

Fault Lines: Bipartisan Consensus on Foreign Aid Begins to Waver

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Morgan Aikele- As Ukraine marches into its second year of defending its homeland against Russian invasion, other countries have inevitably become increasingly involved in the conflict themselves. Russia has welcomed various forms of support, notably from North Korea, and more informally from China. On the other hand, Ukraine has found itself embraced largely by the West— something which has fortified Ukraine’s material power. But that material support may be in its early stages of erosion.

Material power refers to the material items or things that a country possesses, like a robust economy, a large population (especially one literate/educated), or advanced weapons. By its own accord, Ukraine seems to be the obvious underdog in a material context compared to Russia, still a large and relatively formidable world power. However, material support from the West has played a major role in keeping Ukrainian resistance alive and well. The provision of tanks by western countries like the U.S., Germany, and the U.K., and billions of dollars and euros in foreign aid have been key. The U.S. has been the largest single-country source of foreign aid for Ukraine during the war. But what began as a strong, bipartisan consensus regarding aid has begun to waver in the U.S. This week, two separate House committee hearings showcased both Republican and Democrat party leadership questioning the efficacy of U.S. aid for various reasons. Republicans focused on accountability. They examined recent allegations of lost or diverted weapons, fraud, and general transparency so that the American people can “trust what the expenditures are,” articulated by South Carolina Representative Joe Wilson. Democrats focused on the ends in sight, or the lack thereof, in

their eyes. To many leaders in the party, the ambiguity surrounding total appropriations in the future— especially considering that policymakers are concerned that the \$45.6 billion package, intended to last until September, will be drained before then— is a hard pill to swallow. As Congress grapples with these issues, Ukraine’s material power is subject to increasing volatility.

Understanding **scale** can provide more insight into this potential decline in aid. Scale helps us to determine the scope of conflict— whether it be local, regional, national, or global. While Ukraine and Russia are fighting this war on Ukraine’s land, the need for material support has caused both countries to seek relationships with other countries. This has escalated a regional conflict into a growing global one as countries contribute materially to either “side.” If Ukraine loses monetary support from the United States, it may signal a general regression of western commitment to the conflict, reducing its perceived scope to one between neighbors.

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