
Arms likely to spark further escalation

Cory Welt, George Washington University, February 2015

| U.S. FOREIGN POLICY |

A decision to supply military assistance to Ukraine – and what kind – will ultimately be a political one. Whatever the decision, it should not be defended on the basis that the assistance will enable Ukraine to hold its current line of defense and persuade Russia to refrain from further escalation. We simply do not know how Russia will respond, although I suspect an initial escalation is more likely than not. Before providing even non-lethal military equipment, therefore, the U.S. ought to have a plan in place for how it will respond to another round of escalation – and a plan that does not involve a constant ratcheting up of military assistance. The U.S. should also be prepared for the contingency by which Ukraine remains outgunned despite an influx of military assistance and is forced to negotiate a peace on less favorable terms than those that hold now. Without such planning, it may be preferable to first strive to maintain the current line of defense through other means than military assistance.

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