



Gauging the Potential of Heavy Weapons Deliveries For Ukraine from the Middle and Far East

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Russia's continuation of the war in Ukraine and partial mobilisation suggest it is prepared for a prolonged conflict. These actions also imply the increased need for continued deliveries of heavy weapons and artillery munitions for Ukraine. In light of the shrinking capabilities of the Central Europeans and limits of the production capacities of Western defence industry (including the U.S.), there is a necessity for additional sources of deliveries. These gaps might be filled by U.S. allies and partners in the Middle and Far East.

Ukraine's Needs. Russia's war with Ukraine has resulted in high losses of weapons on both sides. The recent counter-offensive by Ukraine underlined that heavy weapon systems are crucial to defeating the aggressor. [Gaps in the military capabilities of Ukraine cannot be fulfilled by captured weapons and munitions.](#) Efforts by Czechia, Poland, and Slovakia to deliver post-Soviet systems are decreasing their reserves as NATO members. These have been limited to Polish PT-91 tanks and BMP vehicles from Czechia, Finland, and Slovakia. Additional BMPs and interceptors for Ukrainian S-300 systems are only available from Bulgaria, Greece, and Cyprus. After transferring to Ukraine a few models of NATO howitzers of 105 mm and 155 mm calibres (L118/119, M-777, M-109, and others) there were signals about limited reserves of ammunition for these types of guns and the production capacity of companies in NATO countries.

In the long-term, Western assistance should be aimed at the full transition of Ukraine to NATO standards. Even before the end of 2023, there might be a need to transition from post-Soviet tanks to NATO types, for instance, the American M-60 and M-1 Abrams or German Leopard-1 and Leopard-2. Equally risky might be any delays with exchanging of the rest of Ukraine's MiG-29 and Su-27 planes for Western platforms like the F-16 and Gripen. In these areas, there is also necessity for U.S. initiatives and pressure because reserves of older-generation NATO tanks are limited (most are in Greece and Turkey) or in countries lacking the political will to support Ukraine (especially Germany). [Prolongation of the war through](#)

[Russia's partial mobilisation](#) means the need for continued weapons supplies for Ukraine in both standards. In this context, the U.S. and other partners of Ukraine should fully use additional sources of military systems and ammunition outside of Europe.

Potential of the Middle East and North Africa. Larger Arab states drawing lessons from the Russia-Ukraine war, especially the rich Gulf states, might be interested in a correction of their military modernisation programmes away from Soviet or Russian systems. That opens a window of opportunity for delivering such weapons to Ukraine. Nevertheless, the U.S. must take a leading role in initiating this. [A large group of Middle Eastern states is dependent on more or less formal U.S. security guarantees and military presence on their soil.](#) The United States may use this dependency to encourage such transfers. Mauretania, Oman, and Qatar may deliver to Ukraine anti-tank weapons of different types and hand-held anti-air missiles, such as the Iglu/Striela or Stinger. Mauretania may be capable to deliver, for instance, up to 20 post-Soviet D-30 howitzers and Grad rockets. However, of crucial importance might be states with huge armies and reserves of weapons, in some cases even with currently bigger reserves than many countries of Western and Central Europe.

Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Morocco may have huge reserves of 122 mm ammunition and Grad rockets, which fit Ukraine's current artillery systems. This group, along with Saudi Arabia, has also the biggest reserves of NATO artillery ammunition, as well as 400 M-109 howitzers. Egypt, Israel, and Jordan also

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produce NATO and Soviet standard artillery ammunition for their own use and for export. However, pro-Western Middle Eastern countries' reserves of the Soviet T-72 tank family are limited to 250 in Kuwait and Morocco together (Iraq has many more, but Iranian influence makes it mostly impossible to transfer tanks to Ukraine). The reserves of American tanks in the region are impressive, including the types M-1 (more than 700 in Saudi Arabia and Morocco) and M-60 (more than 800 in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Morocco). Likely the biggest potential platforms from the Middle East are M-113 armoured personnel carriers, number more than 10,000 (half in Israel alone). Kuwait and UAE may still have 700-800 Soviet-era BMP-2s and Russian BMP-3s. Much more limited in the region are Soviet long- and medium-range air defence systems, but Egypt might still have interceptors for the S-300V. Egypt may also possess a bigger quantity of interceptors for [Buk, Kub, and Tor systems](#). At the same time, all allies of the U.S. in the region are rich with reserves of Igla/Striela systems, and Israel and Saudi Arabia have many Stingers. The earlier transition of the majority of the region to Western helicopters and multi-role jets limits the potential of providing Ukraine with Soviet air systems. For instance, Egypt has 12 M-24 attack-helicopters and weapons for them, but it will not risk cutting off Russian servicing of its newest Ka-52 helicopters. Egypt also possesses a larger MiG-29 fleet than NATO, with even 40-46 jets. Moreover, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan produce different models of rocket-propelled grenades, anti-tank guided missiles, and mortar munitions, all needed for Ukraine's light infantry.

Potential of the Far East. Military aid for Ukraine was granted by U.S. traditional allies and NATO's close partners in the region, including Australia, Japan, New Zealand, [and South Korea](#). Australia transferred to Ukraine six M-77 howitzers, 28 M-113s, and 60 new Bushmaster vehicles (with declared readiness to give more). Australia with New Zealand and Canada have already trained Ukrainian artillery units in United Kingdom in operating L118/119 ultra-light howitzers. Australia still possesses more than 400 M-113s, which are near the end of their service life, and thousands of Bushmasters. Since February, Japan has delivered huge quantities of material aid for soldiers and citizens of Ukraine. Japan also has reserves and produces 35 mm ammunition, necessary for Ukrainian Gepard systems and almost exhausted in Europe. Despite the unconfirmed scope of its assistance, South Korea since May has also granted aid to Ukraine. It has good relations with Russia so it may limit some of future military transfers. South Korea still has 40-50 T-80U tanks and 20 BTR-80 vehicles. Moreover, South Korea may have up to 1,000 M-109 howitzers, 1,000 K1 older-generation tanks, and 560 M-113 vehicles, which are predicted to reach the end of service in this or the next decade. [South Korean industry also has the opportunity to increase its presence in NATO's markets](#) with its advanced K9 howitzers and K2 tanks. Even if they are not transferring their systems to Ukraine, Australia, Japan, and South Korea produce 155 mm ammunition, so together they might become important source of munitions deliveries to

Ukraine and NATO states. If the U.S. or other major NATO states decide to deliver Western-made tanks to Ukraine, the three Asian countries may also deliver 105 and 120 mm tank-gun ammunition. Moreover, reserves and production lines of different types of NATO ammunition are also available in Taiwan and Singapore, so both countries should be seen as potential new partners for Ukraine.

The potential of other U.S. Asian partners is very limited, especially in Soviet and Russian systems. In some cases, the problematic part is their good relations with Russia, or with China. These issues might be of lesser importance in Thailand and Malaysia, which potentially could deliver to Ukraine PT-91s (48 tanks) or the new T-84 (49 tanks). The state with the biggest military potential for assisting Ukraine is Pakistan, which is producing 122 mm ammunition and Grad rockets. Despite its alliance with China and improved relations with Russia, Pakistan may be economically motivated to help Ukraine, and in previous years there was military cooperation between them. Apart from ammunition, provision of other Pakistani-held weapons is unrealistic, but some spare parts might be guaranteed from its fleet of 40 Mi-17 helicopters. Equally hypothetical, but not impossible, might be spare parts deliveries from the Mi-8/17 fleet of Vietnam and Indonesia (50 helicopters in total). Gaps after such transfers should be compensated with a higher price or new American helicopters. Vietnam also is a potential source of spare parts for Su-22M close support jets, in case of the delivery of 10-12 of these airplanes by Poland to Ukraine. Even more challenging and complicated would be to assure spare parts for Ukrainian Su-27 multi-role fighters from Vietnam and Indonesia (16 airplanes in total). Unlikely partners include states with a "patchwork" of obsolete U.S., Soviet, and Chinese systems, like Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. The strong orientation towards Russia also excludes assistance for Ukraine from India, which has 80 MiG-29, 2,400 T-72-type tanks, and 122 mm ammunition.

Conclusion. Russia's continued aggression demands assured deliveries of weapon systems in both Soviet and NATO standards to Ukraine. Of crucial importance are heavy weapons, spare parts, and ammunition. Some of the current limits in Western countries and industry requires more creative options than those employed to now, mainly using U.S. alliances and partnerships outside Europe. In the Middle East, the most prospective sources of weapons for Ukraine are such U.S. allies as Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia. In the Far East, the countries with the best opportunities to obtain NATO-standard ammunition are Australia, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan, while Pakistan can provide Soviet-type artillery ammunition. Military assistance from states of the Middle and Far East are demanding effective high-level U.S. diplomacy, clearly with Ukrainian initiatives not guaranteeing this. Moreover, it should be stressed that many of these states may expect that the U.S. will take the lead in transferring heavy systems, like NATO standard tanks, to Ukraine.