RECONSTRUCTING UKRAINE

WHAT IT WILL TAKE TO CREATE A PROSPEROUS AND SECURE POSTWAR UKRAINE PAGE 16

Why GENDER DIVERSITY matters in the U.S. Department of Defense

A promising strategy for POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

Countering TRUTH DECAY in 2024
How Technology and Artificial Intelligence Have (and Have Not) Affected Jobs in Recent Decades

Researchers developed this visualization to depict how technology—especially AI—has affected occupations in the U.S. by using natural language processing to sift through technology patents. They assess how AI has shifted occupational exposure; how exposure to technology fluctuates over time; whether new technology reduces the need for human labor; and college degrees and routine cognitive tasks as indicators of exposure.

MORE AT www.rand.org/t/DVA2655-1

Preparing the Federal Response to Advanced Technologies

Although AI has the potential to transform entire industries, it could also pose novel threats to national defense and homeland security. Unless society puts in effective guardrails, broadly capable AI systems could hasten the design and proliferation of bioweapons, cyberweapons, nuclear weapons, progressively more general intelligence, and other threats not yet conceived.

MORE AT www.rand.org/v230919

Improving Treatment Outcomes for Veterans with Mental Health Conditions

“Continued federal investment in research and improving scientists’ access to psychedelic drugs for research studies are critical for discovering treatment options that reach more veterans and yield greater reductions in their mental health symptoms,” said senior behavioral scientist Rajeev Ramchand, in testimony presented before the House Committee on Veterans Affairs, Subcommittee on Health, in November 2023.

MORE AT www.rand.org/t/CTA3043-1

To Protect U.S. Elections, Call China’s Bluff on AI

The Chinese government has pledged opposition to using AI to manipulate public opinion, spread disinformation, or intervene in other countries’ affairs. Unfortunately, China is likely to be quickly adopted by Beijing. China’s lie, however, could be the start of something good—assuming the United States seizes the opportunity and takes action to safeguard the 2024 elections from Chinese interference.

MORE AT www.rand.org/b231114

Will We Hold Algorithms Accountable for Bad Decisions?

As AI algorithms become incorporated into more decision processes that affect individuals’ welfare and well-being, public perceptions of the technology will have many implications, including for jury judgments about algorithmic liability and support for AI regulation.

MORE AT www.rand.org/t/RRa2100-1
A highway bridge lies in ruins in Bucha, Ukraine, in the aftermath of the Russian invasion. The war has damaged or destroyed thousands of kilometers of major roadways—part of the infrastructure that will have to be repaired when it is over. As a recent RAND report makes clear, rebuilding Ukraine will require a whole-of-society approach to ensure a “freer, more prosperous, and secure future” for Ukrainians and the West.
The Need for a Neurodiverse National Security Workforce

U.S. national security benefits from the skills of people with autism, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, and other neurodivergent diagnoses, a recent RAND study found. Keeping the country safe is too important to be left to people who only use their brains in typical ways, researchers wrote.

Other countries have already realized this. Israel has an army unit of autistic soldiers whose focus and attention to detail helps them spot patterns in satellite images. Australia is recruiting neurodivergent people to work in cybersecurity.

But the U.S. government treats autism and other neurodivergent diagnoses as disabilities that can disqualify people who want to serve in the military. In the civilian workforce, employees either need to self-identify as “disabled” or work without any accommodations.

Studies have shown that people with neurodivergent diagnoses often outperform neurotypical people in processing large amounts of information, perceiving patterns, and remembering details. One defense contractor boasted that his autistic workers could tell the difference between a Russian MiG fighter jet, a Ukrainian MiG, and a Russian MiG painted to look like a Ukrainian MiG.

However, the size of the neurodivergent population working in U.S. national security is unknown. Many service members and civilians do not acknowledge their neurodivergence for fear of discrimination, bias, or military discharge. To protect their careers, they may go outside of the military health system to seek a diagnosis—or not seek a diagnosis at all until after they retire. They may hide their conditions at work, creating stress and a sense of being “in the closet.” Government agencies should pivot to better embrace neurodiversity, researchers wrote. They could, for example, adopt universal design principles that would eliminate the need for some employees to seek special accommodations while benefiting everyone in the workplace. Job descriptions and hiring processes should focus on skills without vague words like “good communications.” Affinity groups independent of disability groups can provide support systems and mentoring. And systemic change could lead to changes in security clearance, recruitment, and deployment processes, expanding the pool of qualified people working to safeguard national security.

Funding for this research was made possible by the independent research and development provisions of RAND’s contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers.
The Pentagon is working to develop computer algorithms that might one day help with basic personnel decisions, like who gets promoted. The devil is in the data they’ll use.

Computer algorithms devour huge amounts of historical data to learn what patterns they should watch for. In the case of promotions, that means pulling in data that, at best, underrepresent women and minority groups. A computer trained on such data could simply replicate historical disparities under the guise of objectivity.

Researchers at RAND developed a framework to help the Pentagon avoid that outcome. Then they translated their findings into computer code. The result was the RAND Algorithmic Equity Tool, which can evaluate and, if needed, remove baked-in biases from future algorithms.

The tool compares an algorithm’s results for different protected characteristics, such as race or gender. Users can then flag situations in which those results are disadvantaging certain groups. When that happens, the tool can adjust the threshold at which members of those groups get considered for promotion. It provides a readout of any changes it makes and how those changes affect equity and performance.

The tool can also scrub the initial training data to break any links between an algorithm’s recommendations and protected characteristics. It could, for example, tune out the influence of race in historical promotion decisions. It would then feed that modified data into the computer. The computer would learn to identify other patterns, not involving race, that point to successful candidates for promotion. That would further cancel out historical biases and ensure that candidates from different racial or ethnic groups have an equally fair chance of getting promoted.

More generally, the framework RAND developed can help policymakers consider how to meet equity mandates in the use of predictive algorithms—and, ultimately, whether to go forward with such computer systems. Machine learning algorithms could lead to more objective, more equitable decisions, researchers noted—if they are implemented carefully.

The researchers developed the framework and tool as part of a RAND Project AIR FORCE initiative to support diversity, equity, and inclusion in the U.S. Air Force.

Funding for this research was made possible by the independent research and development provisions of RAND’s contracts for the operation of its U.S. Department of Defense federally funded research and development centers.
Ray Block, Jr., has some advice for people heading into the 2024 elections. “Do not be a passive consumer of information,” he says. “Be an active consumer—an empowered consumer. Scrutinize everything. Cross-check it. Ask yourself, ‘What goal does this information accomplish?’”

Block leads RAND’s efforts to combat “truth decay”—the diminishing role of facts and analysis in public life. It’s the talking heads on TV, the distrust and conspiracy theories, the basic disagreements over not just what’s right, but what’s real. With a presidential election looming in November, 2024 will be a year of truth decay.

Block holds the inaugural Michael D. Rich Distinguished Chair for Countering Truth Decay, named for RAND’s former president and CEO, who identified truth decay as one of the existential threats of our time. Block’s previous research has looked at racial, ethnic, and gender differences in civic involvement and public opinion. In addition to his work at RAND, he is an associate professor of political science and African American studies and a member of The McCourtney Institute for Democracy at Penn State. He is also a senior analyst for the African American Research Collaborative and a member of the Scholars Strategy Network.
Q  What motivates you to do this work on truth decay?

A  Honestly, COVID-19. It hit my family just like it hit everyone else’s family. There was a period of time during the lockdown when I was really upset. Family members were passing away, and I felt really helpless. I’m a researcher, so I leaned into the research as a way to cope. I saw all of these social and political inequalities that existed before the pandemic that just got worse during the pandemic. It created what some have called the “info-demic.” There was this spread of disinformation, and it had racial and ethnic and gender and urban disparities built into it. Those are the things that I study, so I started working with medical researchers, public health researchers, to understand it.

Let’s talk about your research. What is a lesson you’ve learned that you can apply now to truth decay?

I did a survey with the African American Research Collaborative a few years ago. We found that Americans are highly worried about the staying power of their democracy. Six out of ten people were really concerned, and that’s similar to what we’ve seen in other surveys. In fact, our numbers might be conservative.

But people also said they were hopeful as they went to the polls in 2022—Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservatives. That hope, side by side with this fear of democracy ending, suggests to me that Americans are worried, but they’re not going be passive and let their democracy go. Being upset with the system and feeling like you can do something about it—to me, that’s a great inspiration for being civically minded and civically active.

You’ve pointed out that you hold the Distinguished Chair for Countering Truth Decay—not just studying it. What is RAND’s role here?

I think of it as combining research with outreach. On the research side, we need to do more to understand how individuals process information and how institutions create contexts that provide fertile ground for disinformation. But we also need to look at nonprofit organizations, community organizations, religious organizations—entities that serve communities but aren’t attached to the government. We need to better understand the role they can play.

With outreach, we do a good job of making our information available to individuals and institutions. It’s available online, and free. But I want to make sure we’re accessible to people who work in the spaces between individuals and institutions, people who run foundations for democracy or who work for nonprofits and nongovernmental organizations. We can empower the doers who exist already in our society, giving them tools they can use—and hopefully those tools help counter the problem.

What are you working on now?

I’m working with my colleagues here at RAND to explore, conceptually, what truth means in truth decay. Sometimes politicians or government leaders tell you things that aren’t 100 percent true. So you can argue that truth is fundamental to democracy, but others will counter that lying is a pretty common feature of government, too. How do you reconcile those two things? What is the truth that we’re trying to preserve from truth decay?

I’m also working on what I’m going to call COVID-related disinformation spillover. I’m looking at whether the posts on social media, the shares and the likes, the video views, truly, in a causal way, contributed to people being more or less willing to take mitigation steps to slow down the spread of COVID-19.

You’ve held this chair for almost a year now. Heading into 2024, are you feeling more or less optimistic than when you started?

The more I’m at this job, the more serious I think the situation is. I’ve got real respect for what we’re dealing with. I hate it—but I’ve got to respect it. I also see all of the resources and all of the brainpower that RAND is bringing to the table, and I think we’re ideally suited to inform the kind of change that needs to happen. My appreciation for the significance of the problem has grown since I got here. My belief that we can do something about it has never wavered.
How Do We Stop Relying on 911 to Handle Mental Health Crises?

By Stephanie Brooks Holliday

911 is the most well-known phone number in the country. When 911 launched in 1968, its original intent was to alert responders to emergency situations such as fire, crime, and accidents.

Today, though, about two-thirds of calls to 911 are for nonemergency situations like power outages or general requests for information: What time is it? What day is recycling collected? And though a 911 call taker may be able to tell someone what time it is or refer them to a public works department, the situation can quickly become far more complicated when community members call in with, or on behalf of, someone undergoing a behavioral health crisis.

Call centers for 911 have a more technical name: public safety answering points, or PSAPs. People who work at these centers can do a lot, but they have limited resources and training to address behavioral health issues.

That is in part why, more than a year ago, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline became the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, transitioning to a three-digit number and expanding its focus to include mental health crises. Rather than expecting that a person experiencing a crisis could remember a 10-digit number, the goal was to create an easy-to-market and easy-to-remember number, with the hope that more people in crisis would reach out to 988 for help.

And there are a lot of indications that things are going well, including a 46 percent increase in the number of calls answered in the first year.

Even so, a recent survey found that just 13 percent of Americans know of both 988’s existence and the reasons why someone might contact 988. Instead, 911 continues to be a default option when a person is experiencing suicidal thoughts, or when a loved one with a mental health condition has become agitated or aggressive.

How do we help people get mental health care—instead of getting arrested or killed?

Some of my research has been to show how jails become the default “mental health facility” for people experiencing acute distress, even when these individuals could be reasonably served within their community instead.

How can systems be improved to ensure that these calls result in people getting help, rather than arrested or killed?

Nationally, efforts to launch 988 ramped up slowly, so as to avoid overwhelming the
In the meantime, some jurisdictions have focused on trying to meet the needs of those either in crisis or those calling in on behalf of someone else in crisis, who end up calling 911 and not 988. In Los Angeles County, the police department diverts behavioral health calls coming into 911 to the local 988 call center. In Durham, North Carolina, a Crisis Call Diversion unit staffed by clinicians has been embedded within the 911 call center. Some states have passed policies that require coordination between 911 and crisis call centers, as Virginia did with the Marcus-David Peters Act. Named for a young Black teacher killed by police during a mental health crisis, it requires that all counties develop enhanced and coordinated crisis services, including establishing regional crisis call centers that coordinate with 911 and outlining a role for mobile response teams, police and clinician co-response teams, and police officers who have participated in crisis intervention training.

These efforts, along with those in L.A. and Durham, are building a “no wrong door” approach—whether a person in crisis knows to call 988 or is familiar only with 911, their call will end up making it to a behavioral health professional.

The need for 988 is desperate for mental health care

However, this coordination between 911 and emergency mental health services remains limited. When there’s no state requirement to develop coordinated processes—as is the case in most states—it means that a community must spearhead the effort from the ground up.

Such an effort requires funding, collaboration, and infrastructure. It also necessitates more successful models to point to as guides.

Even in cases where there is a state requirement to coordinate between mental health services and 911 calls, setting up such complicated systems can take years before they are up and running. For example, implementing Virginia’s Marcus Alert will continue until July 2028, as communi-
In some fields, stackable credentials offer a promising strategy for reshaping postsecondary education and training for the underserved.

By Doug Irving, Staff Writer
An alternative to four-year degrees

Josh Eschke tried to make four years of college work. But sitting through lectures, reading about work he wanted to do without actually doing it—he just couldn’t get excited about it. “It was hard to see what I would be doing, exactly,” he said.

He dropped out and enrolled in Lorain County Community College, a national leader in stackable credentials, near his home outside of Cleveland. He earned a one-term certificate in microelectromechanical systems, building and testing circuit boards. He used that to pursue a one-year certificate—and with it, an internship at a local plant that pays $23 an hour. He’s now working toward his associate degree.

“This is much more hands-on than any engineering degree at a big university,” he said. One other important benefit: “This has a very high placement rate. Almost everybody who goes through this program has gotten a position after they’ve left.”

That’s how stackable credentials are supposed to work. Schools often pitch them as a way for students to build their education and their careers in steps in high-demand occupations like nursing or information technology. Several states have guaranteed funding for them in an effort to help more disadvantaged students move beyond a high school diploma.

But the evidence for stackable credentials has been much more limited than the glossy school brochures would suggest. Daugherty, a specialist in education and workforce policy at RAND, wanted to know not just whether these programs deliver, but under what circumstances, and for whom.

What the data show

She and other RAND researchers partnered with researchers from the University of Michigan to find out. They pulled data on student enrollment, credential awards, and employment outcomes from two states that have pushed hard for stackable credential programs: Colorado and Ohio. Their final sample included more than 80,000 students who earned their first credentials between mid-2006 and mid-2015. Ascendium Education Group, a foundation that works to give lower-income students more opportunities to succeed, funded the study.
Low-income students who built up their credentials over time sharply reduced the earnings gap with their more-advantaged peers.

The data showed that low-income students in both states were more likely to stack credentials than middle- and high-income students. They were more likely to identify as Asian, Black, or Hispanic; and in Colorado, they were more likely to be women. And in both states, they were more likely than other students to build toward higher and higher credentials in their field—what the researchers called vertical stacking.

That was key. Students who collected a series of shorter-term certificates without ever building up saw no meaningful increase in their earnings. But low-income students in Ohio who stacked vertically saw their average annual incomes go from less than $20,000 to more than $40,000 within six years. In Colorado, it was closer to $50,000. In both states, low-income students who built up their credentials over time sharply reduced the earnings gap with their more-advantaged peers.

“Honestly, we expected to see gaps; we expected to see concerning data and issues with equity,” Daugherty said. “And instead, what we saw seems relatively promising. But the story here is not, hey, you can just go get all of these short-term credentials and close the income gap. It’s only vertical stacking, and it’s really only certain fields, that are driving this.”

Nursing, for example, provided high rates of good-paying jobs. So did mechanics. In fact, more than 70 percent of the credential-stacking mechanics in both Colorado and Ohio went on to find middle-income jobs. Other stackable fields with high numbers of middle-income earners included manufacturing and information technology.

Looking forward: lessons from more high-value programs

But that’s not always where low-income students went looking for credentials. The researchers found high concentrations of them in culinary and applied arts programs, for example. Those fields have limited vertical-stacking options and lower rates of good-paying jobs. Low-income students also tended to enroll in family and consumer science programs. Those can include anything from nutrition and child care to fashion consulting and retail management—jobs that also don’t usually pay as well as tech and health jobs.

That suggests colleges could provide more up-front information about the value of different credentials, the researchers wrote. They should consider offering more career-counseling services, especially for low-income and underserved students. States and colleges should also identify high-value programs and scale them up—while carefully considering whether they need any more culinary schools or applied arts programs.

RAND researchers are now taking a closer look at how students build their credentials in some of those high-value fields, such as manufacturing and computer science. Daugherty is just starting a study in Indiana to identify lessons from its experience with stackable credentials. She’s also hoping to do more on-the-ground research, hearing what works and what doesn’t from students who have gone through stackable programs—students like Josh Eschke.

He’s a few credits away from getting his associate degree. After that, he might go look for a job at a chip factory. He might stay and get his bachelor’s degree. Either way, he says, “I’m very optimistic. This field will be growing for as long as ...,” he pauses. “I can’t imagine it ever having a downturn unless some insane new technology comes out.”

Intel is building a $20 billion plant not far from his home that it touts as the largest silicon manufacturing location on the planet. It hopes to anchor a new “Silicon Heartland” in central Ohio. Eschke might not have known what he wanted to do when he started college, but he knows now. He’s working toward one day being a supervisor there.
Calculations based on data from the Colorado Community College System and the Ohio Longitudinal Data Archive. "Middle-income wage" means quarterly earnings higher than 200 percent of the federal poverty level. Vertical stackers earned an initial certificate and then a higher credential within three years. Horizontal stackers earned an initial certificate and then an additional credential on the same level within three years. Non-stackers did not earn any additional credentials.
Why Gender Diversity Matters for the U.S. Department of Defense

By Doug Irving, Staff Writer
Disoriented and traumatized, tens of thousands of Afghan evacuees started to arrive in the United States in late August 2021. They had escaped from Kabul as the Taliban closed in. Now, as they filed into temporary housing units on U.S. military bases, officials realized they had miscalculated. These were not all men.

What followed was a race to provide everything from separate housing units to baby formula to information sessions for Afghan women. It was a test of the military’s commitment to better address women’s needs and safety—and, more than that, to center women as leaders and advisers. It became, RAND researchers found, an example of how to do that, and how important it can be.

“The Department of Defense has all of these strategic documents, strategic frameworks, and implementation plans,” said Joslyn Fleming, a defense policy researcher who led the study. “We wanted to give the implementers, the commanders, an idea of how it looks in action. We wanted them to say, oh, that’s what it means to incorporate a gender perspective.”

Those strategic documents and frameworks all refer to “Women, Peace, and Security.” It’s an umbrella term that covers a few different ideas. It means making sure women play a meaningful role in matters of war, peace, and security. It means recognizing the disproportionate impact that conflict has on women—and taking steps to ensure their safety. And it means embedding women’s perspectives in all levels of decisionmaking.

It’s been U.S. policy since 2017, and not just as a moral imperative. The Department of Defense says meeting those objectives is key to building a more lethal force. For years, it has pointed for an example

“Women, Peace, and Security” is the recognition of women’s impact on peace and security decisionmaking—and the disproportionate impact that conflict has on women.
to the all-women teams that worked alongside special operations forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. They were able to build relationships in local communities that men never could, often yielding mission-critical intelligence.

But military leaders wanted more, and more recent, examples of what it looks like on the ground to apply a gender lens to planning and operations. Researchers developed a set of real-world vignettes to demonstrate the how and the why, drawn largely from interviews with women who had served. Many had worked as gender advisers—GENADs in military lingo—a role the military created to provide that gender lens.

A few years ago, for example, U.S. service members were in Guyana for an annual training exercise with partners in the Caribbean. They included gender advisers, who noticed that the Guyanese women in uniform were doing menial jobs like serving food. At the time, Guyana badly needed soldiers to defend its border with Venezuela. But the advisers learned it had not built separate facilities for women there, so it could not deploy them. They worked with U.S. and Guyanese officials to get the facilities built. Within months, two units of women were patrolling the border.

On the other side of the globe, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command developed an index to track gender equity and other developments in its area of operations. It flagged the small Southeast Asian nation of Timor-Leste as a hot spot of human trafficking. Command officials sponsored a workshop to help Timorese labor inspectors spot trafficking victims and get them help. The country identified ten trafficking victims and 32 other possible victims in 2022 and early 2023, up from one the year before.

“As we are trying to counter adversaries like Russia and China, this is an area where we can
OBJECTIVE 1
Women are more prepared and increasingly able to participate in efforts that promote stable and lasting peace.

OBJECTIVE 2
Women and girls are safer, better protected, and have equal access to government and private assistance programs, including from the United States, international partners, and host nations.

OBJECTIVE 3
United States and partner governments have improved institutionalization and capacity to ensure WPS efforts are sustainable and long-lasting.


walk the walk and really be a partner of choice for these nations,” said Fleming—who, in addition to her work at RAND, is a lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve. “Incorporating these principles sets us apart from them and helps us in that competition.”

But, she added, “it’s not just about looking at other countries. There’s an internal focus here, too.”

In the summer of 2021, as the Afghan government collapsed and the Taliban swept back into Kabul, tens of thousands of people crushed the gates of Hamid Karzai International Airport. U.S. forces had expected to evacuate mostly men who had served as interpreters or security partners. Instead, as they loaded people into cargo planes for one of the largest airlifts of noncombatants in history, they saw that many of the men were accompanied by women and children.

The U.S. bases that would house the evacuees had as little as three days to get ready. Expecting young men, they had plentiful supplies of soda, but not baby formula. One base in Virginia hosted 150 pregnant women and had to scramble to find doctors for them. A base in Indiana didn’t have enough soldiers who were women to patrol separate housing units for women and children.

The military deployed more than two dozen gender advisers to help with what became known as Operation Allies Welcome. Working across bases, they helped commanders anticipate the needs and cultural sensitivities of the new arrivals. They provided women-only recreation areas and organized women-only town halls. They set aside more time for women in base supply stores, because they realized women were shopping not just for themselves, but for their entire family—often with children in tow.

The gender advisers “made a compelling case for taking a comprehensive approach to consider gender dimensions for all aspects of the mission,” RAND researchers wrote. The commander of U.S. Northern Command, General Glen VanHerck, described their contributions as “truly groundbreaking and critical.” The advisers, he said, “helped enable the success of Afghans resettling into American communities.”

RAND researchers are now developing case-study reports for individual combatant commands and service branches. They’re also looking at how leveraging the principles of Women, Peace, and Security could help the military combat sexual assault and harassment.

The military, too, is trying to get the word out. The gender advisers who worked with Afghan refugees in the United States developed a training curriculum from what they learned. Among the countries that have asked for their insights is Bangladesh. It has hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees living in camps on its southern border, one of the worst refugee crises in the world. More than half are women and children.

Women, Peace, and Security in Action: Including Gender Perspectives in Department of Defense Operations, Activities, and Investments is available for free download.
Economists in Ukraine have kept a grim tally ever since the Russian army swept across their border in early 2022. Private houses destroyed in the first year of the war: 66,618. Major roadway kilometers torn up by tank treads and high explosives: 8,746.

The economists track how many schools have been turned to rubble (434 in the first year alone) and how many hydroelectric power plants have been damaged or destroyed (all of them). They know how many agricultural bee colonies were wiped out in one year of fighting (86,902).

Their ledger provides some idea of just how massive the reconstruction effort will have to be when the shooting stops. But it’s just the start. Researchers at RAND looked across decades of recovery efforts, from post-World War II Europe to post-Hurricane Katrina New Orleans,
to show what it will take to rebuild Ukraine. Their goal was not just to get houses rebuilt and schools reopened, but to ensure a “freer, more prosperous, and secure future” for Ukrainians and the West.

“This might be the largest recovery project in modern history,” said Howard Shatz, a senior economist at RAND who coauthored the report. “It’s not going to be like Iraq or Afghanistan. There’s no insurgency here. The war has unified Ukrainians, not divided them. This is going to be more like what happened in Europe after World War II or the fall of the Berlin Wall.”

Ukraine was the poorest country in Europe even before Russia invaded. Its infrastructure was in such bad shape that President Volodymyr Zelenskyy once said—before the war—that he hoped to be remembered as a leader who built good roads. Its reputation for corruption was legendary. One U.S. government report described the case of a judge caught accepting a $12 million bribe—who still managed to keep her job.

To rebuild successfully, Ukraine will need to come out of the war on a new trajectory. And the time to start thinking about what that will look like, and how to make it happen, is now.

It’s possible that neither Ukraine nor Russia will win this war outright. When it comes, peace might instead take the form of a ceasefire or an armistice, with both sides seething but exhausted. That’s rough ground on which to rebuild. Ukraine will need some way to guarantee its security against the threat of another Russian attack and to give investors confidence. Bringing it into NATO is one option—but it’s only one option. The U.S. and other allies could instead continue to supply Ukraine with weapons and
They could also threaten to send in their own forces if Russia crosses the border again.

“NATO doesn’t need Ukraine as a member to deter Russia,” the late James Dobbins, a storied diplomat who held the Distinguished Chair in Diplomacy and Security at RAND, once said. He helped lead the Ukraine project almost up until his death last year. He added: “Nor does Ukraine need to become a NATO member to enjoy material support for its defense.”

A more-secure Ukraine can then turn to the long and costly task of rebuilding. The economists keeping count at the Kyiv School of Economics estimate the war has caused more than $150 billion in damage, just to physical infrastructure. The destruction has been so sweeping and so complete that in some places it’s like a natural disaster hit. So RAND researchers also looked for lessons in previous disaster-recovery efforts.

In Haiti, for example, recovery from a catastrophic 2010 earthquake slowed when few international donors wanted to cover the very necessary, but very unglamorous, work of clearing rubble. Just bringing displaced people home to participate in the recovery can be a challenge: The population of New Orleans still is not what it was when Hurricane Katrina crashed ashore in 2005. Puerto Rico put together a whole-of-society recovery and reconstruction plan after Hurricane Maria in 2017. But local communities, often short on workers, struggled to spend the huge sums of rebuilding money coming in.

“In fact, in the majority of the natural disasters we looked at, those local communities lacked the staff, expertise, and processes to manage such a large reconstruction effort,” said Gabrielle Tarini, an associate policy researcher who coauthored the report. “So while we certainly want to localize the effort in Ukraine as much as possible, we also need to be mind-
ful of the capacity constraints that communities are going to have.”

That leads to the next big question: Where will the money come from? Western countries have frozen roughly $300 billion in Russian assets. But it’s not at all clear that seizing those assets and using them for the recovery would be legal under international law. Instead, given the scale of the challenge, many commentators have called for a new Marshall Plan for Ukraine.

The original Marshall Plan provided billions of dollars to help pull Western Europe out of the wreckage of World War II. The aid—and the creation of NATO at the same time—provided the stability that Europe needed to rebuild. But what often gets overlooked is that it was private investment, not international aid, that mainly bankrolled the recovery. And the economic engines of Europe didn’t really start up again until international trade started flowing.

Central Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall might provide a closer precedent for Ukraine. There, some U.S. aid came in the form of enterprise funds that invested in small and medium-sized companies. Those funds revitalized banks and rebuilt industries to help the countries receiving it, such as Poland and Hungary, eventually join the single market of the European Union.

That is the stated goal of Ukraine, too, and the potential for EU membership should exert a “gravitational pull” on the recovery effort, researchers wrote. “This is not 1947,” said Charles Ries, a former ambassador and principal deputy assistant secretary of state for European Affairs, now an adjunct senior fellow at RAND. “The Ukrainians have their own vision about the economy that they want to create. And the most important economic aspect is that it moves toward eventually joining the European Union.”

The European Union should take the lead—with Ukraine setting the priorities—on managing the economic recovery. The U.S. should take the lead on questions of security. All major partners should appoint special representatives to coordinate their support and ensure Ukraine’s needs are met, even down to rubble removal. And, with billions of dollars likely to flow into the country, Ukraine should appoint an independent inspector general to ensure the money is well spent and the process is transparent.

The Marshall Plan provides one other key lesson. In the postwar America of the 1940s, the plan was a hard sell. The Truman administration led a massive effort to build bipartisan support. Ukraine’s recovery will take years. It will span presidential administrations. If federal officials want it to succeed, they need to do more to make their case and shore up support for the long haul.

“Ultimately, building a secure, economically prosperous Ukraine that is fully integrated into European institutions will be a capstone achievement,” Ries said, “beneficial on both sides of the Atlantic and a boon for global security and Western democracy.”

Ukraine already has an outline of what it will look like. Its plan looks far beyond the immediate damages tallied by the economists in Kyiv and envisions more than $750 billion in economic support and projects that would raise a new Ukraine from the destruction. It calls for new power plants and modern buildings, labor reskilling programs and rule-of-law reforms, science parks and a manufacturing hub for electric vehicle components.

It calls for thousands of kilometers of new and rebuilt roads, too. But that is no longer President Zelenskyy’s main measure of success. In a 2022 Wall Street Journal op-ed, he promised to make Ukraine “the greatest growth opportunity in Europe since the end of World War II.”
A total of $13.9 million in grants from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation will strengthen RAND’s research panels by extending the American School District Panel, adding preschool teachers to the American Teacher Panel, and creating two new panels: an American Youth Panel and American Parent Panel.

RAND’s panels consist of nationally representative participants who agree to take surveys over time for research purposes. Survey results reveal relevant and timely information about issues and concerns on important, policy-related topics.

RAND fields the surveys to participants online and makes the de-identified survey results available for free to benefit the public good.

Currently, RAND operates the 6,000-participant RAND American Life Panel and three education-focused panels that provide feedback on educational policy and practice: 25,000 teachers in the American Teacher Panel; 8,000 principals in the American School Leader Panel; and 1,000 districts in the American School District Panel. Previously, only adults were surveyed, but this gift expands RAND's capacity to glean insights from youth.

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The youth panel will consist of approximately 4,000 youth ages 12–21, with about 5,000 participants on the parent panel. Initial plans are for the new panels to gather data on youth and parent perceptions of schooling experiences. The youth panel will address such topics as attitudes toward math, connectedness to school, and college and career plans.

RAND education surveys in recent years have yielded important information about such diverse topics as teacher well-being and burnout, the effects of COVID-19 on education, and a teacher and substitute teacher shortage.

Students over the age of 18 will be recruited directly; parental consent is required for those under 18. Future survey topics are to be determined but will be restricted to topics that benefit educators, students, and the public interest.

“We chose RAND for this investment because of RAND’s long-standing reputation for objective, data-driven, nonpartisan research, which will enable us to unlock deeper insights into national and state trends,” said Adam Goldfarb, program officer at the foundation. “The new panels will complement RAND’s teacher and school leader panels, providing our foundation and the field with access to timely, strategy-relevant data about student achievement.”

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation describes itself as “a nonprofit fighting poverty, disease, and inequity around the world.” It has a track record of engaging with K–12, with recent investments in understanding and promoting math education.

“We want to hear directly what youth are thinking and learn about their experiences,” said Heather L. Schwartz, a senior policy researcher at RAND who directs the Pre-K to 12 Educational Systems Program and codirects the American District Panel.

“Not all nationally representative surveys are equally rigorous or transparent about their methodology,” said Schwartz, “but what’s great about these panels is that you can have confidence that the results truly represent the people that you care about. In the past, we’ve been able to get education-related information directly from teachers and school leaders across the United States. Now, we can get it directly from youth, which adds a whole new dimension to our research, and enables us to juxtapose the results from our various panels.”

RAND will field its first youth panel survey by summer 2024, followed by approximately four short surveys to youth per year.

Also starting in 2024, RAND plans to open the youth panel to additional funders to field surveys. RAND would also like to increase the number of youths who participate in the panel over time to allow for more state-representative or subgroup-specific surveys.

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