

## THE RAMSTEIN GROUP (UKRAINE DEFENCE CONTACT GROUP (UDCG))

Akaazua Terungwa Emmanuel

Department of Political Science and International Relations  
University of Abuja, Abuja, Nigeria

### Abstract

*This study examines the Ramstein Group, also known as Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG) and the role it plays in supporting Ukraine defence efforts through a constructivist lens. Using secondary data, this analysis explores how the group's actions and interactions have shaped Ukraine's defence capabilities and promoted regional stability. The findings suggest that the Ramstein Group has played a crucial role in coordinating military aid, and facilitating cooperation among member countries, and enabling Ukraine to rearm and modernize its military. The study highlights the importance of shared norms, identify, interest and cooperation in shaping the group's efforts and promoting a unified response to Ukraine's deference. The research contributes to our understanding of the complex dynamics of international cooperation and the role of institutions in shaping state behavior.*

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Keywords: Ramstein, Security Group, Collective Security, Containment, Rivalry

### Introduction

The Ramstein Group, officially known as the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG), is a coalition of 57 countries and the European Union that aims to support Ukraine's defence by providing military equipment and coordinating aid. The group was formed in response to the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine, with the primary goal of mobilizing international support of Ukraine's defence efforts. The name "Ramstein Group" comes from Ramstein Air Base in Germany, where the first meeting took place on the 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2022. According to ISW Press (2023), the key objectives of the group include the following:

1. **Military Aid:** Coordinating the donation of military equipment such as tanks, artillery and ammunition to support Ukraine's defence.
2. **Fighter Jets:** Discussing the potential transfer of modern fighter jets to Ukraine with countries like Belgium, Denmark, Norway and the Netherlands committing to supply F-16s.
3. **Infrastructure Support:** Providing support for Ukraine's infrastructure, including air defence systems and drone technology.
4. **Financial Support:** Securing funding to sustainably replace equipment and ammunition sent to Ukraine.

The Ramstein group continues to play a crucial role in supporting Ukraine's defence efforts, with ongoing meetings and discussions aimed at strengthening Ukraine's military capabilities and promoting regional stability.

### **Methodology:**

The study adopts a desktop approach which is secondary data or that which is collected without field work. The study relied on already published studies, reports and statistics. The data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

The study adopted constructivist theory as instrument for analysis. Constructivism is an international relations approach used in analysing international politics among states. Jean Piaget is considered the primary and prominent proponent of constructivist theory. It is a social construction that is changeable using some variables that shape international relations. Some of these variables are said to be ideas, identity, interest and absence of threat. The argument is that states are likely to relate together if they have or share common identity, interest, ideas, and such states do not pose a threat to each other (Barnet, 2018).

The Ramstein Group's efforts to support Ukraine's defence reflect shared norms among member countries such as a commitment to democracy sovereignty and territorial integrity. The group's actions may also shape the identities of its member countries, reinforcing their commitment to collective defence and cooperation. The Ramstein Group's narrative around the conflict in Ukraine influences how member countries and international community perceive the situation. The group's efforts to counter Russian aggression may contribute to a shared understanding of Russia as a threat, shaping the international community & perception of the conflict. The group also provides an institutional framework for cooperation among member countries, facilitating coordination and collective action. By applying constructivist theory, it can be better understood by the complex dynamics at play in Ramstein Group and the role of norms, identity, interest and institutions in shaping international cooperation.

### **Findings and Discussions:**

On 24 February, 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, starting the largest and deadliest war in Europe since World War II, in a major escalation of the conflict between the two countries which began in 2014. The fight has caused hundreds of thousands of military casualties and tens of thousands of Ukrainian Civilian casualties. As of 2024, Russia troops occupy about 20% of Ukraine's Land (McFaul, Michael, Person and Robert (2024). From a population of 41 million, about 8 million Ukrainians had been internally displaced and more than 8.2 million had fled the country by April, 2023, creating Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. Some of the major causes of the war between Russia and Ukraine as enumerated by Ocholi and Okonkwo (2023) include the following:-

1. Dispute over Ukraine's NATO membership: Russia issued demands to the West, including a ban on Ukraine ever joining the NATO military alliance. Russia saw NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe as a threat to its national security.

2. Protection of Russian-speaking populations: President Putin claimed that Russians in Ukraine were facing “humiliation and genocide” and that Russia’s goal was to “demilitarize and denazify” Ukraine.
3. Economic interests: Control of Ukraine’s resources, including lithium deposits, natural gas fields and grain wealth, was also a motive for Russia’s invasion.
4. Historical and Cultural claims: President Putin espoused irredentist and imperialist views, challenging Ukraine’s legitimacy as a state and claiming that Ukraine was historically part of Russia.

However, these claims were baseless and widely rejected by the international community.

### **The Role of RAMSTEIN Group in the War between Russia and Ukraine**

Russia’s aggression against Ukraine on 24 February, 2022 caused radical changes in the architecture of European and global security. The largest land war in Europe since World War II contributed to the creation of a coalition of 57 states christened the Ramstein Group – which developed a mechanism for regular military assistance to Ukraine in the form of arms supplies, funding, training of Ukrainian soldiers, modernization and repair of equipment. Defecto, an organization was created that had no equivalent in post 1945 European Military History (Bazhenova, 2023). The ever increasing assistance to the allies within the Ramstein Group allowed Ukraine to halt the advance of Russian troops and liberate much of the occupied territory. With the start of the war on the 24 February, 2022, the command of the Armed Forces of Ukraine came to conclusion that artillery ammunition and equipment would at best be sufficient for two months of intensive warfare. Once these stocks were exhausted, the Ukrainian army would lose its ability to conduct organized resistance to Russian regular forces. It is worth noting that the core of Ukraine’s arsenal at the time was post-soviet weapons, albeit partially modernized.

In contrast, the amount of modern weaponry was quite limited, including javelin and NLAW anti-tank systems and stinger and starstreak mobile air defence systems, which the first batch of Starstreak sets arrived only at the end of March 2022 (Towfigh, 2025). The Ukraine Defence Contact Group also known as the Ramstein Group currently has all the 31 NATO members and 26 additional countries as members including Japan, South Korea, Australia, New Zealand, Israel, Jordan, Qatar, Kenya, Morocco, Austria and others. This military-political forum is widely associated with the venue of its first meeting (Towfigh, 2025). The meeting was initiated by the United States, notably U.S. Secretary of Defence Lloyd Austin and General Mark Milley, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff. The main objective of the forum was to discuss, synchronize and accelerate the provision of military assistance, weapons and equipment to Ukraine to counter Russian aggression and win the war. Overtime, along with the coordination function, the activities of the Ramstein format also extended to the political level, which involved the creation of a prototype “anti-Russian Coalition” or Atlantic Charter 2.0”. In addition, post-war support for Ukraine began to be discussed at the group’s meetings.

A total of 25 meetings of the Ramstein Group were organized between February 2022 to February 2025, in various locations both in person and online. By the end of April 2023, Ukraine had received more than 1,550 armoured vehicles, 230 tanks, as well as significant amount of other equipment and ammunition through the Ramstein Group. As a result of all these contributions, the largest donor of security aid has been the United States. In addition, allies, including Poland, are assisting in the repair and modernization of equipment and armaments, as well as training the Ukrainian military at their bases in accordance with NATO Standard (Bazhenova, 2025).

Notable meetings held by Ramstein Group:

Since its formation, Ramstein Group has held the following notable meetings:

- 26<sup>th</sup> April, 2022: Inaugural meeting at Ramstein Air Base.
- 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2023: Discussion on sending heavy offensive weaponry to Ukraine
- 14<sup>th</sup> February, 2023: Discussion on transferring modern fighter jets to Ukraine
- 11<sup>th</sup> October, 2023: The Ukrainian President, Zelenskyy's attendance and discussion on sustained military aid.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> January, 2024: Meeting without US funding.
- 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2025: Discussion on Peace negotiations and US expectations from Europe.

#### **Achievements of Ramstein Group:**

According to Towfigh (2025), the Ramstein Group has achieved significant success since its formation in April 2022. Below are some of key accomplishment recorded by the Group:

- a. Military Aid and Support: The group has provided substantial financial assistance to Ukraine amounting to well over a hundred billion dollars, enabling the country to acquire essential military equipment and supplies.
- b. Tanks and Artillery: The group has coordinated the delivery of tanks, including Leopard 2 and M1 Abrams, and artillery systems to Ukraine.
- c. Fighter jets: Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Netherlands, have committed to supplying F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine with pilots training programmes established in several countries.
- d. The group has been coordinating regular meetings to discuss and cooperate military aid, ensuring a unified response to the Ukraine defence needs. At the same time, eight capability coalitions have been formed within the UDCG, focusing on specific areas such as fighter jets and air defence.
- e. Strategic rearmament: The Ramstein Group has enabled Ukraine to rearm and modernize its military converging with NATO standards.

- f. Successful counter-attacks: The group's efforts have contributed to Ukraine's successful counter-attacks and defence operations since the war began.

### **Challenges facing the Ramstein Group:**

The Ramstein Group faces numerous challenges despite some achievements recorded. Some of these challenges as enumerated by PRAVOA (2025) include the following:

- a. Uncertainty due to the United States politics: The group's future is uncertain due to the United States change of leadership owing to the last Presidential election that ushered in Donald Trump to replace the former President, Joe Biden. Trump seems to be uninterested in what is happening to other parts of the world.
- b. Sustaining military aid: The Group needs to continue providing sustained military aid to Ukraine, including defence systems like Patriot air defence systems to counter Russian aggression.
- c. The group has made record-setting commitments, but implementation and addressing electronic warfare challenges remains a priority,

### **Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations**

The Ramstein Group also known as the Ukraine Defence Contact Group (UDCG) has played a vital role in supporting Ukraine's defence efforts since its inception after the outbreak of war between Russia and Ukraine. By coordinating military aid, providing defence systems, and facilitating cooperation among member countries; the group has helped Ukraine counter Russia aggression and protect its sovereignty.

As the conflict in Ukraine continues, the Ramstein Group will likely remain a crucial player in supporting Ukraine defence efforts. The group's ability to adapt to emerging challenges and sustain its support will be essential in helping Ukraine protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

Based on the Ramstein Group's achievements and challenges, the study recommend as follows:-

- There should be a sustained provision of essential military equipment and supplies to support the Ukraine's defence efforts against Russian's aggression.
- To enhance coordination and cooperation, the Ramstein Group should hold regular meetings to and discussions to ensure a unified response to Ukraine's defence needs.
- To ensure and explore alternative funding sources outside US, and at the same time work with the new US administration to secure consistent support.

- Support Ukraine's defence industry development, including production and maintenance of military equipment.
- Continue to support Ukraine's integration with NATO standards, enhancing interoperability and cooperation.

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