cooperation analyses have a tendency to focus on the “tactical” level of security cooperation and concentrate on how to get the equipment to countries faster, or what other augmentations or incentives the United States should add to make it work. My argument focuses on the strategic use of security cooperation to accomplish wider American interests in fragile states. By fragile states, I specifically reference those countries that are dealing with

“extensive corruption and criminal behavior, inability to collect taxes or otherwise draw on citizen support, large-scale involuntary dislocation of the population, sharp economic decline, group-based inequality, institutionalized persecution or discrimination, severe demographic pressures, brain drain, and environmental decay.”

Rather than being a key foreign policy tool, the United States should carefully consider the ramifications of increasing security cooperation in fragile states. For one, the partner nation will likely be unable to sustain this newfound military capacity. Second, miliary assistance is likely to lead to an increase in political instability, corruption, human-rights abuses, and incidences of political oppression. This is because, at its core, the U.S. approach to security cooperation is contradictory and anachronistic. It is based on faulty assumptions about conditions in partner nations, often designed to defeat an enemy the partner nation does not have, and rooted in American models of defense institutions that do not exist. Even during the era of great-power competition, it is not clear that U.S. interests are best served by sending millions of dollars in defense articles and training to fragile states under the guise of “regional stability,” with the primary purpose of keeping Russia and China out.

Inherent in the definition of security cooperation are explicit goals to “build capacity,” which often translate to ensuring that foreign countries can use, maintain, and sustain the equipment that the United States has transferred to them, either through grant assistance or by foreign military sales. Given the internal instability of fragile states, most military capabilities that the United States is seeking to foster are for the purposes of internal defense, counter-insurgency, or counter-terrorism. The suite of programs used to transfer training and equipment are referred to as “building partner capacity” or “train and equip programs.” Often recipients of these programs are states that cannot or will not provide basic services for their population or control their own territory, because the government lacks either the resources, the authority, or the trust of many of its citizens. While the state exists de jure, there is no state de facto. The idea of transferring millions of dollars of state-of-the-art American equipment to a country that cannot provide the most basic services to its population seems counter-intuitive. How is the recipient country expected to maintain it?

While the issue of sustainment is important, let’s sidestep it and focus on what happens after the equipment is delivered and the training has been completed. There may be anecdotal evidence of how security cooperation programs have been “successful” in building military capacity, but numerous commentaries and studies argue that the outcomes of this newfound capacity have been less than ideal. According to these studies, an increase in security cooperation and security assistance correlated with an increased incidence of military coups, political oppression, human-rights violations, and other forms of political instability. For example, a 2020 study conducted by Patricia Sullivan, Leo Blanken, and Ian Rice analyzing post-conflict countries between 1956 and 2012 found a statistically significant increase in incidences of torture, extra-judicial killings, disappearances, political imprisonment and executions, and incidents of genocide among recipients of military assistance. A second study, analyzing U.S. security assistance to 150 countries, found a similar result: An increase in military assistance (security cooperation) correlated with worse performance on human rights. Both of these studies include years in which United States security cooperation programs were tied to Leahy Amendment conditions concerning human rights that barred sending material to units on a human-rights watch list and having every recipient of training vetted. Regardless, the results of these studies should not be surprising. Fragile states in which leaders lack resources to provide basic services for their population often turn to well-resourced (thanks to military assistance) militaries to repress restless populations and target political opponents. Political leaders in fragile states often use newfound military capacity to shore up power. Moreover, if political leaders can depend on an outside donor, like the United States, to resource their military, as opposed to taxes or some other internal resources, it further severs the tie between the government and its citizens.

Regardless of these outcomes, the primary purpose of security cooperation is “to build partner nation capacity consistent with [American] defense objectives.” While the National Defense Strategy outlines numerous defense objectives, in regions with fragile states these objectives often include promoting regional stability, counter-insurgency, counter-terrorism, and even policing (countering human trafficking and drug trafficking). Therefore, the purpose of building military capacity in weak and failed states is mostly to ensure the internal security of that state. However, the American military, by law and tradition, is not designed to play an internal security role. When the United States has engaged in building foreign militaries, it has tended to reflect the American way of war centered around playing its economic strength and technological advantage into a tactical advantage on the battlefield. From doctrine to defense institutions and logistics systems, the entire Department of Defense is built around this American way of war. In fact, for U.S. forces counter-insurgency was a subset of total war until the late 2000s. Through building partner capacity programs, especially those under Department of Defense authorities, the approach to security cooperation has been to mirror American ways of war, doctrine, logistics systems, and training by asking American military members and institutions to help to build the capacity of defense institutions. In Afghanistan in particular, the Department of Defense sought to build a military “that was modeled on the centralized command structures and complex bureaucracy of the Defense Department” rather than build a military to defeat the specific threat(s) that Afghanistan faces rooted in defense institutions that Afghanistan could support. The U.S. implementers drew on what they knew, which resulted in Afghan forces not being able to function without American support operationally and logistically. Ultimately, once the United States withdrew, the Afghan forces fell quickly.

U.S. security practitioners specializing in institutional capacity-building point to Afghanistan as an example of not taking institutional capacity-building seriously, therefore dooming the rebuilding of the Afghan military, and not necessarily of broader security cooperation failure. Congress listened, and required frequently used security cooperation programs to address institutional capacity-building, which advocates argue can even help to prevent human rights abuses, mostly through education or some sort of subject-matter expert or military advisor exchanges. However, institutional capacity-building is not the panacea to the security cooperation dilemma that many within the Department of Defense think it is. Institutional capacity-building programs still focus on the technical aspects of institutions, or give cursory education on issues such as the law of armed conflict. But these programs fail to consider the politics of how authority within states emerges, develops, or changes in order to institutionalize these newly introduced practices. To be clear, I am not arguing that security cooperation planners do not consider politics at all. In fact, U.S. law requires the Department of Defense to “jointly consider political, social, economic, diplomatic, and historical factors, if any, of the foreign country that may impact the effectiveness of the program.” However, assessments of these factors are often shallow and concentrate on the politics of formal institutions, overlooking the importance of informal institutions and how power and authority is actually wielded in fragile states.

In order to understand the deep politics of fragile states, it is crucial to have an understanding of what a state is. The noted sociologist Max Weber defined the state as a “human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.” The key for the Weberian conception of the state is the term legitimate use of force. Weber argued that even states that appear to be authoritarian will seek to root their claim of legitimacy in one of three “pure” types of authority: legal, traditional, or charismatic. Authority in the American state most closely aligns itself with legal legitimation, meaning that U.S. citizens see the American state and government as legitimate because a leader’s power is derived from written laws, procedures, and regulations. Leaders in fragile states often try to legitimize their rule not through legal means, but in a sub-categorization of traditional authority: the neo-patrimonial system. Leaders in neo-patrimonial states, while having a veneer of bureaucracy, also seek to remain in power through clientelism, or the exchange of goods and services for political support. Neo-patrimonial governments also prefer to keep state institutions weak by stacking bureaucracies, like defense institutions, with supporters and encouraging competition amongst individuals to keep them divided and therefore not a threat to their rule. This allows key military leaders to be dependent on the ruler for their wealth while also keeping “national armies divided and faction-ridden.” U.S. military assistance is especially prone to contribute to corruption as often this assistance accounts for a large portion of defense budgets. “Ghost soldiers” (nonexistent military personnel manufactured by corrupt officials to pocket their salary) in Iraq and Uganda are two well-known examples of how easy it can be for military institutions to engage in corruption. Clientelism is not considered corruption, but just the way governance is done in states in which the central government competes with local actors for legitimacy. The Taliban understood this and struck deals “with low-level representatives of the standing Afghan government through bribes or safety guarantees” in order to quickly seize control of various regions.

With this understanding of the state, a deeper look into the approach to institutional capacity-building still shows the failures of security cooperation. According to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, institutional capacity-building initiatives are to be “driven by U.S. interests and values” but at the same time avoid “the projection or imposition of United States’ models, which may not fit an ally or partner’s specific context.” How can institutional capacity-building be driven by U.S. values while also not be driven by U.S. models? Often Americans sent to help build institutions are subject-matter experts in developing and running logistics systems, human resource institutions, and other formal defense institutions in the United States, not state-building or political development scholars with a deep understanding of the informal politics of the state. These gaps in knowledge are then filled in by their experience in running institutions in the United States, resulting in foreign defense institutions modeled on the complex American bureaucratic system, a system rooted in rational legitimacy. Additionally, institutional capacity programs are often aimed at improving the skills of functionaries and/or rewriting laws, processes, or regulations that improve the veneer of the neo-patrimonial system without necessarily shifting governance style further down the legal continuum. This veneer serves to further enhance a leader’s international legitimacy while doing nothing to improve their domestic legitimacy, to say nothing of the standard of living of the country’s citizens.

#### Defense forces don’t need to be overwhelming – 1 third is enough to deter because Russia knows the long-term response will be bad

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Washington should also attempt to persuade other NATO nations to make increases in combat capability in the Baltic region comparable to its own increases. Collectively, the rest of NATO has a larger GDP and larger armed forces than the United States. Admittedly, it only spends in aggregate about half as much on national defense. But because the countries of Europe do not in general share the global burdens of the United States, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, they should in principle be capable of the kind of additional efforts proposed here — to wit, the equivalent of a combat brigade, with combat aviation and air support, and a plan to surge more forces into the Baltics if need be. It will take time for Europe, and Canada, to respond in this way, but the goal should be established now. Other changes, such as expedited procedures for NATO to gain priority access to central Europe’s rail network in a crisis, can perhaps be made sooner and should be pursued promptly.

The American changes would however be enough to deny current Russian force dispositions more than a three-to-one force advantage in normal peacetime conditions or in the early days of any crisis response — as [calculated](https://www.brookings.edu/research/feasible-us-steps-to-strengthen-nato-deterrence-in-the-baltics-and-poland/) by U.S. Army officers Colonel John B. Gilliam and Major Ryan C. Van Wie. (My recommendations are similar to those of Gilliam and Van Wie, as developed before February 24, 2022, except that in response to the Russian invasion, I would add U.S. combat forces in the Baltics themselves rather than Germany, and would add forward air power as well.) That 3:1 ratio is not an ironclad law of force planning; far from it, as former Brookings scholar Joshua Epstein convincingly argued in rigorous work several decades ago.[[11]](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthening-the-us-and-nato-defense-postures-in-europe-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/#footnote-11) But it is popular enough among militaries that it has some perceptual significance in its own right. My own simple modeling suggests that if NATO has engaged forces that are one-third the size of Russia’s, it would have a good chance — though hardly a guarantee — of stymieing the Russian attack long enough to flow reinforcements into theater.[[12]](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthening-the-us-and-nato-defense-postures-in-europe-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/#footnote-12) Thus, as an interim capability, it makes sense. It strikes a balance reflecting, on the one hand, a much tenser European security environment, but on the other a rather mediocre and weakened Russian military.

In conducting force planning, it is important neither to underestimate nor overestimate the potential adversary. Russia could, in a future war, avoid some of the mistakes witnessed in its initial onslaught against Ukraine — sticking to the roads where forces can be easily located and attacked and bottled up, failing to cover vehicle flanks with dismounted infantry, failure to provide adequate artillery support for maneuver forces, communicating in the open without encryption, providing poor tactical leadership for combat units. But it will still be saddled with an outdated military, severely weakened by the war in Ukraine. Further, it will [lack access](https://www.brookings.edu/research/interim-security-insights-and-implications-from-the-first-two-months-of-the-russia-ukraine-war/) to advanced Western electronics with which to modernize its armed forces for years to come. Again, the argument seems compelling for a relatively modest NATO force posture in the Baltics — yet one made up of major combat units organized as such, unlike the current eFP.

**CONCLUSION**

As 2022 unfolds, and tragedy in Ukraine continues, NATO is nonetheless in strong military and political shape. No major surgery is needed to right-size or reposition the alliance for the challenge of a more reckless Russia. Moreover, NATO is already adapting somewhat to the new strategic environment, and the general trend is sound. Its responses include modest growth in defense spending across much of the alliance and the likely addition of Sweden and Finland to the alliance’s roster, as well as ongoing efforts in the realm of economic warfare.

Yet more change is needed nonetheless. In the crucial Baltic region, NATO should shift from what has been an impressive tripwire stance since 2017 to a modest but meaningful forward-defense posture. NATO should have enough combat power in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and nearby locations that it could immediately resist any Russian attack, be it in the form of “[little green men](https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-ukraine-crimea/29790037.html),” other covert aggression, or a more classic cross-border attack. But Russia’s capacities in these areas are generally limited, so NATO’s response need not be monumental in scale. The United States should station a brigade combat team, a combat aviation brigade, and two to three squadrons of tactical fixed-wing airpower in the Baltics; it should complete planned prepositioning of vehicles for a brigade combat team in Poland while also adding transport, engineering, and air and missile defense capabilities there. NATO allies should commit to making comparable additions to those recommended here for the U.S. presence in the Baltics as soon as they can.

The good news is that these changes do not require huge additional expense and therefore need not fundamentally disrupt the Pentagon’s understandable desire to focus much future modernization on the Indo-Pacific. Once facilities are built, keeping U.S. forces abroad rather than at home typically [adds about 10%](https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR201.html) to their annual cost. For 15,000 U.S. military personnel, that would equate to the rough vicinity of $1 billion a year.[[13]](https://www.brookings.edu/articles/strengthening-the-us-and-nato-defense-postures-in-europe-after-russias-invasion-of-ukraine/#footnote-13) Local partners can handle many of the expenses of building those new facilities.

NATO’s longstanding policy of not basing combat units in eastern member states — as a nod to Russian security sensitivities — is no longer relevant in light of Russia’s attack on Ukraine.

If the Army and Air Force permanently station small numbers of units abroad, in Poland and the Baltics, rather than maintaining a new forward posture with frequent rotations of numerous units, they can likely sustain this burden without enlarging their force structures. The Army’s past preference to rotate units into Poland (and South Korea) is understandable. This approach gives more soldiers experience at preparing for deployment, as well as a chance to serve abroad. But it also creates strain on the force structure, given that at least three units are needed to sustain a single continuous deployment (due to the need for training, preparation, and then recovery). At this juncture, NATO’s longstanding policy of not basing combat units in eastern member states — as a nod to Russian security sensitivities — is no longer relevant in light of Russia’s attack on Ukraine. Moreover, the very modest stationing of combat units proposed here for the Baltics and Poland cannot pose a meaningful threat of cross-border aggression against Russia.

Permanently stationing 15,000 more American troops in the Baltics and Poland, while asking European and Canadian allies to make similar additional efforts in eastern Europe as well, is an affordable and prudent response to the increased Russian threat to NATO’s forward regions.