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Interstate solidarity and support – the case of Ukraine after the escalation in 2022



ABSTRACT

The paper aims to contribute to the question of the possible role of social capital and trust in the international system by examining the support provided to Ukraine in the first year of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023. In a secondary data analysis based on publicly available sources, the composition and dynamics of support will be investigated in different dimensions. The results imply that – on global context – the group of countries providing support to Ukraine is narrow, with quite significant disparities between them. In addition to the dominance of the United States of America, the involvement of the United Kingdom, Germany and Japan proves to be remarkable, and the significant aggregate share of NATO member states might be highlighted, which may also draw attention to possible specific mechanisms of social capital.

KEYWORDS

social capital, trust, international support, Russian-Ukrainian war

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1. INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH PROBLEM

Social capital and trust can be seen as a rather specific resource. On the one hand, if we take Pierre BOURDIEU'S (2006) threefold distinction of capital theory as a starting point, alongside economic capital – which tends to be institutionalised in the form of money –, and cultural capital – which can be recognised in several different subtypes –, *social capital* can be regarded specific as it does not become a type of advantages in itself, but rather as a consequence of belonging to a group, and can provide its owner with additional opportunities through intra-group exchange relations. This interpretation of Bourdieu – which is regarded typically individualistic (ORBÁN – SZÁNTÓ 2006. 140–142) – is also reflected in James COLEMAN'S (2006) formulation in that social capital is not embodied directly in people, but rather in the *relations among* them. To the former structural character of social capital, Coleman adds the functional character of this type of capital, i.e. the characteristic that – as productive form of capital – social capital also facilitates action, promoting the achievement of goals which without the actual social resource the actors would not be able to achieve (COLEMAN 2006. 111–112).¹ The potentially positive impact of social capital for those affected, precisely through its absence, has been introduced and extended in a broader social context by Robert Putnam (2006). Putnam's approach – which is essentially a collectivist one (ORBÁN – SZÁNTÓ 2006. 140–142) – applies the term *trust* to describe this type of capital as a community resource that contributes greatly to the functioning, prosperity and development of society – or, in its absence, hinders the potential for the latter.

The positive impact of social capital – identified at the level of countries and societies – might also be relevant regarding the functioning and security of the international system. It is worth to mention – for example – to the role of various trust-building activities in preventing the emergence or escalation of conflicts (GAZDAG – REMEK 2018. 20) and the emergence of security traps (GAZDAG – REMEK 2018. 14–15). An important benefit of cooperation between countries – even at the level of institutions – is the predictability of actions (LEBOW 2013. 18), which in an international context can be associated with a focus on the importance and appreciation of trust. In addition to the actor- or micro-oriented approach based on the behaviour of states (RATHBUN 2009. 346), trust also emerges and can be interpreted in terms of theoretical schools on the functioning of the international system (WRIGHTON 2022). This is least true of *the realist school*, which assumes self-interested states operating essentially through their military and economic power in an anarchic system, in which only the absence of trust can be acknowledged. From a *liberal perspective* based on the role of shared values, international institutions and mutually beneficial interactions, trust between states – typically based on rational reason and insight – fosters cooperation and peaceful relations. In the individualist-oriented approach of *constructivist*

¹ In this respect, the more closed and dense the structure of social capital, the more it can fulfil this function.

theory, – which assumes an even broader range of actors in the international system, including various non-state actors – trust emerges as a socio-psychological resource based on shared values and understandings (WRIGHTON 2022. 17–19). Investing in cooperation and trust can therefore prove to be a worthwhile effort not only at the individual or societal level, but also in inter-state relations (WHEELER 2012), as it can contribute to the creation of capacities that would otherwise be unattainable.

In this paper accordingly we illustrate the issues of the positive role of social resources, cooperation, trust and solidarity through the case of a current conflict, the Russian-Ukrainian war. We will attempt to explore, describe and analyse the international support network that emerged in the first year of the conflict in favour of the attacked state. The conflict – which escalated at the end of February 2022 – was a major unprecedented challenge, a shock primarily for Europe, but also for the wider international community, and led to a series of initiatives expressing solidarity and cooperation with Ukraine. A focused and systematic investigation of a certain aspect of these commitments – and in particular of the potential opportunities they offer – might be interesting and fruitful to consider.

2. METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND

The research results presented in this paper provide an overview of the characteristics and composition of the different sources of aid that found in the support network built around Ukraine in the first year of the conflict. Ukraine has received a wide range of support in many areas, which can be seen as an expression of solidarity by other countries, but we consider that it is worth and important to differentiate between them. The support, position statements and declarations expressed by the leaders and leading political figures of a country can all be seen as important elements. Speeches, representing and voting in international organisations – above all, for example, at the UN – can also be seen as a clear statement of approach. For the purposes of this study, however, these are considered symbolic, primarily gestural support and are not examined for reasons of content and scope. Rather, the support provided to Ukraine by individual countries or even other actors in the international system can be more indicative as it is not merely symbolic but represents a material or other *practical* input, and thus allows a narrower but more substantial dimension of the issue to be examined.

The empirical analysis of the support patterns is carried out in the framework of a secondary data analysis based on a database – Ukraine Support Tracker – ², by the Kiel Institute for the World Economy in Germany, which aims to collect and register the various donations and deliveries to Ukraine. The data used as a source distinguish different types of support provided in different forms.³ In our analysis, we focus primarily on bilateral forms of support – i.e. support provided by countries – but multilateral forms, typically linked to international organisations, and reference to market-based forms in order to provide a

² Source : <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>

³ For the methodological framework for data collection, see: <https://www.ifw-kiel.de/topics/war-against-ukraine/ukraine-support-tracker/>

complete picture are also included or mentioned. The scope of data analysis is narrowed to the first year of the conflict – i.e. the period from 24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023 –, and in the course of data analysis descriptive methods and graphical illustrations are employed.

3. DATA ANALYSES

3.1. Basic characteristics of aid

In the first year of the conflict, a total of more than one hundred and fifty billion euros of financial assistance flowed to Ukraine, provided bilaterally by donor countries and institutions.⁴ The distribution of this 156.59 billion EUR by area and purpose of assistance is highly polarised, with 45,81% of the total being financial and budgetary aid, and the value of military commitments being almost identical, but with a slightly higher proportion (46,03%) of the total budget. The remaining part – less than one tenth or 8.16% – is humanitarian aid. If – in addition to the above bilateral support – we also take into consideration the non-bilateral aid for Ukraine by major international organisations (International Monetary Fund, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, United Nations, World Bank Group) – which is exclusively financial aid – the total amount of funding equals to 169,52 billion EUR, with proportions similar to those above, although the relative proportions slightly differ. In this composition, almost half of total aid (49,94%) is financial aid, while more than two-fifths (42,52%) is still military aid and only 7,54% is humanitarian aid.

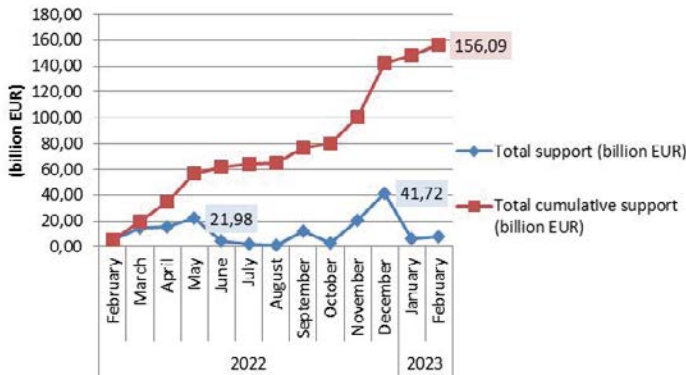
3.2. Temporal trends of support

Investigating the temporal distribution of financial support offered to Ukraine⁵, two periods of expansion can be identified as the main ones (Figure 1). The first wave of such support starts from the beginning of the conflict, reaching its peak in May, when nearly 22 billion EUR of aid is mobilised, and then stagnates in the summer months. This plain period is interrupted by a second, more intense support period which tends to develop in the second half of the autumn and in the winter, and which is more significant than the first, lasting until the end of the year, with the largest inflow of resources – totalling 41,72 billion EUR – at the end of the year in December.

⁴ Some statements also include items pledged by EU institutions - the EU Commission and Council - without which the amount that can be attributed to pure countries is €121.061 billion.

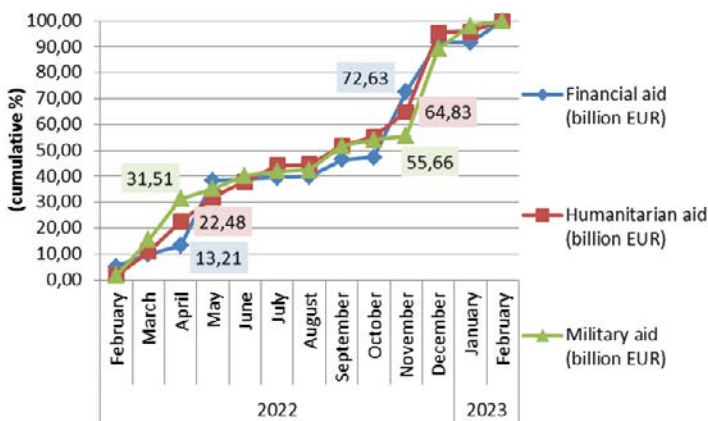
⁵ The total aid calculated for the first year of the conflict amounts to 156,09 billion EUR, which is the closest to the value of the statements aggregated by country group or aid ranking (156,59). The discrepancy for the data examined in the time breakdown is due to the fact that the time of aid cannot be fully or unambiguously established for the input information of the data series.

Figure 1: Distribution of aid over time (own calculation and editing)



If the data is distinguished along different support areas, the investigation of the internal rates may prove to be indicative, although there are no marked differences from the temporal trends of the aggregate data, only minor shifts in the targeting of resources (Figure 2). At the beginning of the investigated period – for obvious reasons – military support increases most notably: by April, military aid accounted for almost one third (31,51%) of the total aid offered to the country, while in the same period, humanitarian aid accounted for between one quarter and one fifth (22,48%), and financial aid was the lowest (13,21%). In May, however, there is a significant increase in financial aid, so that the proportions for this month are much more balanced, but financial support is relatively low in the summer months, and humanitarian aid is typically concentrated in this period. The slow growth rates that unfold from August onwards result in a kind of rebalancing in the first months of autumn. By November, this shift leads to a pattern in which only slightly more than half (55,66%) of military aid is still registered, while humanitarian aid accounts for almost two thirds (64,83%) and financial aid for almost three quarters (72,63%). The strong growth rate up to the end of the year implies a relative decrease of the differences between the proportions by December, with a uniform rate of around 90%, and no marked differences are visible in the last two months of the investigated period.

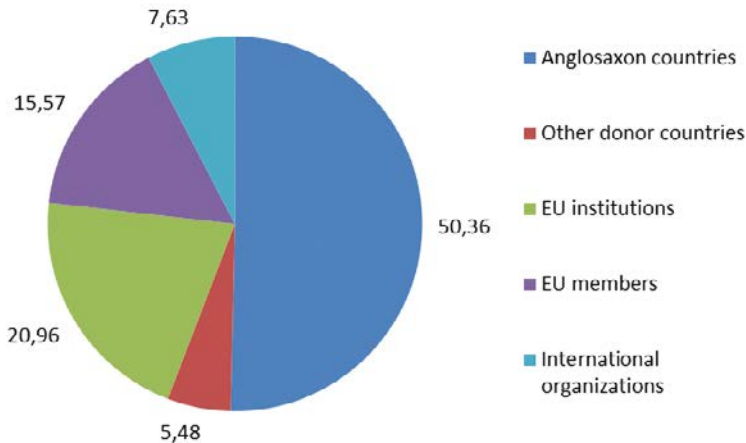
Figure 2: Distribution of aid over time by support areas (own calculation and editing)



3.3. Composition by donor groups

If we examine the distribution of total aid by country groups – typically organised on a bilateral basis – and the pattern of resources committed on an institutional-organisational basis over the investigated period (*Figure 3*), half (50,36%) of the total amount of 169,52 billion EUR belongs to the Anglo-Saxon countries⁶. The second largest share of the group donors to Ukraine can be measured in the case of EU institutions⁷ which accounts for one fifth (20,96%) of the overall, and if adding the commitments of the EU Member States (15,57%), it is still only one third of the total support. The international organisations⁸ – which provide only financial support – have a share of 7,63%, while the other countries⁹ account for approximately only one tenth of the share of the Anglo-Saxon group (548%).

Figure 3: Share of support by donor groups (own calculation and editing)



Within the areas of aid objectives, donor groups show a rather different involvement (*Figure 4*). For financial aid, the EU institutions and the Anglo-Saxon countries have a similar share, slightly above roughly one third (35,82% and 34,81% respectively), and donations from international organisations represent an even larger share of this type of aid (15,27%). There is not remarkable difference between the European Union and other countries, with proportions around 6-8%. In contrast to humanitarian aid, where the EU Member States are the dominant supporters accounting for 43,68% of resources – including the EU institutions (12,6%) – the

⁶ In the category of Anglo-Saxon countries, we find the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, with quite different shares of participation in favour of the USA.

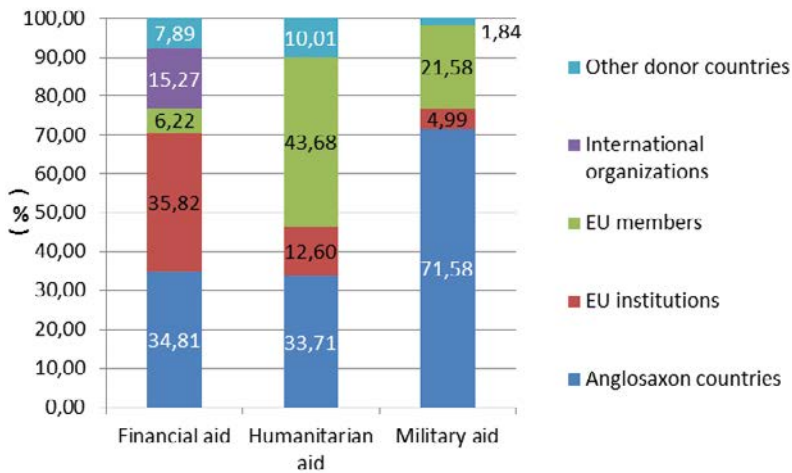
⁷ In the group called the EU institutions, the statement includes grants through the *European Peace Facility*, the *European Investment Bank* and the *EU Commission and Council*.

⁸ The group of international organisations includes the *International Monetary Fund*, the *European Bank for Reconstruction and Development*, the *United Nations* and the *World Bank Group*, which are the non-bilateral forms of aid mentioned above.

⁹ The other donor countries are quite diversified across the region, with China and Japan, South Korea and Taiwan, Turkey and India, Norway and Switzerland. Overall, Japan and Norway have relatively higher aid levels in this group.

EU's contribution accounts for more than half of total aid. Other donor countries account for one tenth of humanitarian funding, and the Anglo-Saxon countries account for one third (33,71%), as in the previous area. However, the funding pattern is again significantly changed when we look at military aid, where the Anglo-Saxon group is by far the most dominant, accounting for almost three quarters (71,58%) of total military aid. With the EU Member States accounting for more than one fifth (21,58%) and the EU institutions (4,99%), the military support can be virtually covered totally – while the other countries' contribution of 1,84% is not significant.

Figure 4: Distribution of support areas by donor groups (own calculation and editing)



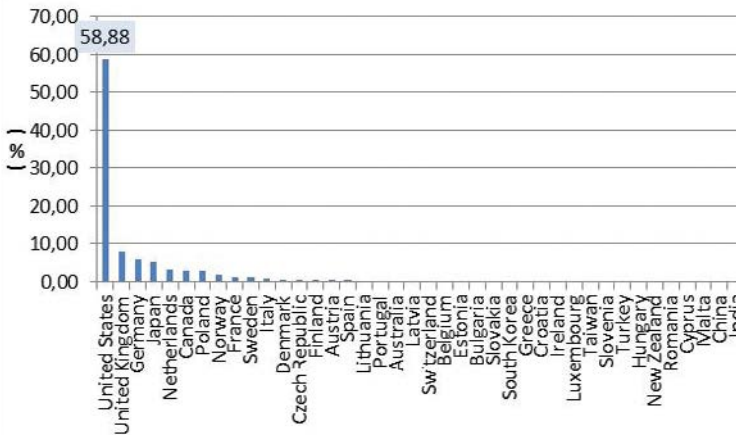
3.4. Country-level patterns

Investigating the financial support offered by countries on a bilateral basis,¹⁰ we can observe a very significant concentration of resources for the forty countries concerned (*Figure 5*). More than half (!) of all financial support comes from the United States of America: 58,88% of the resources represent financial support from the overseas country – considered the most important actor in world politics – in the first year of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The distribution of the remaining aid is – necessarily – rather fragmented, with each of the other countries having a share of less than ten percent.¹¹ The United Kingdom, with 8,12%, Germany – the economic leader in Europe – with 6,09%, and Japan from the Far East, with a share of over 5% (5,15%), are the most notable supporters. The Netherlands, Canada and Poland have shares of around 3%, France, Norway and Sweden from the Nordic region have proportions over 1%, while the remaining countries have shares of less than 1%.

¹⁰ In this part of the analysis, therefore, we only consider data on clearly country-specific aid, i.e. we exclude the EU Member States from the data on funds channelled through the EU institutions, and only data on individual commitments by the states are considered relevant. The total amount of aid analysed at country level in this restricted framework is EUR 121.061 billion, with a strong military component (more than half of the total (56.57%)), financial aid accounting for just over one third (34.20%) and humanitarian aid accounting for around one tenth (9.22%) of the total.+

¹¹ The distribution of resources as a share of GDP naturally leads to a different ordering of countries, but in the context of this work we have attempted to examine the distribution pattern of resources.

Figure 5: Share of donor countries (own calculation and editing)



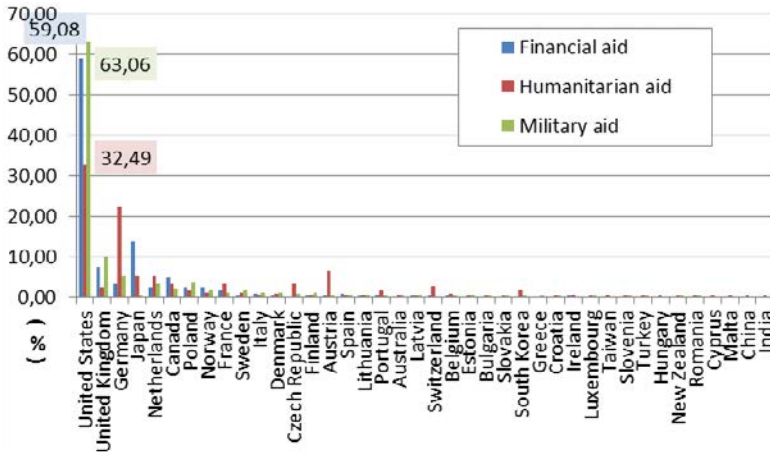
In terms of support areas, the dominance of the United States of America is also evident (Figure 6), accounting for almost sixty percent (59,08%) of financial aid, with Japan and the United Kingdom accounting for a relatively larger share – at 13,67% and 7,11% respectively. If we add to this the shares of Canada (4,97%) and Germany (3,14%), these five countries alone cover nearly nine tenths (87,97%) of all financial support.

In the case of humanitarian aid – compared to the former area – the distribution is much more balanced. Although the US is still the most important player – accounting for almost one third (32,49%) of all humanitarian aid – Germany is not so far behind, having more than one fifth (22,35%) of humanitarian aid. Austria – which previously were not included in the figures – stands out as the third largest donor (6,48%), but the Netherlands (5,26%) and Japan (5,13%) are not far behind. France, the Czech Republic and Canada also account for more than three percent (3,50%, 3,32% and 3,15% respectively). Regarding this area of support these countries – a quarter of all donors – account for 86,61% of the sources, in contrast with the previous dimension, where the same proportion was covered by only one eighth of the donors.

In the case of military support a more concentrated pattern emerges again, with the United States of America on the top occupying a far superior position, providing almost two-thirds (!) of all military aid with a share of 63,06%, and dominating this support area with no other state having a double-digit share. The United Kingdom leads this field with 9,68%, followed by Germany, Poland and the Netherlands with shares of more than five and three percent respectively (5,21%, 3,54% and 3,44%). If we add Canada – which accounts for 2,02% –, the group of just six countries accounts for 86,96% of total military aid.¹²

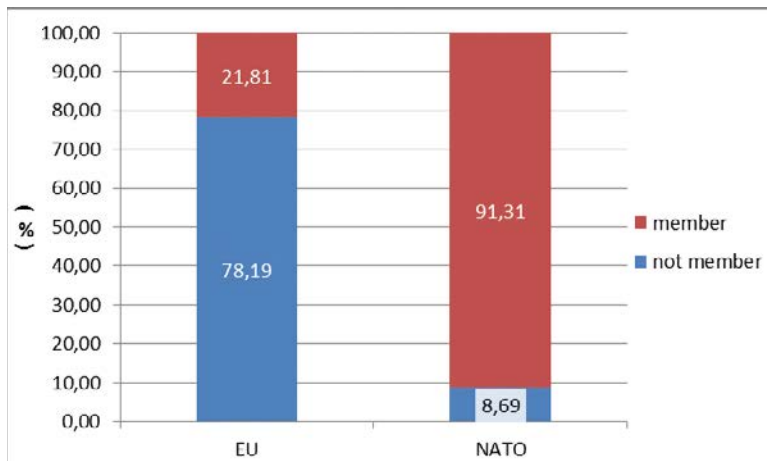
¹² In addition to military support, some countries have also provided Ukraine with some of the equipment it needed to counter the Russian offense in return for military assistance. Among these weapons are Panzerhaubitze 2000, Howitzers and drones, which Ukraine has purchased. Among the sellers are the Czech Republic, Germany, Slovakia, Poland and Turkey; the total cost – which is often incomplete – is less than 2,5 billion EUR.

Figure 6: Share of donor countries by support areas (own calculation and editing)



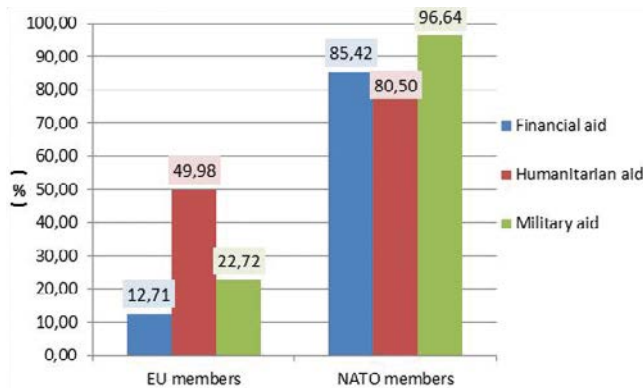
As for the country level data, it may be interesting to explore the possible role of any coalition or federal affiliation that may exist between states in terms of support activity (Figure 7). In previous analyses, we have already seen data aggregated by certain groups of countries and by supporting institutions, which could be useful in the present case, as it is certainly worth distinguishing between the involvement of EU member states – at country level – and also the activities of other countries, but NATO as a military alliance could be of equal interest. The data show that only slightly more than one fifth (21,81%) of the bilateral aid investigated by country comes from EU Member States. In contrast, support from NATO member countries appears to cover more than nine-tenths of the total, resulting 91,31% of all aid being linked to a member of the military alliance, which is significant even with the dominant role of the United States as described above.

Figure 7: Distribution of support by EU and NATO member states (own calculation and editing)



The dominance of NATO members is also clearly visible in the different areas of support (Figure 8). While the EU member states account for only 12,71% of financial aid, the share of NATO members is almost seven times higher (85,42%). The smallest difference – in accordance with the results of the previous aggregate analysis – can be measure in the share of humanitarian aid, with EU and NATO accounting for 49,98% and 80,50% respectively. In the case of military aid, an almost total dominance of NATO countries can be acknowledged (96,64%), although the disproportion is more moderate than in the first area if we consider that the share of EU countries is closer to one quarter (22,72%).

Figure 8: Contributions of EU and NATO members by support areas (own calculation and editing)



3.5 The support network of Ukraine based on arms transfers

To illustrate the diversity of actors involved in supporting Ukraine, and the complexity of the relations among them, military support can be regarded as an obvious case to examine, as these transfers of arms and equipment to the attacked country started quite early, within a relatively short period of time. Ukraine is of course at the centre of the support network, and with the highest number of relations is the primary target of diplomatic engagements and armed assistance (Graph 1).



Graph 1. Support network of Ukraine

Source: own editing

Legend: blue country: member state of the European Union, square: NATO member state, red dash: reciprocal relationship

In terms of network characteristics, the main donor and supporter of arms – in this aspect again – is the United States of America, which – in addition to its individually rather strong financial and other support role to the Ukrainian fights – plays a specific role in channelling support to Ukraine. The fact that the structure of the network does not reflect the expected simple star or hub arrangement with a single actor at the centre is partly due to the fact that the US involvement is more than just providing support to the attacked country. It seems that the US acts as a kind of bridge, an intermediary, for other countries to fulfil their commitments in supporting Ukraine: Denmark for example has sent Stinger missile parts back to the US for a subsequent arms shipment of the complete weapon. The United States influences the transfers of other countries to Ukraine in other ways as well: for example, in the case of Poland, the transfer of fighter aircraft to Ukraine was made with US consent. In early March 2022, US diplomacy encouraged the US President to support and facilitate the assistance of European countries to Ukraine for combat air power, but the US also acted as a facilitator for the transfer of Soviet-made combat aircraft to Ukraine by certain unnamed European states.

Another example of the complexity and structuring of the support network is the reciprocal relationship between Germany and Estonia, which – even in the early stages of the conflict – cooperated in helping the Ukrainian defence forces to build a field hospital and prepare for the tasks to be performed there, but Germany also plays a rather specific role in the network supporting Ukraine to fight the Russian aggressor. As Germany not only supports the Ukrainian armed struggle with its own supplies, but also contributes in other ways to make the transfers possible: for example, it has agreed the Netherlands and Estonia sending rocket-propelled grenades and Howitzers to Ukraine. But technology transfer can also be considered in the case of Germany: Slovenia, for example, has transferred its own T-42 tanks compatible with the Ukrainian forces to the country in exchange for newer manufactured German-made equipment, and Greece is replacing its older infantry fighting vehicles also with German-made ones. This embedded aspect of the network in support of Ukraine is also illustrated by Slovakia's wish to contribute to the support of the fighting in Ukraine by transferring air defence systems that could be rapidly deployed and managed by Ukrainian forces, provided that the resulting loss of defence capacity was compensated by the Western allies with other devices. The position of Poland situation is also specific in that the country functions as an entry point, a distributor – a kind of logistical hub – for other donor countries in the supply of arms to Ukraine. Spain, for example, has sent equipment – mainly defence equipment – to Ukraine to a Polish airport near the Ukrainian border. But it is also Poland which has offered fighter aircraft to the US for delivery to Ukrainian combatants. Further examples of reciprocal links in the support network also illustrate the presence of a specific relation: the symmetrical Turkish-Ukrainian link is intended to indicate that the two countries have agreed to produce Bayraktar TB2 drones in *cooperation* and joint production. In the case of Slovakia, the reciprocal relationship with Ukraine does not indicate a unilateral transfer but a traditional compensated trade agreement, and the same is the case for Poland in relation to self-propelled artillery.

The above examples are therefore only intended to illustrate – and partly to interpret – the emergence of a complex, structured cooperation network among the states that are organised to support the armed fighting of Ukraine. As can be seen in the full graph, a sub-network of actors within a smaller circle of states supporting the Ukrainian struggle is emerging, with multiple

– often reciprocal – links between them. It can be assumed that the structured and embedded characteristic of the support network also facilitates to deepen patterns of solidarity and ensure the sustainability of support.

4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Above, we have explored and described patterns of support for Ukraine along several aspects. Before summarising the results, it is worth pointing out that the countries and international organisations and institutions supporting Ukraine form a relatively small, well-defined group, and that there are also rather notable disproportions among them. Out of the approximately two hundred countries in the world only forty are among the supporters, which is far from outstanding in relative terms – that is, only circa one fifth of the global world is among the supporters, and the United States of America also dominates among them.

Based on the results of the data analyses, the patterns of aggregate support indicators show that (1) military and financial aid prove to be rather dominant, resulting in a polarised pattern with less than one tenth of humanitarian support. As for the (2) temporal dynamics of aid to Ukraine the results show two periods of significant growth – firstly in the quarterly period following the attack until the end of spring, and then in the late autumn and winter months. There is typically some rearrangement in the internal proportions of aid within these periods (3), but the patterns seen in the aggregate trend are also dominant in this respect. In terms of the donors (4) the remarkable dominance of the Anglo-Saxon countries could be explored, as well as in the case of the military aid to Ukraine. The joint proportion of the EU institutions and Member States is one third of the overall support, rising to more than half of the total for humanitarian aid. The share of other countries does not exceed one tenth of the total sum in any of the target areas, which is the lowest in the aggregate, not far behind the share of international organisations, which is only represented in the financial area. Accordingly, a somewhat (5) different funding role seems to be emerging between the two groups of donors, which are considered to be the main players: while the EU Member States – complemented by commitments through the EU institutions – tend to play a larger role in humanitarian aid, the Anglo-Saxon countries are dominant in the resources that underpin the military operations in Ukraine. The patterns of support in financial terms at country level show that – on the one hand – (6) the United States of America is again the most prominent player. The dominance of the USA is most remarkable in the case of military aid, but it is also dominant in the financial area. On the other hand, it is important to highlight the (7) resource mobilisation activities of the United Kingdom and Germany from the European region. Both have a relatively significant share of military aid and – especially Germany – aid in the humanitarian field, but also contribute to financial support. The geographically distant (8) Japan also proves to be a notable player, as it has a considerable overall aid value, but this is particularly true in the area of financial aid. A consistent pattern can also be seen in the fact that (9) NATO as a military alliance system is strongly dominant in the distribution of aid in contrast to the European Union, with NATO member countries far exceeding the aggregate share of EU member states in all areas of aid – especially in the case of military aid and least of the humanitarian support area. The well-defined circle of states that

organised to support the armed struggle of Ukraine against Russia are (10) interconnected in an internally structured network of – at least partially – interdependent relationships that show signs of embeddedness and – as a specific source of social capital – may also form the basis for a longer-term operation and sustainability of support.

The findings of the paper imply that a narrow and internally rather structured network (Coleman, 2006: 111) of support for Ukraine emerged and was organised in the first year of the war, which – in addition to providing significant commitments to the resistance and functioning of the attacked country – may serve as a kind of social capital that could facilitate future support, even at a higher level of embeddedness. However, the dominance of the USA and NATO countries in the support arena may imply the potential role of some additional forms or types of social capital and trust. For example, the concepts of ‘enforceable trust’ and ‘bounded solidarity’ developed by Alejandro Portes and Julia Sensenbrenner (PORTES – SENSENBRENNER 2006. 167–172) refer to mechanisms of social capital that may impose patterns of action – in this case support engagement (?) – which are seen as required or expected in some sense for the – donor – groups concerned. In a further analysis aimed at examining the subsequent evolution of the support network around Ukraine as a representation of social capital, these mechanisms could be considered as possible additional focus or research direction.

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