Russia's war against Ukraine: US support

SUMMARY
Since Russia launched its unprovoked war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the United States (US) has worked in lockstep with allies and partners, notably the European Union, its Member States and other G7 countries, towards a strong collective response. This has included several packages of economic sanctions against Russia aimed at severing the country from technologies and financial sources that fuel its war, and directly targeting the persons and entities involved. The US in cooperation with the EU has garnered support from a large majority of the international community to condemn Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a violation of the United Nations (UN) Charter, and has worked towards isolating Russia in multilateral fora, including within the G20, in defence of the US-led, rules-based international order. Moreover, the US has been at the forefront of multilateral actions to tackle the multiple adverse implications of Russia’s war of aggression both for Ukraine and the whole world, including food and energy insecurity.

The US has provided significant military, financial and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine and its EU neighbours, while steering clear of engaging in direct confrontation with Russia. In January 2023, the US decided to send 31 M1 Abrams tanks, but no fighter jets. By 20 November 2022, the US had provided a total of almost US$48 billion in assistance to Ukraine. In December 2022, the 117th US Congress (2021-2022) passed government spending legislation that appropriates an additional US$45 billion for Ukraine. By then, Congress had already appropriated a total of US$68 billion in support for Ukraine in three different packages. However, modifications to Congressional appropriations for Ukraine cannot be excluded, owing to the ongoing controversy over raising the US federal debt ceiling. Moreover, the December 2022 government spending legislation authorises for the first time US Department of Justice transfers of assets forfeited by Russian oligarchs to assist Ukraine. Recent polls consistently show a solid majority (65 %) of US respondents support US assistance to Ukraine. However, there is a significant partisan gap in the degree of support, with 47 % of Republicans stating the US spends too much, while only 10 % of Democrats say so.

This briefing complements an earlier ‘At a glance’ note by Matthew Parry and Marcin Szczepański.
Introduction

Since Russia launched its unprovoked war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the US has worked in lockstep with allies and partners, notably the EU and other G7 countries, towards a strong collective response, including several packages of economic sanctions against Russia, aimed at cutting the country off from technologies and financial sources that fuel its war, directly impacting the individuals and entities involved.

The US has taken resolute steps to unite the largest possible majority of the membership of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in designating Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as a violation of the UN Charter and to isolate Russia as much as possible in the international arena, including within the G20. Together with the EU, it has been at the forefront of multilateral action to tackle the multiple adverse implications of Russia’s war against Ukraine, both on Ukraine and on the whole world, including food and energy insecurity.

At the same time, the US has also provided Ukraine and its EU neighbours with significant military, financial and humanitarian assistance, while avoiding dragging the US into a direct confrontation with Russia. By 20 November 2022, the US had provided US$47.8 billion in various forms of assistance to Ukraine. The Democratic-controlled 117th US Congress (2021-2022) authorised a total of about US$68 billion in US support for Ukraine in three different packages: in March 2022 (US$13.6 billion included in the US$1.5 trillion omnibus appropriations for the 2022 fiscal year (FY2022); in May 2022 (US$40 billion in additional appropriations as a standalone bill); and in September 2022 (US$13.7 billion attached to a Continuing Resolution). Finally, at the end of 2022, Congress passed the US$1.7 trillion omnibus appropriations for the 2023 fiscal year (FY2023), which authorises an additional US$45 billion in support for Ukraine until the end of September, i.e. the end of US FY2023. Experts argue that at the current monthly rate of expenditure of US$6.8 billion, current appropriations would not last until September 2023.

However, as Republicans (in control of the House of Representatives under the 118th Congress (2023-2024), seek to make their agreement to raise the US federal debt ceiling prior to June 2023 to avoid a US debt default conditional on cuts to federal government spending to gradually reduce the deficit in the future, cuts to the US support for Ukraine are not totally off the table. President Joe Biden seeks a 'clean' debt ceiling increase without conditions. A small group of far-right America First Republicans for instance would prioritise redirecting funds towards tackling illegal immigration at the US’s southern border with Mexico. The spring 2023 Presidential budget requests for the 2024 fiscal year (FY2024) will be another opportunity for US Congress to discuss further support for Ukraine.

Military assistance

By 3 February 2023, the US had provided roughly US$32 billion in military assistance for equipment and training 'to help Ukraine preserve its territorial integrity, secure its borders, and improve interoperability with NATO' since Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. The lion's share of the US$32 billion, i.e. about US$30 billion since January 2021 and about US$29.3 billion since Russia launched its war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, was authorised during the Biden
Moreover, the US has shared invaluable intelligence (satellite imagery and analysis) in support of Ukraine’s counter-offensive. It provided early intelligence warnings in late 2021 regarding President Vladimir Putin’s plans for a multi-front offensive against Ukraine, based on unusual troop movements.

US policy has focused on delivering systems that Ukraine’s domestic defence industry is unable to manufacture, and those that can be operated by Ukraine’s military and thus immediately deployed for combat operations. It has also sought to support the transition of Ukraine’s capabilities towards NATO-compatible weapons. The Department of State’s factsheet of 3 February 2023 lists US weapons deliveries to Ukraine since Russia launched its war. The list notably included 31 M1 Abrams tanks, yet to be delivered, which President Biden described as ‘the most capable tanks in the world’, but ‘also extremely complex to operate and maintain’. The US decision to provide tanks paved the way for German-made Leopard 2 tanks to be delivered to Ukraine. Nonetheless, in January 2023, President Biden also stated that F-16 fighter jets would not be provided to Ukraine. This is to ensure that no risk arises of a direct military confrontation between the US and Russia.

These US support efforts do not include related US Military Operations, including the US deployment of around 18,000 troops to Europe to strengthen defences and deter Russia in spring 2022, at a cost of US$9.6 billion.

US military assistance programmes

The bulk of US military assistance is made available to Ukraine under three programmes:

- Presidential drawdowns from existing US Department of Defense stocks under the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA);
- the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI) of the US Department of Defense;
- foreign military financing (FMF) under the US Arms Export Control Act (AECA) with eligibility determinations made by the US Department of State.

Figure 1 shows that by 19 January 2023, the US had provided US$18.3 billion through 30 Presidential drawdowns in defence articles and services from existing US Department of Defense stockpiles. A significant increase in monthly packages occurred in January 2023, as more advanced defence equipment and greater numbers of equipment were delivered.

Unlike Presidential Drawdown authority, the long-standing USAI is an authority under which the US procures new defence capabilities. On 25 January 2023, the US for instance announced the procurement of a battalion of M1 Abrams tanks for Ukraine under a US$400 million USAI package. In FY2022, appropriations for USAI included intelligence and logistics support, salaries, supplies, and weapon replacements.

Under the FMF, eligible countries can purchase US defence articles, services, and training through either foreign military sales (FMS) or the foreign military financing of direct commercial contracts. Regarding Ukraine, FMF is set either to build long-term capacity and support modernisation of...
Ukraine’s military forces, or to help backfill donations of military equipment from European allies and partners. An example of the latter is the US European Command’s repositioning of one Patriot missile system to Slovakia in replacement of Slovakia’s supply of an S-300 Air Defense System to Ukraine in April 2022.

Table 2 shows that allocations both for FMF and USAI have significantly increased from FY2021 to FY2022.

Table 2 – Selected US Security Assistance to Ukraine, FY2016-FY2023, in US$ millions

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<th>FY16</th>
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<td>FMF</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>99.0</td>
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<td>115.0</td>
<td>1 547.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>USAI</td>
<td>226.5</td>
<td>148.6</td>
<td>195.5</td>
<td>214.8</td>
<td>256.7</td>
<td>275.7</td>
<td>6 300.0</td>
<td>1 250.0 (obligations)* of 12 000.0 (appropriations)</td>
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As of January 2023, active sales under the FMS system were worth US$95.9 million. From 2015 to 2020, the US exported more than US$274 million in defence articles and services to Ukraine via Direct Commercial Sales (DCS). US arms sales to Ukraine were also carried out through government-to-government sales under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) system. FMS sales notified to Congress are listed on the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

Under the Third Party Transfers (TPT) under the AECA, in 2022, the US approved transfers from 14 NATO Allies and close partners to provide Ukrainian forces with equipment originating in the US from their stockpiles. These transfers included almost 12,000 anti-armour systems of all types and more than 1,550 anti-air missiles.

In 2022, the US transferred Mi-17 helicopters to Ukraine under the Excess Defense Articles (EDA) programme. Since 2018, Ukraine has also received refitted US Coast Guard Island-Class cutters under the EDA programme.

Several US military training programmes have been used to scale up training support for Ukraine. Since 2014, the Global Security Contingency Fund, a joint programme of the US Departments of State and Defense, has provided more than US$42 million in training, advisory services, and equipment to support Ukraine in upgrading its tactical, operational, and institutional capacities of its Special Operations Forces, National Guard, and military medical personnel, inter alia.

Moreover, the Department of Defense has provided professional training for Ukrainian military officers under its security cooperation programmes: Building Partner Capacity, Institutional Capacity Building and International Military Education and Training (IMET). In April 2022, it announced the resumption of the training mission Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, created in 2015, to train Ukrainian troops outside Ukraine to operate US and allies’ systems.

In April 2022, US Congress passed the Ukraine Democracy Defense Lend-Lease Act of 2022, which President Biden signed into law on 9 May 2022, (Victory Day in Russia). For FY2022 and FY2023, the bill temporarily waives requirements for the President to authorise the US government ‘to lend or lease defense articles to the Government of Ukraine or to governments of Eastern European countries impacted by the Russian Federation’s invasion of Ukraine to help bolster those countries’ defense capabilities and protect their civilian populations from potential invasion or ongoing
aggression by the armed forces of the Government of the Russian Federation'. While all 100 Senators were in favour of the bill, 10 Republican House Members, mostly far-right Freedom Caucus members, voted against (417-10).

Direct budget support

According to the US Agency for International Development (USAID), by January 2023, the US had provided US$12 billion in direct budget support to the Government of Ukraine to help alleviate Ukraine’s acute budget deficit. The support is intended to keep basic government services running, including hospitals, schools, and utilities.

Table 3 shows that the US ranks second to the EU regarding committed direct budgetary support, but far ahead of all other third countries.

Humanitarian assistance

The humanitarian response of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) has focused on five pillars: First, deploying a disaster assistance response team to Ukraine. Second, providing critical relief supplies like access to food, and clean water, primary and trauma medical care. Third, addressing urgent needs, including responding to cyber-attacks, safeguarding civil society and independent media. Fourth, supporting displaced refugees. Fifth, providing technical expertise to Ukraine in coordination with the international community.

As of 25 January 2023, USAID had provided US$9.88 billion in development and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine since Russia attacked Ukraine. As Russia increasingly targeted Ukrainian essential infrastructure, USAID announced an additional US$125 million in energy support to Ukraine in January 2023.

As regards US support for Ukrainian refugees interested in coming to the US, on 24 March 2022, the Biden Administration announced that it was preparing to provide refuge for ‘up to’ 100 000 Ukrainians. On 21 April 2022, the US unveiled Uniting for Ukraine (U4U), a streamlined process that provides
a pathway for Ukrainian citizens and their immediate family members outside the US to enter the US and stay temporarily for a two-year period of parole. However, to qualify for participation in U4U, Ukrainians must have a financial supporter in the US for the duration of their stay.

The December 2022 US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) report on FY2022 indicates that more than 82,000 Ukrainians and their immediate family members have been allowed into the US under the U4U process, after the financial suitability of more than 177,000 financial supporters for the U4U process was confirmed.

**Support for European energy security**

On 25 March 2022, President Biden and Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the creation of a joint US-EU Task Force on Energy Security to diversify EU liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies in alignment with shared transatlantic climate objectives, reduce EU demand for Russian natural gas imports, and help improve Europe’s overall energy efficiency. As part of the first objective, the US committed to increasing EU imports of LNG in 2022 from the US and other international partners by at least 15 billion cubic metres (bcm), and the Commission pledged to work with Member States to lift demand for US LNG by some 50 bcm per year ‘until at least’ 2030. In 2021, the EU imported 22 bcm of LNG from the US, and 155 bcm of all forms of natural gas from Russia. Provisional figures for January-November 2022 show Russian pipeline gas imports in the EU fell by 69 bcm year-on-year.

According to the joint readout of the US-EU Task Force on Energy Security meeting of 7 November 2022, the March 2022 US commitment to increase LNG supplies to Europe by 15 bcm in 2022 as compared to 2021 had already been surpassed. Between January and October 2022, the US exported roughly 48 bcm of LNG to the EU, i.e. 26 bcm more than for the whole of 2021. The two parties have therefore decided to work towards keeping a high level of LNG supplies to Europe in 2023 of an additional approximately 50 bcm as compared to 2021.

As regards the Commission pledge of March 2022, roughly 1.7 billion cubic feet per day (Bcf/d) new and expanded LNG regasification capacity was added in Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Poland in 2022. Regasification terminals are currently under construction in seven EU Member States. They could add an additional 3.5 Bcf/d of new capacity by the end of 2023. To put this into perspective, US LNG exported an average of 11.1 Bcf/d during the first half of 2022.

The US has also worked with the G7 to stabilise global energy prices by setting an oil price cap of US$60 for Russian sea-borne oil and to curb Russia’s primary source of revenue for its war machine through sanctions.

**Mobilising seized Russian assets for Ukraine**

Shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine, on 2 March 2022, the US Justice Department initiated the Task Force KleptoCapture to seize assets of Russian elites implicated in criminal acts. On 16 March 2022, the US Departments of Justice and Treasury launched the REPO (Russian Elites, Proxies and Oligarchs) Task Force that also includes Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the European Commission. The REPO Task Force’s mandate is to investigate and prosecute Putin’s allies and seize their assets. By June 2022, the US-led Task Force had blocked or seized over US$30 billion in illicit assets.

In 2022, US Representatives and Senators on both sides of the aisle introduced into US Congress a number of bills seeking to make frozen assets from Russian oligarchs linked to the Russian regime and under US sanctions available to Ukraine. These bills included the Repurposing Elite Luxuries into Emergency Funds for Ukraine Act, or Relief for Ukraine Act, S.3639, introduced by Senators Michael Bennet (D-Colorado) and Rob Portman (R-Ohio) in March 2022. This would have required the US Justice Department to direct funds from the liquidation of seized Russian assets to a new Ukraine Relief Fund. In April 2022, the House of Representatives passed the largely bipartisan Asset
Seizure for Ukraine Reconstruction Act, H.R.6930, in a 417-8 vote, sponsored by Representative Tom Malinowski (D-New Jersey), but no companion bill was passed in the Senate to enact the bill.

On 21 June 2022, Representative Steve Cohen (D-Tennessee) introduced the Oligarch Assets for Ukrainian Victory Act, H.R.8156, which would have authorised the transfer of assets forfeited by Russian oligarchs to assist Ukraine. Although it was not adopted as a stand-alone bill, the ‘Oligarch provision’ allowing the US Attorney General to send assets seized from Russian oligarchs as contributions to Ukrainian reconstruction efforts was incorporated as an amendment in Section 1708 of the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2023, H.R.2617. The FY2023 omnibus appropriations bill was signed into law by President Biden on 29 December 2022. In the bipartisan and bicameral joint statement of 22 December 2022, US Representatives and Senators spearheading these efforts stated: ‘We encourage our friends and allies in the G7 and in the European Union to follow suit.’

The Joint statement following the 24th EU-Ukraine Summit on 3 February 2023 states (Frozen assets, point 28): ‘The EU will also step up its work towards the use of Russia’s frozen assets to support Ukraine’s reconstruction and for the purposes of reparation, in accordance with EU and international law.’

Efforts in multilateral institutions

The US has also acted in multilateral institutions, including the UN Security Council (UNSC) and General Assembly (UNGA) and the International Court of Justice (ICJ); as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Group of Twenty (G20); often in tandem with the EU and other partners.

United Nations

United Nations Security Council

On 25 February 2022, the day after Russia’s invasion began, the US co-submitted a UNSC resolution demanding that Russia cease and withdraw. Russia, a permanent UNSC member, vetoed the text. A similar text was put to the UNGA on 2 March 2022, with the US voting with 140 other countries in support. On 23 March 2022, the US and 12 other UNSC members abstained on, and so caused to fail, a Russia-proposed resolution on humanitarian access to Ukraine, objecting to language defending Russia’s invasion.

United Nations General Assembly

On 7 April 2022, the US joined 92 other countries in voting in the UNGA to suspend Russia from the UN’s Human Rights Council. In October 2022, the US garnered 143 UNGA votes to reject Russia’s attempted annexation of Ukrainian territory and to uphold Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The US worked closely with Ukraine and like-minded partners to draft a UNGA resolution on the ‘furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine’ recommending the creation of a register to document damages caused by Russian aggression against Ukraine. On 14 November 2022, the resolution was adopted with 94 votes in favour to 14 against, with 73 abstentions.

United Nations subsidiary bodies

In cooperation with allies and partners, the US successfully challenged Russia’s 2022 candidacies in four subsidiary bodies of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), to isolate it further in the international arena. They include the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (C-NGO), the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (PFII), the executive boards of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN Entity for Gender Equality, and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).
International Court of Justice

The US welcomed a 16 March 2022 ICJ provisional order for Russia to halt its invasion, and on 23 March accused Russia of war crimes (neither the US nor Russia are parties to the ICJ statute). On 17 May 2022, the US launched a Confict Observatory to ‘capture, analyse, and make widely available evidence of Russia-perpetrated war crimes and other atrocities in Ukraine’... ‘for use in ongoing and future accountability mechanisms’. The programme was set up with an initial US$6 million investment and will be funded in future by the European Democratic Resilience Initiative (EDRI). The US launched the EDRI in March 2022 and earmarked at least US$320 million in funds to support media freedom and counter disinformation, bolster the safety and security of activists and vulnerable groups, strengthen institutions and the rule of law, and help ensure accountability for human rights abuses and violations of international law in Ukraine. The creation of the Conflict Observatory coincided with the ICJ deployment of a team of investigators to Ukraine to collect evidence and support the coordination of war crimes investigation.

The US has complemented the ICJ work by deploying teams of international investigators and prosecutors to assist Ukraine’s Office of the Prosecutor General in preparing war crimes cases for prosecution. These activities are part of the Atrocity Crimes Advisory Group, a plurilateral initiative launched by the US, EU and the United Kingdom on 25 May 2022.

World Trade Organization

At the WTO, the US joined the EU and 12 other members in declaring on 14 March 2022 that they would cease to grant Russia WTO-derived trading privileges and discontinue work towards Belarus’s WTO accession. On 12 June 2022, on the sidelines of the 12th Ministerial Conference of the WTO, the US and the EU co-signed a joint declaration in support of Ukraine. The declaration was backed by roughly one third of the WTO membership and highlighted the devastating consequences of the destruction in Ukraine for global trade and the supply to international markets of key commodities produced by Ukraine, including agricultural and food products, critical minerals, fertilisers, and sunflower oil.

The US has been at the forefront of global efforts to tackle the repercussions of Russia’s war against Ukraine on global food insecurity via a set of multilateral initiatives, including the UN-led Global Crisis Response Group (GCRG) on Food, Energy and Finance, the G7 Global Alliance for Food Security (GAFS), the Roadmap – Call to Action and the EU-led Solidarity Lanes. It co-chaired the Global Food Security Summit during the UNGA, on 20 September 2022, with the EU, the African Union, and Spain.

G20

On 6 April 2022, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen expressed the view that Russia should be expelled from the G20, and said that the US would boycott G20 meetings involving Russian officials. While Russia has remained party to the G20, the G20 leaders’ declaration after their November 2022 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, (where Russia was represented by its Foreign Minister), expresses the views of the G20 majority strongly condemning the war as well as dissenting views regarding the situation and sanctions.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization

Finally, the US has also coordinated a collective NATO response to the invasion, not least by deploying additional forces to Europe, while making it clear that the alliance is not a co-belligerent. On 26 April 2022, the US announced what would become the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG), i.e. US talks with allies inside and outside NATO, hosted at the Ramstein air base in Germany on a roughly monthly basis to coordinate support for Ukraine’s defence capabilities. Under the auspices of the UDCG, for example, in November 2022 the US and the Netherlands partnered to finance the transfer to Ukraine of 90 overhauled T-72B main battle tanks from the inventory of the
Czech defence industry for a total value of about **US$90 million**, to further enhance Ukraine’s proficient armoured warfare capabilities.

**Outlook**

During the Democrat-controlled 117th US Congress (2021-2022) under a ‘united’ US government, the US provided unprecedented amounts of military, financial and humanitarian support for Ukraine totalling **US$47.8 billion** (as of 20 November 2022). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s in-person speech was celebrated during a joint session of Congress on 21 December 2022, although the absence of an estimated 90 of the total 213 Republicans was noted.

However, as early as during the run-up to the midterm-elections in November 2022, Republican Party members’ statements, including by then candidate for Speaker of the House of Representatives, Kevin McCarthy, (R-California), raised doubts as to whether the high levels of US support could be sustained during the 118th Congress under a ‘divided’ government. Representative McCarthy stated that Republicans would not support writing a ‘blank check’ for Ukraine if Republicans captured the House majority. This was clarified later as a call for greater oversight, rather than to abandon aid to Ukraine. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Kentucky), retracted these comments and mustered solid Republican support in December 2022 for a **US$1.7 trillion** omnibus appropriation bill that under Division M of the Additional Ukraine Supplemental Appropriations Act 2023, provides **US$45 billion** in new emergency funding for Ukraine. Importantly, it earmarks **US$7.5 million** for the US Government Accountability Office’s oversight of amounts provided to Ukraine in this and prior bills.

Some experts argued in 2022 that a Republican-led House as of January 2023, with a considerable number of extreme right-wing, isolationist ‘Make America Great Again’ (MAGA) Republicans could make the approval of further aid much more challenging. They supported their argument by pointing to the significant shift in the focus of US military assistance away from Israel, the traditionally largest cumulative recipient of US financial assistance since the Second World War and a key US ally, to Ukraine (see Table 5). Moreover, they expected the mood and tone on Ukraine to change in the Senate as well as the House, as some major supporters of Ukraine retired, including the former co-chair of the Senate’s Ukraine Caucus, Rob Portman (R-Ohio). Indeed, the Ohio Senate seat went to MAGA Republican James David Vance, who stated he would not authorise ‘a penny’ for Ukraine.

Cracks in US policy on Ukraine have appeared from both ends of the political spectrum. In October 2022, 30 members of the left-wing Congressional Progressive Caucus released a letter calling on President Biden to step up diplomatic efforts, engage in direct talks with Russia and explore a new security arrangement acceptable to all parties. However, this letter was rescinded a few days later. On the Republican side, in November 2022, 12 members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, supported resolution H.Res.1482, sponsored by Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-Georgia), known for her incendiary rhetoric and attachment to conspiracy theories, to increase oversight of US assistance to Ukraine. This resolution did not gain a vote and fell in the previous Congress. Moreover, during the House Speaker’s election on 5 January 2023, Representative Chip Roy (R-Texas) asked for a debate on whether US support for Ukraine should continue.
In December 2022, in a letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Senator Josh Hawley (R-Missouri) raised concern that US military assistance delivered to Ukraine may compromise US military support to Taiwan aimed at strengthening the island's asymmetric defence capabilities against a potential Chinese invasion. He asked the Biden administration to drop US support for Ukraine to join NATO.

In a speech labelled ‘A time for truth’, given at the Heritage Foundation on 16 February 2023, Senator Hawley challenged the US consensus on Ukraine and advocated a new nationalist foreign policy and a defence policy that prioritises China as the biggest threat. Although experts have explained that the theory of competition between Ukraine and Taiwan for US military support is overblown, it could remain on the radar for some Republicans with a considerable impact on Republican rank-and-file thinking. The Biden administration’s focus on the China challenge is evidenced by the 2022 US National Security Strategy, which ranks China as its first global priority.

Against this background, some experts consider current US policy on Ukraine is less a point of contention between Democrats and Republicans than between Republican factions. Indeed, on 18 January 2023, House Armed Services Committee Chairman Mike Rogers (R-Alabama) and House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas) released a joint statement which appears not to signal any US policy change at all. It urges the Biden administration and US allies to transfer the critical weapon systems Ukraine needs to defeat Russia. The same day, Representative Mike Gallagher (R-Wisconsin), chairman of the new Select Committee on China, called US assistance to Ukraine a ‘sound investment in US national security’, that simultaneously deals a blow to the Chinese Communist Party.

As opposition to US support for Ukraine could therefore become stronger in the Republican camp, experts believe that three major political developments will shape the future Republican stance. First, the Republican presidential primaries, under the assumption that the winner will define future Republican policy on Ukraine. Second, the narrow Republican majority in the House, which turns a small group of dissenters into ‘spoilers’. Third, the direction of the House Oversight Committee and House Judiciary Committee investigations, including into claims about President Biden’s son Hunter Biden and his ties with Chinese, Russian, and Ukrainian officials.

US public opinion on US support for Ukraine

According to a January 2023 Gallup poll, whose results are largely consistent with other polls, a solid majority (65 %) of US respondents (versus 66 % in August 2022) support ‘Ukraine reclaiming territory, even if prolonged conflict’, while 31 % (unchanged since August 2022) wish ‘to end conflict quickly, even if Russia keeps territory’. There are nonetheless partisan differences in the degree of support. At 81 %, support for Ukraine retaking its territory is highest among Democrat voters, while just 53 % of Republicans share this position, with 59 % of Independents adhering to this view. When it comes to reflections about concrete amounts of US funds for Ukraine, partisanship is even more pronounced. While only 10 % of Democrat voters state that the US spends too much, 47 % of Republicans and 35 % of Independents agree. Whereas 48 % of Democrats state that the amount of US support for Ukraine is ‘just right’ and 41 % state the US does not spend enough, only 32 % or 18 % of Republicans respectively take this view. A Pew Research Center poll, however, traces a more noticeable downward trend in respondents’ support for Ukraine since March 2022, when only 7 % of all respondents (9 % Republicans) stated the US ‘spends too much’, while 42 % (49 % Republicans) stated it ‘did not spend enough’.
MAIN REFERENCES

Aid to Ukraine Explained in Six Charts, Center for Strategic & International Studies, 18 November 2022.


Ukraine-support-tracker, Institute for the World Economy Kiel, as of 20 November 2022 (updated regularly).


ENDNOTES

1 A US omnibus spending bill is a type of bill that incorporates several smaller appropriations bills into one larger single bill that can be passed with a single vote in both chambers of Congress. For more information, see: Omnibus Appropriations Acts: Overview of Recent Practices, Congressional Research Service (CRS), 14 January 2016.

2 Continuing resolutions are ‘temporary spending bills that allow federal government operations to continue when final appropriations have not been approved by Congress and the President. Without final appropriations or a continuing resolution (CR), there could be a lapse in funding that results in a government shutdown.’

3 For more information on US military assistance for Ukraine prior to the Biden administration, please see Ukraine: Background, Conflict with Russia and US Policy, CRS, October 2021.

4 Data based on a US State Department factsheet accessed on 3 February 2023. The factsheet is constantly updated, as US support for Ukraine evolves and figures are likely to increase over time.

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