SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE AND REFORM IN UKRAINE

Polina Beliakova
Sarah Detzner

Security Sector Governance and Reform in Ukraine

Polina Beliakova
Sarah Detzner

About the Authors

Dr. Polina Beliakova is a scholar of international security focusing on civil-military relations and the use of force, with regional expertise in Ukraine, Russia, and the United States. She is a postdoctoral fellow in the MIT Security Studies Program. Previously, she received her Ph.D. in International Relations from the Fletcher School, Tufts University, and held a postdoctoral appointment at Dartmouth College's Dickey Center for International Understanding. To find more about Dr. Beliakova's research visit *polinabeliakova.com*

Dr. Sarah Detzner is a security sector governance and reform expert based in Washington D.C. Her research and consulting work is focused on measuring the human security impacts of security sector assistance and reform efforts, as well as judicial reform, anti-corruption, and the role of civil society and popular participation in fragile, transitional, and conflict affected states. Her current and past projects include work with the US Department of State, the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency, the US Institute of Peace, the African Union, the UK Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office, the London School of Economics, the Center for Civilians in Conflict, and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance. She received her doctorate from the Fletcher School, Tufts University.

Authors: Polina Beliakova, Sarah Detzner

PeaceRep: The Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform
School of Law, The University of Edinburgh
Old College, South Bridge
Edinburgh EH8 9YL

Tel. +44 (0)131 651 4566
Fax. +44 (0)131 650 2005
E-mail: peacerep@ed.ac.uk

PeaceRep.org

Twitter: @Peace_Rep_
Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/PeaceRepResearch
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/company/peacerep/
Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/peace_rep_/

PeaceRep's Ukraine programme

PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is a multi-partner initiative that provides evidence, insight, academic research and policy analysis from Ukraine and the wider region to support Ukrainian sovereignty, territorial integrity and democracy in the face of the Russian invasion. PeaceRep's Ukraine programme is led by the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) partnering with the Kyiv School of Economics (KSE) in Ukraine, the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS) in Germany, the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM) in Austria and Jagiellonian University in Poland. Through our collaboration with KSE we work closely with researchers, educationalists and civic activists in Ukraine to ensure that policy solutions are grounded in robust evidence and are calibrated to support democratic outcomes.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This work offers insights into Ukraine's current security sector governance (SSG) gleaned from examining Ukraine's track record of reform since independence, focusing on reform progress since the Russian incursion of 2014 and the current impact of reform successes and failures. We find, in brief, that in Ukraine inertia, internal division, political volatility, and pervasive corruption from 1991 to 2014 prevented reform and created vulnerabilities exploited by Russia. Beginning in 2014, Ukraine, spurred by a clear threat and the abuses committed by the Yanukovych regime, made remarkable SSG progress, in particular training forces to operate under irregular conditions, bringing volunteer and irregular forces under official control, establishing an NCO corps, and instituting limited but meaningful police reform. Donor assistance and civil society mobilization were key to these achievements.

However, these successes focused on immediate combat needs. Major weaknesses leading to long term vulnerabilities — issues with civil-military relations, professional military education, and defence sector corruption — persisted. Russia's invasion of 2022 powerfully boosted demand for more effective security and forced external donors and Ukrainian officials into closer coordination. Previous reform successes proved critical to Ukraine's ability to withstand invasion and its subsequent battlefield performance, and Ukraine has continued to expand on these successes even amidst the war. However, as the war continues, systemic weaknesses persist, and reform progress in these areas remains slow.

Despite this, many of Ukraine's even partial reform successes provide a comparative advantage against more severe Russian SSG weaknesses, notable centralized/inflexible battlefield decision-making, pervasive corruption, political structures that discourages accurate information sharing, and the population's lack of enthusiasm for the war. Our recommendations focus, first, on the ways that Ukraine and allies can enhance comparative advantages in the current war. These include conducting a comprehensive SSG risk assessment, pushing through defence industrial and procurement reforms (especially transparency), systematizing civil society's (currently critical) security policy and oversight role, and improving the consistency and quality of donor support. Beyond this, we urge Ukraine and allies to prepare now for post-war reconstruction in order to exploit opportunities and avoid power vacuums. These preparations should include creating plans for an affordable but effective post-war force structure, for demobilization and reintegration, for providing accountable and effective internal security (especially policing) nationwide, and for addressing the aftermath of occupation in ways that prioritize local input and promote accountability.

Finally, Ukraine's experience highlights SSG lessons for states similarly threatened, including the need to update threat assessments as well as doctrine and training, (especially for unconventional warfare), to develop the legal/institutional capacity to effectively deploy citizen militias and volunteers, to divest from procurement and other practices that enhance dependence on Russia, and to heavily prioritize countering security sector corruption. Donors can assist, especially by acting to boost civil society security policy capacity and freedom of action in targeted states as well as by helping these states quickly replace Russian-sourced defence items with appropriate, affordable, and sustainable replacements.

Introduction

Security sector governance, when done well, is rarely noticed. Where the security sector is well-governed, the fact is rarely an active source of national pride, certainly not on the order of a well-functioning public health care system, widespread educational opportunity and attainment, or even a technically advanced military.

Security sector reform (SSR) tends to come up mostly when observers discuss the prospects of states in which something has gone deeply wrong – civil war, persistent instability, cycles of coups and counter-coups, etc. An interesting opportunity offered by examining security sector reform in Ukraine before and during its current war with Russia is the rare opportunity to observe security sector reform as an engine of comparative military advantage in an interstate conflict.

The primary purpose of this research report is to assess the progress of Ukraine's security sector reform efforts to date, as well as the likely future needs and challenges facing the country's security system, both during the current conflict and afterward. To that end, we explore the state of Ukraine's security sector governance and the successes and failures of reform attempts across three periods:

- 1991 (independence from the USSR) to 2014 (the Revolution of Dignity and Russia's first armed incursions);
- 2014 (Russia's initial invasion) to 2022; and
- 2022 (Russia's full-scale invasion) to the present.

For each of these periods, we examine how reforms attempted/not attempted in the previously period shaped security sector behaviour and performance, what novel reforms were attempted and the extent to which these succeeded or failed, and the extent to which insights gleaned from other cases shed light on SSR progress or lack thereof.

We find, in brief, that in Ukraine inertia, internal division, political volatility, and pervasive corruption from 1991 to 2014 prevented meaningful security sector reform, and that this lack of reform created vulnerabilities exploited by Russia. From 2014-2022, Ukraine, spurred by a clear threat, made remarkable SSR progress. However, reform successes focused on immediate combat needs, and major weaknesses that create long term vulnerabilities — issues with civil military relations, professional military education, and defence sector corruption persist. Remarkably, Russia's full-scale invasion of 2022 did not disrupt reforms completely. Quite to the contrary, in many areas, further progress has since been made. This has been understandably focused once again on immediate combat needs, though as the war drags on the need for further progress on systemic security sector weaknesses becomes clearer.

This report is about Ukraine, and only indirectly about Russia. However, an interesting throughline that emerges is the ways in which many Ukraine's SSR successes are the mirror of Russian security governance weaknesses. Ukraine has brought volunteer armed formations under state control in service of a common goal,

and enhanced battlefield adaptability by training and trusting non-commissioned officers (NCOs) to rely on their own judgement. The state has also benefited from the efforts of an open society and media to detect and counter corruption as well as more directly relied on civil society organizations (CSOs) to organize and fill capacity gaps left by the formal system. In contrast, Russia has failed to reliably control mercenary groups, insisted on running tactical operations from Moscow or through (a rapidly dwindling supply of) generals, and continues suffering from the effects of extensive past corruption and current conscription avoidance.

Our concluding recommendations focus on the ways that the Ukrainian government, civil society and external allies can capitalize on and increase Ukraine's comparative SSR advantages in the current conflict. They involve preparing to meet post-war security governance challenges that might threaten that advantage. Finally, Ukraine's SSR trajectory may be able to tell us about how other states similarly threatened can effectively strengthen their defences pre-emptively by addressing their own security governance weaknesses.

Security Sector Reform: Definition & Evolution

SSR emerged, in part, from the international system's imperfect response to the end of the Cold War. During that decades long conflict, the vast majority of security assistance took the form of bilateral equipment transfers and training. Aside from the immediate benefits of arming security partners, security assistance donors generally held that recipient militaries were "modernizing" forces within their societies, and thus that such assistance would, if anything, advance development goals.[1] Donors were largely uninterested in police and other security institutions.

The end of the Cold War challenged these assumptions. Most immediately, newly independent post-Soviet states faced the substantial challenge of gaining meaningful control over all the security institutions capable of using force – police and intelligence services as much as militaries – and then remaking these institutions to operate effectively under democratically-elected civilian authority and oversight and in a new threat environment. These states often inherited outsized militaries they could no longer afford, the risk that these forces might violently resist downsizing and other restructuring, and/or disgruntled ex-soldiers who might take their skills to organized criminal networks.

In a number of instances, these risks were realized, and over time evidence mounted that many of the state-failure wars of the 90s and early 2000s – in Ethiopia, Guatemala, and the DRC among many others – were fuelled and lengthened both by security force abuses and the unwillingness and/or inability of various regimes to provide basic security to their citizens. These conflicts, in turn, fuelled a number of negative externalities for donor states, such as terrorism and trafficking. Furthermore, it became more difficult for security assistance providers such as the U.S. and U.K. to ignore criticisms, both domestic and international, related to the abusive practices of state security forces with whom they had relationships.

The contrasting positive example of a number of post-Soviet and southern African states that transformed their security forces and returned to stability after post-Cold War crises focused international attention on what would eventually become SSR. The basic core of the approach was the argument that the capabilities of security forces showed a strong tendency to decay and/or be turned to corrupt and repressive ends (rather than citizen protection) without equal or greater attention paid to security force governance - management, monitoring, and accountability.

On paper, this new approach was widely adopted by donors, though judging the track record of efforts overall is complicated by considerable disagreement about which cases represent "real" SSR attempts and which have been labelled as such without significant reform actually being attempted. The approach remains common in stabilization and reconstruction efforts because the problems it was intended to address – state failure and fragility (especially post-conflict) stemming from flawed relationships between civilians and security forces as well as the state's inability to meet citizen demands for basic security – persist.

---

[1] Clare Short. "Security Sector Reform and the Elimination of Poverty: A Speech by Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development" (speech given at the Centre for Defence Studies, King's College London, 9 March 1999. DFID, 1999)

There is no consensus definition of SSR, and an exploration of the various alternatives is beyond the scope of this work. However, a commonly-used version from leading SSR NGO the Geneva Centre for Security Governance is revealing:

Security sector governance refers to the process by which accountable security institutions transparently supply security as a public good via transparent policies and practices. Accountability of security institutions is affected by democratic oversight performed by a range of stakeholders including democratic institutions, government, civil society, and the media. Security sector reform is the process by which security institutions are subordinated to oversight mechanisms, vetting, and lustration in order to deliver transparent and accountable public services as a public good. Security sector governance reinforces the rule of law.[2]

This definition, focusing on specifically democratic oversight, reflects a strong consensus among scholars and practitioners that SSR is fundamentally political, and that past failures can be attributed in large part to attempts by reform advocates (especially outside donors) to treat reform as a purely technocratic process. The following section illustrates this finding by briefly summarizing common patterns of SSR success and failure (focusing on those most relevant to the Ukrainian experience), and reflecting on the political forces driving various outcomes.

Common Patterns of SSR Success & Failure

Significant political (and indeed, societal) disruption has proved to be a necessary precondition for achieving major security sector reform. This disruption can take the form of invasion, civil war (or widespread internal conflict short of war), or sustained mass protests. In other terms, an actual or threatened change in *government* is usually insufficient. An actual or threatened change in *regime* creates a necessary, but not sufficient, *window of opportunity.*

Politically speaking, this disruption is necessary because the control over unreformed security forces and resources is too valuable and central to regime power to give up unless failure to reform also poses an existential threat. For a political leader in system of weak security governance, security sector reform:

1) Threatens an important resource base – revenue from corrupt acquisition deals, control over military assets, direct payments or loyalty to be gleaned from control over security force appointments, a cut of proceeds from looting and/or protection schemes, etc. – that a leader relies on not just for personal enrichment but for the "political budget" necessary to compete in elections, buy off rivals, and so on.[3]

2) Threatens a leader's ability to keep themselves in power directly by limiting their control over security institutions while (at least in the short run) increasing vulnerability to coups, mutinies, and other forms of dangerous resistance from security actors who stand to lose from reform.

---

[2] "SSR" *Geneva Centre for Security Governance (DCAF).* May 20, 2023. https://www.dcaf.ch/about-ssgr

[3] Benjamin J. Spatz, Aditya Sarkar, and Alex De Waal. "The political marketplace: a framework and toolkit for analyzing transactional politics in conflict-affected countries." *Conflict Research Programme* (2021).

Major disruption is the first step toward creating the conditions where leaders are concerned enough about their political (and sometimes actual) survival that they may be willing to run the risks and forgo the benefits described. However, to make the attempt, leaders must believe that implementing meaningful security sector reform will win them the support they need to keep power. This is the reason autocrats virtually never attempt significant SSR – those who stand to lose from reform (security force leaders and elites who benefit from corruption and weak rule of law) are important parts of their support coalitions, while the mass of ordinary citizens most likely to demand reform can usually be safely ignored.

Democratically elected leaders face different considerations. Elected regimes taking power amid or after major upheaval come to power based on promises of reform, but not necessarily security sector reform. If popular demand and attention concentrates around other priorities, a new government is less likely to pay a political price for failing to pursue SSR. Alternately, if a new democratic regime has come to power specifically based on promises of security reform, that regime is highly motivated to keep those promises. Prominent examples include police reform and military lustration in post-Fujimori Peru, comprehensive reform of the entire security sector's basic goals and doctrine in post-Apartheid South Africa and restructuring of both intelligence gathering and national vs. local authorities over policing and justice in post-war Sierra Leone.[4]

Much as most actual governments don't fit neatly into democratic/autocratic typologies, and face shifting and fractured popular demands, the politics of any particular state attempting SSR are usually not clear-cut. However, we observe that where civil society actors are plentiful, organized, representative (of the entire population), and knowledgeable about reform alternatives and other policy details, reform success is much more likely. These actors usually work to create the preconditions that make successful reform more likely – making SSR a more politically salient issue by raising public awareness, forming coalitions with clear and actionable reform demands, and reducing resistance to reform by forging alliances with sections of the security sector and/or civilian governing elites - well in advance of a political window of opportunity. In cases of failure, SSR is often successfully stalled and de-prioritized by anti-reform actors long enough that the reform-instigating crisis passes, a new status quo is established, and reform momentum dissipates. Donors and other external actors that back reform tend to be effective when backing locally-popular reform priorities during windows of opportunity, and extremely ineffective when pushing for changes of interest to the donor but with little popular awareness or support. The history of Ukraine's SSR attempts over the decades since independence can be usefully understood with reference to these general patterns

---

[4] Gino Costa and Rachel Neild. "Police reform in Peru." Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology 38, no. 2 (2005): 220. John Crabtree. Making Institutions Work in Peru: Democracy, Development and Inequality Since1980. (University of London, 2006). Rocky Williams. "Defence in a democracy: The South African Defence Review and the redefinition of the parameters of the national defence debate." In Ourselves to know: Civil-military relations and defence transformation in Southern Africa. Eds Rocky Williams, Gavin Cawthra, Diane Abrahams (ISS Africa 2002): 205-23. James Vincent. "A Village-Up View of Sierra Leone's Civil War and Reconstruction: Multilayered and Networked Governance." IDS Research Reports 2012, no. 75 (2012): 11
Paul Jackson. "Decentralised power and traditional authorities: How power determines access to justice in Sierra Leone." The Journal of Legal Pluralism and Unofficial Law 43, no. 63 (2011): 211. Nathalie Wlodarczyk. "Politically Enfranchising the Non-political: Safeguarding Peace through Civic Education and Inclusion? The Civil Defence Forces in Sierra Leone." Civil Wars 11, no. 2 (2009): 205

Security Sector Governance in Ukraine from 1991 to 2014

The transition from Soviet rule was clearly a moment of major societal disruption, and thus might have presented an opportunity for SSR. However, during this period, the incentives successive Ukrainian governments and the population at large had to push for reform to either external or internal security institutions were not strong (or, importantly, immediate) enough to overcome contravening forces — rapid political swings toward and away from Russian influence, entrenched (and often corrupt) institutional habits and interests, and an inability among pro-reform actors to overcome centre-periphery and other divisions in service of common agenda.

Soviet legacies and the Ukrainian military

As Ukraine gained its independence from the USSR in 1991, Kyiv had to create a new Armed Forces. Despite the sporadic efforts to de-Sovietize the Ukrainian military, Soviet legacies continued to define the security sector up to the beginning of the war in 2014.

First, Ukraine needed to retrain and reorganize its troops according to the new post-Cold War geopolitical environment. In the early 1990s, Ukraine neither needed nor could sustain the second largest military in Europe that it had inherited from the USSR, numbering 750,000 troops in 1992.[5] The main direction of the reforms was to reduce the number of troops and cut military spending. However, due to the lack of clear strategic vision, the reforms were incremental and had an overall destructive effect on the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU). The AFU never became a small military force capable of fighting in modern conflicts in mobile units, operating advanced weapons, or acting effectively against state-supported and non-state actors in unconventional environments.[6]

Rapid swings between successive governments looking to align more closely with either NATO powers or Russia ensured a lack of consistent government policy regarding the purpose and future of the AFU. For example, a brief period of Viktor Yushchenko's presidency (2005-2010) ignited some changes and NATO-leaning tendencies but did not result in tangible changes. Under Yushchenko, the Ukrainian government designed an ambitious state programme for the AFU's development, which included rearming the Ukrainian military with modern weapons systems. The government of the next president, the Russia aligned Viktor Yanukovych, subsequently cut this programme, undermining the AFU's combat readiness.[7] Unsurprisingly, at the time of the annexation of Crimea in March 2014, the Ukrainian

---

[5] Kuzio, Taras. "The Non‑military Security Forces of Ukraine." The Journal of Slavic Military Studies 13, no. 4 (2000): 29–56, 30; Akmaldinov, Yevhen. "Development of Civil-Military Relations in Independent Ukraine," 2003, 8-9

[6] "Transcript of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine Meeting in the Aftermath of the Russian Aggression in the Crimea" [In Ukrainian], Ukrainska Pravda, February 22, 2016, http://www.pravda.com.ua/ articles/2016/02/22/7099911; Zarembo, Kateryna. "Substituting for the State: The Role of Volunteers in Defense Reform in Post-Euromaidan Ukraine." Kyiv-Mohyla Law and Politics Journal 0, no. 3 (December 25, 2017): 47–70, 47;

[7] https://zn.ua/ukr/ukraina-1991-2020/opk-jakij-ukrajina-vtratila.html; https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/05/how-corruption-guts-militaries-ukraine-case-study/84646/

military was ill-equipped, understaffed, undertrained, and unmotivated, with only about 2000 deployable troops.

In the early years of independence, the military did not recognize addressing the Russian threat as an overriding part of its mission. The *Concept of Defence and Development of the Ukrainian Armed Forces,* adopted in October 1991, proclaimed the neutral and non-aligned status of Ukraine. This development required restructuring the AFU by preparing the troops to repel aggression from every direction, including Russia.[8] However, these efforts never materialized. Ukraine's second president Leonid Kuchma (1994-2005) pushed a "multi-vector" foreign policy for Ukraine insisting on non-aligned status. This neutral orientation, combined with pro-Russian sympathies of the government, resulted in the failure to recognize Russia as a potential aggressor. The resolution of the first crisis between Russia and Ukraine over the status of the Russian navy in Crimea in Russia's favour cemented the intertwined political future of the two states. In early 2014, the Ukrainian military remained stationed according to Cold War deployment plans in the western part of the country, leaving its eastern regions open to the Russian invasion.[9]

Immediately before the 2014 Russian invasion, the Yanukovych government delivered the final blow to already stagnating military institutions. It divested from training and exercises while further cutting the number of troops.[10] From 2010 to 2013, the annual expenditure for training and development had never reached a 20% mark, with more than 80% of funds spent on ineffective bureaucracy. In 2013, the military spent $1.52 billion on salaries and social benefits for the personnel, while only $0.1 and $0.22 billion were allocated on training and modernization, respectively.

Civilian control and oversight 1991-2014

Soviet legacies also prevented Ukrainian civilian officials from establishing effective control of the military. First, independent Ukraine kept appointing military rather than civilian leaders as ministers of defence. Doing so distanced Ukrainian civil-military relations from the standards of western democracies, in particular OSCE and NATO countries. Second, civilians struggled to achieve dominance in security policymaking.

Following Soviet tradition, the General Staff dominated policy formulation, leaving the administrative issues to the MoD. Unsurprisingly, the uniformed personnel of the General Staff drafted most of the foundational military policies, including the laws "*On the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine,*" "*On Defence of Ukraine,*" and "*On the Armed Forces of Ukraine.*"[11] Despite these shortcomings, Ukraine's democratic aspirations helped create the legal and doctrinal bases for civilian control of the armed forces, at least on paper. In 1997, the Verkhovna Rada (Ukrainian Parliament) developed and approved the *Concept of National Security of*

---

[8] Natalie Mychajlyszyn, "Civil-military relations in post-Soviet Ukraine: Implications for domestic and regional stability." *Armed forces & society* 28, no. 3 (2002): 455-479, 467.

[9] Ilmari Käihkö, "A Nation-in-the-Making, in Arms: Control of Force, Strategy and the Ukrainian Volunteer Battalions." *Defence Studies* 18, no. 2 (April 3, 2018): 147–66, 152.

[10] https://savelife.in.ua/materials/news/derzhava-ne-mozhe-buty-v-povniy-miri-hot/

[11] Polyakov, Leonid I. "Defense Institution Building in Ukraine." *Connections* 7, no. 2 (2008): 15-20, 16.

Ukraine that emphasized the necessity of establishing democratic civilian control over the armed forces. In 2003, it passed the *Law of Ukraine "On Democratic Civilian Control of State Military Organization and Law Enforcement Bodies,"* extending the scope of civilian control over security services.[12] In practice, civilian control remained underdeveloped as the power of oversight resided mainly within the executive branch.

Thus, pre-2014 legislative efforts constitute only partial success in democratizing Ukrainian civil-military relations. By the beginning of the war in Donbas in 2014, the Parliament's capacity to exercise effective oversight of the armed forces remained limited. At the same time, the President of Ukraine and Presidential Administration had close to full power over the military.[13] In addition, almost since the inception, the Ukrainian military was in a constant state of reforms leaving both civilian authorities and the military in flux about the future of the UAF.

Defence procurement and manufacturing 1991-2014

Despite Ukraine being one of the world's biggest arms exporters, Soviet legacies, ineffective governance, reliance on foreign clients over domestic contracts, and corruption meant that leading up to 2014, the Ukrainian military industrial complex (MIC) could not provide all necessary weapons and technologies to its own military.

Ukraine inherited a powerful and extensiv;e MIC from the Soviet Union. It could manufacture a full range of weapons systems and parts, including airplane engines, radiolocation systems, airplanes, tanks, missiles, launching systems, and ships. However, Ukrainian MIC had been designed to be dependent by Soviet authorities attempting to discourage regional autonomy. The Soviet approach to arms manufacturing was to scatter military plants, research and development bureaus, and assembly facilities across all Soviet republics, creating mutual dependence. Therefore, even after the independence, the Ukrainian defence industry remained connected to and dependent on Russia.

After the breakup of the USSR, Russia filled the gap left by lost facilities by investing in new independent capabilities (so-called import substitution), forming closed production cycles. At the same time, Russia continued to order the outdated Soviet-designed Ukraine-manufactured spare parts. This situation maintained the Ukrainian dependence on the Russian clients while disincentivizing Ukrainian state-owned companies from developing new systems and designs. As a result, Russia was

---

[12] Bulletin of the Verkhovna Rada, 2003, No 46, p. 366

[13] Stacy Closson,"Civil-Military Relations in a Sovereign Ukraine: Contributing or Detracting from the Security of a New Nation?" In *Ukrainian Foreign and Security Policy: Theoretical and Comparative Perspectives*, edited by Jennifer D P Moroney, Taras Kuzio, and Mikhail A Molchanov, 113–28. Praeger, 2002, 118; Leonid Polyakov, 2005. An analytical overview of democratic oversight and governance of the defence and security sector in Ukraine. *Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces.*, 3; Puglisi, Rosaria. "Institutional Failure and Civic Activism: The Potential for Democratic Control in Post-Maidan Ukraine." In *Reforming Civil-Military Relations in New Democracies*, edited by Aurel Croissant and David Kuehn, 2017, 45; Author's interview with the former commander of the Air Assault Forces of Ukraine, Lieutenant General Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Kyiv, December 2019.

modernizing its MIC while Ukraine lagged.[14] Ukrainian attempts to reform its procurement system to address weaknesses were also met with resistance from the military officials who benefitted from corruption in the manufacturing and bidding processes.[15]

The main lifeline for Ukraine's defence industry in this period was the international arms trade. Orders from foreign clients such as Pakistan, Turkey, India, Thailand, Vietnam, UAE and others not only brought money to the Ukrainian MIC but also helped modernize Ukrainian weapons that the AFU procured through state defence orders. In 2012 foreign clients financed 60% of research and development orders in Ukraine's MIC. However, the lack of vision, corruption, and weak governance in MIC led to multiple failures in arms exports in this period. For instance, in 2009, Ukraine failed to fulfil a $2 billion US-sponsored contract for the Iraqi military.[16]

Internal Security Force Reform 1991-2014

Ukrainian politicians may have left the military to its own devices, but post-transition leaders competed fiercely for control of the internal security institutions. Those were commonly used for repression in Soviet times (and most salient to the everyday lives and safety of ordinary Ukrainians), most notably the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVS, responsible for policing) and the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU, responsible for domestic intelligence as well as countering terrorism and organized crime). Before 2014, these institutions received more funding than the MoD and AFU. Friesendorf characterizes the situation thus: "The tradition of regime policing survived Ukraine's independence. In fact, it became worse. Communism had, at least in principle, made its representatives accountable to state organs. After independence, in the absence of an overarching ideology, state interests became indistinguishable from personal interests."[17]

Because of policing's salience to the daily lives of citizens, it is unsurprising that in the years following independence, Ukrainian civil society groups concentrated their pro-reform efforts far more heavily on police than military reform, particularly focusing on bringing an end to the torture and extortion by the police that was routine in the Soviet era. It is notable that early victories – when the government signed a number of European human rights conventions, revised the Criminal Procedure Code, and created several new accountability and investigative mechanisms – were often framed in terms of attempting to better match the practices of western European neighbours.

However, the major swings in Ukraine's political leadership every few years during this period made it easy for the MVS and SBU to stall on reform implementation, and difficult for activists to impose meaningful political costs. Most observers therefore agree that very little actual change in institutional practice took place. Pehlman

---

[14] https://zn.ua/ukr/ukraina-1991-2020/opk-jakij-ukrajina-vtratila.html

[15] https://mil.in.ua/uk/blogs/yak-ukrayini-vygotovlyaty-suchasnu-zbroyu/

[16] https://zn.ua/ukr/ukraina-1991-2020/opk-jakij-ukrajina-vtratila.html

[17] Cornelius Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," *Problems of Post-Communism, vol. 66, no. 2* (2019): 111

memorably summarizes police reform efforts before 2014 as "an elusive and piecemeal medley of grudging symbolic concessions and stillborn pilot programs."[18]

This was especially true in Ukraine's peripheries. Marat describes local police departments outside of Kyiv during this period as "self-regulating patrimonial structures that collected bribes and then shared some of the revenue with the central leadership in Kyiv."[19] Civil society organizations in these areas were generally small and poorly networked – particularly heinous cases of police abuse sometimes prompted protests and support from activists in the capital, but this support was transitory and failed to translate into concrete reforms.[20]

Furthermore, political leaders learned from experience the importance of keeping direct control over policing institutions. Pehlman argues convincingly that failure to maintain sufficiently tight control over these institutions contributed significantly to the fall of both Leonid Kravchuk's and Leonid Kuchma's governments (in 1994 and 2004 respectively).[21] In a further illustration, while internal security forces largely refused to act against protestors during the 2004 Orange Revolution, pro-Russian President Yanukovych, taking power in 2010, learned from this example and packed these institutions with appointees and officers from his home region of Donbas or with other strong ties to Russia.[22] As of 2013, Transparency International reported that 84% of survey respondents in Ukraine characterized the police as corrupt or extremely corrupt.[23]

Comparative Analysis

Observers familiar with the profound security sector transformation seen in many other post-Soviet states during this period, perhaps most notably the Baltics, will naturally wonder what differentiated Ukraine from these relative success stories. These divergent post-Soviet experiences serve as an important illustration of two linked political dynamics that shape SSR outcomes. The first of these is the indispensable role of popular demand for sparking and maintaining such momentum, and the second is the central importance of establishing reform momentum during a post-upheaval window of opportunity.

As discussed at the beginning of this piece, donors attempting to convince the leaders of various states to enact SSR are routinely frustrated by their inability to offer these leaders sufficiently enticing "carrots" to enact reform. What they fail to understand is that no promised benefit is large enough to counter-balance the risks and losses ruling elites usually face from relaxing their direct control over security forces. However, in the case of the Baltic states, external donors had an enormous inducement to offer for successful security sector reform that appealed, not solely or primarily to ruling elites, but to ordinary citizens. This was the prospect of eventual NATO and (even more importantly) EU membership. Furthermore, this "carrot" became available just as

---

[18] Nicholas Pehlman. "Patrimonialism through Reform," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies, 2020, Vol. 37, No. 3/4* (2020):327

[19] Erica Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. Oxford University Press, 2018: 147

[20] Ibid, 142-149

[21] Pehlman. "Patrimonialism through Reform," 328

[22] Ibid.

[23] "Global Corruption Barometer 2013, Ukraine" *Transparency International*, September 17, 2016: http://www.transparency.org/gcb2013/country/?country=ukraine

Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 112

citizens of these newly democratized states gained the ability to reward or punish leaders for delivering or failing to deliver change.

In the early post-transition years, the balance of power between US/European major powers and a newly 'independent' Russia was too delicate for direct membership negotiations to begin. However, the 1994 establishment of NATO's Partnership for Peace (PfP) with its relatively uncontroversial goal of preparing "new" European militaries to participate in UN-mandated peacekeeping missions established a rationale for the Baltic states to create (and receive external assistance in developing) the joint Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT).[24] As Chinchilla and Poast recount, "By creating and cooperating through BALTBAT, the Baltic states signalled their willingness to find joint solutions to security problems. In other words, they demonstrated a desire and ability to fulfil a core function of NATO: provide collective defence. Second, BALTBAT facilitated the distribution of technical assistance and material resources from the established democracies to the Baltics."[25] At the same time, as EU membership was becoming a more potent economic prize, and candidacy more realistic for these states, "the EU demanded from its candidates not just proof of their democratic credentials but also precise performance standards in a number of fields of non-military security" – including, but not limited to, police and judicial reforms.[26]

The full story of these states' reform and ascension is beyond the scope of this analysis. However, in short, it is a story of path dependence - success building on prior success. The creation of BALTBAT (among other mechanisms) set in motion in the Baltic states the changes to doctrine, threat assessment, training, and so on that failed to jump-start in post-transition Ukraine (with, as subsequently explored, profound consequences in 2014). Eventual participation in training exercises and later missions gave Baltic forces experience in unconventional and hybrid warfare, and created the immediate combat requirements necessary to overcome institutional resistance and inertia. The existence of a concrete goal (membership) that stood to deliver gains to the average citizen helped maintain popular pressure for continuing reform throughout. Eventual ascension to NATO and the EU cemented the reform gains necessary for admission by enmeshing the Baltics in a multilateral system of demand and obligation as well as on-going technical assistance and other support.

---

[24] Alexandra C. Chinchilla, and Paul Poast. "Defense Institution Building from Above? Lessons from the Baltic Experience." *Connections* 17, no. 3 (2018): 64
[25] Ibid.
[26] Marina Caparini. "Security sector reform and NATO and EU enlargement." *SIPRI yearbook* (2003): 239

Security Sector Reform in Ukraine 2014-2022

The societal mobilization against the pro-Russian foreign policy of Viktor Yanukovych (the Revolution of Dignity), and Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 opened another window of opportunity for security sector reform. First, Russia's annexation of Crimea and incursions in Eastern Ukraine clarified the threat environment — Ukraine was unquestionably under a Russian attack.[27] The previous competition for domestic political control between pro-Russian and pro-Western blocs (dooming many reform attempts to periodic reversals) was largely settled in favour of the latter. Second, the armed conflict in Eastern Ukraine brought the security sector to the forefront of the governmental and societal priorities. Third, open military hostilities in the centre of Europe attracted resources from the Western countries, creating pressure and enabling reforms.

This open escalation exposed the failures and weaknesses of all of Ukraine's security institutions. These include lack of military expertise in responding to low-intensity conflict in urban environments and the lack of coordination between the SBU, MoIA, the AFU, and other security actors. However, after the first several months, in which ineffective security forces received stop-gap support from volunteers and civil society, the government regrouped and began working with external supporters to address those issues most related to combat readiness. Over the next seven years Ukraine made remarkable (though incomplete) reform progress in learning to operate under irregular conditions, bringing volunteer and irregular forces under official control, and establishing an NCO corps. Further, the government began to address a key domestic vulnerability by instituting meaningful police reform in Kyiv, though little progress was made expanding this reform. However, reform progress in areas less relevant to immediate combat needs – updating professional military education, cementing civilian control over the military, and addressing inefficiency and corruption in defence acquisitions – lagged. Both successes and failures have had clear impacts on Ukraine's ability to respond to the full-scale Russian invasion of 2022.

Facing the problem: Early failures

The dynamics previously explored left all Ukrainian security institutions profoundly unprepared to respond to the Russian incursions of 2014, or even to determine whose job it was to respond.

In the early days of Russia's incursion in Eastern Ukraine in 2014, Russian tactics involved igniting protests, taking over government buildings, destroying civilian and military infrastructure, and killing or taking hostage local pro-Ukrainian activists. The AFU was unprepared to respond to unconventional violence committed by the local Russian-armed militants, Russian mercenaries, and paramilitaries – such a response fell outside of the AFU's understanding of its professional mission and expertise. This helps explain numerous acts of insubordination among the soldiers and officers. Despite the recognition of intrastate armed violence as one of the most pressing issues of the 2000s, the AFU had never updated its professional profile to adopt

---

[27] Polina Beliakova, "External Threats and Civilian Control: The Case of Ukrainian Military's Professional Adaptation to Russian Aggression," in David Kuehn, Aurel Croissant, and David Pion-Berlin Eds. *Research Handbook of Civil-Military Relations* (Edward Elgar Publishing, Forthcoming 2024)

counterinsurgency strategy, population-centric tactics, urban warfare training, or anything pertaining to intrastate missions.

Instead, the mandate for countering such internal violence was supposed to belong to the SBU and the MoIA.[28] However, it was clear that these institutions, somewhat discredited and in any case designed to quell moderate internal dissent, lacked anything like the training, capability, and operational skill necessary to respond to a large-scale regular/irregular hybrid threat wherein insurgent forces were supported by the resources (and often the troops) of a major military power.

Moreover, due to years of competition and mistrust, Ukraine's security sector remained a patchwork of organizations lacking a unified vision and capacity. The AFU, SBU, and newly created National Guard had no interoperability training. When Ukraine launched its Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) it placed the SBU in charge. The abovementioned vulnerabilities of Ukraine's security sector defined the key directions of subsequent reforms.

Drivers of Resilience & Adaptation

The reforms that Ukraine badly needed to respond to the new threat touched upon tactical, operational, and institutional issues. The tactical and operational reforms included improving training and exercise, creating new Special Operations Forces (SOF), changing the recruitment practices to bring volunteer fighters under the AFU's control. Institutional reforms required fundamental changes in political processes and practices including reforming the professional military education (PME), improving civilian control of the military, and increasing transparency in defence procurement and the military industrial complex of Ukraine.

SSR between 2014 and 2021 was unsurprisingly most successful in those areas where the government, citizens (acting through civil society), and donors shared the same priorities.

Critically, post-2014 Ukrainian governments recognized the necessity of changing the security and defence sector's practices. Despite some disappointing rollbacks in civilian control (discussed in detail below), the Poroshenko (2014-2019) and Zelensky governments alike fostered security reforms that prioritized improving the AFU's immediate battlefield performance.

Furthermore, Ukraine's vibrant civil society, mobilized during the Revolution of Dignity, stepped in to improve the procurement and supply for the frontline troops as well as improve the civilian expertise in the MoD. Finally, as early as June 2014 the United States and other western countries started supplying Ukraine with non-lethal and later lethal aid. In return they insisted on reforms improving civilian control, reducing corruption in MIC, and defence procurement.

Most reforms that received strong support and direct involvement from government, citizens (acting through civil society), and donors resulted in complete or partial success. Those that lacked governmental commitment, civil society input, and/or

---

[28] Rosaria Puglisi, "General Zhukov and the Cyborgs: a clash of civilisation within the Ukrainian armed forces," *Istituto Affari Internazionali* (IAI), 2015, 2, 6; Author's interview with the former commander of the Air Assault Forces of Ukraine, Lieutenant General Mykhaylo Zabrodskyi, Kyiv, December 2019

western resources were slow rolled, with the consequences becoming clear after Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Successful Reforms

1. Special Forces

The Ukrainian government approved the creation of the Special Operation Forces (SOF) in 2016. Western advising, training, and supply efforts were essential for creating this new branch of the AFU bringing the military's profession closer to the relevant challenges of Russian aggression. The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs relied on its Global Security Contingency Fund (GSCF) — a joint program with the U.S. Department of Defence — to finance the training of the Ukraine's National Guard and later the Special Operation Forces. Instructors from the United States, Canada, Denmark, Romania, and the UK implemented the training.[29] Joint exercises, including with US Special Operations Command Europe, brought Ukrainian SOF closer to NATO standards.[30] In 2019, a Ukrainian SOF unit successfully passed assessments to join the NATO Response Force signifying a high standard of training.[31] The mission and expertise of the new SOF includes military information and psychological operations, organization and support of resistance movement including in the occupied territories; counterterrorism, international military cooperation, protection of citizens and state-owned objects outside Ukraine, and clandestine operations behind enemy lines.[32]

2. Engaging with Civilians in Conflict

In addition, the AFU created a new civil-military cooperation component. Before the beginning of the war, the AFU shunned any engagement with civilians in the conflict-affected areas. Early instances of the military's failure to implement orders were directly linked to the AFU's inability to interact with civilian populations. For instance, on April 17, 2014, in Kramatorsk, Donetsk oblast, the 25th Airborne Brigade of the AFU surrendered under the pressure of local civilians and unidentified armed individuals.[33] The soldiers explained their refusal to resist by stating that no one trained them to engage with civilian populations or to undertake urban combat operations against irregular forces.[34] The soldiers did not have a protocol for how to interact with civilians under such circumstances and instead had to fall back on the typical military protocol of not engaging at all.

Recognizing this gap in professional training as a strategic vulnerability, the AFU developed civil-military coordination units charged with managing civilian affairs in the conflict zone. The new civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) units underwent

---

[29]https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/ukraine-conflict-ukrainian-special-operations-forces-in-focus

[30]https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/ukraine-conflict-ukrainian-special-operations-forces-in-focus

[31] https://www.thedefensepost.com/2022/03/14/security-assistance-ukraine/

[32] https://sof.mil.gov.ua

[33] Kateryna Hladka, Dmytro Khromakov, Veronika Myronova, Oleh Pokal'chuk Ol'ha Pluzhnyk, Ihor Rudych, Vasylisa Trofymovych, and Artem Shevchenko. "Dobrobaty: Istoriia bataloniv, shcho vriatuvaly krainu." (2016), 250.

[34] https://echo.msk.ru/blog/azar_i/1302072-echo/; Hladka et al. 2016.

special training to respond effectively to the needs of the local population in the conflict-affected zone and adjust the military operations accordingly.[35] Since 2015, the US-based NGO CIVIC (Center for Civilians in Conflict) has assisted the Ukrainian military in bringing the AFU's civilian protection practices in to line with NATO standards. The Ukrainian military officers have been eager to learn the new skills because it matched the operational requirements they encountered on the ground and brings them closer to NATO and farther from Russia and its Soviet heritage.[36] In short, improving civil-military coordination in conflict-affected areas helped match the AFU's professional skills to the war's realities.

3. Developing the Reserve Corps: Territorial Defence Forces (TRO)

In addition, Ukraine has managed to bring the patchwork of volunteer fighters activated during the early days of the war under the AFU's chain of command.[37] In late 2014, Minister of Defence Poltorak recognized that the volunteer battalions which had stepped in while the military was re-emerging from its slumber in the spring of 2014 needed to be brought under civilian control and into the AFU's chain of command. As soon as November 2014, the MoD presented an ultimatum to the volunteers — sign contracts or lay down arms. By summer 2015, most of the volunteer fighters either signed the contracts and joined the AFU or the National Guard or had laid down their arms. In rare but visible cases of tensions between the government and the militarized formations, official Kyiv showed assertiveness and forced the disobedient volunteer units to disband.

Most importantly, over the eight years of war, Ukraine developed a legal and institutional basis for effectively mobilizing the reserve corps (TRO) under firm civilian control and within the AFU command.[38] The Ministry of Defence, the General Staff, and the Ground Forces Command, with advice from civil society organizations, reformed the territorial defence units, thus creating the TRO brigades. In 2018 the General Staff and the Ground Forces Command formed 25 new TRO brigades in all Ukraine's regions. These brigades underwent training involving professional military and reserve soldiers. In 2021, the Parliament passed a new law "On the national resistance" cementing the place of TRO in the military vertical, putting TRO under the direct command of the AFU's Commander in Chief.[39] New TRO brigades helped effectively manage the influx of volunteers willing to defend Ukraine after Russia's full-scale attack on February 24, 2022.[40] This success was particularly critical in that it gave the international coalition supporting Ukraine the necessary confidence that the weapons and other support they provided would remain under governmental control.

---

[35] Author's interview with Military Attache at Embassy of Ukraine in Washington DC, Col. Andriy Ordynovych, October 2019.

[36] Author's interview with former CIVIC employee.

[37] Rosaria Puglisi, 2015. Heroes Or Villains?: Volunteer Battalions in Post-Maidan Ukraine. Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI), 4.

[38] Polina Beliakova, "Volunteer troops can be a curse, not a blessing. But Ukraine may be figuring it out." Washington Post, February 27, 2022, https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/02/27/volunteer-troops-can-be-curse-not-blessing-ukraine-may-be-figuring-it-out/

[39] https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/territorial-defence-of-ukraine-backgroun-2-en/

[40] Mykola Bielieskov and Anton Muraveinyk, "Generalization and Assessment of Territorial Defense Forces Application Experience in 2022," *Come Back Alive,* https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/generalization-and-assessment-of-territo-en/

4. Building an NCO Corps

The reform of the Ukrainian sergeant corps (NCO corps) of the AFU is another success. This reform was supported from all three aforementioned directions: the Ukrainian government, civil society, and Ukraine's western partners. The Parliament created the legal basis,[41] the Project Office of Reforms (a civil society component that existed within the MoD until October 4, 2020) fostered the implementation of the reform, the United States and NATO provided the educational component,[42] consulting, and expertise, and the General Staff of the AFU set the reform in action.[43]

One of the important drivers of the reform was distancing the AFU from the Soviet and Russian rank system. Switching to the new system dramatically improved personnel management, streamlined the promotion practices, and brought Ukrainian troops to the ranks and insignia standards outlined in NATO's Standardization Agreement (STANAG) 2116.[44] A transparent promotion system helps soldiers to strategize their career development and fosters personnel retention. Reforming the NCO corps in line with the NATO standards opened new avenues for training, exchange, and education. Many newly hired members of the NCO corps attended workshops and courses at NATO's and U.S. professional military training institutions.[45] This reform elevated the personnel quality and increased the prestige of military service in Ukraine. It also contributed to military effectiveness since the AFU replaced thousands of officers lacking professional managerial training with new leadership-oriented sergeants.

5. Reforming Ukraine's Military Industrial Complex

Despite the corruption concerns and overall ineffectiveness of defence procurement reforms discussed below, some reforming efforts in Ukrainian MIC were successful and remain promising. In 2020, the Ministry of Economy completed the first comprehensive review of the defence-industrial complex. It concluded that most weapons, military and special equipment of the Ukrainian Armed Forces are outdated and physically obsolete. In 2020-2021, a working group from The Office of the President, the Verkhovna Rada, the Ministry of Defence, the National Security Council, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Economy, the State Space Agency, the embassies of the G7 countries and the NATO Liaison Office, scientists, and anti-corruption experts developed a new law on reforming the state-owned MIC companies.

This law enacted in October 2021 allowed to corporatize the companies associated with the biggest state-owned concern, Ukroboronprom. This corporatization effort brought Ukrainian MIC closer to the OSCE standards, partially mitigates the corruption risks associated with the Ministry of Strategic Industries discussed below,

---

[41]https://mil.in.ua/uk/verhovna-rada-zrobyla-krok-u-formuvanni-serzhantskogo-korpusu/, https://mil.in.ua/uk/news/komitet-z-natsbezpeky-pogodyv-zakonoproekt-shhodo-serzhantskogo-korpusu/

[42] https://mil.in.ua/uk/v-odesi-rozpochalys-kursy-liderstva-vid-instruktoriv-zi-ssha-ta-brytaniyi/

[43]https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-polytics/3009914-reforma-serzantskogo-korpusu-vidbuvalas-za-ucastu-ekspertiv-proektnogo-ofisu-minoboroni.html

[44] https://mil.in.ua/uk/verhovna-rada-zrobyla-krok-u-formuvanni-serzhantskogo-korpusu/

[45] https://novynarnia.com/2021/08/23/reforma-serzhantskoho-korpusu/

opens Ukrainian state-owned MIC companies to investors, and mitigates direct political influence on arms production.[46] The reform of Ukroboronprom continued even after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and resulted in the full restructuring of the concern into a joint stock company in June 2023

Stalled Reforms and Persistent Challenges

Despite these successes, Ukraine struggled to implement other important security sector reforms between 2014 and early 2022.

1. Professional Military Education (PME) Reform

One of the areas where the Ukrainian military and government slow-rolled security sector reforms is professional military education. The current system suffers from outdated pedagogical practices, inadequate curriculum that does not match the real-life security challenges, underdeveloped foreign language studies, and the lack of a systemic approach to a career-long support of the officer corps.[47] NATO's Defence Education Enhancement Programme in Ukraine encountered difficulties with language skills as well as overstretched PME structure that involves multiple separate educational institutions that do not exchange knowledge or experience in a systemic way.[48] PME reform requires the reorganization of existing institutions in accordance with the western standards of military education. The primary motivation for adopting the western standards lies not so much in their effectiveness or applicability to the Ukrainian realities but rather in the necessity of interoperability under conditions where the west is providing Ukraine with necessary weapons and training. Therefore, the Ukrainian military would have to learn the western standards and a special toolkit for translating them in accordance with the unique Ukrainian challenges. In practice, this reform also means that many Soviet-educated officers would have to adapt to new requirements or lose their jobs.

It should come as no surprise that this reform met resistance among the military and its implementation was sluggish at best. As of 2021, Ukraine was still at the planning stage, discussing the potential perspectives of PME for officers and building the legal basis for the reform the importance of which was recognized years before.[49]

The reform of the military education was likely deprioritized because, at the first glance, it does not directly affect battlefield performance. However, a deeper dive in the subject proves otherwise. A study conducted by a civil society organization "Come Back Alive" cites the lack of professional military education as one of the main reasons why soldiers who signed contracts with the AFU and received training and combat experience do not extend their contracts. The respondents of the survey stated that the current educational system does not provide sufficient practical skills training, involves the military personnel in custodial work, often has low qualification of instructors, and a mismatch between training and their professional responsibilities in the military.[50]

---

[46] https://ukroboronprom.com.ua/pro-reformu
[47] https://www.pfp-consortium.org/articles/defense-education-enhancement-program-ukraine-limits-natos-education-program
[48] https://www.pfp-consortium.org/articles/defense-education-enhancement-program-ukraine-limits-natos-education-program
[49] https://www.mil.gov.ua/content/files/whitebook/WhiteBook 2021_Draft_Final_03.pdf, p. 37
[50] https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/why-are-servicemen-leaving-the-armed-for/

About 62% of the survey respondents stated that they signed the contracts because they wanted to become professional military. The failure of the PME reform undermines this motivation and jeopardizes Ukrainian defence and security in several ways. First, it prevents liberation from the Soviet standards, practices, and values embedded in the curriculum. Second, the gap between the newly educated soldiers and officers that received outdated education creates unnecessary friction. In particular, the officers do not receive adequate training in how to manage the rank-and-file.[51] Third, it creates a leaking pipeline in recruitment, training, and retention of new talent in the AFU.

2. Rolling Back Civilian Control

Between 2014 and 2022 Ukraine struggled with adopting the western requirements of civilian control of the military. For the first five years of the war, the Ukrainian MoD was headed by career military officers. One of them, General Stepan Poltorak (MoD 10/2014 - 08/2019), a great proponent of the reforms, even retired from the military service while already holding an MoD position to meet the western requirements of civilian control on paper. In August 2019, President Zelensky appointed the first civilian MoD of Ukraine in seven years. Out of 15 people who occupied the position since Ukrainian independence, Andrii Zahorodniuk was only the third civilian.

The former head of the civilian Reform Office at the MoD, Andrii Zahorodniuk, was in charge of the MoD less than seven months only to be replaced by another career military officer general Andrii Taran. Being a conservative old-school military professional, Taran resisted the reforms, dismissed the MoD's Reform Office supported by the United States and removed the Civilian Council responsible for advice and oversight of the ministry. These decisions rolled Kyiv's modest achievements in strengthening civilian control back to the pre-Maidan era.

It remains unclear why Zelensky decided to appoint a military minister of defence in place of a civilian reformer. Unfortunately, this decision had negative consequences for civilian control, anti-corruption efforts, defence procurement, and Ukraine's ability to defend itself in 2022 (which we discuss in detail later in this report).

3. Lack of Foresight and Transparency in MIC and Defence Procurement

Since 2014, the Ukrainian government, legislature, and civil society have achieved some positive changes in MIC. For instance, the military procurement market became more competitive, with private manufacturers and state-owned companies dividing the market on a 50-50 and sometimes even 40-60 basis.[52] As discussed, the state-owned Ukroboronprom – one of the biggest MIC players – started to undergo reforms promoted by the government and civil society with the support of the Western consultants. Ukraine increased its spending on modernization and armament of the AFU by 35 times between 2014 and 2021.[53] Nevertheless, these state defence orders still did not to provide the AFU with required equipment and civil society volunteers

---

[51] Ibid

[52] https://biz.liga.net/ua/all/all/article/bayraktary-djaveliny-slabaya-aviatsiya-i-odin-fregat-kak-armiyu-gotovili-k-veroyatnoy-voyne
https://www.epravda.com.ua/columns/2021/02/22/671218/

[53] https://www.epravda.com.ua/columns/2021/02/22/671218/

continue to buy badly needed vehicles, drones, armoured vests, electric generators, laptops and other goods for the military outside of the official procurement system.[54]

A decades-long lack of investment in research and development from the MoD created an absurd situation where foreign countries received the best Ukrainian-made weapons before the AFU. For instance, in 2021 the MoD was supposed to procure a "Vilkha-M" missile system with a range of 110 km which could be useful for repelling the Russian aggression. Instead, the MoD dragged its feet while the UAE government purchased this system for its military.[55] In addition to poor planning and procrastination by the MoD, private companies producing advanced weapons systems have to finance research and trials on their own, which halts the development of new equipment.

The main goal of reforming the defence procurement system was halting corruption. In 2014, the military and defence industry in Ukraine formed a dysfunctional corrupt blend in which the high officers from the General Staff could manipulate the technical requirements for new equipment and weaponry so that only the defence companies involved in the corrupt networks could meet them. Pervasive secrecy enabled these practices. Since the beginning of the war, the secret share of the defence procurement budget was increasing which took Ukraine farther from NATO standards.

Corruption extended beyond state-owned MIC players. New private manufacturers burgeoned because they enjoyed the support of powerful politicians. For instance, the ship building and armament company Kuznya na Rybalsky, belonged to Petro Poroshenko, the"Bogdan Motors corporation to the former first deputy secretary of the National Security Council Oleg Gladkovskyi, and the armoured vehicle company Ukrainska Bronetechnika was associated with the former head of the parliament's national security committee Serhii Pashynskyi.[56] Since before 2020, the state defence order remained 99% secret, these companies received lucrative contracts without proper bidding, competition, and oversight.

Attempting to address these issues, in July 2020, Ukrainian parliament passed the law on defence procurement aimed at decreasing corruption risks and increasing transparency. However, one year before the Russian invasion, Ukrainian anti-corruption experts noted that the law's implementation was undermined because of the foot-dragging of the Ministry of Strategic Industries and the MoD headed by Gen. (Ret.) Taran.[57] In particular, as late as the fall of 2021, these ministries did not develop a registry of the government contractors – a crucial element for the transparency of the defence procurement system.[58] As a result, the MoD failed to fulfil the state defence order, undermining not only the anti-corruption efforts but also leaving Ukraine unarmed in the face of the looming Russian invasion.[59] In November

[54]https://biz.liga.net/ua/all/all/article/bayraktary-djaveliny-slabaya-aviatsiya-i-odin-fregat-kak-armiyu-gotovili-k-veroyatnoy-voyne

[55]https://biz.liga.net/ua/all/all/article/bayraktary-djaveliny-slabaya-aviatsiya-i-odin-fregat-kak-armiyu-gotovili-k-veroyatnoy-voyne

[56] https://www.epravda.com.ua/columns/2021/02/22/671218/

[57]https://m.censor.net/ua/blogs/3249680/reforma_oboronnih_zakupvel_za_krok_vd_provalu?fbclid=IwAR2ic1eoX-A4JxxVq_ruVD2q1V6bFe-kaki2eWB0V5l3wKJlGo0KW153EKU
https://www.epravda.com.ua/columns/2021/01/18/670106/

[58] https://nako.org.ua/media/rejestr-vikonavciv-oboronnix-zakupivel-povilnii-neprozorii-i-duze-vazlivii

[59]https://biz.liga.net/ua/all/all/article/bayraktary-djaveliny-slabaya-aviatsiya-i-odin-fregat-kak-armiyu-gotovili-k-veroyatnoy-voyne

2021, the Minister of Defence Taran was fired by the parliament because he failed the state defence order and rolled back military reforms.

3. The New Ministry of Strategic Industries

In 2020, the Ukrainian government created a special ministry to deal with the Military Industrial Complex (MIC) including export – the Ministry of Strategic Industries. Ukrainian anti-corruption experts warned of risks associated with creating a separate ministry. First, the responsibilities of the new ministry overlapped with those of the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Economic Development, Ministry of Digital Transformation, and other ministries and agencies. Additionally, the new ministry received control of the state defence order, research and development in MIC, and arms exports and trade. These extensive prerogatives concentrated in the hands of one agency created conflict of interests and corruption risks.

Moreover, Ukraine's experts in defence procurement and anti-corruption became worried that none of Ukraine's Western partners had a separate MIC ministry. In their assessment, this mismatch in security sector governance practices could complicate cooperation with Ukraine's partners in arms trade. Finally, the ministry received control over the state-owned MIC organizations with the right to appoint the leadership, invest and divest from companies, as well as create new companies. Ukrainian experts expressed concerns that this approach contradicts the OSCE standards requiring corporate governance over the state-owned institutions instead of direct governmental control.[60] The main goal of the mentioned OSCE standards is to disentangle the professional appointments from political networks. Therefore, meeting these standards directly pertains to the anti-corruption efforts.

4. A Mixed Bag: Internal Security Reform 2014-2022

While the Russian incursion of 2014 forced a sudden awareness of the consequences of the military's weaknesses, the Revolution of Dignity immediately prior had forced a similar awakening regarding the police and other internal security services. As of the beginning of the 2013-2014 Euromaidan protests, President Yanukovych had successfully packed many internal security institutions with his own loyalists. In contrast with the neutral or protective attitude security forces had assumed toward protesters in the Orange Revolution, from November 2013 until the fall of the Yanukoyvch government the police killed at least a hundred protesters and injured over a 1,000, frequently in night raids and other operations likely to provoke public outrage.[61]

Unsurprisingly, the new Poroshenko government, deeply politically indebted to the types of civil society actors who had been most harmed, acted quickly to disband the Berkut (the riot police most directly implicated in the violence), to pass a new policing law, and to begin to set up a new "patrol police" system to handle day-to-day security provision (traffic control, immediate requests for help), first in Kyiv and

---

[60] https://nako.org.ua/storage/pdf/analiz-polozhennia-pro-Minstartprom.docx-2.pdf

[61] Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. 110
"Ukraine Crisis: Timeline," BBC News, November 13, 2014, www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-26248275

eventually in other major cities.[62] The new law, in line with findings from other SSR cases underlining the importance of building pro-reform coalitions prior to a moment of reform opportunity, was instigated in large part by activists who had been organizing for police reform since well before Euromaidan, and the law itself "reflected activists' input into the legislative process, mostly thanks to pre-existing venues of collaboration between NGO coalitions and parliament."[63] Importantly, it included major provisions to de-politicize police leadership, and explicitly created a role for civil society actors in vetting the planned new force.[64]

International assistance provided resources to make a rapid stand-up possible – the new patrol police model was based on a similar, successful Georgian reform program, and Georgia's former deputy interior minister took the remarkable step of immigrating to Ukraine to help implement it. As Peacock describes, the United States' International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (ICITAP) office in Kyiv "served as the administrative hub for the stand-up of the new patrol police, administering joint police and civil society hiring commissions and the two dozen ad hoc basic training facilities to prepare more than 18,000 officers for the first 31 patrol police departments across the country" in addition to other substantial and sustained U.S. funding.[65]

Many of these new officers had no prior background in law enforcement, but were considerably better-educated on average than previous forces, and specifically selected on the basis of "personal integrity and physical fitness."[66] Previous police salaries had been set at near-subsistence levels on the tacit expectation that officers would make up the difference in bribes (as well as cutting superiors up the chain of command in on profits) – these new police were considerably better paid and equipped.[67] Finally, in addition to the inherent pro-reform motivation of many new recruits (many had been participants in the Euromaidan protests) public tolerance for police violence was at a low ebb.[68] Overall, the new police were highly incentivized to break with past abusive and corrupt practices, and largely seem to have done so. As Peacock recounts "The first year of the new Patrol Police Department led to dramatic increases in public satisfaction and willingness to call the police. Surveys in the largest cities demonstrated that patrol police had become the single most trusted institution in the government (82% satisfaction rate) while calls to police were up nearly 70% and the average response time on those calls had fallen from more than 30 minutes to 9.5 minutes."[69]

---

[62] Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 113

[63] Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. 111
S Detzner, "Nothing For Us Without Us? The Impact of Popular Participation on Security Sector
Reform Progress In Transitional States," *Tufts University PhD diss.*, (2019)

[64] Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 113

[65] Robert Peacock, "Bayley's six critical elements of democratic policing: evaluating donor-assisted reform in Armenia, Georgia, and Ukraine," International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice, 45:3 (2021): 289
Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. 130

[66] Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 113

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.
Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. 128

[69] Peacock, "Bayley's six critical elements of democratic policing," 289
Focus, 2015. Nachalo Reformi pravooxranitelnoy systemi [The Start of Reforms in the System of Law Enforcement]. Focus Journal. Kyiv, Ukraine: Ukrainian Media Holding.

However, as is common in even successful cases of SSR, reform momentum waned and revanchist forces reorganized and pushed back before reforms could penetrate throughout the country and across different institutions.[70] The patrol police had been chosen as an initial reform target in part because their tasks brought them in frequent contact with the public (who could thus observe and politically reward improvement) but also because it was the part of the internal security structure that could be "replaced with the least political resistance."[71] The Poroshenko government and the Interior Ministry were either unwilling or unable to push past such resistance to the degree necessary for more pervasive change, and, according to Marat, gradually side lined the CSOs who might have served as allies in sustaining political pressure for reform.[72]

Some of the problems that resulted in what activists described as two systems (reformed and unreformed) operating simultaneously were practical – effective investigative teams and other officers with advanced skills could not be trained quickly.[73] However, other obstacles were more clearly political and speak to the difficulty of reforming long established institutional cultures as well as the difficulties of trying to focus finite government will and attention on multiple simultaneous targets in the context of on-going armed conflict. After the early burst of reform, structures allowing for the persistence of patronage networks within the Interior Ministry, and internal security services generally, were kept in place despite CSO protests.[74] Most notably, this included allowing chiefs of police and their deputies to be appointed rather than competitively recruited, especially among the regional police outside major cities, and allowing the Ministry of the Interior to maintain direct control of numerous opportunities, positions, and privileges tied to Ukraine's police universities.[75] Furthermore, throughout this period, many of the officers slated for removal through the official, CSO-assisted vetting process were never fired in practice, or were eventually reinstated.[76] Once again, Ukraine's political volatility played a role. As Friesndorf observes:

"Even for officials who acknowledged the flaws of the old system, it was rational to not openly support reform. After all, the political wind might change again; and in Ukraine, political change such as the replacement of interior ministers often meant the replacement of police down to the level of oblasts and raions."[77]

Beyond this, the government was faced with the somewhat more urgent and politically fraught task of purging the large, powerful SBU, which had been pervasively infiltrated by Russian agents, while (for lack of an alternative) keeping the institution functional enough to play its intelligence gathering roll at a critical time.[78] As subsequent periodic discoveries of additional Russian agents has revealed, these efforts were only partially successful.[79]

---

[70] S Detzner, "Nothing For Us Without Us? The Impact of Popular Participation on Security Sector Reform Progress In Transitional States," *Tufts University PhD diss.*, (2019)

[71] Peacock, "Bayley's six critical elements of democratic policing," 289

[72] Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries.* 111

[73] Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 116

[74] Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries.* 134

[75] Friesendorf, "Police Reform in Ukraine as Institutional Bricolage," 116

[76] Ibid, 114

[77] Ibid, 116

[78] Christopher Miller, "Mission: Impossible? Ukraine's New President Ventures To Reform Powerful State Spy Agency," *Radio Free Europe.* Aug. 17, 2019

Meanwhile, the window for police reform in neglected peripheral areas to the east had never truly opened – the need to beat back continuous Russian incursions after 2014 made demilitarizing and possibly decentralizing internal security services in these regions difficult if not impossible. However, the awareness among populations to the east that reforming their abusive and corrupt security providers was not a government priority was underlined by the fact that in February of 2014 several hundred former members of the Berkut riot police (banished from a security role in Kyiv and other major population centres after their Euromaidan abuse of protestors) were retrained and deployed against protestors in Donetsk and Kharkiv.[80]

Comparative Analysis

Ukraine's reform trajectory during this period in some ways reflects what one might expect from the experiences of other states that have attempted SSR. However, there are important and interesting differences, mostly stemming from the unusual dynamics created by the fact that internal reform and the external conflict with Russia are both part of the same extremely popular political project, the goal of durably freeing Ukraine from Russian dominance.

Generally speaking, states do not attempt to make changes to security sector governance systems while engaged in existentially threatening conflict. It is difficult to, essentially, 'remodel the plane while flying it'. Reforms that challenge the interests of security sector actors can compromise force unity, and any donors involved tend to focus assistance primarily on combat effectiveness. This is somewhat reflected in Ukraine's experience – the majority of the successful reforms discussed above are the ones most immediately related to success on the battlefield, and the stalled reforms were those that most closely related to security forces' underlying power structures. However, the length of the conflict and its significant escalation in 2022 (more on which below) has helped keep both internal and external pressure on security services to address these underlying issues. The weaknesses caused by a lack of appropriate professional military education, widespread corruption, and poor acquisition/procurement systems can be compensated for in a short war, but they become more and more serious in a long one (as has also become clear on the Russian side of the conflict).

Behind the front lines, delaying internal security service reform was not a political option when the unreformed security services (though attacks on protestors during Euromaidan) were seen by many citizens as tools of Russian aggression. Finally, in both internal security service and military reform, the CSOs that continue to push for reform have an unusually strong hand to play. Not only must Ukrainian political leaders keep their support to survive politically (see Poroshenko's electoral loss to the politically neophyte but much more strongly pro-reform Zelensky), but Ukraine's strong and well-organized civil society has and continues to contribute (with concrete and specific policy/legislative proposals, by joining the TROs and the patrol police,

https://www.rferl.org/a/ukraine-zelenskiy-reform-state-spy-agency-sbu-/30114589.html

[79] Daniel Boffey, "Ukrainian security service 'needs cleanout' after arrest of accused spy," *The Guardian*. Jan 26, 2023
https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/26/ukrainian-security-service-needs-cleanout-after-arrest-of-accused-spy

[80] Marat. *The politics of police reform: Society against the state in post-Soviet countries*. 118

by raising money/equipment, by lobbying donors) much more directly to both reform and war efforts than is usual.

Ukrainian Security Sector Governance in the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion (February 24, 2022 - present)

The invasion of February 2022 had an even more strongly unifying effect on Ukrainian society than the incursions of 2014. As a result, they have given a powerful boost to the demand for more effective security. It also forced external donors and Ukrainian officials to coordinate more closely than ever before – a heightened and accelerated version of the process that post-Soviet states such as the Baltics went through during their NATO candidacy processes. Importantly, previous reform successes proved critical to Ukraine's impressive (and widely unexpected) ability to withstand initial invasion and subsequent battlefield performance. However, as the war stretches on, the risks created in areas where reform has stalled also grow. Below, we review progress to date across a number of the key reform areas previously discussed.

1. Combat Readiness

The AFU's improved combat readiness — through training and exercise, professionalization, and proper troop rotation — contributed to the major differences in Ukraine's ability to repel the Russian attacks in 2014 vs. 2022. Unlike in 2014, the AFU was ready to face Russian aggression both mentally and professionally. Ukraine's defence forces had a clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities of different security institutions. The AFU, the National Guard, the SBU and other security forces had new capabilities developed in response to up-to-date threat assessments. Over the eight years, the AFU expanded its professional repertoire to include conventional and sub-conventional threats. The AFU also became proficient in using western anti-tank weapons (NLAWs, Javelins) which were especially useful in the first weeks of the invasion. The newly developed SOF (Special Operations Force) proved to be effective in operating in the occupied territories through clandestine activities, sabotage, informational-psychological operations, etc. Though after February 24 2022 the reform of the NCO corps was put on the back burner, it was implemented enough to contribute to Ukraine's ability to repel Russia's full-scale invasion.[81]

Training provided by Ukraine's allies has been and continues to be key to maintaining and building on these gains, in particular to incorporating new weapons systems and other advanced capabilities.[82] Unfortunately, the Ukraine-based training centres became targets for Russian missile fire and led to the withdrawal of the Multinational Training Group-Ukraine from Yavoriv, Lviv Oblast. Therefore, training provided in the European Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States is increasingly essential for maintaining Ukraine's combat readiness.

2. Reserve Corps

The AFU's previously-discussed gains in establishing control over and effectively deploying reservists has allowed Ukraine to make the most of one its strongest comparative advantages — the great enthusiasm of the Ukrainian population for

---

[81]https://apostrophe.ua/ua/news/society/2022-10-23/vajnyiy-komponent-armii-kak-reformirovalsya-institut-serjantov-vsu/282314

[82] https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/war-security-assistance-lessons

resisting the Russian invasion. In contrast to 2014, the improved recruitment system was able to process the volunteers faster, though they still had to (but notably were willing to) stand in long lines to the recruitment centres sometimes for several days.[83] The Ukrainian government has been able to maintain the monopoly over the legitimate use of military force it briefly lost in 2014 when relying on the volunteer battalions and then subsequently worked to regain. The AFU and the National Guard remain the only game in town, no longer competing for recruits with loosely organized and politically motivated militias.

By the end of the second day of invasion, February 26 2022, at least 50,000 citizens had joined the Territorial Defence Forces (Ukr: TRO).[84] In May 2022, the TRO numbered about 110,000 people.[85] Placing the willing volunteers within the AFU's chain of command as part of Territorial Defence Forces has promoted synergy between the regular ground troops and territorial defence forces. In addition, the subordination of reserves to the professional AFU officers fostered the delegation of authority on the lowest level and improved responsiveness of troops to the changing operational environment without expecting the approval from the very top.

These territorial defence battalions have served as the first line of defence in some areas, taking quick action before conventional troops could mobilize. According to interviews with local authorities reported in the Ukrainian media, when Russian troops first entered the city of Sumy, in northeast Ukraine, in late February 2022, territorial defence units repelled the initial attack with the help of local civilians.[86] These actions bought time for the Ukrainian military to deploy heavier artillery, drones, and additional forces to defend the city, even as the surrounding area fell under Russian occupation. In Chernihiv region, the TRO prevented the Russians from taking over the critical railroad connection and successfully targeted Russian logistics and supply lines.[87]

After Russia withdrew its troops from the Northern regions of Ukraine and focused its offensive in Southern and Eastern directions, the AFU used its TRO forces outside of their original zones of dislocation to enforce the new defence lines in the South and East of Ukraine.[88] Overall, the reform of territorial defence and the use of its reserve mobilization potential was crucial to Ukraine not only in the first months of war but also later on.

Notably, the combined impact of Ukraine's creation of an effective (if incomplete) NCO corps and deployment of the TRO within a clear chain of command (but with high levels of operational flexibility) has been to make the most of another comparative advantage against the Russian military, which has so far struggled to

---

[83] https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/generalization-and-assessment-of-territo-en/

[84] https://interfax.com.ua/news/general/803416.html

[85]https://armyinform.com.ua/2022/05/17/nyni-vzhe-stvoreno-ponad-700-dobrovolchyh-formuvan-terytorialnyh-gromad/;   https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/generalization-and-assessment-of-territo-en/

[86] https://www.pravda.com.ua/articles/2022/04/16/7339908/

[87] https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/generalization-and-assessment-of-territo-en/

[88] https://savelife.in.ua/en/materials/research-en/generalization-and-assessment-of-territo-en/

either train or empower junior officers to make independent tactical decisions in the face of changing battlefield conditions.[89] Russia's over-reliance on senior officers to make decisions in the field has also led to notoriously high death rates among these officers, who then cannot easily be replaced by ill-prepared subordinates.[90]

3. Professional Military Education (PME)

As the full-scale invasion started, the need for reforming the PME became even more urgent and obvious to Ukrainian government, in part, as previously noted, due to the enhanced training required to make the most of allied assistance. Despite the fact that for the first time in its history, the AFU is headed by an officer with no Soviet educational background — Gen. Valeriy Zaluzhnyi — down the chain of command there is still a mismatch between the old-school officers and soldiers trained according to the new requirements. As Ukraine continues to prioritize interoperability with NATO, its PME system remains a stumbling block. Understanding this, on 3 January 2023, the Ukrainian government approved the new concept of transforming the PME system.[91] Nevertheless, the implementation of the reform is likely to meet resistance as long as it is delegated to the very institution that needs to be reformed. Previous progress "on paper" was not transformed into a successful reform on the ground.

4. Civilian Control of the Military

As discussed earlier in this report, the appointment of a former military officer, Andrii Taran, as Minister of Defence rolled back Ukraine's progress in civilian control. One of Taran's first decisions in office was to terminate the work of the Project Reform Office — a crucial civil society component of the MoD — leaving the reform implementation to the institution that had to be reformed. Appointing a member of the military profession as a head of the MoD was not only a symbolic deterioration of civilian control. General Taran's record has also showed conservative tendencies, typical of the military officers educated under the old system. For instance, under his leadership and without any public discussion, the MoD invested in expensive Turkish-made Ada-class corvettes for the Ukrainian navy while deprioritizing smaller ground-based capabilities (e.g., heavy multiple rocket launcher Vilkha-M, Operational-Tactical Missile System Hrim-2 (Sapsan) which would have covered more relevant needs of the AFU.[92]

President Zelensky restored civil-military balance in the MoD in November 2021 by appointing Oleksii Reznikov as a civilian Minister of Defence. Reznikov successfully represents the political interests of the MoD, advances the reforms, builds strong cooperative relationships with Ukraine's partners and civil society. The strengthening of civilian control continues despite the ongoing war. For instance, the parliamentary committees on national security, budget, and European integration revived the work on a law project (#4210) that explicitly prohibits appointing any member of the

---

[89]https://www.defenseone.com/policy/2022/05/ncos-america-has-them-china-wants-them-russia-struggling-without-them/366586/
https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/07/20/why-russia-keeps-losing-generals-ukraine/
[90] Ibid.
[91] https://www.kmu.gov.ua/news/uriad-ukhvalyv-kontseptsiiu-transformatsii-systemy-viiskovoi-osvity-za-standartamy-nato
[92] https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/features-57103069;
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=56PCwxm-zf4&t=3903s.

military as a minister of defence, the first deputy minister of defence, or deputies of civilian appointees before the five-year "cool-down" period from their retirement from military service. This law, if approved and enacted, would bring Ukraine closer to NATO standards on civilian control.[93]

However, the potential strengthening of the position of civilians over the General Staff and the Commander in Chief sparked a public debate. Some critics argue that changing the power balance in the civil-military hierarchy during the war could be damaging to Ukraine's defensive capabilities. Others are struggling to accept that civilians would have more power over the military in general.[94] Therefore, if the government and the parliament want to strengthen civilian control by enacting the abovementioned law, they will have to address existing concerns and win support from civil society.

5. Defence Procurement and Anti-Corruption Efforts

The previous Ministry's of Strategic Industries and the Ministry's of Defence failures to implement the 2020 law on the military procurement clearly damaged the Ukrainian ability to defend itself from Russia's full-scale invasion in 2022. Since the MoD did not place the state defence order in 2020-2021 to procure the necessary weapons in time,[95] the Ukrainian MIC had extra capacity to take international orders instead of producing much needed weapons for Ukraine. In one case, a Ukrainian manufacturer took an order for producing highly efficient anti-tank weapons "Stuhna-P" from one of the Arab states and produced them right before the Russian invasion. This completed order was later redirected to the needs of the AFU – as a result, Ukrainian forces were using Ukrainian-made weapons with an Arabic interface.

Russia's full-scale invasion had a mixed effect on secrecy in Ukraine's defence procurement process. On the one hand, wartime realities require increased secrecy regarding military procurement since manufacturers, warehouses, repair facilities, and stockpiles constitute a high-priority target for Russian strikes and sabotage. On the other hand, Ukrainian society has become increasingly intolerant of corruption and embezzlement when the very existence of Ukraine is at stake.[96] In addition, since Ukraine is now dependent on Western weapons like never before, Western partners have more leverage to foster anti-corruption reforms.

Since 2022, the Ukrainian government has shown an increasing willingness to tackle corruption in defence procurement. In January 2023, Ukrainian media alleged that the Ministry of Defence was about to overpay suppliers of food for Ukrainian troops. The scandal resulted in hearings at the Ukrainian parliament, investigations, and the partial declassification of the defence procurement budget—a bold step toward transparency that is all the more striking in the midst of an ongoing war. As part of

---

[93]https://nako.org.ua/en/research/analiz-zakonoprojektu-4210-shhodo-zmicnennya-demokraticnogo-civilnogo-kontrolyu-nad-zbroinimi-silami-ukrayini

[94] https://espreso.tv/mayzhe-diktatura-yak-u-proekt-zakonu-4210-proshtovkhuyut-sumnivni-normi; https://vesti.ua/uk/politika-uk/zakryt-rty-ili-standart-nato-pochemu-zakonoproekt-4210-vyzval-skandal

[95]https://biz.liga.net/ua/all/all/article/bayraktary-djaveliny-slabaya-aviatsiya-i-odin-fregat-kak-armiyu-gotovili-k-veroyatnoy-voyne

[96] Interview with Tymofiy Mylovanov, President of the Kyiv School of Economics; Minister of economy of Ukraine, 2019-2020.

the response to this crisis, the parliament initiated a new law project (#8381) aimed at reducing secrecy in defence procurement.[97] In addition, the Ministry of Defence fired the head of the procurement department while the deputy minister of defence resigned voluntarily. This scandal is remarkable in that the investigative journalists broke the story before the money even changed hands. The Ukrainian government reacted promptly and professionally while the parliament launched the necessary procedures to get to the bottom of the alleged corruption.

In addition, despite the ongoing war, the largest state-owned concern Ukroboronprom continued to reform by corporatizing its companies in accordance with OECD norms. The Supervisory Board included experts in reforms, economics, anti-corruption efforts, former political appointees and civil society organizations. Interestingly, the all-out war even stimulated the reform process. The reform team is now prioritizing the companies with higher strategic priority and reducing the bureaucratic burden.[98]

As of July 29, 2023, Ukroboronprom was finally transformed into a joint stock company Ukrainska Oboronna Promyslovist (Ukrainian Defence Industry). The next reorganization steps will include the transfer of staff and property and further transformational processes. After that, a Supervisory Board will be formed to match the OECD standards.[99] President Zelensky also fired the previous director general, allegedly for the failure to develop an efficient missile program.[100] The new director general comes from the defence industry — his previous job was the director of an armoured vehicle factory in Kharkiv. The key priorities of the new director of the transformed state defence company are to intensify weapon production, clean the industry from corruption and complete the defence reform.[101] Ukrainian anti-corruption experts admit that while the first task might be relatively easy, the latter two will be a challenge due to the inherent corruption risks.[102]

The war in general increased the urge of purging the defence companies of remaining Russian influence and corrupt officials. In the recent most egregious example, Viacheslav Boguslaiev, director of the Ukrainian private company Motor Sich, — one of the largest manufacturers of helicopter engines in Europe – was discovered to be trading with Russians after the full-scale invasion. For instance, in March 2022, when Russian helicopters were attacking Ukrainian cities, Boguslaiev sought ways to supply the Russian military with the most advanced engines for attack helicopters MI-24, MI-28, and MI-35.[103] This situation was not new for the Ukrainian authorities. In 2020, investigative journalists reported that Motor Sich provided the necessary parts for the helicopters Russia used in the war against Ukraine since 2014.[104] This arrangement is a direct consequence of the Soviet production cycle approach in MIC discussed in the previous sections. When the USSR collapsed, Ukraine inherited the

[97]The current version of the proposed law has several inconsistencies that might halt its implementation: https://nako.org.ua/en/research/analiz-zakonoprojektu-8381-shhodo-zaprovadzennya-prozorosti-v-oboronnix-zakupivlyax

[98] Interview with Tymofiy Mylovanov, President of the Kyiv School of Economics; Minister of economy of Ukraine, 2019-2020.

[99]https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2023/06/29/701706/;

https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2023/06/26/701553/

[100] https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2023/06/27/701648/

[101] https://www.epravda.com.ua/publications/2023/06/26/701553/

[102] https://ukr.radio/news.html?newsID=101737

[103] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dms0wrbI1uQ

[104]https://bihus.info/motor-sich-nardepa-boguslaeva-postachae-detali-dlya-dviguniv-viyskovim-rf-pracyue-u-krimu-i-tzv-dnr/

most advanced engine-manufacturing capabilities and Russia became the main importer of Ukrainian engines after 1991. The Ukrainian governments under presidents Poroshenko and Zelensky did not interfere in Motor Sich trade with Russia between 2014 and 2022. Russia's all-out attack on Ukraine changed the government's priorities and in November 2022, the authorities seized control over the Motor Sich under martial law.[105]Fighting corruption in the defence industry will require a systematic effort to prosecute former officials.[106]

[105]https://www.reuters.com/markets/europe/ukraine-lawmaker-publishes-document-nationalisation-stakes-several-strategic-2022-11-07/
[106] https://www.epravda.com.ua/news/2023/06/27/701606/

Moving Forward: Recommendations for Prioritizing and Improving SSG in Wartime

Ukrainians and their supporters must decide how to build on reform gains while countering the most dangerous remaining weaknesses. Our key recommendations are as follows:

1. Push through defence industry and procurement reforms

Despite the ongoing war, Ukraine is embarking on reforms in the defence industry and procurement. This presents a challenge – during the war, transparency conflicts with security interests. Reducing secrecy about the types of weapon systems and equipment procured for the security sector, as well as exposing the list of manufacturers increases Ukraine's vulnerability to Russia's attacks on its MIC and weapons stockpiles. At the same time, lasting reform seems unlikely to take root without greater transparency, making it difficult to detect and punish corruption. One solution is to be more selective about the areas in which secrecy truly is necessary for security, rather than applying an overly broad policy.

Some areas can and should be made more transparent with little additional security risk assumed, such as procurement processes for non-military goods intended to support the military (e.g., rations) – such a move could prevent a repeat of the morale-sapping scandals of the recent past.[107] Implementing such a solution, and other similar measures, will require more specialized and competent personnel than Ukraine currently has – this is an area where Ukraine's international partners should devote special efforts to filling the expertise gap, within the military but also for civilian government officials and civil society groups who perform critical external monitoring.

2. Establish consistency in donor support, bolster donor expertise

Another important factor impacting security sector governance in Ukraine during the war is allied pressure and support. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, Baltic states and many others provide weapons to Ukraine and train Ukrainian soldiers. To protect both their reputations and investments, these donors have also insisted on SSR progress in key areas such as anti-corruption and civilian control and effective oversight of the military. However, donors have not provided the necessary targeted support to enable reform nor maintained the sustained presence necessary. Often donor personnel are rotated in and out quickly, with a focus on military over civilian policy advisors. To judge reform implementation and assess the political context surrounding reform efforts, a longer-term civilian presence is essential.

If the United States and other allies plan to prioritize and insist upon SSR beyond military training, they must develop and deploy long-term advising missions that maintain an awareness of the political and other context factors that impact reform. The effectiveness of these missions depends on their ability to build and maintain productive, lasting relations with the Ukrainian government *and* (often overlooked or de-prioritized) civil society involved in SSG.

---

[107]https://www.politico.eu/article/ukraine-deputy-defense-minister-vyacheslav-shapovalov-resign-corruption-war-zelenskyy/

3. Systematize civil society engagement and oversight

Both the government and external allies recognize the key role of civil society in the current war. Ukrainian civil society and NGOs contribute greatly to the AFU's performance, overseeing defence procurement, auditing MoD appointments, generating public funds for the needs of the AFU, and streamlining the defence procurement process by overriding the MoD's bureaucracy.

For example, from 2015 to 2020 the Office or Reform Projects at the MoD, which included about 40 experts from civil society and business, developed new practices and procedures that increased effectiveness and civilian control, and fostered the reforms of the NCO corps, military procurement, logistics, military medical services, etc.[108]

More recent examples of civil society support include extensive crowdfunding initiatives. For instance, since February 2022, the *Come Back Alive* foundation improved Ukraine's procurement process—and bypassed the Ministry of Defence's bureaucracy—by crowdfunding the purchase of communication devices, laptops, generators, telescopic sights, and advanced drones for combat and reconnaissance. *Hospitallers*, a volunteer paramedic organization, has trained hundreds of paramedics to work on the frontlines and evacuated thousands of wounded combatants and civilians since 2014 and more after 2022. *Serhiy Prytula Foundation,* named after and headed by another Ukrainian comedian-turned-politician, provided the armed forces with drones, communication equipment, vehicles, and even raised funds for training initiatives.[109] Supporting Ukraine's armed forces with donations has become a daily routine for thousands of Ukrainian citizens and businesses. Since February 2022, *Come Back Alive* has received almost $163.5 million, 80 percent of which has come from individual donations under $30. *Come Back Alive* and *Prytula Foundation* work in close cooperation with the MoD and the Chief Intelligence Directorate of the General Staff.

Making sure these organizations can remain effective but also accountable, without undermining unity of command, is a challenge that requires more attention. On the one hand, governmental regulations have sometimes restricted the ability of volunteers to purchase and import necessary equipment including off-the-shelf drones and vehicles for the AFU.[110] On the other, volunteer foundations do not have an audit standard.[111] At the moment, every foundation decides on how to report their spending to the public. These organizations also often do not have the tools to trace where and how the crowd-funded equipment is used, which creates serious risks that equipment might be used in contravention of the military's rules of engagement, in such a way as to undermine its overall strategy, and/or create dangerous confusion on the battlefield. The development of a flexible but precise legal basis for volunteer activities in support of the AFU will be crucial to reducing all of these risks and making sure that civil society actors can act effectively within the law without opening themselves to

---

[108] Despite its effectiveness, the Office was disbanded by the MoD Taran in 2020.
[109] https://prytulafoundation.org/en/help-army/direction/vijskova-shkola-boriviter
[110]https://www.volynnews.com/news/all/vam-pidozra-u-lutsku-vidbuvsia-vseukrayinskyy-volonterskyy-forum-/
[111] Interview with Tymofiy Mylovanov, President of the Kyiv School of Economics; Minister of economy of Ukraine, 2019-2020.

prosecution during or after the war. The government had made some initial steps in this direction[112] but the process is still ongoing.

4. Initiate a comprehensive SSG risk assessment

To address all of these SSR challenges and others yet to arise, the government, external donors, and civil society actors should jointly engage in an on-going security sector governance risk assessment specifically geared toward ensuring full implementation of remaining reform priorities, sustaining past gains, responding quickly to emergent governance challenges, and maintaining trust and cooperation amongst all actors. Momentum behind reforms challenging institutional equities fades after conflict, increasing the urgency of locking in change before such momentum wanes.

The proposed SSR assessment should evaluate two groups of risks. The first group involves the potential damage the ongoing hostilities can inflict on key security sector reforms not completed in the previous periods. These, first and foremost, involve civilian control of the military and defence procurement. The development of the Ukrainian SSG after February 2022 suggests that the war may even have a positive effect on reforms by reducing ambiguities, reducing bureaucracy, and increasing civil society pressure on the government. At the same time, it is crucial to evaluate the risks related to the reform process disruption, politicization of the reform process, and the lack of qualified cadres to implement necessary changes.

The second group of risks pertains to the incomplete reforms undermining Ukraine's combat ability under conditions of war. These include corruption risks, especially in Ukrainian MIC and the incomplete military education reform. The risk assessment should focus on existing corruption networks, such as in the Motor Sich example and the emergence of the new ones, especially involving private manufacturers. Trading with Russia, providing faulty parts to Ukraine, supplying low-quality products, or embezzling defence budgets have a direct battlefield effect, undermining the AFU's combat ability. The holes in military education and training also put Ukraine's battlefield performance at risk. Competent commanders, sergeants, soldiers, and paramedics are essential for tactical, operational, and strategic effectiveness of the AFU. As the conflict continues, Ukraine's battlefield losses would have to be replenished with new well-prepared cadres to prevent the erosion of expertise.

To be successful and comprehensive, the risk assessment process must involve the representatives of government, civil society, and the expert community, including western advisors.

---

[112] https://jurliga.ligazakon.net/news/215451_rada-sprostila-restratsyu-volonterv--dozvolila-robiti-tse-cherez-dyu

Preparing for Post – War Reconstruction

Clearly the outcome of the war, on a spectrum from frozen conflict along current lines of control to a complete return to Ukraine's 1991 borders, will determine the shape of any post-war reconstruction. Despite this, beyond recommendations for the present, there are other specific steps that Ukraine and allies can and should begin planning for to facilitate this reconstruction.

As explored, windows of opportunity for SSR are generally fleeting, and extremely serious issues – ensuring elected civilian governments maintain control of the military, ensuring security forces are accountable under law, limiting the use of violence to settle scores beyond the law – are easy to ignore amidst the general optimism that follows victory. Beyond this, even in various shades of victory, Ukraine is likely to face a destabilizing enemy along its eastern border for some time to come, and the extent to which the nation plans in advance for likely post-war security sector challenges will significantly impact the nation's ability to repel both overt and covert aggression.

1. Sustainable Forces

The government of Ukraine should begin consultation and planning in order to reconfigure the AFU and the broader Defence Forces for post-war reality (with donor support). While the threat from Russia will continue, Ukraine cannot and need not sustain its forces at their current size. Instead, the government will need to plan for a much smaller but highly trained and capable core force, supplemented by advanced intelligence capabilities and numerous well-trained reserves (including veterans) to be swiftly mobilized if necessary. The implementation of this plan would require considerable legal and institutional preparation that should commence before the war is over.

2. Demobilisation & Reintegration

Simultaneously, donors should seek to blunt the impact of mass post-conflict demobilization, possibly by subsidizing military payrolls such that shrinking forces to a sustainable size is a gradual process. Notably, other post-conflict states that have used similar strategies to avoid the economic and other risks that come with rapid demobilization have proved far more stable than those that haven't. More generally, donors should coordinate to provide extensive economic assistance (the Marshall Plan is a relevant analogue) geared toward rebuilding infrastructure and creating jobs and other opportunity. Experience suggests that these forms of support are extremely sound investments in regional security, stability and economic health. Therefore, donors should coordinate before the conflict ends and support for assistance wanes.

3. Internal Security Reform

Ukraine must act to maintain government legitimacy (which literature suggests is linked to effective, transparent, and accountable everyday security provision) and decrease vulnerability to corruption and subversion by more fully reforming internal

security sector institutions.[113] As experience both within Ukraine (the limits of past police reform) and amongst other post-Soviet states has shown, habits of clientelism and systems of patronage within the security system are extremely difficult to dismantle, and will become even more so in a post-war period where elite unity wanes competing factions look to revive the use of old political tools. One remedy is, as soon as possible, to codify and professionalize the policies around hiring/firing, promotion, and selection for training in these institutions. Critically, this should happen alongside the creation and promotion of mechanisms within security institutions – ombuds organizations, unions – meant to ensure even application of new polices and to insulate ordinary officers from political pressure and retaliation. The experience of other cases such as post-Fujimori and post-Apartheid South Africa suggests that security forces themselves often support such reforms if they are implemented transparently and perceived as increasing force effectiveness by promoting predictable and meritocrat career paths.[114] Donors can provide technical assistance and advice to these processes.

4. Preventing Security Vacuums

The government must plan to prevent a post-war security vacuum in any territory liberated from Russian control, but especially areas that have experienced on-going hostilities and/or occupation since 2014. Given the volume of weapons likely present in these areas, such a vacuum should be avoided. Indeed, other conflict and post-conflict experiences, such as Northern Ireland, Guatemala, and South Africa, provide a warning against the potential for vigilante action (especially to address wartime grievances), escalating feuds, and the growth of organized crime networks. At the same time, day-to-day service provision is a role that the military should avoid. The government, assisted by donors, must develop a post-war plan including targeted training, clear division of roles and responsibilities, and joint planning between different services active in these regions. Critically, this plan should be developed

---

[113] Ndaruhutse, (ed.) (2011). "State-Building, Peace-Building and Service Delivery in Fragile and Conflict-Affected States: Literature Review – Final Report."
Richard Batley, and Claire Mcloughlin. "Engagement with Non-State Service Providers in Fragile States: Reconciling State-Building and Service Delivery." *Development Policy Review* 28, no. 2 (2010): 131-154.
Sebastian Jilke, and Steven Van de Walle. "Two track public services? Citizens' voice behavior towards liberalized services in the EU15." *Public Management Review* 15, no. 4 (2013): 465-476.
Sacks. "The Antecedents of Approval, Trust and Legitimating Beliefs in sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and six Arab Countries."
Margaret Levi, Audrey Sacks and Tom Taylor, "Conceptualizing Legitimacy, Measuring Legitimating Beliefs," American Behavioral Scientist 53 (2009), 354.
Sarah Dix, Karen Hussmann, and Grant Walton. "Risks of corruption to state legitimacy and stability in fragile situations." *Bergen: CMI* (2012).
Claire McLoughlin, "When Does Service Delivery Improve the Legitimacy of a Fragile or Conflict-affected State?" *Governance* (2015)
Séverine Bellina, Dominique Darbon, Stein Sundstøl Eriksen, and Ole Jacob Sending. "The legitimacy of the state in fragile situations." *Report prepared for the OECD DAC International Network on Conflict and Fragility* (2009).
[114]Gino Costa, and Rachel Neild. "Police reform in Peru." Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology 38, no. 2
(2005): 220, 224
John Crabtree. Making Institutions Work in Peru: Democracy, Development and Inequality Since1980. (University of London, 2006)
Louis Eloff. "Transformation of the SAPS: An Insider's View." In Police reform in post-conflict Africa: A review.(Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) 2006): 63

transparently in consultation with national and (critically) local civil society to ensure local appropriateness, legitimacy and cooperation.

5. Accountability & Rebuilding Governance

More generally, establishing long-term security in these regions recovering from prolonged occupation will further require transparently addressing wartime harms through some type of truth, justice, and accountability process. Further, re-establishing government institutions and trust between citizens and security providers (especially police) will involve a process of vetting, lustration, as well as hiring and training new forces. Post-WWII occupied Germany and, more recently, post-war Liberia provide potential models for these tasks wherein local communities take the major role in determining who, and at what level, members of their communities should be held accountable for wartime collaboration and other misdeeds – in a climate of considerable disagreement over what behaviour constitutes collaboration under occupation, these communities are well-positioned to pass judgement on a case-by-case basis.[115] More generally, as previously discussed, Ukraine's peripheries, especially to the east, have been left out of previous waves of police reform. In order for the government of post-war Ukraine to re-establish strong and widely legitimate state control in reclaimed territory, this exclusion must end.[116]

6. Empowering Civil Society

All of the above reforms are much more likely to succeed if Ukrainian civil society is empowered to continue to play a robust role in the process, by directly providing additional capacity, by maintaining political support for and attention on those reforms most salient to citizens, and later through oversight. Donors can help ensure this by providing capacity-building training and hosting consultation to help Ukrainian CSOs build and maintain country-wide networks, develop joint articulations of reform priorities and plans, and so on.

---

[115]Jamie Dettmer, "In Ukraine, collaboration cases aren't always clear-cut," *Politico* (Aug. 5, 2023) https://www.politico.eu/article/in-ukraine-collaboration-cases-arent-always-clear-cut/
[116] Carl J. Friedrich, "The Three Phases of Field Operations In Germany" In *American Experiences in Military Government in World War II*. (NY: Rinehart, 1948), 250
Earl F. Ziemke, "The Formulation and Initial Implementation of U.S. Occupation Policy In Germany", (Lawrence, Kansas: Regents Press, 1978), 35

Security Sector Governance Insights from Ukraine's Experience

Finally, Ukraine's experience highlights security sector governance lessons for states similarly threatened and the external allies who support them. These states should:

- Thoroughly update their threat assessments (doctrine, training, etc.), with particular attention to clarifying force roles and responsibilities for conventional and unconventional warfare. Donors can assist, but assessments should be done with as much domestic transparency and consultation as possible. The broader the constituency that believes that the military/other forces focus on pertinent threats, the greater the support for their mission.

- Develop in advance legal and institutional capacity to coordinate citizen militias, volunteers, etc., (i.e. National Guard systems) to facilitate joint training with conventional forces, and perform basic vetting.

- Give high priority to countering security sector corruption (as should external supporters). Corruption is the greatest and most persistent of Ukraine's security weaknesses, but the pervasive corruption-related weaknesses of the Russian military in conflict are an even more compelling illustration of this need.

- Donors should make investments in civil society security policy capacity in targeted discourage repressive action against civil society/media actors working on security reform issues. These investments protect crucial mechanisms for security sector accountability, anti-corruption, the domestic political capacity to push for SSR, and, as Ukraine has demonstrated, direct action to help compensate for the weaknesses of official security actors.

- Additionally, donors should consider major investments in helping post-Soviet states rid their supply chains of lingering reliance on spare parts (as well as other Russian or primarily Russian sourced materials) while simultaneously ensuring that replacements are appropriate, affordable, and sustainable.