

U.S. Support for Ukraine:

Mid-Term Context and Implications for Trump 2.0

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発行所： 東京大学先端科学技術研究センター
創発戦略研究オープンラボ (ROLES)
〒153-8904 東京都目黒区駒場 4-6-1

電話： 03-5452-5462

Web サイト： <https://roles.rcast.u-tokyo.ac.jp/>

Introduction

The United States surprised us once again from late 2025 to early 2026. On December 5, the National Security Strategy (NSS 2025) was released, explicitly stating a focus on the Western Hemisphere in the form of the “Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine¹.” And in the early hours of January 3, the policy outlined in NSS 2025 was swiftly implemented as a military operation. The U.S. military’s “Operation Absolute Resolve²” against Venezuela concluded with greatest success, and the detention of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife became the shocking news of the New Year.

While new “surprises” have emerged, persistent problems remain. One such problem is the “war” that began with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The war has been going on for four years now, with fierce fighting still ongoing between the two countries, and no end in sight.

The so-called Western countries have been supporting Ukraine which has been invaded. Among these, support from the United States is truly overwhelming, and it would be no exaggeration to claim that Ukraine would be unable to function without it. According to the latest data from the Kiel Institute, which summarizes country-specific allocations for Ukraine from January 24, 2022, to October 31, 2025, the United States alone accounts for approximately 35% of the total³.

However, the situation surrounding the United States has changed significantly since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The biggest change, needless to say, is the presidential transition. At noon on January 20, 2025, the “master of the White House” transitioned from Democrat Joe Biden to Republican Donald Trump. The “man of fear” has returned after four years.

So, how has U.S. support for Ukraine changed or continued in response? This paper examines the current state of U.S. assistance to Ukraine and the Mid-term context it creates, and derives the implications for understanding “Trump 2.0.”

¹ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, Nov. 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/2025-National-Security-Strategy.pdf>.

² For inside this operation, see Alexander Ward, Alex Leary, Dustin Volz, Vera Bergengruen and Shelby Holliday, “Inside Operation Absolute Resolve, the U.S. Incursion That Deposed Venezuela’s Maduro,” *Wall Street Journal*, Jan. 6, 2026, <https://jp.wsj.com/articles/inside-operation-absolute-resolve-the-u-s-incursion-that-deposed-venezuelas-maduro-366ad40b?mod=Searchresults&pos=1&page=1>.

³ Kiel Institute for the World Economy, “Data Set, Ukraine Support Tracker Data,” Dec. 2025, <https://www.kielinstitut.de/publications/ukraine-support-tracker-data-6453>.

1. Three Debates on the Future of Ukraine Aid with Trump's Return

Many may recall Trump's claim before the presidential election that he would "end the war in Ukraine within 24 hours" if re-elected. How would the approach to supporting Ukraine change if a second Trump administration were to take office? This issue was debated extensively even before the election. The discussions can be broadly divided into three main points.

First, there was the argument that the uncertainty surrounding support would increase. If Trump won the presidential election, an isolationist administration would return, and even the suspension of aid was being considered. This would have been an extremely dangerous situation for Ukraine⁴.

Second, related to the first point, they claimed that could not grasp the intentions of the Trump administration. This fear was not only shared by Ukraine, but also by the European countries that had supported Ukraine alongside the United States. Former German Ambassador to the United States Wolfgang Ischinger described the situation in these countries, stating that they had fallen into panic and were terrified of what the United States intended⁵.

Third, in contrast to the previous two points, there is the argument to continue supporting Ukraine, or rather to strengthen American engagement. According to Michael Kimmage of The Catholic University of America, what Trump fears most and must avoid at all costs is being seen as a "loser." To prevent this, he must avoid defeat during his own administration. Kimmage states that the only way to achieve this is by continuing support or increasing engagement⁶. At the start of the second Trump administration, such expectations initially existed.

⁴ Alexander Vindman, "What the U.S. Election Means for Ukraine: A Trump Win Would Cause a Crisis for Kyiv—but Wouldn't Guarantee Defeat," *Foreign Affairs*, Sep. 25, 2024, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/what-us-election-means-ukraine-trump-alexander-vindman>.

⁵ Wolfgang Ischinger, "Europe's Moment of Truth: The Transatlantic Alliance Is Under Grave Threat—but Not Yet Doomed," *Foreign Affairs*, Mar. 2, 2025, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/volodymyr-zelensky-trump-europes-moment-truth>.

⁶ Michael Kimmage, "Trump Is Unlikely to Abandon Ukraine—and Might Dangerously Escalate the War," *Wall Street Journal*, May 9, 2024, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/trump-is-unlikely-to-abandon-ukraineand-might-even-escalate-the-war-356a2825>.

2. Current Status and Approaches of U.S. Support for Ukraine

This section provides an overview of the support situation from the Biden administration to the second Trump administration. Since late February 2022, the U.S. Congress has passed five bills designed to support Ukraine. The “headline” figures recorded were \$13.6 billion in March 2022, \$40.9 billion in May of the same year, \$12.3 billion in September of the same year, \$47.4 billion in December of the same year, and \$61.3 billion in April 2024, totaling approximately \$175 billion. Additionally, in December 2024, the U.S. approved a \$20 billion loan funded by interest from frozen Russian assets. This brings the total allocated for Ukraine-related assistance to approximately \$195 billion. Of this amount, approximately \$128 billion has been provided as direct aid to the Ukrainian government, broken down as follows: \$3.7 billion in humanitarian support, \$53.8 billion in fiscal support, and \$70.6 billion in military support⁷.

Needless to say, all of these decisions took place during the Biden administration. From the beginning of the second Trump administration until now, no new stand-alone legislation for Ukraine aid has passed the federal legislature. The Trump and Biden administrations had significantly different approaches. The latter secured additional funding by packaging various Ukraine support schemes⁸.

On July 14, 2025, following the inauguration of the second Trump administration, the first new development in support of Ukraine emerged. Trump and NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte announced a new mechanism for delivering weapons to Ukraine. Under this mechanism, NATO member countries would send weapons to Ukraine from their own stockpiles and purchase replacements from the United States. Furthermore, separate from the above, the United States decided to sell Ukraine weapons worth a total of \$652 million under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program. This was a moderate but useful decision for Ukraine as it continues to fight its ground war⁹.

⁷ Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow, “Here’s How Much Aid the United States Has Sent Ukraine,” Council on Foreign Relations, July 15, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/article/how-much-us-aid-going-ukraine>.

⁸ Multiple schemes exist for providing Ukraine support. Representative examples include the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), a Department of Defense (DoD) scheme supporting the Ukrainian military; Presidential Drawdown Authority (PDA) under the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, a scheme allowing the DoD to provide stockpiled defense equipment to countries facing unforeseen contingencies abroad; and Foreign Military Sales (FMS), which provides U.S. defense equipment and services like training for a fee under the Arms Export Control Act. For specific amounts and details of support provided up to early March 2025, refer to the following: Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, “U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine,” Mar. 12, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-political-military-affairs/releases/2025/01/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine>.

⁹ Mark F. Cancian and Chris H. Park, “The Trump Administration Boosts Immediate Military Aid Deliveries to Ukraine,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, July 25, 2025, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/trump-administration-boosts-immediate-military-aid-deliveries-ukraine>.

Additionally, on November 18, the U.S. Department of State approved a support package valued at \$105 million to sell equipment and training programs necessary to maintain the Patriot air defense system¹⁰. On December 18, President Trump signed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2026 into law¹¹. This legislation includes provisions for continued support to Ukraine. However, the Patriot system sale is based on the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program, while the NDAA establishes the overall framework for the defense budget. Neither is primarily aimed at providing support to Ukraine.

3. Promoting the “Europeanization of the Russia-Ukraine War”

In light of the U.S.’s recent support measures for Ukraine, how have the Biden and Trump administrations' policies on this issue continued and changed? The first aspect to consider is continuity. While the future of support for Ukraine has become increasingly uncertain, the reality is that support is still ongoing. Following the contentious U.S.–Ukraine summit in late February 2025, attempts to halt military support or make threatening gestures were temporary, not permanent, decisions. These measures were merely ad hoc tools used to achieve Trump's priority objectives at that time. Support decided upon during the Biden administration continues to be implemented. Furthermore, the Trump administration has continued to implement sanctions against Russia. Trump has neither lifted nor eased the sanctions imposed by the Biden administration. Rather, he appears to be seeking to strengthen them. For example, on November 16, Trump expressed support for a bill being pushed by Congress that proposes on imposing tariffs of up to 500% on countries purchasing oil and gas from Russia¹². This represents a strengthening of so-called secondary sanctions.

President Trump’s shifting assessments and stance toward Russian President Vladimir Putin are well known. The underlying reason is undoubtedly Putin's failure to commit to the “peace” plan Trump desires. As former U.S. Trade Representative Michael Froman points out, Trump may have finally

¹⁰ Defense Security Cooperation Agency, “Ukraine—PATRIOT Air Defense System Sustainment,” Nov. 18, 2025, <https://www.dsca.mil/Press-Media/Major-Arms-Sales/Article-Display/Article/4334941/ukraine-patriot-air-defense-system-sustainment>.

¹¹ The White House, “Statement by the president,” Dec. 18, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/2025/12/statement-by-the-president-7598/>.

¹² Gram Slattery, Andrea Shalal and Steve Holland, “Trump would back Russia sanctions bill if he retains final authority, White House official says,” Reuters, Nov. 18, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-would-back-russia-sanctions-bill-if-he-retains-final-authority-white-house-2025-11-17/>.

reached the limit of his patience with Putin, whom he likely views as the figure standing between himself and the Nobel Peace Prize¹³.

On the other hand, there are also aspects of change. First, although the support continues, its nature and focus have shifted. Direct aid from the United States is unlikely to form the basis of future assistance. A more likely scenario is the U.S. selling weapons to Europe, which would then send them to Ukraine. As mentioned earlier, there are already concrete examples of this. Riana Fix of the Council on Foreign Relations points out that, if this happens, it becomes critically important for European nations to ensure Ukraine's long-term access to U.S.-made weapons¹⁴.

Trump consistently voiced his dissatisfaction with the burden-sharing rate among European nations regarding support for Ukraine. At the NATO summit held in The Hague, Netherlands, in June 2025, he personally secured a principled agreement on the goal of member nations spending "5% of GDP (gross domestic product)" on defense¹⁵. In early December, he criticized European leaders as "weak" in an interview with Politico, implying the possibility of scaling back Ukraine aid¹⁶. Furthermore, the NSS 2025 included statements that hardly sound like words directed at allies. The document stated that the European continent could undergo a dramatic transformation within 20 years and expressed significant doubt about its reliability as an ally. To prevent this outcome, the document asserts that a shift in current policies is necessary¹⁷. Additionally, the National Defense Strategy (NDS 2026) released on January 23 further clarified the Trump administration's stance toward European nations. According to the NDS 2026, NATO nations are "strongly positioned to take primary responsibility for Europe's conventional defense", including leading "in supporting Ukraine's defense." The NDS 2026 further stated that "[a]s President Trump has said, the war in Ukraine must end. As he has also emphasized, however, this is Europe's responsibility first and foremost. Securing and sustaining peace will therefore require leadership and commitment from our NATO allies¹⁸."

Trump's stance and the strategic documents issued by his administration suggest he views the Ukraine issue as fundamentally a European problem. Why should the United States provide sufficient

¹³ Michael Froman, "Will Trump's Ukraine Deal Force Putin's Hand?" Council on Foreign Relations, July 18, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/article/will-trumps-ukraine-deal-force-putins-hand>.

¹⁴ Liana Fix, "For Ukraine, Europeans Need to Play Checkbook Diplomacy With Trump," Council on Foreign Relations, Aug. 4, 2025, <https://www.cfr.org/article/ukraine-europeans-need-play-checkbook-diplomacy-trump>.

¹⁵ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "The Hague Summit Declaration issued by the NATO Heads of State and Government participating in the meeting of the North Atlantic Council in The Hague 25 June 2025," June 25, 2025, <https://www.nato.int/en/about-us/official-texts-and-resources/official-texts/2025/06/25/the-hague-summit-declaration>.

¹⁶ Alexander Burns, "Trump thrashes European leaders in wide-ranging interview: 'I think they're weak,'" Politico, Dec. 9, 2025, https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/09/trump-dasha-burns-interview-europe-immigration-ukraine-00682016?utm_content=topic/politics&utm_source=flipboard.

¹⁷ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, pp. 25-27.

¹⁸ Department of War, *2026 National Defense Strategy*, Jan. 23, 2026, <https://media.defense.gov/2026/Jan/23/2003864773/-1/-1/0/2026-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY.PDF>, p. 11.

support when European nations fail to do so, despite it being their problem? That's strange. That's his perception. Given this, it's hardly surprising that the Trump administration's approach to supporting Ukraine has shifted. Drawing a parallel to a the "Vietnamization of the Vietnam War" of Nixon-Kissinger diplomacy, an area of the author's expertise, one could argue that Trump is pushing for a "Europeanization of the Russia-Ukraine War."

4. Support Continued as "Leverage" for Transactions

The second change pertains to the purpose and rationale of the support. The Biden administration has provided support to enable Ukraine to prevent Russia's invasion from succeeding and to deter Russia from expanding the war beyond Ukraine. This was based on the premise that the United States would not make decisions about Ukraine without consulting Ukraine¹⁹. But, the Biden administration held a strong commitment to avoiding escalation of the conflict and preventing direct U.S. involvement, carefully exploring the nature of American engagement. Consequently, while they used rhetoric to portray Russia's invasion as a "strategic failure" and to preserve the international order, they lacked a clear vision for how to end the war, ultimately remaining reactive.

In contrast, the Trump administration appears primarily focused on "ending" the conflict, regardless of whether that results in peace or a ceasefire. Indeed, Trump has repeatedly stated that the war between Ukraine and Russia is unsustainable and must end²⁰. What lies behind this stance is unclear. It could be a desire for the Nobel Peace Prize, or it might not be. In any case, as Trump himself has long claimed, he does not appear to act based on strategy or logic. Rather, he seems to prioritize intuition²¹.

However, what is crucial is that we do not adopt an attitude of it's fine to ignore him because his policies are incompetent and capricious toward Trump's stance and policies. Admittedly, there is an undeniable aspect of capriciousness, impulsiveness, and self-validation. Yet, what remains crucial is twofold: ① that the administration itself positioned these policies within a coherent "strategy," and ② that this positioning fits within the traditional context of American political and diplomatic history. This was clarified by the NSS 2025 and the frequently invoked "Trump Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine" (the term "Donlow Doctrine" is

¹⁹ Joseph R. Biden Jr., "President Biden: What America Will and Will Not Do in Ukraine," *New York Times*, May 31, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/31/opinion/biden-ukraine-strategy.html>; The White House, *National Security Strategy*, Oct. 2022, <https://bidenwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>.

²⁰ Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, Department of State, "U.S. Security Cooperation with Ukraine," Mar. 12, 2025, <https://www.state.gov/bureau-of-political-military-affairs/releases/2025/01/u-s-security-cooperation-with-ukraine>.

²¹ Donald Trump with Tony Schwartz, *Trump: The Art of the Deal*, NY: Random House, 1987.

synonymous). The idea that the exceptional (or aspiring to be exceptional) United States should adhere to a principle of mutual non-intervention with the European continent should feel familiar to anyone who has studied American diplomatic history. Indeed, discerning what is truly surprising from what is merely trite requires calm reflection. We must also be sensitive to how the Trump administration positions itself within the broader context. In any case, it seems unwise to attempt to understand Trump solely by isolating him from the traditional context of American political and diplomatic history.

Some readers may wonder why, despite emphasizing his intent to “end” the war, Trump continued the Ukraine support that began under the Biden administration. However, given Trump’s preference for a transactional style, this seems less surprising. The U.S.’s support for Ukraine can be used as leverage in subsequent deals. A prime example of this is Trump’s suspension of military and intelligence support for Ukraine following the shocking U.S.-Ukraine summit in late February 2025. For Trump, who prefers negotiating from a position of strength, leverage is essential to any deal.

The third area of change is the decision-making process. There is no need to say much about it. Unlike previous administrations, the Trump administration entrusts important foreign policy matters to a small group of close aides. This inner circle consists of Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Chief of Staff Susie Wiles, and Steve Whitkof, a longtime friend of Trump’s from the real estate industry. Regarding issues in the Middle East and Ukraine, Jared Kushner, President Trump’s son-in-law, was asked to provide support at Whitkof’s request²². Everyone knows the National Security Council (NSC) has been weakened and is not functioning. This makes it impossible to provide the president with diverse options, let alone conduct thorough prior deliberation for that purpose. While it’s true the NSC had become overly expanded, this is still an excessively extreme “all-or-nothing” approach. This point also marks a significant departure from the Biden administration²³.

Indeed, the reality of U.S. support for Ukraine under both the Biden and Trump administrations cannot be described as merely continuing or changing.

²² Diana Nerozzi and Eli Stokols, “Inside Trump’s small national security team,” Politico, Dec. 7, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/12/07/the-small-team-running-trumps-foreign-policy-00679802>.

²³ For foreign decision-making process under the Biden administration, see Bob Woodward, *War*, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2024; David E. Sanger, *New Cold Wars: China’s Rise, Russia’s Invasion, and America’s Struggle to Defend the West*, NY: Crown, 2024; Alexander Ward, *The Internationalist: The Fight to Restore American Foreign Policy After Trump*, NY: Portfolio, 2024.

5. The Inability to Take the Initiative in Engagement Approaches

Finally, how can we understand U.S. support for Ukraine from the Biden administration to the second Trump administration within a more medium-term perspective—that is, from the time of the 2014 annexation of Crimea? From the Obama administration to the current Trump administration, there has been a consistent focus on supporting Ukraine, imposing sanctions on Russia, and reassuring allies²⁴. While each administration has treated these as three pillars, they have effectively weighed two factors—maintaining the international order and the risk of escalation—against each other to make concrete decisions. In that sense, the broad framework of the U.S.’s response to Russia and Ukraine has remained unchanged for the past decade. During the Obama administration, the United States imposed sanctions on Russia while deploying troops to NATO member states bordering Russia and providing military support to Ukraine, excluding lethal weapons. The first Trump administration essentially continued this policy. In fact, they strengthened sanctions against Russia and even decided to send lethal weapons to Ukraine²⁵. The Biden administration and the second Trump administration have taken the approach described above.

From a medium-term perspective, the above analysis indicates that priorities and rhetoric significantly influence U.S. support for Ukraine. The Obama and Biden administrations clearly prioritized avoiding escalation risks with Russia. Obama did not send lethal weapons, and Biden exercised considerable “self-restraint,” ensuring that long-range missiles and systems were not provided immediately. While the Biden administration framed the Russia-Ukraine war as a fight to defend the international order, it was clear that other priorities took precedence, as this rhetoric remained just that. These points indicate something crucial: namely, that American support and its reinforcement require “something to happen,” meaning it cannot be initiated proactively. This becomes abundantly clear when examining the gradual process of support reinforcement under successive administrations.

Indeed, we can position and understand Trump within this same context. Trump has been waiting for “something to happen” while leveraging support for him, following his own priorities. However, unlike

²⁴ Satoru Mori, “Ukuraina to ‘Posuto Puraimashi’ Zidai no Amerika ni yoru Genjyō Bouei [Ukraine and the Current Defense Policy of the United States in the Post-Primacy Era],” Satoshi Ikeuchi et. al., *Ukuraina Sensō to Sekai no Yukue [War in Ukraine and Its Global Consequences]*, Tokyo: Tokyo University Press, 2022, p. 48.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 49-54.

Democratic administrations, however, there is no rhetoric or “self-restraint” involved. The unpredictability is high. This may be what separates “the America of the past” from “the America of the future.” While this paper won't discuss the details here, it's also important to acknowledge that some in the American public support a Trump-style approach: reducing U.S. involvement and engaging with Russia only to prevent escalation.

To be sure, there are limits to understanding Trump's diplomacy by applying it to existing foreign policy traditions or foreign policy analysis (FPA)²⁶. However, his actions and policies are not entirely anomalous in historical perspective. This paper demonstrated that the Trump administration's policy toward Ukraine broadly aligns with prevailing policy ideas of the past decade. This finding underscores the importance of examining not whether Trump fundamentally differs from his predecessors, but rather how, to what extent, and in what respects he diverges from them. Such an approach enables a deeper understanding of contemporary American politics through the lens of Trump.

American constitutional historian Naoyuki Agawa, echoing Alexis de Tocqueville, pointed out as follows:

In the preface to *Democracy in America*, Volume I, Tocqueville stated, “I confess that in America I saw more than America.” He also wrote, “while they [--the various factions] are busied for the morrow only, I have turned my thoughts to the whole future.” We also want to find that “in Trump we saw more than Trump²⁷.”

This approach is all the more necessary now because it provides insight into understanding Trump 2.0 — and, by extension, America itself — by closely observing the reality of Ukraine support.

The year 2026 will be packed with U.S.-related events. July 4 marks the 250th anniversary of American independence, and September 11 commemorates the 25th anniversary of the terrorist attacks. The midterm elections are on November 3, and the G20 summit is in Miami in December. Once again, the world will focus on America this year. It is precisely at such times that we must pause and engage in a sober analysis of the United States and President Trump.

²⁶ Ruth Deyermond, “The Trump presidency, Russia and Ukraine: explaining incoherence,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 99, No. 4 (2023), pp. 1595-1614.

²⁷ Naoyuki Agawa, *Dono Amerika? Muzyun to Kinkou no Taikoku [Which America? A Superpower of Contradictions and Balances]*, Kyoto: Mineruva Shobou, 2021, p. 241. The words of Tocqueville cited here are included below: Alexis De Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, Vintage Book Edition, NY: Vintage Book, 1990, p. 14, 16.

[Note]

This article is based on a piece written for Foresight in Japanese but has been revised and edited from the original. The link to the original paper is below: <https://www.fsight.jp/articles/-/51898>

About the author

Ryoya ISHIMOTO

Ryoya Ishimoto, Ph.D., is a Lecturer of International Relations at Hokkaido University of Education, Hakodate Campus, Hokkaido, Japan, and a Visiting Researcher at the Research Center for Advanced Science and Technology, the University of Tokyo. He earned BA in Education from Oita University, and a M.A. and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Doshisha University, Japan. His research interests are International Relations, especially American Diplomatic History, International Security, and the History of U.S.-Japan Security Relations.

His recent publication includes “Japan’s Nuclear Balance: Deterrence and Disarmament,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Sep. 2025); “Foreign Policy toward Japan regarding SALT II during the Carter Administration: Continuity and Discontinuity from the Ford Years,” *ROLES REVIEW*, Vol. 6 (Dec. 2024); “Strengthening Japan-US Security Relations Over Extended Deterrence,” *The Diplomat* (Aug. 21, 2024); “Henry Kissinger and Japan: Focusing on the Nixon-Ford Administration Years,” *ROLES REPORT*, No. 29 (Jan. 2024).

