

NEW ERA OF UNCERTAINTIES: HOW US FOREIGN AID WORKS IN TIMES OF WAR

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ABSTRACT

Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 has brought immense damage to the people of Ukraine and Europe, their critical resources and infrastructure, and the whole idea of sustaining peace based on democratic principles. Rebuilding peace and democracy in this challenging time requires a lot of effort; foreign aid serves as the instrument for achieving this goal. It is noteworthy that since the invasion in 2022, Ukraine has become the top European recipient of US Foreign aid for the first time since World War II. This article examines the foreign aid relationship between the US and Ukraine in the years 2022 and 2023 and suggests that foreign aid is an important foreign policy tool despite certain criticisms regarding the effectiveness of the aid, its oversight mechanisms, and the diverse range of critical approaches, which argue that aid is perceived as a capitalist instrument serving the interests of a strong capitalist West rather than those of developing countries. Contrary to criticism, this article suggests that US aid to Ukraine in this difficult time is important in illustrating that democracy can survive in the global arena, undermining Russia's future aspirations of attacking others, and supporting a secure environment for cooperation among states. This article studies the determinants of US foreign aid from the perspective of the donor and the recipient country, as a two-way and complex process, through the prism of liberalism. Based on the liberal tradition, we can assume that US assistance in Ukraine is focused on aiding Ukraine in countering authoritarian Russia and safeguarding democratic principles but is also influenced by the recipient's commitment to liberal values, including the promotion of peace, a robust economy, and a thriving democracy.

Keywords: foreign aid, US-Ukraine aid relations, US strategic interests, recipient influence on donor decisions, Russia-Ukraine conflict, liberalism.

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of liberal ideas through foreign aid is one of the foreign policy goals of the US and powerful Western states. The end of the Cold War saw the launch of a wave of democratization and led to the strengthening of liberal ideas. Today, liberal ideas face new challenges, such as threats that range from populism to authoritarianism. The United States has used foreign aid as a tool for rebuilding peace and democracy for over 50 years now. US foreign aid falls into four general categories: humanitarian aid to address the immediate needs of a population in crisis; developmental aid to help develop economies in the long term; military aid for explicit purposes of defence; and political-economic aid to support political stability, economic policy reforms, and democratic institutions. It can provide support in the countries where the US has strategic interests and supports activities related to peace talks, human rights, political and criminal justice reforms, etc. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023).

Before I suggest an analysis of the US-Ukraine aid relationship from 2022-2023, I would first like to address different perspectives on the efficiency or even counter-productivity of the aid.

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Some observers have questioned the legitimacy of the Western aid model. Some might argue that foreign assistance does not always bring positive results and that it could on the contrary bring harm to the recipient country. Critics usually cite “aid to corrupt governments in Africa or US anti-communist aid to Latin American rebels and regimes. Numerous examples exist of hospitals, schools, and other facilities that were built with donor funds but have not been used. In some instances, critics even argue that foreign aid may do more harm than good, by reducing recipient government accountability, fuelling corruption, damaging export competitiveness, creating dependence, etc.” (Lawson, 2016). Critics also argue that “democracy assistance is code for manipulative great power interference in the socio-political business of a sovereign state – a particularly invasive form of governmentality and world ordering. Consequently, criticisms of democracy assistance roam well beyond questions of effectiveness, into ethical queries about the overall appropriateness of politically centred developments program” (Mandaville & Mandaville, 2007). However, according to the liberalist approach of the International Relations Theory, aid plays an important role in the democratization process. The flow of aid from rather strong advanced democracies to emerging democracies is seen as a great contribution to global peace and economic development. It could also be suggested that countries have a moral responsibility to help those in need, whether these are basic needs to survive or more complex issues such as protecting statehood and institutions.

Another aspect of criticism towards the Western aid model is the effectiveness of the aid, which could be ambiguous, primarily due to the lack of comprehensive evaluations aimed at assessing their real-world impact. In the case of US foreign aid, it is significant to highlight that the evaluation mechanism of the effectiveness of the aid has been there for decades. “The importance and methodologies of evaluation of foreign aid have been varying over time starting from 1961 since USAID was established. The process of evaluation responded to political and fiscal circumstances. Starting from 2003 accountability to Congress became a major evaluation priority with the foreign assistance to support military activities in Iraq and Afghanistan” (Lawson, 2016).

It is also interesting to look at whether foreign aid goes to corrupt governments. “New York University professor and former World Bank economist William Easterly made the case in his 2006 book, *The White Man's Burden* that development aid is dominated by top-down planners and bureaucrats with little accountability and that there is scant evidence that aid boosts a country's long-term growth. Nobel laureate Sir Angus Deaton argues that aid gives a lifeline to corrupt governments, insulating them from the political pressures that would create a better functioning state” (McBride, 2018). The criticism regarding aiding corrupt governments could be addressed with an argument suggested by George Ingram that only a fifth of US economic assistance goes to governments, 20% goes to non-profit organizations, 34% to multilateral organizations, and 25% elsewhere. Typically, when the US supports a country that is ruled by a corrupt or autocratic government, assistance goes through private channels, NGOs, or multilateral organizations and enhances the accountability of the US economic assistance (Ingram, 2019). This indicates the US efforts to avoid the possible negative effects assistance might bring.

To sum up the aid-related arguments, it could be suggested that foreign aid has both positive and negative aspects and that its efficacy depends on a variety of factors. Although there are valid concerns about the misuse of aid funds and the potential negative or manipulative effects of aid on recipient countries, measures have been taken to prevent such misuse and ensure that aid is used effectively. Furthermore, “The research has shown that it can lead to significant progress in reducing poverty, improving food security, and enhancing the well-being of individuals. Moreover, measures have been put in place to prevent the misuse of aid funds, thereby increasing its efficacy” (Wu, 2022).

When it comes to promoting democracy, diplomacy and support for peaceful processes are likely to be more effective than using military force. Overall, foreign aid can be an important tool for promoting international development and stability, but it should be provided with caution and evaluated regularly to ensure that it is achieving its intended goals.

The 2022 US national security strategy outlines that America's fate is linked to events beyond its shores, including challenges such as the global pandemic, economic downturn, decline in democracy, and growing rivalry from authoritarian states (National Security Strategy, 2022). The unlawful military aggression of Russia against Ukraine in 2022 had far-reaching

consequences on the citizens, resources, and vital infrastructure of Ukraine and Europe. This act of aggression shattered the fundamental concept of maintaining peace based on democratic principles. The Russian military intervention in Ukraine was perceived as an assault on democracy in wider Europe and even the world. Thus, it is crucial to support Ukraine for three primary reasons: first, to demonstrate that democracy can endure on the global stage; second, to curb Russia's future aspirations of assaulting a peaceful nation; and third, to foster a more prosperous and secure environment for cooperation among states in the liberal world order. Aiding Ukraine, from the US perspective, in these circumstances could prove to have more benefits rather than faults.

To contextualize the main goal of the article, I will analyse the arguments in favour of US aid to Ukraine and weigh them against the criticism of the motives and effectiveness of aid. Considering the wide response the world had to Russia's illegal attack on Ukraine, and democratic principles in general, this article will cover an empirical analysis of the foreign aid dynamics between Ukraine and the United States from the beginning of the attack in 2022 until now. The article will also cover a theoretical analysis of the aid relationship based on liberal tradition but will also examine aid through structuralism and critical theories.

As mentioned, Russia's illegal attack on Ukraine was perceived as a general threat to democracy. Soon after Russia invaded Ukraine, the member states of the Council of Europe (CoE) agreed to suspend the membership of Russia in the organization due to its violation of the fundamental principles of international law, such as invading a country and committing massive war crimes. The European Stability Initiative in its newsletter says that Europe's club of democracies needs to protect itself from countries blatantly violating its rules (ESI, 2022). The UN General Assembly resolutions of the eleventh emergency special session condemn the 24 February 2022 declaration by the Russian Federation of a special military operation in Ukraine. One year after the Russian invasion, during the eleventh emergency special session of the UN, member states also deplored the dire human rights and humanitarian consequences of the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine, including the continuous attacks against critical infrastructure across Ukraine with devastating consequences for civilians, and decided to suspend the rights of membership in the Human Rights Council of the Russian Federation (GA Resolutions ES – 11/6 2023).

Freedom House “urged democratic countries to remain unwavering in their support for Ukraine and its people, including by providing direct budgetary support to the Ukrainian government, with appropriate oversight, to withstand the considerable economic and social shocks the invasion has caused” and underlined that “democracies must prepare to support Ukrainian reconstruction as it rebuilds and further strengthens its democratic institutions” (Freedom House, 2023).

Why is 2022-2023 a critical period for evaluating the US-Ukraine aid relationship? As mentioned above, this could be answered by the importance of showing the world that democracy can survive. “What happens next in Ukraine matters enormously, because this will send a powerful signal – encouraging or discouraging – to anyone attempting to become democratic, especially if they live within striking distance of well-armed autocracies such as China, Russia, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. Such signals will be read carefully throughout Asia, but also in Latin America, Africa, and even Europe itself” (Acemoglu & Johnson, 2023).

Since the beginning of the war, President Biden's administration has shown immense support to Ukraine in terms of emergency, military, and humanitarian assistance. Freedom House president Michael J. Abramowitz, on the 1st anniversary of Russia's full-scale military invasion of Ukraine, urged democratic governments to “publicly recognize that Ukrainian victory is the only acceptable outcome of this unjust war, anything less guarantees future aggression from Moscow. While the provision of weapons and technical and security assistance is needed to achieve victory on the battlefield, democracies must also provide support for human rights defenders, journalists, and citizens who are engaged in the vital wartime work of documenting human rights violations, collecting evidence of war crimes, and assisting those whose lives have been forever changed by the war” (Freedom House, 2023).

What are the determinants of US foreign aid to other countries in general? The determining factors of aiding other countries would be to help promote global stability; advance the donor country's national interests; and address humanitarian needs as well as support economic development. The United States aims to create a more prosperous and secure environment, prevent conflicts, and build partnerships (USAfacts, 2023) through liberal order.

The United States has given out over \$3.75 trillion in foreign aid since the end of World War II. The aid has varied over time due to various geopolitical circumstances, economic conditions, and national priorities (USAfacts, 2023). In specific periods, US aid addressed concrete regions and was determined by its own concrete interests, such as fighting communism in Asia in 1946-1977, containing the communist threat in Latin America in 1961-1968, fighting AIDS in Africa from 2004 to the present, establishing a stronghold in the Middle East from 1976 to the present, where the US saw Egypt and Israel as important players for promoting regional stability, and fighting the war on terror from 2003 to the present (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). I would add to the list aiding stability in Europe from 1992 to the present, under which I assume support for the transitioning of post-Soviet states into democracies. Peace and security investments make up one of the largest sectors of American assistance aid, enabling other states to combat terrorism, counter international crime, or stop the spread of weapons of mass destruction (Cohen, 2020). Different US administrations choose different approaches to foreign aid. President Trump's administration was not the biggest advocate of democracy aid; however, things changed with the Biden administration, which defined support for democracy as one of its priorities (National Security Strategy, 2022).

The US strategic interest in helping to maintain and further build a peaceful and strong Europe could have been the determinant for giving aid to Ukraine in the aftermath of the Cold War. Furthermore, due to the extremely challenging security situation in Europe these days, it is very interesting to look at aid relations between the two countries since Russia's full-scale military aggression against Ukraine in February 2022, which certainly elevated the importance of different types of aid. Upon Russia's 2022 military aggression against Ukraine, the US provided different types of aid almost uninterrupted until September 2023, when Congress did not vote for a state budget with the attached Ukraine assistance (Copp & Baldor, 2023).

What factors have mostly determined the aid to Ukraine in the past two years? Is the US strategic interest the main determinant for providing aid or does Ukraine's openness to democracy also play a role in aid decision-making? Why did US aid to Ukraine not have full support in Congress in September 2023? The answers to these questions and the analysis provided in the article could indicate that the United States does not always make decisions regarding aid based solely on its strategic interests, but also pays attention to the openness of the recipient country towards democratization. In openness, I assume the openly declared democracy values of the recipient country, the reforms made towards democracy, and the transparency in using received foreign aid.

The article will study whether a donor country gives aid based on its own interests or, beyond that, whether other factors and circumstances may influence the aid. I suggest that rather than a one-way process, it may be a two-way, complex process. In this article, I argue that the US national interests and its own domestic support for foreign policy on the one hand, and Ukraine's determination in fighting the war against a common enemy (Russia) since 2022 and its readiness or shortfalls in cooperating with the West in terms of advancing and protecting democracy on the other, are both determining factors for the US aid to Ukraine.

The research on the possible influence of the recipient country on the donor country will be an important addition to the international relations academic space. The fact that American foreign aid is determined mainly by its strategic interests has been well studied in the literature for years, while the possible influence of the recipient's openness to democracy on the donor's aid decision-making is not similarly well studied, especially in such a concrete case as the US-Ukraine aid relationship from 2022-2023.

RESEARCH GAP

In this section, I will demonstrate that, even though there are a lot of articles studying foreign aid, most of them focus on aid effectiveness and donor perspective, while there is limited work addressing how the recipient country can influence foreign aid. The goal of this article is to enrich the existing literature on foreign aid by adding the recipient's perspective.

Alberto Chong and Mark Gradstein claim that the existing empirical literature on foreign aid has been almost entirely devoted to the issues of aid allocation and the effects of aid in recipient countries (Chong & Gradstein, 2007). There are a vast number of articles that concentrate mostly on the outcomes of US aid in the recipient country and on why giving foreign aid is so important to the United States itself, such as 'Sponsoring Democracy: The United States and Democracy Aid to the Developing World, 1988-2001' by James M. Scott and Carrie A. Steele T. In the article, the authors talk about democracy assistance from the United States through the US Agency for International Development (USAID) to investigate the impact of democracy aid on democratization in Latin America, the Middle East, Africa, and Asia between 1988 and 2001. In another article, 'Does aid support democracy?' by Rachel M. Gisselquist, Miguel Niño-Zarazúa, and Melissa Samarin, the authors study whether aid has a positive impact on democracy and how. What factors most influence its impact?

Other interesting research on the topic includes: 'Aid and good governance: Examining aggregate unintended effects of aid' by Geske Dikstr, an article which speaks about the unintentional negative effects of aid on good governance, whether the effect of aid on democracy has become more positive since the Cold War, and the effect of aid on government capacity and reducing corruption; 'Twenty Years of Western Democracy Assistance in Central and Eastern Europe' by Pavol Demes, which discusses the need to adapt democratic assistance to the specific needs and expectations of each country; 'Has Assistance from USAID been Successful for Democratization? Evidence from the Transition Economies of Eastern Europe and Eurasia' by Andreas Freytag and Jac C. Heckelman, an article in which the authors study the extent to which aid can help serve the aim for which it has been paid; and 'Does "Democracy Aid" Promote Democracy? What Works and What Does Not' by Yoonbin Ha, a very interesting article in which the author makes it clear that he would concentrate on donors and not recipients because foreign aid is part of foreign policy. Many scholars study the impact of aid on democratization: "Goldsmith (2001) found a positive but small relationship between aid and democratization in Africa. Carapico (2002) concludes that aid did not have such an effect in the Arab world and may have even had the opposite impact. Burnell (2000) and Sogge (2002) are also skeptical of a relationship between development assistance and democratization. Likewise, studies of the impact of aid conditionality on recipient country political reform are mostly skeptical (Collier 1997; Crawford 1997)" (Scott & Steele, 2011).

However, there is a lack of research on whether and to what extent the recipient and its democratic aspirations determine the donor's foreign aid.

The current article aims to contribute to the existing literature by studying the two-way process of aid dynamics. Even though many recipient countries are not mature democracies, willingness for socio-economic modernization, achieving good governance, and economic freedom will delay or avert the backsliding of democracy. Thus, it is important to see how willing Ukraine is to democratize and how much attention is paid to this factor by the United States in a particular war condition where the necessity to aid Ukraine supposedly calls for no strategic questions.

Despite this lack of research in 'recipient triggers for aid', the evidence that the recipient country influences aid to some extent in the donor country may be found in James Scott's and Carrie Steele's article where they say that part of US aid allocation decisions is based on strategic calculations of where aid may do the best and where democratization is both preferred and possible (Scott & Steele, 2011). The authors also mention that although the connection between general foreign aid and democratization has been underdeveloped theoretically, scholars have argued that general development assistance should promote democracy in numerous ways, which includes enhancing civil society and constraining recipient behaviour through conditionality (ibid.). Conditionality is what would indicate the two-way process of aid dynamics, meaning that if a recipient country fulfils the democratization conditions it should be able to receive aid from a donor.

If we have a look at US aid allocation policies to different countries, we can see the changes it has undergone. In certain cases, aid allocation was motivated by economic development in the receiving country; in others, policy conditionality includes “the support for democracy, respect of human rights, rule of law and good governance. The US Foreign Assistance Act in 1974 vowed that no assistance would be extended to governments involved in human rights violations. Humphrey-Cranston Congressional Amendment, approved in 1974, suggested that no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” (Ali, 2018).

It is also worth mentioning that not all US aid is given based on the conditionality of democratic aspirations and the protection of human rights from the recipient country. “Although the US government did a commendable job by passing legislation to link the provision of aid to respect for human rights, previous research shows that these laws have rarely been implemented. Lars Schoultz’s study illustrates that in contrast to these laws, the US provided more aid to governments that were accused of human rights violations. Michael Stohl, David Carleton, and Steven Johnson found that during the regimes of both President Nixon and Ford, governments engaged in human rights violations were provided considerable aid. Likewise, in the tenures of President Carter and Reagan respect for human rights was not a significant factor in determining the sanctioning of aid to several developing countries across the world. Their findings show that numerous countries that were considered vital for safeguarding US foreign policy goals received US aid irrespective of their dismal display of political and civil liberties” (Ali, 2018).

Another interesting factor while analysing the impact of the recipient country’s democratic aspirations on the donor country’s aid allocation policies would be to look at the factors that affect the support of foreign aid among voters in donor countries. The authors Chong and Gradstein claim that aid is linked with inequality, corruption, political leaning, and taxes in donor countries but has little relationship with the economic conditions in the receiving country. The authors emphasize that aid generosity is found to be mainly affected by donor country governments’ efficiency and less by the recipient one (Chong & Gradstein, 2007).

To sum up, foreign aid plays an important role in advancing development and democratization, though it is criticized by many. Numerous articles in the International Relations field largely focus on the impacts of US aid in recipient countries and the significance of foreign aid to the United States itself. However, there appears to be a gap in research regarding whether and to what extent the recipient country influences the decision-making of the donor in providing aid. This study aims to contribute to the existing international relations literature on foreign aid by examining the two-way dynamics of the aid process. The research presented in this article indicates that some of the decisions regarding US aid allocation are shaped by both the strategic considerations of the donor and the recipient’s openness to democracy.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This article is based on empirical research on the foreign aid dynamics between Ukraine and the United States from the beginning of Russia’s full-scale aggression against Ukraine in February 2022 until now. I use qualitative methods for data collection. The data I have gathered covers information on US aid to Ukraine, on US national interests in aiding Ukraine, and on Ukraine’s democratic aspirations and readiness to defend peace and security in Europe during the research period.

The research and analysis of the gathered qualitative data helps find answers to the questions mentioned in the introduction: What factors have mostly determined US aid to Ukraine in the past two years? Is US strategic interest the main determinant of providing aid to Ukraine or does Ukraine’s openness to democracy also play a role in aid decision-making? “Empiricism is based on a broad assumption that knowledge can be accumulated through experience and observation. Theories of IR can be generated through careful observation and experimentation” (Lamont, 2015). In this article, I try to establish whether giving aid in the case of US-Ukraine relations from 2022-2023, during Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, is a two-way

process rather than a one-way process. For this, I try to observe the general aid-giving policy of the United States as well as US aid to Ukraine in the specific period. I also study Ukraine's efforts to democratize even in challenging war times as well as how the country tries to be open and cooperative with the West. In the case of the current article, observing the relationship between the aid-giving of a donor and the Western aspirations of the recipient would help conclude whether the donor gives aid only based on its strategic interests or considers the recipient's attitudes.

For the research, mainly qualitative methods are used based on Christopher Lamont's 'Research Methods in International Relations'. The qualitative data provided in the article includes internet-based research and archival or document-based research. I use primary source documents such as official documents and public speeches of officials as well as secondary sources such as analytical and media articles, opinions, and reports issued by American and/or Ukrainian governmental and non-governmental agencies and research organizations. The selection of these specific sources is based on their relevance to the research objectives, as explained below. The analysis of academic work used during the research provides a foundational framework for understanding the US-Ukraine general aid relationship through the prism of liberalism, contributing to the theoretical underpinning of this research as well as critical theoretical analysis.

Regarding US foreign aid, I explore data gathered from Jonathan Masters and Will Merrow's article 'How Much Aid Has the US Sent Ukraine?' The authors suggest that since World War II, Ukraine has become the European country receiving the most US aid. In addition, I use Jim Garamone's article from the US Department of Defense, which provides information on the amounts and nature of aid and the support of President Joe Biden's administration to Ukraine. Information from the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) as well as the Congressional Research Service is used to describe congressional decisions regarding assistance. Another important source for gathering foreign aid-related data and analysing it is USAID assistance and their assessments of Ukraine's democratic aspirations through their official website as well as in articles published by CSIS. Information regarding strong US support for aiding Ukraine is also found in primary sources such as the speeches of President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin.

Gathering data on US National interests towards aiding Ukraine is done through analytical papers such as Anthony Smith's 'Supporting Democracy After the Invasion of Ukraine' by Carnegie Europe. The article indicates that Ukraine's defence against Russia's war is an attempt to defend world democratic values and US national interests. President Biden's speeches also reflect that supporting Ukraine is a worldwide commitment to support freedom everywhere, and Secretary Blinken's speeches indicate that the US administration has a clear vision that Ukraine's fight against Russia is a fight for the security of the rest of Europe and European values intertwined with US national interests. The Willson Center's article is used for collecting data on the US National Interest: written by Syzov Vitaliy. 'Four Reasons Why Supporting Ukraine is a Good Investment' explains that strengthening Ukraine means strengthening the US's international position. Another important source for the data about US national interests is the bipartisan task force analysis, which addresses the global decline in democratic freedom and the authoritarian dangers to US national security. It also talks about elevating democracy support as part of US foreign policy. The task force is comprised of Freedom House, the CSIS, and the McCain Institute. The George Bush Institute, Freedom House, and the Penn Biden Center also suggest an analysis that confirms that the American commitment to democracy remains strong. For research purposes, American interest in aiding democracy looks through certain perspectives from the US Summit for Democracy.

Regarding recipient country triggers on foreign aid, data will be gathered about Ukraine's democratic reforms from secondary sources such as the analysis suggested by Michael Runey in his article 'Supporting Ukraine's Democracy after the War'. Ukraine's anti-corruption, anti-monopoly, and market regulation efforts and the continued support of the US towards democratic reforms are reflected in Secretary Blinken's speeches. Data is also collected on Ukraine's national perspective of defending democratic principles from the analytical work 'How Democracies can respond to the Invasion of Ukraine' by Laura Thornton. Freedom House reports are assessed to study the political rights and civil liberties in Ukraine in 2021 and 2022 to compare how and whether the situation in that realm changed before and after the war. Data on Ukraine's European aspirations is also presented through the USAID analysis. Monica Toft in her work also assesses Ukraine's national policies.

In analysing recipient country triggers on US aid, I also look at US domestic political resilience regarding aiding Ukraine, which is based on the insufficient transparency of the spending of the aid on Ukraine's end. This contributes to the argument of whether recipient country developments might have an effect on aid decision-making. In that regard, important works are presented by Grayse McCormick and Julia Mueller.

For the theoretical analysis, I use different approaches from donor perspectives as well as liberalist assumptions and critical theories. I will be focusing on Onur Sen's work on strategic aid, which tries to explain the motives and choices of international donors, on the liberalist assumptions that are presented in Jackson and Sorensen's book *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches*, and on Clara Mayerl's work on the Democratic Peace Theory. For my theoretical arguments, I also use Alim Eray's (2019) comparative analysis of the Ukraine crisis through the prism of offensive liberalism and liberal internationalism as well as Larsen Henrik's 'Which Kind of Realism Should Drive Western Support'. For critical theories, I collected data from Barnabe Malacalza's 'The Politics of Aid from the Perspective of International Relations Theories'.

In this analysis, I excluded sources that were not directly related to US aid to Ukraine during the specified time frame. There are certainly academic limitations to the article based on the real-life policy decisions the US makes to aid certain authoritarian countries based on its strategic interests, and I may be biased in my selection criteria since I believe that democratization would only bring more peace and is the only way for countries to align themselves with the West. Being close to Western values means also being close to economic development and political stability. Other limitations considered in the article are that I may not have accessed complete data on US aid provided to Ukraine and certain official and media sources might have subjective biases.

THEORETICAL EXPLANATION

Giving foreign aid could be categorized and explained through the prism of various IR theories. Donor countries could give aid based on their self-interest, global security, goal to improve their international status, etc. Onur Sen in his dissertation suggests that from a realist perspective, donor countries give foreign aid to increase their physical security and further their economic interests. "A liberal approach would suggest that donors give aid to produce global public goods, stability and alleviate problems from global inequality" (Sen, 2018).

It could be assumed that donor countries use their security and economic interests and their interests related to recipient needs and performances when making foreign aid decisions. According to Onur Sen, aid is related to the power index and regime type of the donor country. "If a donor prioritized security and economy then its decisions are Realist; if needs and performances of recipients – Liberalists" (Sen, 2018).

The United States is both a high power and a democratic country and its foreign aid tradition dates back years. It is a founder of democratic order, and its main goal is to sustain and develop it. At the same time, US decision-making about foreign aid also includes the aspects of improving the economic and democratic performances of the recipient countries (Sen, 2018). Thus, US decision-making is not strictly about national interest but also considers developments in the recipient country as argued in the current article.

Liberal IR theorists see the connection between peace, democracy, and aid. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, "democratic sponsor states" such as the United States and others in Western Europe publicly committed themselves to supporting and expanding democratic governance in the developing world (Scott & Steele, 2017).

Liberalism plays an important role in explaining US-Ukraine aid relations. "Republican liberals argue that liberal democratic constitutions and forms of government are of vital importance for inducing peaceful and cooperative relations between states. All liberals agree that in the long run cooperation based on mutual interests will prevail. The positive liberalist outlook was strengthened after the end of the Cold War and was supported by the defeat of communism and the expected universal victory of liberal democracy" (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

“Republican liberalism is built on the claim that liberal democracies are more peaceful and law-abiding than are other political systems. The argument is not that democracies never go to war; democracies have gone to war as often as non-democracies. But the argument is that democracies do not fight each other. Why are democracies at peace with one another? The first is the existence of domestic political cultures based on peaceful conflict resolution. The second element is that democracies hold common moral values which leads to the formation of what Immanuel Kant called a ‘*pacific union*’” (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

The United States aims to democratize countries by all means in the name of liberal ideas to expand the zone of peace (Mayerl, 2014). We can assume that US aid to Ukraine is exactly for the Kantian purpose of peace. The Russian Federation and its actions do not affect the narrow circle of states in Europe but pose a threat to the regional security of the continent, thus also affecting NATO allies. “Ukraine is now on the front lines of Russia’s containment. Ukrainians are paying the highest price for this, in the lives of their people. If Ukraine failed to tackle Russia, the threat of Russian aggression would remain” (Syzov, 2023).

Jackson and Sorensen also argue that “peace between democracies is strengthened through economic cooperation and interdependence. In the Pacific Union, it is possible to encourage what Kant called ‘the spirit of commerce’: mutual and reciprocal gain for those involved in international economic cooperation and exchange” (Jackson & Sorensen, 2013).

To sum up, following liberal tradition, we can assume that US aid to Ukraine is responsive to the recipient’s liberal values and principles of sustaining peace, a strong economy, and a strong democracy. In US-Ukraine relations from 2022-2023, democratizing Ukraine is not a direct aim, but the aim is to help Ukraine defeat authoritarian Russia and defend democratic principles. This reflects the importance the US attaches to Ukraine’s democratic aspirations. “Adopting these and other critical reforms (good governance, transparency, accountability) to increase Ukraine’s transparency, and competitiveness – to bolster the rule of law – will help attract more private investment. Both of us (Governments and International Financial Institutions) have a hugely important role to play in Ukraine’s recovery” (Blinken, 2023).

The Ukraine crisis and US support for Ukraine could also be explained through the prism of liberal internationalism by John G. Ikenberry. According to the author, the US has a liberal project, the aim of which is to create an international order based on open markets, international institutions, cooperative security, a democratic community, etc. The US’s role in this is critical since it has the capability as a leading liberal power. Ikenberry also points out that states, as rational actors, decide to participate in this liberal order because through this order they maximize their interests. According to the author, the US liberal order is not coercive but is cooperative and inclusive, with economic, political, and security ties among its members (Eray, 2019).

Ukraine’s war against the authoritarian aggressor, Russia, brought Ukraine closer to defending democratic values and thus helped Ukraine come closer to Western ideology. Considering the importance of having Ukraine fight for Western security and values, however, pushed the United States to give more aid to Ukraine and express stronger moral support. “Viewed through Ikenberry’s prism, given liberal states’ inclination to embrace nations that show an interest in joining liberal international order, it should be expected of the West to offer Ukraine the required assistance in the latter’s efforts to westernize” (Eray, 2019).

However, it is also important to note the controversies linked to liberal notions. First would be an argument about whether states can impose or mandate the ‘good life’ (in our case, peace and prosperity) to their citizens. Lyle A. Downing and Robert B. Thigpen argue that “Because persons have the right to choose their personal good, the state may neither mandate a conception of the good life nor enforce virtues inextricably linked to a particular way of life” (Downing & Thigpen, 1993). However, the authors suggest a solution to this through liberalism, which can reformulate this idea into an idea of the common good, meaning that “liberalism can provide a significant role for the concept that is consistent with the democratic right of self-government. Distinguishable from both the mandatory right and the personally chosen way of life, the common

good may be politically chosen to enhance the lives of persons generally” (ibid). With that, we could assume that through supporting democracy and democratic values, there is clear support for the ideas of the common good, for instance, peace and prosperity.

It is also interesting to look at the war through a classical realism prism: “While Western nations see no vital interest in Ukraine, they do see the interest in preserving established principle in Europe that aggression must not be allowed to pay off. Western states want to equip Ukraine to withstand Russia not to unleash the precedent of revisionist claims that will undermine the long-lasting European order” (Larsen, 2022). So, to sum up, arming Ukraine will bring the higher benefits of weakening Russia’s military capabilities and creating a stronger Europe and NATO.

However, as mentioned in the introduction, critics argue that US foreign aid has not always effectively achieved its intended goals. Ian Vasquez argues that “There is no correlation between aid and growth, aid that goes into a poor policy environment does not work and contributes to debt, aid conditioned on market reforms has failed, countries that have adopted market-oriented policies have done so because of factors unrelated to aid” (Vasquez, 2022). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that there are measures to prevent the misuse of aid and to ensure that it is used effectively, as mentioned in the introduction chapter.

From the perspective of theoretical criticism, it is interesting that international relations theorists consider democracy transition a risky process. It is important to aid the process with caution. “Using military force to spread democracy fails for several reasons... it could be the violent resistance towards using force to spread democracy... successful democracies are not just the written constitution or elections, it takes time to bring systemic change” (Walt, 2016).

It is also interesting to look at the critical theories of aid that are comprised of a very heterogenous group of approaches to international relations, “namely structuralism, dependency, neo-Marxism, imperialism, and underdevelopment theories; neo-Gramscian approaches; and post-structuralism and decolonialism. They look at the problem of the world order as a whole, giving proper attention to economic interests and social forces and seeing how they relate to the development of political and economic structures” (Malacalza, 2019, p. 18). It is notable that aid is seen as a capitalist tool that is used by the ‘core’ to exploit the ‘periphery’, in other words, aid is used as an imperialistic tool that serves the interests of capitalist centres or as a hegemonic mechanism that lays down general rules of behaviour of states (Ibid.). That may be true to a certain extent. The US is the world’s largest contributor of official development assistance and we can assume that the United States uses bilateral aid to advance its strategic priorities. However, according to the OECD, the key priorities in US foreign aid encompass such global and important areas as health and security, combating the climate crisis, and advocating for democracy and good governance, while opposing authoritarianism and addressing the issues of discrimination and inequality (OECD, 2023).

It is also argued that developed countries have a moral obligation to help developing countries based on visions of international peace (Hattori, 2003). David Lumsdaine makes this assumption explicit, arguing that “foreign aid cannot be explained based on the economic and political interests of the donor countries alone, and any satisfactory explanation must give a central place to the influence of humanitarian and egalitarian convictions upon aid donors” (Hattori, 2003). According to liberalism, the aid policy is distanced from the capitalist class and is based on humanitarian considerations, democratic values, and economic prosperity.

On the question of whether foreign aid benefits the US or the recipient, including in the US-Ukraine case analysed in the article, the answer is that aid benefits both. “Foreign aid typically aims to support security as well as the economic, social, and political development of recipient countries (true in our case) and their people. At the same time, such assistance also advances one or all of the following overriding US interests: Contributing to US national security by supporting allies in promoting stability; Reflecting the core US value of caring for others in need—providing humanitarian assistance to victims of war, violence, famine; Advancing US and recipient economic interests by building economies and markets” (Ingram, 2019). All three are true in the US-Ukraine aid relationship.

To sum up, liberals see aid as a contribution to the democratization process, and the flow of economic aid from developed countries to developing countries is seen as a positive way to maintain world peace and prosperity.

In conclusion, foreign aid provided by donor countries can be viewed through different theoretical perspectives; however, the fundamental one is liberalism. The decision-making process of donor countries is influenced by factors such as their own national interests but also recipient needs and performance. The United States, being a high-power democratic country, has a foreign aid tradition that aims to sustain and develop the liberal order while also fulfilling its national interests. US aid to Ukraine is aimed at defending democratic values and Western security interests, preserving the established principles of European order, weakening Russia's military capabilities, and rewarding democratic developments in Ukraine. Therefore, understanding the theoretical underpinnings of foreign aid can help in analysing and interpreting the actions of donor countries in the international arena.

US AID TO UKRAINE

The Biden administration was heading towards 2022 with diverse components integrated into US foreign assistance, including combating climate change, responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, and countering authoritarianism, but since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Ukraine became the top recipient of US Foreign aid. "It is the first time that a European country has held the top spot since the Harry S. Truman administration directed vast sums into rebuilding the continent through the Marshall Plan after World War II" (Masters & Merrow, 2022).

US aid to Ukraine varied over time starting from Ukraine's independence from the Soviet Union to the present day. Throughout the period 2022-2023, President Joe Biden's administration expressed immense support for Ukraine in terms of foreign aid, including military, humanitarian, and economic support. Through aid, the United States underlined its commitment to support Ukraine for the long term. "This aid is tangible proof of America's belief in the Ukrainian people" (Garamone, 2022).

From 2022 until now, the US Congress has passed four spending packages in response to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine: \$113 billion in total. While Congress holds the power to decide on the amount of assistance, it is the administration that decides how the money is directed. There has been oversight of the assistance through the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the offices of the Inspectors General (OIG) (Hoffman et al., 2023).

It is important to note that the nature of aid is changing with the development of the war. Throughout 2022, there were several announcements of different types of aid in different disbursements. "Military equipment the United States provides has changed as the Russian invasion has continued. Originally, the US provided anti-armor and anti-aircraft munitions, including the javelin and stinger systems. After the Ukrainian military drove the Russians back from Ukraine's capital of Kyiv, the nature of war has changed... the Nature of the combat changed, and the fighting required more artillery pieces and capabilities" (Garamone, 2022). In that sense, it is notable that after Russia invaded Ukraine in 2014, "the Obama administration provided Ukraine nonlethal security assistance, including body armor, helmets, vehicle, night and thermal vision devices, heavy engineering equipment, advanced radios, patrol boats, rations tents...medical kits and other related items. In 2017, the Trump administration announced US readiness to provide lethal weapons to Ukraine like sniper rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers, counter-artillery radars, satellite imagery and analysis capabilities, air surveillance systems, etc." (Welt, 2023). However, in 2022, the type of assistance became more advanced defence equipment (Welt, 2023).

Support for United States aid to Ukraine was bipartisan for most of the 2022-2023 period. Congress swiftly reacted to the situation in Ukraine, authorizing different types and amounts of aid and tranches. Following Russia's renewed invasion of Ukraine, Congress authorized or proposed increased funding for existing security assistance to authorities. In 2022, the United States Congress passed three aid packages totalling \$68 billion, and in November 2022, the administration submitted a new aid request of \$37.7 billion, which would bring the total to \$105.5 billion (Cancian, 2022). Public laws P.L. 117-128 and

P.L. 117-328 require Secretaries of State and Defense to report measures taken to account for the lend-lease of US weapons transferred to Ukraine since 24 February 2022. Additionally, the Democracy Defense Lend-Lease ACT of 2022 provides means to bypass bureaucratic barriers for leasing or lending US defence articles to Ukraine (Welt, 2023).

It is important to see that security assistance does not come alone. The bipartisan task force, which was created by Freedom House, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), and the McCain Institute to address issues of US Strategy to Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism, issued recommendations specifying the importance of economic assistance “We should distribute foreign aid and security assistance in ways that help reduce corruption and leverage the private sector ... through mechanisms that promote investment in countries, which show progress in countering corruption” (Freedom House et al., 2021). This task force analyses the importance of connecting economic and democratic policies to fight against authoritarianism and supports inclusive and sustainable economic development.

USAID is one of the key national agencies that distributes foreign aid to different countries, defines criteria for the aid, reports on it, elaborates, and adjusts the foreign aid policies accordingly. Ukraine is no exception. USAID helped Ukraine before and during the times of war to emerge as independent and democratic. Since the start of Russia’s full-scale war against Ukraine on 24 February 2022, USAID focused on both urgent needs and sustaining “development goals like helping Ukraine maintain a well-functioning state with strong institutions free of corruption, fostering inclusive economy, free media, strong civil society and to help build a health system that is transparent and responsive to the needs of the Ukrainian people” (USAID, 2023).

How long will it take to spend the aid? There is no exact answer to this question. Money for operations is spent relatively quickly, whether through DoD for military operations or USAID for Humanitarian actions. Procurement funds for equipment take more years to spend, which means that some of the Aid allocated may get spent in 2026 (Cancian, 2022). This long time frame is also an indication that the US plans to help Ukraine rebuild its military, even if the war ends in the near term (Toft, 2023).

To help meet Ukraine’s wartime needs and recover successfully, USAID has provided \$13 billion in direct budget support, helping the government of Ukraine (GoU) fund basic public services such as healthcare, education, and emergency response. \$1.4 billion was provided for humanitarian assistance and urgent needs, and over \$800 million was provided in development assistance to strengthen Ukraine’s energy sector, governance institutions, agriculture, and small business and civil society, while also considering what will be needed for recovery and reconstruction (USAID, 2023).

Even though most of the assistance, military/security and humanitarian, is directed to the needs of the war, it is interesting to see the traits of the aid related to democracy strengthening, including the fight against corruption and supporting the increase in transparency, building public trust and continuing donor aid, attracting private sector investment, safeguarding the country’s institutions, and accelerating European integration (USAID, 2023).

It is important to note that despite the difficult war situation and everyday battles with Russia’s brutal acts of aggression, Ukraine’s government and business sectors have shown signs of being serious about pushing institutional reforms to combat corruption. According to the head of the National Anti-Corruption Prosecutors Office, nearly 300 investigations have been launched and a record of 58 indictments have been sent to the court last year. President Zelensky personally took steps to fight corruption and fired regional military recruitment officials based on allegations of corruption. This progress was also validated when, in March 2023, the European Council’s group of States against corruption removed Ukraine from the list of countries deemed globally unsatisfactory (Hoffman, 2023).

It is thus especially interesting to see how, even during the war, Ukraine tries to present efforts to indicate a willingness for democratization in order to secure support from the West, even though strategic support is there.

In their joint press conference on 6 September 2023, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine Dmytro Kuleba addressed the issues of US aid to Ukraine. Secretary Blinken specifically underlined that during his six trips to Ukraine, he always saw “the determination, the resilience, and that commitment on the part of all Ukrainians to build a future where they can live safely and live freely in a thriving democracy fully integrated in Europe” and also highlighted

that “in the crucible of President Putin’s brutal and ongoing war, the United States and Ukraine have forged a partnership that is stronger than ever and growing every day” (Blinken & Kuleba, 2023). This highlights the special aid relationship that was formed in the period 2022-2023 between the two countries and also indicates the important role Ukraine’s strive for democracy and freedom has in the bilateral relationship formed during Russia’s war on Ukraine.

The importance of democracy in this war could also be seen in the \$300 million that was allocated by the United States to support law enforcement efforts to restore and maintain law and order in liberated areas. Blinken said in 2023, “we’re making new investments to enhance the transparency in Ukraine’s institutions and bolster the rule of law so that Ukraine is even more responsive to the needs of people” (Blinken & Kuleba, 2023). USAID provided \$102 million for the European Democratic Resilience Initiative (EDRI) to support free press and counter disinformation as well as to enable the documentation of human rights violations and protect activists and vulnerable groups in Ukraine and surrounding cities (USAID, 2023).

In conclusion, the chapter highlights the significant role that the United States has played in providing aid to Ukraine, particularly in response to Russia’s invasion in February 2022.

The nature of the assistance provided to Ukraine has evolved in response to the changing dynamics of the conflict, with a shift towards advanced defence equipment to meet the demands of the ongoing war. Beyond military and humanitarian aid, the chapter also highlights the importance of supporting democracy and countering corruption in Ukraine. Strengthening democratic institutions, increasing transparency, and fostering free press are seen as essential elements in building public trust, attracting private sector investment, and accelerating European integration. The Ukrainian government’s efforts to combat corruption and the recognition of its progress by the US are significant indicators of the country’s determination to reform and democratize and could have a determining influence on US aid allocation decisions.

In essence, the chapter portrays a multifaceted and dynamic relationship between the United States and Ukraine, where aid not only addresses immediate needs but also fosters long-term goals of democratic development, economic prosperity, and national security. This partnership is not only a response to an ongoing conflict but also a testament to the shared values and aspirations of both nations.

THE ROLE OF US NATIONAL INTERESTS IN AIDING UKRAINE

There are national factors that determine US funding to Ukraine, including national interests and domestic dispositions.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has changed the security architecture of Europe and threatened the democratic world. This war became a war to protect not only one nation but the whole of Western values against authoritarian aggressors. “Lives are being sacrificed to preserve Ukraine’s freedom. But observers in other democracies now see that their freedoms are at stake too and that democratic values are a strategic priority,” said Anthony Smith, co-author of the article published in *Carnegie Europe* (Youngs et al., 2022).

Democrats and Republicans in Congress and the American people have all been strong and unwavering in their support for Ukraine. President Biden stated that “supporting Ukraine’s ability to fight off Russian aggression, to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity is a worldwide commitment... Freedom for Ukraine, freedom everywhere” (Biden, 2023).

During President Biden’s administration, US aid towards strengthening democracy has been expressed through different opinion makers and thinktanks and has enjoyed bipartisan support. The bipartisan task force (mentioned above p 17) on US Strategy to Support Democracy and Counter Authoritarianism is an example of that. “The Task Force was created to address the significant global decline in democratic freedom and the rise in authoritarianism that endangers US national security and the post-World War II political order... On April 14, the Task Force released its general recommendations, and in the report, they call an action from United States leadership and suggest 7 strategies for governments, civil society, citizens, and the private sector to fight challenges of democratic values and institutions” (Freedom House et al., 2021).

The task force members believe that US national security and the future of democracy are so interconnected that they recommended elevating democracy to become the 'fourth D' of US foreign policy, alongside Diplomacy, Development, and Defense. They advocated for President Biden to declare democracy at home and abroad as a core value and a core national interest and for the US to increase investment in the pillars of open accountable, inclusive, and democratic society (Freedom House et al., 2021). Such advocacy could be seen as one of the supporting determinants of increased US foreign aid to Ukraine, especially after Russia's aggression.

USAID has worked for years to help Ukraine strengthen its anti-corruption efforts together with supporting independent media and strong civil society. Through these prior efforts, USAID could establish the basis for preventing, monitoring, and countering corruption to ensure that funding meets the needs it was intended for and reaches Ukrainians (USAID, 2023). This indicates that one of the aid-determining factors could be exactly such assurances as part of a two-way aid allocation process. Since the invasion, Ukraine's National Agency on Corruption Prevention (NACP), which USAID helped establish, has been supporting the war effort in multiple ways, including addressing corruption risks related to the provision of humanitarian and other aid. NACP is also advocating and managing sanctions policy, engaging in asset tracking and recovery and coordinating humanitarian aid delivery to local communities (USAID, 2023).

Domestic opinion is an important factor in determining the longevity of the aid. In December 2022, 65% of Americans said they favour supplying arms to Ukraine and 66% said they supported sending money directly, according to the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, a non-partisan political thinktank (Toft, 2023).

In the research carried out by the George W. Bush Institute, Freedom House, and the Penn Biden Center, one of the main findings confirmed that American commitment to democracy remains strong. "Sweeping majorities want to live in a democracy, and they endorse US support for democracy abroad" (George W. Bush Institute et al., 2018).

Overall, 71% of respondents favoured the US government taking steps to support Democracy and Human Rights abroad. Ninety-one per cent agreed that "We can't control what happens in the world, but we have a moral obligation to speak up and do what we can when people are victims of genocide, violence, and severe human rights abuses", and "84% majority agrees that when other countries become democratic it contributes, to our well-being" (George W. Bush Institute et al., 2018).

The messaging is an important factor in administering foreign aid; the above-mentioned survey suggested that citing concrete success stories when talking about programmatic support for democracy and human rights abroad might be helpful. An impressive 88% reported feeling strongly or somewhat strongly that the United States was right to support the post-Soviet democratic transformation of Central Europe (George W. Bush Institute et al., 2018).

It is important to highlight that the current US administration has a clear vision that Ukraine's fight against Russia is a fight for the security of the rest of Europe and the European values that are intertwined with the United States' national interests. "Moscow's actions in Ukraine threaten to set new precedents on European soil, undermining these basic international principles vital to peace and security" (US Department of State, 2022). Strengthening Ukraine in this war would also mean strengthening the United States' international position; the war in Ukraine revealed the supremacy of the Western military industry (Syzov, 2023).

Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III announced that the US is going to maintain momentum throughout the winter so that Ukraine can consolidate gains and seize the initiative on the battlefield. According to the Secretary of Defense, assistance to Ukraine is important to help fight for its freedom and to defend the rules-based international order that keeps the world secure (Austin, 2022).

In conclusion, the factors that determine US funding to Ukraine are complex and multi-faceted. These include national interests, domestic dispositions, and the importance of promoting democracy and human rights. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has highlighted the need to protect democratic values and the importance of supporting allies against authoritarian

aggression. US aid towards Ukraine shows the importance of democracy in US foreign policy, and the messaging around success stories can be a helpful tool in administering foreign aid. The current US administration has a clear vision that Ukraine's fight against Russia is not just for its own security, but for the security of the whole of Europe and the promotion of Western values. In this context, the continued US aid to Ukraine is crucial to help fight for Ukraine's freedom and to defend the rules-based international order, defined by the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act, and the Charter of Paris for New Europe that keeps the world secure. The 2023 Summit for Democracy highlighted that "By supporting Ukraine, democratic countries are helping those who want the right to decide for themselves and to live in a democratic state free from outside interference. Getting this message across to other countries and their citizens—particularly in Africa, Asia, the Balkans, and Central and Eastern Europe—is vital to sustaining the attractiveness of a democratic model of governance. Such nations need to be sure that other democratic countries will not leave them behind if they pursue the path of peace, democracy, and prosperity, even against the pressure of more powerful autocracies" (Zareba, 2023).

RECIPIENT COUNTRY TRIGGERS ON FOREIGN AID

Ukraine's determination to fight against the common enemy and its readiness to defend Western values and advance its democracy influences US bilateral aid towards it.

Even though there is consensus in the democratic West on the importance of supporting Ukraine, it is key to also recognize Ukraine's efforts and readiness to defeat Russia on a unified front, on the one hand, and to commit to strengthening the country's democratic consolidation, especially in the post-war environment on the other. "The most recent period of reform, which has included major decentralization and direction of resources to the regions, has coincided with a significantly larger share of Ukrainians agreeing that democracy is the preferable form of government in public opinion surveys," GsoD reported in 'The Global State of Democracy' (Runey, 2022).

As early as the beginning of March 2022, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed Congress and underscored the broader consequences of Russia's war in Ukraine, connecting it to the struggle for global democracy. In this regard, he underscored "the commitment to the defense of Ukraine and Democracy all over the world" and mentioned that "Ukrainian people are defending not only Ukraine but are fighting for the values of Europe and the world" (Thornton, 2022). Zelenskyy's connecting Ukraine's fight against Russian aggression to the fight for global democracy could have aimed to draw more support from the US and its Western partners.

Secretary Blinken also highlighted "We are engaged in assisting the Government of Ukraine on anti-corruption efforts and on efforts to ensure the accountability and full transparency of all the assistance we're providing" (Blinken, 2023). Earlier, Secretary Blinken also positively assessed Ukrainian government reforms toward democracy. "The Ukrainian Government has made meaningful strides in bolstering these institutions, even as it fights for survival, and Kyiv has taken tangible and difficult steps to align its standards and practices with the European Union, particularly since the EU granted Ukraine candidate status a year ago. Earlier this month, Ukraine passed reforms to align its energy market regulations with the European Union, strengthening measures to combat market manipulation and insider trading. And we look forward to the Rada taking up anti-monopoly legislation very soon" (Blinken, 2023). Blinken also pledged continued assistance to invest in Ukraine's long-term efforts to strengthen good governance, transparency, and accountability (Blinken, 2023).

Freedom House's Freedom in the World reports of 2022 and 2023 provide information on political rights and civil liberties in Ukraine in 2021 and 2022. It is important that the overall score out of 100 was 61 in the 2022 report and declined to 50 in 2023. However, it is clear that despite the war situation, Ukraine managed to maintain the democratic reforms throughout the two years and the only decline in scores was caused due to Russia's unjustified, illegal attacks and Ukraine's inability to take control of the situation on the ground.

In the 2022 report, general findings indicate that Ukraine has enacted positive reforms since President Viktor Yanukovich left office due to wide protests in 2014; however, corruption and attacks against journalists and civil society activists remained a challenge. In the report, political rights were given a total of 61 out of 100. In the electoral processes section, the election of the head of Government and chief national authorities through free and fair election got the highest (4 out of 4), and elections were generally deemed competitive and credible; however, electoral laws and framework and their implementation by relevant election management bodies were criticized (2 out of 4). The right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings (3 out of 4) was relatively positively assessed, mentioning that oligarchs exert significant influence over politics either directly or indirectly, including through financial support for various political parties and lobbying for the appointment of loyalists to key institutional positions. Corruption was assessed as a serious problem (1 out of 4), and an open and transparent government was also granted a low score (1 out of 4) (Freedom House Report, 2022).

In the section on civil liberties, free and independent media was scored as average (2 out of 4) and freedom of assembly was assessed relatively positively (3 out of 4). An average score was given to freedom of non-governmental organizations, particularly those engaged in human rights and governance-related work (2 out of 4). According to the report, civic groups that emerged since Yanukovich in 2014 can influence decision-making at various levels of government (ibid.). Another important indicator assessed in the report is the rule of law, among them, the independent judiciary, where Ukraine got a lower score (1 out of 4) due to corrupt and politicized courts. As for freedom for trade unions and labour organizations, Ukraine scored higher (3 out of 4) (ibid.).

Overall, this data indicates that democracy reforms in 2021 were average, balancing between relatively lower and higher assessments of certain indicators.

As mentioned above, the 2023 report assesses the situation in 2022 where, mainly due to reasons of war, Ukraine got a lower score compared to the previous year (50 out of 100). Russia's invasions led to the deterioration of some political and civil liberties enjoyed by Ukrainians (Freedom House Report, 2023).

Despite implementing some war-related legal changes that drew international and legal criticism for their impact on civil liberties according to the Freedom House Report, the Government of Ukraine still managed to implement policies towards democratization, which was a clear signal of Ukraine's Western aspirations. During the year, Ukrainian authorities appointed a new chief anticorruption prosecutor, who quickly reopened stalled cases, launched new investigations, and ratified the Istanbul Convention—the Council of Europe's treaty on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Freedom House Report, 2023). Despite the critical war situation, electoral processes higher scores remained the same as in 2022. However, the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings was given a lower score (2 out of 4) compared to the previous year. "The score declined from 3 to 2 because Russian forces violently suppressed Ukrainian political activity in occupied areas, and the Ukrainian government implemented a new law allowing swift bans on political parties that were identified as 'pro-Russian'" (Freedom House Report, 2023). Another democratic disruption caused by Russia was assessed via additional criteria, bringing a score of minus 2. "The Russian forces have sought to eliminate Ukrainian ethnic and national identity in areas under their control, in part by seizing or destroying cultural sites and materials, punishing use of the Ukrainian language, and abducting and transferring hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia" (Freedom House Report, 2023). Indications of Government efforts to maintain democratic processes could be why the scores did not change compared to last year in areas such as media freedom, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom for non-governmental organizations, particularly in human rights and governance-related work, even though "in 2022, under martial law, civil society organizations were banned from using foreign bank transactions. However, Ukrainian lawmakers allowed such groups and individual volunteers who transferred charity funds to combatants and employees of security agencies to be exempted from income tax" (Freedom House Report, 2023).

Meanwhile, it is important to note that European integration prospects are a major driving force of Ukraine's democratic reforms; the recent candidate country status and accession negotiations have enhanced determination towards reforming the country. Ukraine is open to declaring its democratic aspirations within the international community and discussing the

challenges and perspectives of good democratic governance in the post-war period. First Deputy Speaker of the Ukrainian Parliament Oleksandr Korniyenko underlined the importance of good democratic governance as one of the key reform areas for Ukraine at the high-level dialogue held in Strasbourg in the Council of Europe Headquarters during the 2022 World Forum for Democracy (Council of Europe, 2022).

USAID views the decision of the European Commission on granting Ukraine candidate status as a recognition of Ukraine's achievement in democracy building and protecting democratic values. "The reforms required for accession to the EU are also an integral part of Ukraine's democratic developments and have been and will continue to be a core part of USAID's partnership with Ukraine" (USAID, 2023).

Ukraine has demonstrated strong levels of national unity, leadership, and military competence during the war; "even perfect intelligence support and the most advanced US weaponry wouldn't have made much of a difference if Ukraine hadn't shown such skill, courage, and grit in the face of Russia's overwhelming advantages" (Toft, 2023).

Another argument that highlights the importance of recipient country triggers on foreign aid could be the serious criticism from the Republican Party in September 2023 at Congress towards Ukraine's aid, which was based on insufficient transparency in the administration of the aid by the Ukrainian side. "Most of our voters are skeptical about additional aid to Ukraine, and they should be," Sen. Josh Hawley said "We still don't have any independent oversight of the spending, no independent accounting of where it's going, how it's being spent. I just think that's outrageous" (McCormick, 2023).

This could serve as evidence that backs up the argument of whether the US takes democracy aspiration and openness into account when making aid decisions. Even though some of Ukraine's efforts are in general assessed positively as mentioned by Secretary Blinken, the questions asked in Congress had a negative influence on approving the State budget with Ukraine's aid attached to it (Mueller, 2023). However, despite the September controversies regarding aid, the United States Pentagon approved a new \$150 million aid package to Ukraine and urged Congress to authorize more (Clark, 2023). This could support the argument that United States aid decisions are determined by donor's national interests, with attention paid to the recipient's openness and democratic aspirations.

In conclusion, Ukraine's determination to fight against a common enemy, Russia and its readiness to defend Western values and advance its democracy have influenced US bilateral aid towards Ukraine. Ukraine has managed to maintain its democratic reforms throughout the two years, with the only decline in scores caused by Russia's unjustified, illegal attacks. The Freedom House reports of 2022 show that Ukraine has enacted positive reforms since 2014, but corruption and attacks against journalists and civil society activists remain a challenge. In the Freedom House 2023 report, it is clear that despite implementing some war-related legal changes that drew international and legal criticism for their impact on civil liberties, the government still managed to implement strong policies toward democratization, which was a clear signal of Ukraine's Western aspirations. However, questions emerged in the US regarding the spending of US aid in Ukraine and the transparency of the process, and this has halted certain aid decisions, which is an important argument regarding aid recipient factors also being determinants of a donor's aid decisions.

Based on the information provided in this chapter, we could assume that the recipient country influences foreign aid from the donor country. The determination of Ukraine to fight for democracy, defend its values, and elaborate on democracy reforms, even under war circumstances, positively affects aid from the United States. However, doubts regarding the transparency of aid allocation inside the recipient country negatively affect bipartisan support for US aid.

CONCLUSION

Democracy promotion has been on the agenda of powerful Western states, especially the United States, for decades as a tool against the spread of authoritarianism. There are clear benefits to the aid but there is also criticism towards it; however, Russia's recent aggression against Ukraine has pushed the US and the Western states to enhance their efforts in protecting

democracy. “This would be a logical response to the clear and distressing evidence provided by Russia’s war of the danger that autocrats pose not only to their people but also to their neighbors” (Youngs et. Al. 2022). Addressing Russian authoritarianism and aiding Ukraine is a movement towards peace in the world rather than turning a blind eye to it. This article covered the analysis of democracy aid based on the donor country’s national interest and the recipient country’s determination towards democratic development since the beginning of the 2022 Russian aggression in Ukraine.

This article demonstrated that the US made decisions regarding foreign assistance to Ukraine based on its national interests, assuming that a secure and peaceful Ukraine would mean peace in Europe and stronger NATO vs weaker authoritarian Russia. Thus, the US made Ukraine its top European country for receiving foreign assistance in this fight for freedom. The domestic opinion on US foreign aid was also an important determinant of the aid policy. Another important factor is that the US aid towards strengthening democracy had bipartisan support at the national level most of the time.

United States foreign aid was also triggered by the strong-willed fight from Ukraine and their declared and continued aspirations for democracy. It is evident that despite the ongoing conflict, Ukraine has been able to uphold its democratic reforms for two years, with the only setback being the result of Russia’s unwarranted and illegal attacks, which made it difficult to manage the situation on the ground. As mentioned in the article, according to the Freedom House 2023 report, the decline in overall scores in 2022 was mainly attributed to the war, with Russia’s invasion causing a deterioration in certain political and civil liberties that Ukrainians had been enjoying. This development may have prompted the United States to provide more assistance to prevent Russia’s aggression not only towards Ukraine but also towards its democratic system. Additionally, the decision by the European Council to grant Ukraine candidate status is seen by USAID as a recognition of Ukraine’s achievements in building and safeguarding democratic values, with the reforms required for EU accession being a crucial part of USAID’s partnership with Ukraine and its democratic progress. However, we have seen that when questions arise regarding the transparency of aid in the recipient country, this hinders decision-making regarding aid allocation by the donor.

Foreign aid can be understood through various lenses provided by international relations (IR) theories. Critical theorists argue that the intended objectives of US foreign aid are not realized as they are supposed to be. They suggest that this instrument has to be used with caution, not to damage the state’s internal affairs at the expense of supporting development. A diverse range of critical approaches suggests that aid is perceived as a capitalist instrument that serves the interests of a strong capitalist West rather than those of developing countries.

Classical realism illustrates how a state’s national interests can influence decisions to support another country in its fight against a common enemy.

Nevertheless, liberalist approaches demonstrate how states can cooperate and support each other in building a liberal international order that prioritizes peace and democracy. Through the prism of liberalism, the United States follows a foreign aid tradition designed to advance the liberal world order. US assistance to Ukraine safeguards democratic values and Western security interests. Additionally, it responds to democratic progress in Ukraine. Consequently, understanding the theoretical foundations of foreign aid helps in the analysis and interpretation of donor countries’ actions on the global stage.

While valid concerns exist regarding the potential misuse of aid funds and the negative or manipulative impacts it may have on recipient nations, measures have been implemented to prevent such misuse and ensure the righteous use of aid. In essence, foreign aid can serve as a crucial instrument for fostering international development and stability. Nevertheless, its provision should be approached with caution, and regular evaluations are imperative to ascertain its fulfilment of the intended objectives.

The analysis of the US foreign aid to Ukraine during the period of Russia’s aggression demonstrates that US aid decision-making is not purely driven by the donor’s self-interest but also by the democratic performance of the recipient country and its fight for Western values. This conclusion is supported on the one hand by empirical evidence through the statements of high-level officials, actual decisions, and expert analysis, and on the other hand by theoretical arguments.

Ukraine should continue to demonstrate its aspirations to defend democracy as this influences foreign aid. The United States and the West, however, must also ensure that Ukraine sustains and expands its success after the war. The democratic reforms must be safeguarded and expanded so that international confidence in Ukraine stays strong and proves that democracy is sustainable both during and after the war.

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