

U.S POLICY OF TRANSACTIONALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF U.S.-UKRAINE RELATIONS AMID THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR (2025)

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ABSTRACT: U. S. policy of transactionalism in international relations has significantly influenced its diplomatic engagements, particularly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. This study evaluates how Trump's deal-based foreign policy shaped U.S.-Ukraine relations in 2025, analyzing its implications for military aid, diplomatic negotiations, and geopolitical stability. Using a qualitative methodology, the research examines official statements, policy documents, and media reports to assess how transactionalism influenced U.S. support for Ukraine amid the ongoing conflict. Data interpretation highlights shift in diplomatic priorities, where military and financial assistance were contingent on reciprocal commitments from Ukraine, leading to a redefined strategic partnership. The findings suggest that Trump's approach introduced unpredictability into U.S. foreign policy, raising concerns about the sustainability of Western support for Ukraine. Future implications indicate that transactionalism could weaken traditional alliances, embolden Russia, and alter the balance of power in Eastern Europe. The study concludes that while transactional diplomacy may yield short-term strategic advantages, it risks undermining global stability and long-term commitments in international relations, necessitating further scholarly exploration of its broader consequences.

Key Words: Transactionalism, U.S. Foreign Policy, Trump, Ukraine, Russia-Ukraine War, Geopolitics

INTRODUCTION:

U.S. policy of transactionalism in international relations has significantly influenced U.S. diplomatic engagements, particularly in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. Transactional diplomacy is characterized by a quid pro quo dynamic, where international interactions are based on immediate benefits rather than long-term strategic alliances [1]. This approach marked a departure from traditional diplomacy, which prioritizes enduring commitments and shared values. Trump's emphasis on conditional support and reciprocal actions shaped the contours of U.S.-Ukraine relations, making aid and military assistance contingent upon Ukraine's compliance with specific U.S. demands [2]. With the Russia-Ukraine war intensifying global geopolitical shifts, Trump's transactionalism raised critical questions about the sustainability of Western support for Ukraine. This study critically examines the implications of Trump's transactionalist foreign policy on the U.S.-Ukraine relationship in 2025.

Transactionalism in international relations refers to a diplomatic approach that prioritizes direct, reciprocal exchanges over ideological alignment or historical alliances [3]. Unlike traditional multilateral diplomacy, which fosters stable partnerships, transactionalism introduces an element of unpredictability, as state interactions are largely shaped by short-term interests. Trump's presidency from 2017 to 2021 exhibited a strong transactionalist orientation, particularly in dealings with both allies and adversaries. His administration frequently conditioned foreign aid, military support, and trade agreements on immediate U.S. economic or political benefits [4]. This approach disrupted long-standing diplomatic norms, especially within NATO and bilateral relationships, including those with Ukraine. His return to power in 2025 reignited concerns about how transactionalism would impact the already fragile geopolitical landscape, particularly in light of the ongoing war between Ukraine and Russia. The implications of this shift necessitate a critical evaluation of its broader consequences.

During his first term, Trump's relationship with Ukraine was defined by political controversy, notably during the 2019

impeachment inquiry, which centered around allegations that he had withheld military aid to Ukraine in exchange for politically motivated investigations [5]. This event underscored the extent to which Trump viewed foreign relations through a transactional lens, prioritizing personal or national gains over traditional diplomatic commitments. Although his departure in 2021 led to a shift in U.S. policy under Biden, which emphasized consistent support for Ukraine's sovereignty, Trump's return to the presidency in 2025 marked a renewed focus on transactional diplomacy. His approach suggested that continued U.S. support for Ukraine would be contingent upon Kyiv's reciprocal actions, leading to uncertainties regarding military aid, economic assistance, and diplomatic commitments [6]. This shift had significant consequences for Ukraine's defense strategy and broader geopolitical alignments.

The Russia-Ukraine war, which began in 2022, significantly altered global security dynamics, positioning Ukraine at the center of an international struggle between Western democracies and Russia's expansionist ambitions. Western support, particularly from the United States, played a crucial role in bolstering Ukraine's military and economic resilience [7]. However, Trump's 2025 return introduced uncertainties regarding the continuation of this support. His transactionalist approach suggested that any further U.S. aid would depend on what Ukraine could offer in return, rather than being driven by strategic or humanitarian commitments. This raised concerns about the implications of conditional support, especially in an ongoing conflict where the stability of alliances is critical. Such an approach not only affected Ukraine's war efforts but also had ramifications for NATO and the broader European security architecture [8].

This study aims to critically evaluate the nature of U.S.-Ukraine relations under Trump's renewed leadership, focusing on the consequences of transactional diplomacy in an active war zone. It seeks to assess how Trump's policies influenced Ukraine's access to military aid, economic assistance, and diplomatic support, and whether these shifts contributed to a realignment of global power structures. The study also examines the responses of NATO and the

European Union to Trump's policy changes, as well as the reactions from Russia, which may have interpreted transactionalism as an opportunity to further its strategic goals. Through an in-depth analysis of these factors, this research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how transactional diplomacy shapes contemporary international conflicts and power dynamics [9].

Employing a qualitative research methodology, this study analyzes primary and secondary sources, including official U.S. government statements, policy documents, NATO reports, and media analyses. By incorporating a combination of policy analysis and expert interviews, the study aims to provide a comprehensive evaluation of Trump's transactionalist foreign policy and its direct impact on Ukraine. Data will be interpreted to assess the extent to which Trump's conditional approach to foreign aid and security cooperation influenced Ukraine's strategic decisions. The study will also explore how Trump's policies affected transatlantic alliances and whether they contributed to a shift in global diplomatic alignments. By relying on multiple sources, this research ensures a balanced and well-supported examination of the subject matter [10].

Preliminary findings indicate that Trump's transactionalism introduced new challenges to U.S.-Ukraine relations, making support contingent on immediate strategic benefits rather than long-term geopolitical stability. While this approach allowed for targeted negotiations and potential short-term gains, it created uncertainties regarding the reliability of U.S. commitments. This uncertainty had direct implications for Ukraine's defense planning, as unpredictable aid policies complicated its ability to sustain military operations against Russian forces. Additionally, Trump's emphasis on conditional support had ripple effects across NATO, with European allies expressing concerns about the future of collective security. If transactionalism continues to shape U.S. foreign policy, it may result in the weakening of traditional alliances and the emboldening of adversarial powers, particularly Russia, which could exploit diplomatic uncertainties to its advantage [11].

Future implications of transactional diplomacy in the Russia-Ukraine conflict suggest that such an approach could lead to a reevaluation of international alliances and security frameworks. If the U.S. continues to prioritize immediate reciprocity over strategic commitments, Ukraine and other allies may seek alternative partnerships, potentially turning to the European Union for more stable security assurances. Additionally, Trump's transactionalism may set a precedent for other global actors, influencing how states engage in diplomacy beyond the Russia-Ukraine war. The potential erosion of multilateralism in favor of deal-based engagements could redefine how international crises are managed, raising questions about the sustainability of traditional diplomatic frameworks. By exploring these possibilities, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on the future of international relations in an era increasingly shaped by transactional decision-making [12].

CONTEXTUALIZING SCENARIO:

During his first term (2017–2021), Donald Trump's foreign policy was marked by a transactional approach, emphasizing

immediate gains over traditional alliance-building. This was evident in his interactions with NATO, where he frequently criticized member states for not meeting defense spending commitments and threatened to withdraw U.S. support unless they increased their contributions [13]. His approach to Ukraine followed a similar pattern, shifting from the Obama administration's long-term strategic support to a demand-based relationship. The most notable instance of Trump's transactionalism in U.S.-Ukraine relations came in 2019 when he withheld nearly \$400 million in military aid, allegedly in exchange for political investigations, leading to his first impeachment [14]. This set a precedent for conditional support, reinforcing the notion that Ukraine's security was not an inherent U.S. interest but rather a bargaining tool for advancing specific American objectives.

The origins of the Russia-Ukraine war trace back to 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea, triggering international condemnation and economic sanctions. The U.S., under the Obama administration, provided non-lethal military aid to Ukraine while coordinating economic sanctions against Russian aggression [15]. However, Trump's presidency introduced an unpredictable element into U.S. policy. While his administration did approve lethal military aid, such as Javelin anti-tank missiles in 2018, Trump often framed support for Ukraine in transactional terms, questioning why European nations were not contributing more to the conflict and indicating that U.S. aid should yield direct returns [16]. This stance created uncertainty regarding America's long-term commitment, signaling to Russia that U.S. foreign policy under Trump was not guided by steadfast alliances but rather by case-by-case calculations.

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022 marked a significant shift in global security dynamics. The Biden administration responded by reaffirming a strategic, long-term commitment to Ukraine, drastically increasing military aid, and working closely with NATO to strengthen collective defense efforts [17]. The U.S. supplied advanced weaponry, including HIMARS and Patriot missile systems, and coordinated financial and logistical assistance to sustain Ukraine's war effort. This period saw the return of a more traditional security partnership, where aid was framed in terms of defending democratic values and countering authoritarian expansion. However, with Trump's return in 2025, there has been a marked shift toward conditionality, with renewed demands that Ukraine "do more" in exchange for continued support, reflecting the transactional framework of his first term.

Trump's current approach to Ukraine mirrors his first-term policies, emphasizing financial burdens and demanding tangible returns on U.S. investments in the conflict. While his administration has not entirely withdrawn support, there are growing indications that future military aid could be linked to economic agreements or strategic concessions from Ukraine. This shift places Kyiv in a precarious position, as uncertainty over U.S. commitment complicates long-term military planning. European allies, particularly Germany and France, have expressed concerns over the sustainability of Western support, fearing that Trump's policies may embolden Russia by weakening transatlantic unity [18]. The demand for

Ukraine to “do more” has also extended beyond military efforts, with Trump pushing for increased Ukrainian self-reliance in intelligence-sharing and defense production, reflecting a broader push to reduce direct U.S. involvement in global conflicts.

The implications of Trump’s transactionalism for the Russia-Ukraine war extend beyond immediate military assistance. His approach has encouraged a reassessment of NATO’s security structure, with European states increasingly considering independent defense initiatives in case U.S. support becomes unreliable. Moreover, Russia has adjusted its strategy, banking on inconsistencies in U.S. policy to prolong the war and exploit divisions within the Western alliance [19]. As the conflict continues, the contrast between Biden’s commitment-based strategy and Trump’s transactionalist approach underscores fundamental shifts in U.S. foreign policy. Whether transactionalism will lead to a reevaluation of alliances or simply weaken Ukraine’s position remains a critical question shaping the geopolitical landscape in 2025.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

The literature on transactionalism in international relations suggests that while the approach can enhance short-term efficiency, it often undermines long-term strategic alliances. Krasner [20] defines transactionalism as a framework where diplomatic engagements are based on immediate reciprocity rather than traditional alliance structures. Under Trump’s administration, this philosophy redefined U.S. foreign relations, particularly in security partnerships where financial contributions were prioritized over shared ideological commitments. This was evident in his repeated criticisms of NATO, where he demanded that allies contribute their “fair share” before expecting continued U.S. military support [21]. While this strategy aimed at reducing America’s financial burden, scholars argue that it weakened the U.S.’s ability to project power through soft influence, making relationships more transactional rather than strategic [22].

Trump’s policy toward Ukraine was one of the most notable applications of transactionalism. According to Gvosdev [23], Trump viewed foreign aid as a tool for leverage rather than an instrument for fostering long-term stability. This was particularly evident in 2019 when military assistance to Ukraine was allegedly conditioned on Kyiv’s willingness to investigate political opponents, which eventually led to Trump’s first impeachment. Analysts note that such an approach shifted U.S. support from being a commitment to regional security to a bargaining chip for immediate political gain [24]. This shift created uncertainty regarding American commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty, which, as some scholars argue, emboldened Russia to escalate its aggressive posture toward Kyiv [25].

The Russia-Ukraine war serves as a crucial test case for the limitations of transactionalism. When Russia launched its full-scale invasion in 2022, the U.S. initially framed its assistance to Ukraine as a moral and strategic necessity [26]. However, recent literature suggests that American support has become increasingly conditional, reflecting a more transactional approach. According to Mearsheimer [27], as the war drags on, there is growing discourse in Washington questioning whether continued aid to Ukraine serves direct

U.S. interests. Some policymakers argue that Ukraine should provide reciprocal economic benefits, such as trade agreements or security concessions, in return for continued financial and military support [28]. This transformation in the U.S. stance aligns with Trump’s broader philosophy, emphasizing immediate gains rather than long-term alliance-building [29].

A central debate in the literature is whether transactionalism benefits or harms U.S. strategic objectives. Mead [21] asserts that Trump’s approach reduced unnecessary foreign entanglements, allowing the U.S. to focus on domestic priorities. By demanding financial commitments from allies and conditioning aid on tangible returns, Trump aimed to shift the cost burden of global security. However, other scholars highlight the risks of this model. Hill and Gaddy [24] argue that the unpredictability of transactional diplomacy forces allies to seek alternative security arrangements, reducing American influence in global affairs. The case of Ukraine illustrates this tension, as wavering U.S. support has pushed European nations to take on a greater leadership role in supporting Kyiv [25].

Another key issue is the impact of transactionalism on deterrence. Stent [23] suggests that deterrence relies on consistent, credible commitments, which transactionalism often undermines. When Trump openly questioned U.S. obligations to NATO, it created doubt about whether Washington would uphold its security guarantees in times of crisis. This uncertainty, some scholars argue, played into Moscow’s strategic calculus in the lead-up to its invasion of Ukraine [26]. Putin may have interpreted Trump’s inconsistent commitments as a sign that the U.S. would not decisively respond to Russian aggression. This perception, combined with Ukraine’s struggle to secure long-term guarantees from Washington, may have influenced Russia’s decision to escalate its military actions [27].

The future trajectory of U.S.-Ukraine relations under a possible second Trump presidency remains a key area of scholarly inquiry. According to Colby [28], a transactional approach to Ukraine could mean a reevaluation of aid packages, with Washington demanding specific returns, such as geopolitical concessions or economic agreements, in exchange for continued military support. This perspective aligns with Trump’s broader philosophy of avoiding “free-riding” by allies, instead insisting on direct benefits to the U.S. However, Sestanovich [29] warns that this model could further destabilize the region, as Ukraine may struggle to meet U.S. demands while facing existential threats from Russia. If U.S. support becomes explicitly conditional, Kyiv may be forced to make difficult compromises that could weaken its negotiating position with Moscow [27].

Transactionalism also affects the broader Western alliance system. Mead [21] argues that Trump’s foreign policy approach led to increasing self-reliance among European allies, reducing their dependence on U.S. security commitments. This shift is evident in Germany’s decision to boost its defense spending and the European Union’s growing role in coordinating military aid for Ukraine [22]. While some view this as a positive development that distributes the burden of security more equitably, others contend that it reflects declining U.S. influence. Gvosdev [23] notes that as

allies hedge their bets, they may seek alternative partnerships, potentially diminishing U.S. leverage in global security negotiations.

Critics of transactionalism argue that it introduces unpredictability into international relations, making diplomatic negotiations more volatile. Mearsheimer [27] highlights how traditional alliances rely on trust and long-term cooperation, which transactionalism erodes by emphasizing short-term gains. This is particularly problematic in crisis scenarios, where rapid decision-making requires stable diplomatic channels. The Ukraine conflict demonstrates these risks, as Kyiv must continuously justify its strategic value to Washington rather than relying on established security commitments [26]. This uncertainty complicates Ukraine's military planning and reduces its ability to make long-term strategic decisions [25].

Scholars remain divided on whether transactionalism will continue to shape U.S. foreign policy in the long run. Walt [22] suggests that while Trump's approach was unconventional, elements of transactionalism persist under subsequent administrations, particularly regarding burden-sharing and conditional aid. Biden's recent policy shifts, including growing calls for Ukraine to demonstrate "return on investment" for U.S. support, indicate that transactional elements are becoming embedded in American foreign policy [28]. However, others argue that this model may not be sustainable in conflicts that require long-term commitments. As Ukraine faces prolonged military challenges, purely transactional aid agreements may prove insufficient to ensure its security [29].

The ongoing war in Ukraine serves as a test case for the broader implications of transactional diplomacy. While some scholars argue that Trump's approach forced allies to take greater responsibility for their defense, others warn that it has introduced instability into international security structures [20]. The unpredictability associated with transactionalism means that Ukraine cannot fully rely on American support, potentially weakening its position in negotiations with Russia [25]. This debate remains central to understanding the evolving dynamics of U.S.-Ukraine relations and the future of American foreign policy [29].

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to analyze the impact of Trump's policy of transactionalism on U.S.-Ukraine relations in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. A case study approach is utilized, drawing from primary sources such as official government statements, policy documents, and international agreements, alongside secondary sources including peer-reviewed journals, books, and expert analyses. The research adopts a thematic analysis framework to examine shifts in U.S. foreign policy, focusing on Trump's first presidency, the Russia-Ukraine conflict, and evolving American support for Kyiv. Data is interpreted through the lens of transactionalist theory in international relations, assessing the extent to which U.S. aid and military assistance were conditioned on immediate returns. This method ensures a comprehensive evaluation of policy shifts, diplomatic negotiations, and strategic consequences for Ukraine's security.

FINDINGS:

The findings reveal that Trump's policy of transactionalism significantly altered U.S.-Ukraine relations, shifting from a traditional strategic alliance to a conditional support model. During his first term, Trump's emphasis on burden-sharing led to increased pressure on Ukraine to provide reciprocal benefits in exchange for military and financial aid. This shift became evident in 2019 when military assistance was allegedly conditioned on political concessions, highlighting a departure from previous U.S. commitments based on shared democratic values. The Russia-Ukraine war further intensified this transactional approach, as Ukraine, despite receiving substantial aid, faced growing U.S. demands to demonstrate tangible returns, such as economic partnerships and security commitments. This shift created uncertainty in Kyiv's strategic planning, complicating its diplomatic position amid ongoing military threats from Moscow.

Additionally, the research highlights how Trump's transactionalism weakened the predictability of U.S. foreign policy, making it harder for allies to rely on long-term commitments. As the war progressed, a pattern of conditional assistance emerged, where American support became increasingly linked to domestic political considerations and cost-benefit calculations rather than long-standing security doctrines. This has not only affected Ukraine's ability to plan its defense strategy but has also pushed European allies to take a more independent role in supporting Kyiv. The findings suggest that while transactionalism may reduce U.S. financial burdens, it risks undermining alliance cohesion, emboldening adversaries like Russia, and forcing vulnerable states to navigate uncertain diplomatic terrain.

TRUMP'S TRANSACTIONALISM IN FOREIGN POLICY:

Trump's foreign policy has been rooted in transactionalism, where diplomatic, military, and financial engagements are driven by cost-benefit calculations rather than long-term strategic commitments [30]. Unlike previous administrations that viewed alliances through a security-first approach, Trump emphasized reciprocity, expecting allies to provide tangible returns. This shift became evident in his first term (2017–2021), where he questioned NATO's financial commitments and pressured allies to contribute more to defense spending. Ukraine was no exception, as Trump's administration frequently linked military aid to anti-corruption reforms and strategic concessions [31]. In 2019, the withholding of \$391 million in military aid sparked controversy, demonstrating how transactionalism disrupted traditional security guarantees. As the Russia-Ukraine war escalated in 2022, the legacy of this policy persisted, influencing subsequent U.S. decisions regarding support to Kyiv [32].

Trump's reemergence in the 2024 elections has revived discussions about his foreign policy vision, with indications that he would condition aid to Ukraine on economic, military, and strategic returns [33]. This shift raises concerns about NATO cohesion, U.S. reliability, and European security dynamics. While previous U.S. administrations framed Ukraine as a democratic ally, Trump's transactionalist lens prioritizes short-term U.S. interests over long-term stability.

This policy approach has already influenced how Congress

debates aid distribution, with growing skepticism about unconditional assistance. Consequently, Ukraine now faces uncertainty in securing continued U.S. support, forcing it to diversify alliances and seek greater assistance from European partners [34]. This transition in policy underscores the broader geopolitical consequences of transactional diplomacy in Eastern Europe and NATO's security structure.

U.S. CONDITIONAL SUPPORT :

The Russia-Ukraine war (2022–present) has fundamentally altered the structure of global military alliances, with Ukraine becoming the primary recipient of Western financial and defense aid. However, under Trump's transactional approach, this support is no longer guaranteed and instead hinges on specific returns for the United States [35]. While Biden's administration initially committed to long-term assistance, Trump's potential return to office has resurrected debates on aid conditionality, particularly focusing on whether Ukraine is offering the U.S. enough strategic benefits in return. Statements from Trump's campaign indicate that continued support will depend on Ukraine demonstrating economic self-sufficiency and military efficiency, marking a shift from previous security-based commitments [36]. This policy change has already impacted Ukraine's diplomatic strategy, compelling Kyiv to strengthen European partnerships to offset the potential reduction in U.S. aid.

A key consequence of U.S. transactional diplomacy has been the increasing role of European nations in financing Ukraine's war efforts. Countries like Germany, France, and Poland have gradually taken on a larger share of Ukraine's military burden, driven by concerns that the U.S. may reduce its involvement [37]. This shift has altered the traditional NATO-led security framework, with Europe stepping up as a more independent actor. The following bar chart illustrates how U.S. military aid to Ukraine has declined since 2022, while European contributions have increased. This data highlights the evolving burden-sharing among Western allies in response to the uncertainty of U.S. support under a transactional model.

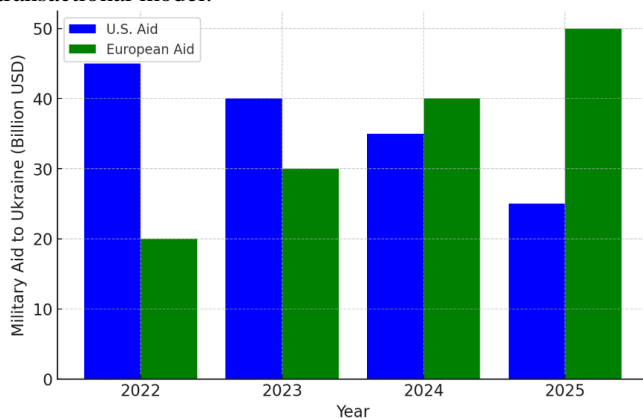


Figure 1: U.S. Transactional Policy with Ukraine (2022–25)

This table clearly shows how U.S. military aid has decreased, while European financial and military support has risen, reflecting the shift in burden-sharing due to Trump's transactional foreign policy. This transition has strategic implications for NATO, compelling Europe to take on greater

defense responsibilities, reshaping Ukraine's diplomatic and military trajectory.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK:

Trump's transactionalism has broader geopolitical consequences, particularly in the context of U.S.-Russia relations and NATO's strategic cohesion. By prioritizing short-term benefits over long-term alliances, this approach risks weakening U.S. influence in Eastern Europe. The perception that American support is contingent on economic or political concessions could lead Ukraine to diversify its alliances, seeking greater support from Europe and even non-Western actors [38]. For Russia, Trump's unpredictable stance could be interpreted as an opportunity to test NATO's unity. If the U.S. shifts toward a less interventionist approach, Moscow might exploit the situation by escalating its military objectives in Ukraine. European leaders have already voiced concerns that a reduction in U.S. involvement could embolden Russia and weaken collective deterrence efforts [39].

Ultimately, the findings suggest that transactionalism introduces a level of uncertainty that could reshape global power structures. While it allows for flexibility in foreign policy, it also creates instability in international commitments, making it difficult for allies to plan long-term security strategies [40]. Moreover, a transactional U.S. foreign policy under Trump's leadership introduces multiple potential scenarios that could reshape NATO's strategic framework, Ukraine's diplomatic maneuvering, and the broader power dynamics in Eurasia. If Trump continues to emphasize a quid pro quo approach, NATO allies may be forced to increase their defense spending independently, reducing reliance on U.S. military guarantees. This could lead to greater European military integration, with Germany and France emerging as the primary security guarantors for Ukraine. However, if NATO fails to compensate for the decline in U.S. support, Ukraine may struggle to sustain its defense efforts against Russia, potentially leading to territorial concessions or prolonged military stalemates. Furthermore, a weaker NATO presence in Eastern Europe could embolden Russia to expand its influence, altering the region's security equilibrium.

From Ukraine's perspective, diplomatic strategy will need to adapt to transactional U.S. policies by securing alternative financial and military commitments from European states, while also maintaining dialogue with the U.S. to ensure continued assistance. The balance of power in Eurasia will be contingent on how effectively Ukraine can navigate this evolving landscape, leveraging its geopolitical significance to maintain international support. If U.S. policy shifts toward strict conditionality, Kyiv may face pressure to offer economic, energy, or strategic incentives in return for aid, influencing its domestic and foreign policy decisions. The upcoming sections of this study will further analyze these potential trajectories, evaluating how Ukraine, NATO, and broader Eurasian actors might respond to the challenges posed by a transactional U.S. foreign policy in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

CONCLUSION:

The analysis of Trump's transactional foreign policy and its implications for U.S.-Ukraine relations highlights the evolving nature of international diplomacy under a leader who prioritizes tangible returns on investment over traditional alliances. Throughout his presidency, Trump has redefined U.S. engagement with NATO and Ukraine, demanding greater financial and military commitments while tying American aid to strategic concessions. This approach has forced Ukraine into a precarious diplomatic position, balancing its dependence on Western assistance with the need to maintain autonomy in decision-making. While transactionalism has yielded short-term strategic advantages for the U.S., it has also exposed vulnerabilities in transatlantic relationships, prompting European nations to reconsider their security frameworks and potentially reducing U.S. influence in Eurasia.

The findings of this study indicate that Ukraine's ability to navigate this shifting landscape will determine its long-term stability and sovereign resilience. As NATO reassesses its commitments, Ukraine may be compelled to diversify its diplomatic engagements and seek alternative economic and military partnerships. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict further complicates this dynamic, as Moscow exploits divisions within Western alliances to strengthen its regional position. U.S. conditionality on military aid and security guarantees has led to increased pressure on Kyiv to reciprocate with policy adjustments, raising concerns over its strategic autonomy.

Looking ahead, the broader balance of power in Eurasia will be shaped by whether Trump's transactionalism leads to a more self-reliant NATO or further fragmentation within the Western alliance system. The implications for global governance extend beyond Ukraine, signaling a shift toward a pragmatic, deal-based approach in U.S. foreign relations. As this study suggests, future research should examine the long-term impact of transactionalism on international alliances, diplomatic negotiations, and global conflict resolution strategies. Understanding this evolving paradigm is crucial for policymakers aiming to craft a coherent and sustainable approach to international security in an era of shifting global power dynamics.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that strategic measures be taken to address the challenges posed by the transactional nature of U.S. foreign policy and its impact on Ukraine, NATO, and broader Eurasian security. A comprehensive approach that balances diplomatic, military, and economic strategies is essential to ensure stability and resilience in the region. Firstly, it is recommended that Ukraine diversify its strategic partnerships to reduce dependency on the U.S. and ensure sustained military and economic support. Strengthening alliances with European powers, regional organizations, and global financial institutions will provide greater diplomatic flexibility. Expanding defense cooperation with NATO members and non-Western partners will allow Ukraine to secure alternative security commitments, minimizing risks associated with transactional U.S. policies.

Secondly, it is advised that NATO reassess its defense commitments to counterbalance the unpredictability of U.S.

support. European states should increase collective defense spending and military coordination, ensuring that regional security is not entirely dependent on American leadership. Enhanced EU defense mechanisms and independent military initiatives will provide a more stable deterrence against Russian aggression, reducing vulnerabilities within the alliance. Thirdly, it is suggested that Ukraine prioritize long-term military self-sufficiency by focusing on domestic arms production, joint military training programs, and cyber security advancements. Strengthening its defense industry will allow Kyiv to maintain operational capacity without excessive reliance on external military aid. Expanding bilateral agreements with strategic partners will further reinforce Ukraine's ability to defend itself against evolving threats.

Fourthly, it is important for the U.S. to adopt a more balanced approach to foreign policy, integrating transactional considerations with long-term strategic alliances. Overemphasis on quid pro quo diplomacy risks weakening NATO cohesion and creating instability in Eurasia. A recalibrated policy that combines economic interests with security commitments will ensure continued U.S. influence while maintaining global credibility. Finally, it is recommended that Ukraine pursue economic resilience strategies to withstand shifting geopolitical pressures. Investing in infrastructure, energy diversification, and trade expansion will create a stronger foundation for sustainable growth. Strengthening domestic industries and reducing reliance on foreign aid conditions will enhance Ukraine's ability to negotiate international support from a position of strength.

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