



# Military Literature Festival 2022

Can it end  
without  
**nuclear  
weapons?**

## **Russia-Ukraine War 2022**

A collection of articles on the  
**Russia - Ukraine War 2022**  
and its implications for India

# Russia-Ukraine War 2022



Military Literature Festival  
Chandigarh 2022

3rd-4th December 2022





ਭਗਵੰਤ ਮਾਨ  
Bhagwant Mann



ਮੁੱਖ ਮੰਤਰੀ, ਪੰਜਾਬ  
Chief Minister, Punjab



## MESSAGE

It is heartening to learn that the sixth edition of the Military Literature Festival is being held at Chandigarh from November 27 to December 07, 2022 and an e-book is being published on the Ukraine War during the event.

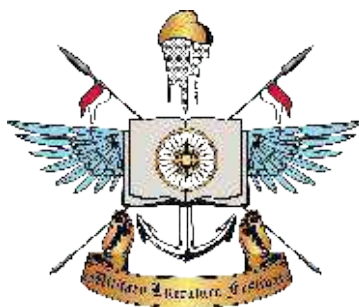
Concerted efforts of the organizers to hold this mega event every year is highly laudable. Such endeavors are the need of the hour to create awareness among the people especially the youth about the rich legacy of our Armed Forces, and rekindle the motivating spirit for joining the Army in them. I am apprised that top military thinkers, authors, historians, curators and defense experts from various parts of the country will participate in this unique event and dwell on a number of issues pertaining to national security.

I hope that the festival will act as a catalyst to invoke patriotism amongst the youth and give them exposure to the rich military history of Punjab.

On this occasion, I send my best wishes to the organizers and participants for the success of this event.

  
(Bhagwant Mann)





**LT GEN TS SHERGILL, PVSM (RETD)**  
**CHAIRMAN**  
**MILITARY LITERATURE FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION (MLFA)**  
**CHANDIGARH**

I am as glad as the citizens of the Tri City that our popular 'Festival' is back in its physical form. The carnival atmosphere and the military displays have returned to complement our principal purpose - the scholarly discussions.

Our agenda this time has a flavour that is global, with analysis that will help us to understand the Geo Strategic and Geo Political impact of these happenings on India. We will also dwell on historic military events in our country in the last 75 years, which make us proud of our soldiers, their rich ethos and their daring exploits.

Our main focus is on 'The War In Ukraine' and its global impact, a panel discussion has been scheduled as the opening event. The MLF Society has also compiled an eBook on the war with contributions from eminent veterans and historians.

The War in Ukraine is unique in many ways: it has gone on much longer than anticipated, territories won and lost, the hybrid content in form of sanctions, social media and energy as a weapon has been high and the use of modern weapons precise and devastating. While the war itself is localised to the boundaries of Ukraine, its impact on the world economy and Geo Politics is global.

Supply chains of key commodities and shipping has been severely restricted making trade disruptive and expensive. Consequently, there has been an increase in the price of commodities. This comes at a time when global supply chains are already under the pandemic stress.

Russia and Ukraine are major grain producers. Together they account for 30% of global wheat exports and 20% of corn. Grain shipments through the Black Sea are disrupted by the war. A global food inflation has been triggered; this can hurt world communities living in poverty and countries dependent on food imports.

Both Ukraine and most of Europe are therefore likely to face a very cold winter this year; this strategy by Russia of using energy as a weapon is expected to add a new dimension to Hybrid Warfare.

Beyond the current economic impact of the war, it appears likely that the Geo Political framework of Western Europe is also rapidly changing. A sizable increase in government spending on defence in the future is inevitable.

The eBook presents these issues in great detail, and, we can certainly can look forward to some interesting readings on the war.

Date: 18 Nov 2022

(Lt Gen TS Shergill, PVSM (Retd))





## EDITORIAL

**Lt Gen Chetinder Singh, AVSM, SM, VSM, Retd**

The theme of this year's Military Literature Festival Journal is the Russia-Ukraine War. The editorial team has made a modest effort to source articles and analyses which are balanced, authoritative, informative and of high quality. Many of the authors are veterans themselves.

The compilation has been arranged in convenient sections on Background, Progress of Operations, the Hybrid Nature of War, the Nuclear Dimension, Implications for India, Commentaries and Lessons Learnt.

This MLF Journal is special, in that the conflict has been covered comprehensively. While the war continues and is into the tenth month, some lessons which have emerged cannot be missed. The outcomes over the first months of the war surprised many observers, challenging some traditional assessments of military and economic power. Armies of the world are watching and studying this war carefully. Many doctrines and theories have been debunked. Newer tactics and innovative use of weapons have been highlighted.

If one sees the number of soldiers involved on both sides, this is a comparatively small war. Yet, beyond the suffering and humanitarian crisis, the entire global economy has felt the effects of slower growth and faster inflation. The effect on food supplies, energy flow and finance has taken a toll in many countries.

The inter-connected nature of the world's economy has demonstrated the immediate effect of the war on the global supply chain and the prices of commodities including petrol and diesel. Meanwhile, companies around the world are being forced to find alternative material and labour sources.

India has managed to deflect the trickle down effect through deft political and diplomatic moves. But it has been a tight rope walk and the future holds many challenges.

While decisive moves are yet to take place and it is to be seen how the war ends, it would be worthwhile to study how the nature of warfare has changed from Korea to Vietnam, from Iraq (both Operation Desert Storm and Iraqi Freedom) to Afghanistan and now to the Ukraine conflict.

Meanwhile, happy reading.

Lt Gen Chetinder Singh, Retd



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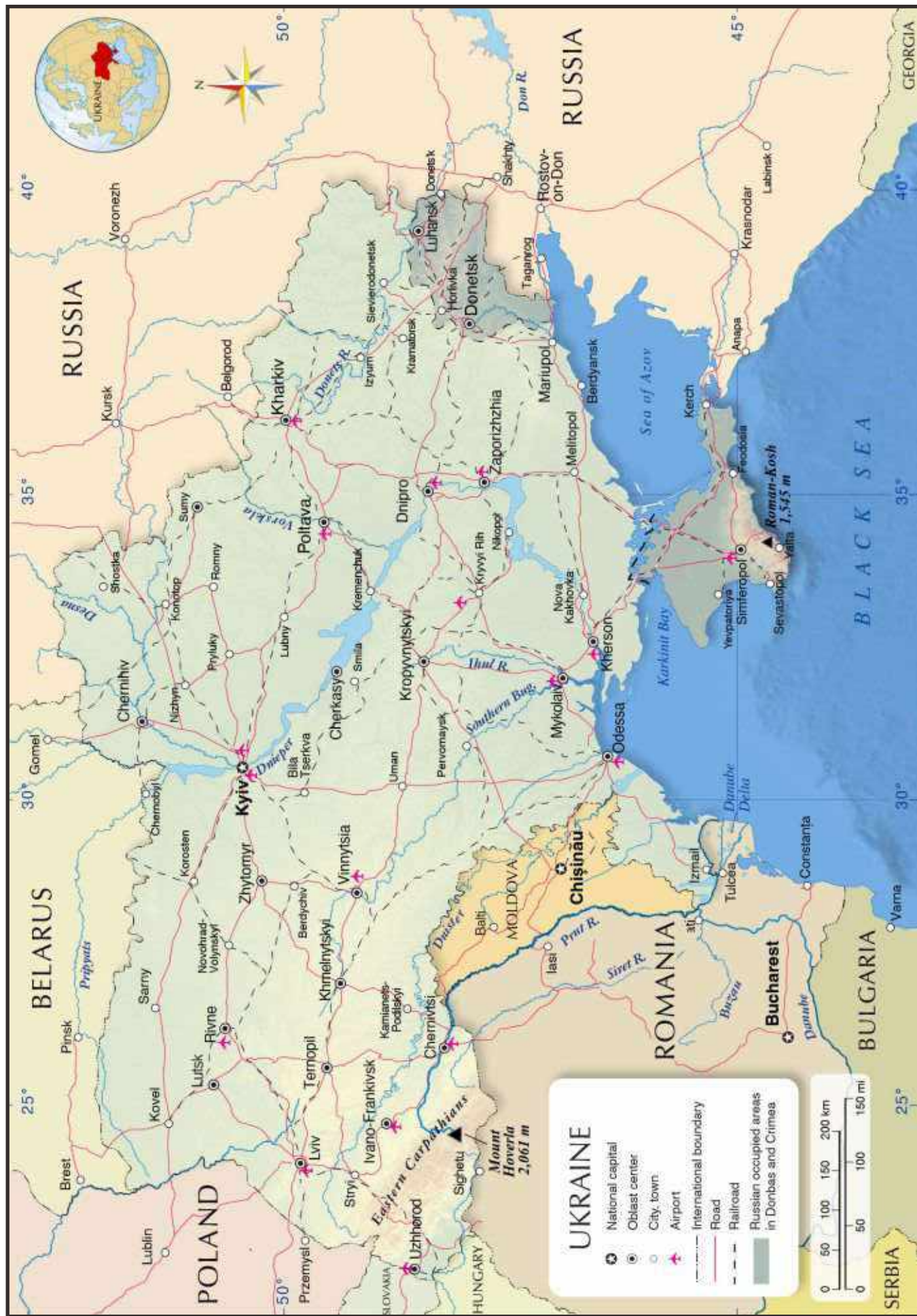




## Military Literature Festival 2020 (Virtual) Webinars, Panel Discussions and Book Discussions







# BACKGROUND INFORMATION

## Key Facts About Ukraine

Bruno Venditti

The modern state of Ukraine was formed nearly 30 years ago after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, the country has often made headlines due to political instability and the looming threat of a Russian invasion.

In the map graphic above, we examine Ukraine from a structural point of view. What's the country's population composition? What drives the country's economy? And most importantly, why is the country important within a global context?

### Where Do People Live in Ukraine?

With a population of nearly 44 million people, Ukraine is the eighth-most populous country in Europe. For perspective, that is slightly smaller than Spain, and four times larger than Greece.

A large portion of the country's population is located in and around the capital Kyiv, along with the Donetsk region—which is front and centre in the current conflict with Russia.

### Ukraine Population Cartogram

Not surprisingly, many of the country's Russian speaking citizens live on the eastern side of the country, near the Russian border.

**Ukraine's Demographics.** Ukrainians make up almost 78% of the total population, while Russians represent around 17% of the population, making it the single-largest Russian diaspora in the world.

Other minorities include:

- Belarusians: 0.6%
- Bulgarians: 0.4%
- Hungarians: 0.3%
- Crimean Tatars: 0.5%
- Romanians: 0.3%
- Poles: 0.3%
- Jews: 0.2%

The country's population has been declining since the 1990s because of a



Distribution of Russian-speaking population in Ukraine

**“Ukrainians make up almost 78% of the total population, while Russians represent around 17% of the population, making it the single-largest Russian diaspora in the world.”**

high emigration rate, and high death rates coupled with a low birth rate.

The majority of the population is Christian (80%), with 60% declaring adherence to one or another strand of the Orthodox Church.

### Ukraine's Economy: An Overview

When the Soviet Union collapsed, Ukraine turned over thousands of atomic weapons in exchange for security guarantees from Russia, the United States, and other countries. However, the

defense industry continues to be a strategically important sector and a large employer in Ukraine. The country exports weapons to countries like India, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey.

Furthermore, Ukraine is rich in natural resources, particularly in mineral deposits. It possesses the world's largest reserves of commercial-grade iron ore—30 billion tonnes of ore or around one-fifth of the global total. It's also worth noting that Ukraine ranks second in terms of known natural gas reserves in Europe, which today remain largely untapped.

Ukraine's mostly flat geography and high-quality soil composition make the country a big regional agricultural player. The country is the world's fifth-largest exporter of wheat and the world's largest exporter of seed oils like sunflower and rapeseed.

Coal mining, chemicals, mechanical products (aircraft, turbines, locomotives and tractors) and shipbuilding are also important sectors of the Ukrainian economy.





## The Bear in the Room

Given the country's location and history, it's nearly impossible to talk about Ukraine without mentioning nearby Russia.

The country shares borders with Russia both to the east and northeast. For context, a car trip from Moscow to one of the Ukrainian border cities, Shostka, takes around 8 hours. To the Northwest, Ukraine also shares borders with Belarus—a country that is closely aligned with the Kremlin.

To the southeast is Crimea, a peninsula entirely surrounded by both the Black Sea and the smaller Sea of Azov. In 2014, Russia annexed the peninsula and established two federal subjects, the Republic of Crimea and the federal city of Sevastopol. The annexation was widely condemned around the world, and the territories are recognized by most of the international community as being part of Ukraine.

The region was of particular interest to Russia since Moscow depends on the Black Sea for access to the Mediterranean. The Port of Sevastopol, on the southwest edge of Crimea, is one of the few ice-free deepwater ports available to Russia in the region.

Due to ongoing tensions between the two countries, Ukraine has been seeking to reduce Russia's leverage over its economy. As a result, China and Poland have surpassed Russia as Ukraine's largest country trading partners in recent years.

However, Ukraine still remains an important route for Russian gas that heats millions of homes, generates electricity,

and powers factories in Europe. The continent gets nearly 40% of its natural gas and 25% of its oil from Russia.

Furthermore, Ukraine is connected to the same power grid as Russia, so it remains dependent on Moscow in the event of a shortfall. Even as conflict heats up, the two countries still share economic links, which will influence how the situation unfolds.

## Conflict in the Donbas Region

Ukraine stands at the center of a geopolitical rivalry between western powers and Russia, and that rivalry is flaring up once again.

Two regions along the Russian border—Donetsk and Luhansk—have been a conflict zone since 2014, when pro-Russian separatists began clashing with government forces.

## Donbas Region Conflict Zone

Currently Russia has troops and military equipment amassed at various points along the border between the two countries, as well as in neighboring Belarus.

Russian President Vladimir Putin



A map of the line of control and buffer zone established by the Minsk Protocol on 5 Set 2014

ordered troops into two breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine, recognizing them as independent states. This recognition serves as a definitive end point to the seven-year peace deal known as the Minsk agreement.

As this conflict heats up, it remains to be seen what will happen to the roughly 5 million people who live in the Donbas region.

Courtesy: Visual Capitalist

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# Russia-Ukraine War 2022 Editorial Team

The Editorial Team thanks all authors, writers and journalists who contributed their articles and made this compendium possible. The Team also thanks all newspapers, periodicals, websites, blogs for giving permission to reproduce the works here; Special thanks to the backstage team, designers and volunteers for the hard work put in.

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# IMR

INDIAN MILITARY REVIEW

Produced & Published by  
Indian Military Review for  
Military Literature Festival 2022



# US considers security of Europe vital to its interests Why Ukraine Matters?

## Russia feels promises on NATO expansion belied

### An IMR Assessment

Ukraine is the second largest country in Europe, with a population of 43.8 million. With rolling plains and river valleys, the land is unequally divided by the 980-km course of the Dnieper river. It has a long coastline on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov.

Ukraine is rich in strategic minerals. It is in top position with Europe's proven recoverable reserves of uranium ores; it has the second largest titanium ore reserves in Europe; it is second in the world in terms of explored reserves of manganese ores and

the second largest iron ore reserves in the world; and it has Europe's second largest mercury ore reserves.

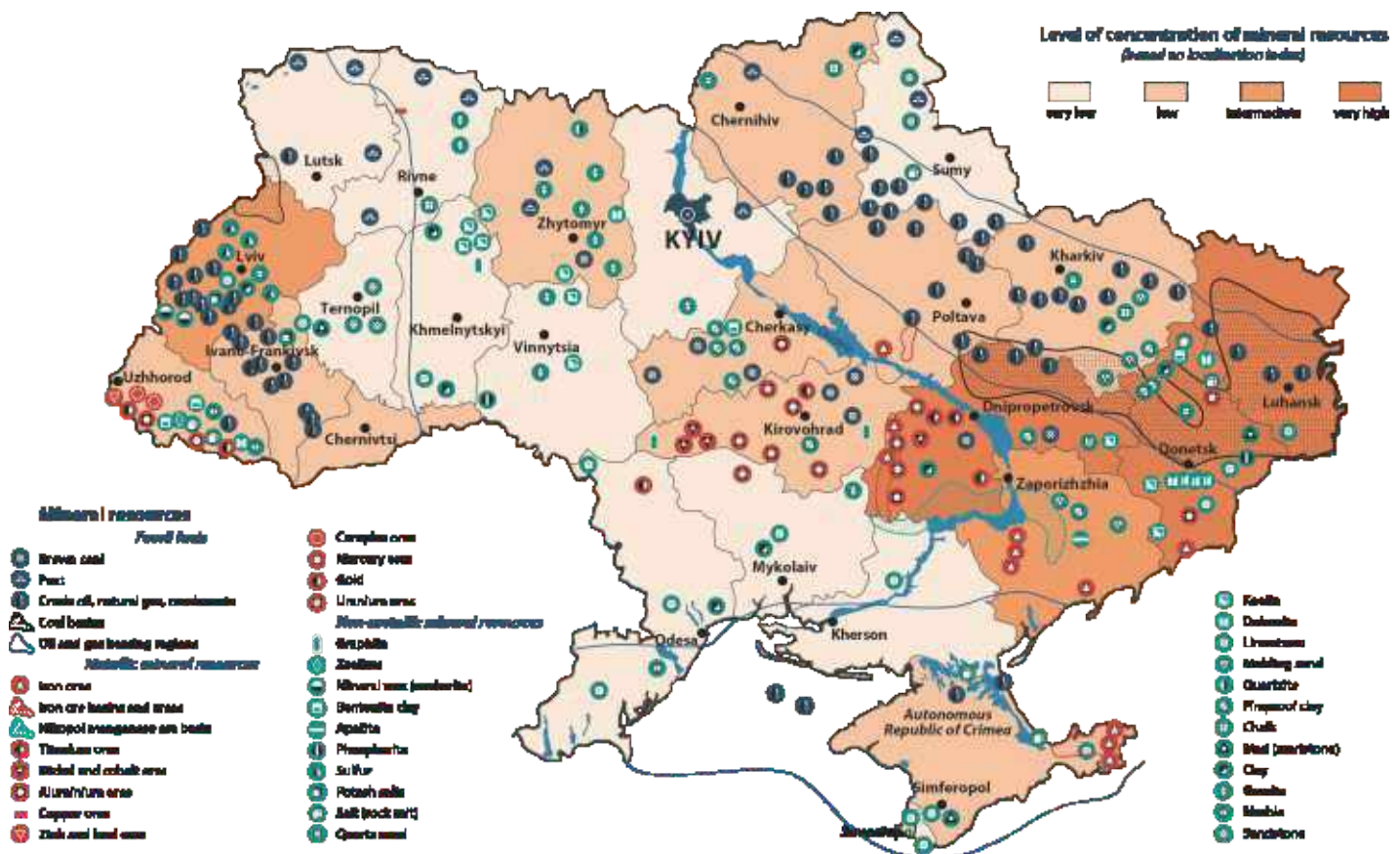
Agriculturally, Ukraine has Europe's largest arable land area; it the world's top exporter of sunflower and sunflower oil, second in the world in barley production; and the third largest producer of corn in the world.

Ukraine is an important industrialized country being the top European ammonia producer; having Europe's second largest natural gas pipeline system and the third

largest installed capacity of nuclear power plants in Europe.

Ukraine is a largely democratic nation of more than 40 million people, with a pro-Western president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who in 2019 won 73% of the vote in the election's final round. Ukrainians want to live in a country that resembles the European nations to its west — and the U.S. — more than it resembles Russia.

In a bid to unshackle itself from Russia, Ukrainian has desired to be a member of the European Economic Union and NATO.





Demography and geography, however, weigh against this. To the east of the Dnieper, large sections of the Russian minority are linked to Russia. Thus, Russia has the capability of bleeding Ukraine in an insurgency centred in the eastern Donbass region.

## Political Milestones

Both Ukraine and Belarus were independent members of the UN. With 77.8% Ukrainians and 17.3% people of Russian origin, Ukraine was quick to declare autonomy on 16 July 1990, as well as independence on August 24, 1991, as the Soviet Union unravelled.

The present crisis must be viewed in the light of definitive protests of the Orange Revolution (2004-05) and the Euromaidan protests in Kyiv of 2014. The US backed a coup in Ukraine in 2014 to oust the pro-Russian government of Viktor Yanukovich. It was an invitation to a Russian military buildup along its frontier?

## Why Ukraine's Invasion is different?

There have been dozens of wars in the almost 80 years since World War II ended but Russia's invasion of Ukraine is different from almost all of them. The invasion involves one of the world's largest militaries launching an unprovoked ground invasion of a neighboring country. The apparent goal is an expansion of regional dominance, either through annexation or the establishment of a puppet government.

Since World War II, such unprovoked aggression has been undertaken by the Soviets in Afghanistan (in the 1970s), Czechoslovakia (in the 1960s) and Hungary (in the 1950s) and Russia's annexation of Crimea (2014). The U.S., for its part, sent troops into Vietnam (1961-73), the Dominican Republic (1965), Grenada (1983), Panama (1989), Kuwait & Iraq (1991), Haiti (1994), Bosnia (1994), Kosovo (1999), Iraq (2003-2010), Libya (2011) and Syria (2011-).

## Why Russia invaded Ukraine?

So, what is it about Ukraine that Russia was compelled to invade? The invasion is a spectacular gamble and a sign that the world might be changing.

## Why Ukraine Matters

Ukraine is the second largest country by area in Europe by area and has a population of over 40 million - more than Poland.

Ukraine ranks:

- 1st in Europe in proven recoverable reserves of uranium ores;
- 2nd in Europe and 10th in the world in titanium ore reserves;
- 2nd in the world in explored reserves of manganese ores;
- 2nd largest iron ore reserves in the world (30 billion tons);
- 2nd in Europe in terms of mercury ore reserves;
- 3rd in Europe (13th in the world) in shale gas reserves;
- 4th in the world by the total value of natural resources;
- 7th in the world in coal reserves (33.9 billion tons)

Ukraine is an important agricultural country:

- 1st in Europe in terms of arable land area;
- 3rd in the world by the area of black soil;
- 1st in the world in exports of sunflower and sunflower oil;
- 2nd in the world in barley production;
- 3rd largest world producer and 4th largest exporter of corn;
- 4th largest producer of potatoes in the world;
- 5th largest rye producer in the world;
- 5th in the world in bee production (75,000 tons);

Ukraine is an important industrialized country:

- 1st in Europe in ammonia production;
- Europe's 2nd's and world's 4th largest natural gas pipeline system;
- 3rd largest in Europe and 8th largest in the world in terms of installed capacity of nuclear power plants;
- 3rd largest iron exporter in the world
- 4th largest exporter of turbines for nuclear power plants in the world;
- 4th world's largest manufacturer of rocket launchers;

Russia believes that liberal democracies are in decline, the U.S. and Europe are struggling to lift living standards for much of their populations, they are polarized by cultural conflicts between metropolitan areas and more rural ones and major political parties are weak. These problems have given Putin and his top aides confidence that "the American-led order is in deep crisis," as Alexander Gabuev of the Carnegie

Moscow Center wrote in The Economist.

Gabuev explained: "A new multipolar order is taking shape that reflects an unstoppable shift in power to authoritarian regimes that support traditional values. A feisty, resurgent Russia is a pioneering force behind the arrival of this new order, along with a rising China."

Russia wants to "demilitarise and de-Nazify" Ukraine which Putin refuses to recognise as a "country" and firmly believes, as he asserted in his speech justifying the invasion, that Ukraine is "an inalienable part of our history, culture and spiritual space" for historical reasons. Putin's claim in fact extends to all the "historic Russian lands" extending to Odessa on the Black Sea coast, the logic on which he had annexed Crimea in 2014.

Russia's key demand is a halt to NATO expansion. Russian President Vladimir Putin has asked for guarantees that Ukraine will never be allowed to join the alliance, and demanded a withdrawal from eastern Europe. That, naturally, is a no-go for the allies. On the contrary, NATO wants to welcome Sweden and Finland, Ukraine and Georgia.

## Why Ukraine Matters to NATO?

The US considers stability and security of Europe as vital to its interests.

Moscow wants to establish new rules of the international order or to weaken the current order. Its objectives include weakening NATO and the EU, which means that the United States has a vital interest in thwarting the Kremlin in Europe. Ukraine is at the very front of this war. If Ukraine cannot repel the Russians, they will go farther and try to gobble up additional European territory. Helping Ukraine defend its territorial integrity and sovereignty is the most economical way of defending our NATO.

During the Cold War, Western Germany served as another buffer to the rest of Europe, and it also allowed NATO states to help influence the country's military development. Ukraine could very well serve a similar purpose that West Germany did.

*Contd on page 13*



# REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

## A One-sided Contest Under a Risky Backdrop

# Russia and Ukraine Military Strengths Compared

### IMR Team Assessment

Ukraine's armed forces are heavily outnumbered by Russia's. In terms of manpower and weapons, the arithmetic looks grim for Ukraine. The number of Russian troops near Russia's border with Ukraine before the invasion began were more than 100,000. Russia also moved some troops to Belarus, north of Ukraine, for military drills.

Estimates of the numbers of new Russian troops moved closer to Ukraine vary from 60,000 to around 100,000, with a U.S. intelligence document suggesting that number could be ramped up to 175,000.

### Personnel and Equipment

While western European nations have contributed military equipment to Ukraine in the recent past, the country's military capabilities pale in comparison to Russia's, which has among the mightiest armed forces in the world.

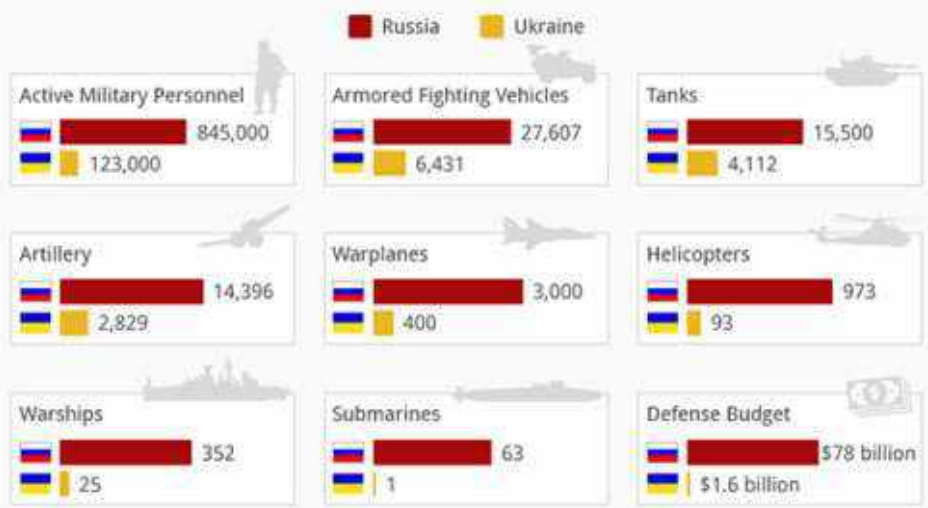
Although Ukraine trebled its defence budget in real terms from 2010 to 2020, its total defence expenditure in 2020 amounted to only \$5.9 billion, or one-tenth of Russia's, according to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), which tracks global arms trade, at US\$ 61.7 billion.

In a head-to-head comparison of the military capabilities of the two nations, Russia outnumbers Ukraine in almost every aspect. According to Global Fire Power, which has been analysing the military capabilities of countries across the world since 2006, while Russia is the second most powerful country militarily, Ukraine is ranked 22 out of 140 nations.

Russia has nearly 850,000 active personnel, which is more than three times

### Massive Military Imbalance Between Russia and Ukraine

Estimated military strength of Russia and Ukraine in 2014



250,000 for Ukraine. In terms of airpower, Russia has more than 4,100 aircraft, with 772 fighters, while Ukraine only has 318 total aircraft, with just 69 fighter aircraft.

Similarly, in terms of ground forces, Russia has around 12,500 tanks and more than 30,000 armoured vehicles, while Ukraine only has around 2,600 tanks and 12,000 armoured vehicles. While Russia has around 14,000 towed and self-propelled artillery guns, Ukraine's total number is just over 3,000.

Although navies are unlikely to make any direct contact in this conflict, still, Russia has more than 600 naval vessels, including one aircraft carrier, compared to the total 38 naval vessels with Ukraine. For stealth capabilities in the sea, Russia has 70 submarines, to zero for Ukraine.

Beyond the regular army, Ukraine has volunteer territorial defence units and

around 900,000 reservists. Most adult males have at least basic military training, so Russia could find itself facing stubborn and protracted resistance if it tried to capture and hold onto territory.

Ukraine's anti-aircraft and anti-missile defences are weak, leaving it highly vulnerable to Russian strikes on its critical infrastructure. They also have short-range air defences and anti-tank weaponry, including U.S.-supplied Javelin missiles, which would help to slow any Russian advance.

Russia would seek to use its superiority in electronic warfare to paralyse its adversary's command and control and cut off communications with units in the field.

### Ukrainian Experience

Ukraine's army is also better trained







Ukrainian servicemen sit atop armored personnel carriers on a road in the Donetsk region

and equipped than in 2014, when Russia captured the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine without a fight, and is widely seen as highly motivated to defend the country's heartland. Ukraine's forces gained combat experience in the Donbass region in the east of the country, where they have been fighting Russia-backed separatists since 2014, and are highly motivated.

The military challenge would be incomparably higher than in previous wars Russia has fought since the Soviet Union's collapse, including in breakaway Chechnya in the 1990s and against Georgia in 2008.

## Western Military Aid

Western countries have stepped up arms deliveries to Ukraine, but Kyiv says it needs more. The United States has ruled out sending U.S. troops to Ukraine to fight.

The United States has provided more than \$2.5 billion in military aid since 2014, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, coastal patrol boats, Humvees, sniper rifles, reconnaissance drones, radar systems, night vision and radio equipment. Further supplies could include Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, small arms and boats.

Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov said, on 23 January 2022, the country had received a second consignment of weapons from the United States as part of defensive aid totalling \$200 million.

**“The United States has provided more than \$2.5 billion in military aid since 2014, including Javelin anti-tank missiles, coastal patrol boats, Humvees, sniper rifles, reconnaissance drones, radar systems, night vision and radio equipment. Further supplies could include Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, small arms and boats.”**

Ukraine had been arming itself with anti-tank missiles taken from the US, though. Hundreds of the Javelin missiles have been given to Ukraine since December, which will help Ukrainian troops to target Russian tanks. It is a man-portable fire-and-forget anti-tank missile, which means that a soldier can fire it from his shoulder, and its automatic infrared guidance system will target the tanks from above, which is the weakest part of any tank.

Washington has said it would continue to support Ukraine amid concerns in Kyiv and among its Western allies over tens of thousands of Russian troops amassed on its border. Russia denies planning a military offensive. About 90 tonnes of “lethal security assistance”, including ammunition, from the package approved by the U.S. in December 2021.

At the beginning of the Russian invasion, countries across the globe have offered their military support to the Ukrainian government. European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen announced, on 28 February, that the EU would finance the purchase and delivery of arms to Ukraine totalling €450 million. Some countries in the bloc would also be sending fighter jets, the EU's foreign chief Josep Borrell announced. In another major shift, Germany has broken its long-standing foreign policy of banning all exports of lethal weapons to conflict zones.

Listed alphabetically, here is what donor countries have announced.

- Belgium – 2,000 machine guns, 3,800 tons of fuel, 3,000 additional automatic rifles and 200 anti-tank weapons.
- Canada – helmets, bulletproof vests, anti-tank weapons, ammunition.
- Croatia – €16 million worth of protective gear and light arms
- Czech Republic – 30,000 pistols, 7,000 assault rifles, 3,000 machine guns, sniper rifles, ammunition.
- Denmark – 2,700 anti-tank weapons, volunteer brigade.
- EU – will finance the purchase of arms for €450 mn
- Finland – 2,500 assault rifles, 150,000 rounds of ammunition, 1,500 rocket launchers, 70,000 field rations.
- France – defence equipment and fuel support.
- Germany – 1,000 anti-tank rocket launchers, 500 Stinger surface-to-air missiles, nine Howitzers, 14 armoured vehicles and 10,000 tonnes of fuel to Ukraine.
- Italy – military equipment.
- Netherlands – weapons and protective equipment, 200 Stingers
- Norway – helmets, bulletproof vests, 2,000 M72 anti-tank weapons.
- Portugal – bulletproof vests, helmets,



night vision goggles, grenades and ammunition.

- Romania – fuel, body armour, helmets, ammunition, military equipment, medical treatment.
- Slovenia – rifles, ammunition and helmets.
- Sweden – anti-tank weapons
- USA – €350 million military aid package (adds up to €1 billion over last one year).

Although US troops were not being sent to Ukraine, the US was prepared to put as many as 8,500 troops on heightened alert part of the NATO Response Force, if that group is activated for deployment in Eastern Europe if needed, offering a show of military force alongside diplomatic efforts to defuse the crisis. The NATO Response Force numbers 40,000 personnel drawn from multiple nations.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the 30-nation alliance's new military deployments in eastern Europe are defensive and do not threaten Russia. "I welcome that allies are stepping



Shattered Russian combat vehicles

up," Stoltenberg told reporters in Brussels, mentioning moves including Denmark sending a frigate to the Baltic Sea and deploying fighter jets to Lithuania, and France expressing readiness to send

troops to Romania under NATO command.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: Feb 2022

## Why Ukraine Matters

*Contd frompage 10*

### Promise Belied

In the early 1990s, US President George HW Bush verbally promised not to expand NATO into former Soviet bloc countries. The promise was ditched and the Russians lost trust in the West. US leaders assert that Russia is a expansionist state, but they are blind to NATO expansion against Russian terrain since 1991.

To address Russian anxieties, the NATO-Russia Founding Act was signed in 1997, a political agreement explicitly stating that: "NATO and Russia do not consider each other as adversaries." The formation of the NATO-Russia Council followed in 2002.

Putin is nevertheless said to begrudge what he regards as the alliance's gradual extension eastwards, which saw ex-Soviet satellites Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland join in 1999, followed by Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania,

Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004.

### Europe's Dependence on Russia

Europe imports approximately 40% of its gas from Russia. Russia also has the ability to disrupt global oil markets. It has already directly hit Americans.

A year after the "Orange Revolution" in end-2004 which led to the ouster of a pro-Kremlin leader, replacing him with one who sought closer ties with the West, Gazprom demanded Ukraine pay full market rates for its gas. Ukraine refused and Russia restricted the flow of gas through the pipelines. It was also later used as the basis for claims that Ukraine was an unreliable gas transit country, which helped build support for a new pipeline named Nord Stream that directly channeled gas from Russia to Germany. That pipeline opened up in 2011 and resulted in the annual loss to Ukraine of

US\$720 million in transit fees.

The U.S. had led efforts to thwart the \$11 billion Nord Stream 2 pipeline running from Russia to Germany. While the US has succeeded it is a disaster for Germany. Nord Stream had significantly increased German energy dependence on Russia, which by 2020 was supplying an estimated 50 to 75 per cent of its natural gas, up from 35 per cent in 2015. Natural gas is used not only to power industry but also for heating and to generate electricity in Germany. That pipeline grew to supply a third of all Russian gas exports to Europe. As a result, Russian gas exports to Europe reached a record level in 2021 – despite U.S. efforts to ramp up exports of liquefied natural gas to Europe.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published in March 2022





# Russia Banked on Kyiv Falling Quickly Why the Early Days of War Went Badly for Russia

**Zack Beauchamp**

**O**n paper, a war between Russia and Ukraine is not a fair fight. On every quantifiable metric - troops, armed vehicles, aircraft, you name it - the Russians outnumber the Ukrainians by a significant margin. They have more advanced weapons, superior capacities in cyberspace, and a recent history of sophisticated deployments of military force.

Yet, so far at least, the war has not gone Russia's way.

Russian troops have been kept outside Kyiv, the Ukrainian capital and the focal point of their initial advance. They have failed to win control over any other major Ukrainian population center. They have yet to establish air superiority. They are failing at even basic logistical tasks like ensuring their vehicles have enough fuel.

After a week into the invasion it's too early to make any definitive statements about how the Russian campaign will end. But the consensus among military experts is that the initial invasion was based on badly flawed strategic premises.

"It's taken me a while to figure out what they're trying to do because it looks so ridiculous and incompetent," Michael Kofman, director of Russian studies at the CNA think tank, said on Twitter of the Russian advance. "The Russian operation is a bizarre scheme, based on terrible political assumptions, with poor relationship to their training & capabilities."

Some analysts argue that the problem goes even deeper, that the Russian military is not merely tasked with executing a bad strategy but is itself an inept organization incapable of adequately performing basic battlefield



The An-225 Mriya, the largest aircraft ever built, was destroyed in the early stages of the war.

functions. On this theory, even a better plan would have still yielded subpar battlefield results.

"The simplest explanation here is that the Russian military is bad! It was a paper tiger, and now the paper's on fire," writes Brett Friedman, a Marine Corps reserve officer and author of the book *On Tactics*.

In the long run, Friedman and other experts caution, Russia is still favored to win the war: It is simply too large and well-equipped. The Pentagon is warning that things will soon get worse: In a Monday briefing, a senior US defense official warned that Russia may lay siege to Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities, a brutal tactic that intentionally cuts civilians off from basic necessities like food.

But in these first few days of the war, a rapid Ukrainian collapse is starting to look like an increasingly remote possibility -

and if Russia does attain victory, it will do so at a significantly higher cost than President Vladimir Putin seems to have expected.

With the benefit of hindsight, Russia's strategy for the first days of the conflict has come into clearer view: take Kyiv as rapidly as possible and depose President Volodymyr Zelensky's government, ending the conflict before it really got underway.

Pre-war research conducted by Russia's FSB intelligence agency, recently leaked to British experts, suggested that Ukrainians were in general unhappy with their leadership and pessimistic about their country's direction. It appears that the Russian invasion plan may have banked on this assessment, presuming that Ukrainian resistance would be light and a rapid march on the capital would be



feasible.

"[Russia] made large assumptions about their ability to reach Kyiv in 48 hours, and most of their decisions were shaped around this," Henrik Paulsson, a professor in the department of war studies at the Swedish Defense University, tells me. "[It was] a strategic choice, shaped by bias and assumption, that tried for a mad dash that failed. I don't think that's really debatable."

In a conflict like this, traditional military doctrine calls for the heavy use of what's called "combined arms": different elements of military power, like tanks and infantry and aircraft, deployed simultaneously and in complementary fashion.

But according to Paulsson, "we have not seen combined arms used" by Russian forces in any systematic way. Instead, they have seemingly opted to send isolated forces, like reconnaissance and paratroopers, ahead pell-mell without sufficient support or logistical planning. It's a tactical choice that makes sense if you think you'll encounter only token resistance – which has not been the case so far.

Similarly, the Russian military decided not to deploy some of their more devastating weapons and tactics – including mass bombardment of populated areas seen in places like Syria – in the early days of the conflict. This, too, appears to have been a political choice rooted in poor assumptions about Ukrainian will.

"It appears Putin has wildly miscalculated and had a, frankly, bad plan going into this of how quickly the Ukrainian military would collapse," Mason Clark, the lead Russia analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, tells my colleague Ellen Ioanes. "[He tried] to avoid using these very damaging weapons of concentrated missiles and air strikes to destroy Ukrainian defensive positions to preserve his narrative of this not being a real war and not requiring that sort of use of firepower."

The Ukrainians have done far more than simply fail to collapse.

Their ground forces have put up strong resistance, making the Russians pay severely for their haphazard and poorly resourced advances. Their air defenses survived the initial Russian bombardment



A destroyed Russian BMP-3 near Mariupol, 7 March 2022.

**“[Russians] have seemingly opted to send isolated forces, like reconnaissance and paratroopers, ahead pell-mell without sufficient support or logistical planning. It's a tactical choice that makes sense if you think you'll encounter only token resistance – which has not been the case so far.”**

and remain functional today, denying Russians clear air superiority so far – a crucial factor in impeding a swift march forward. And the Ukrainians have reportedly made smart use of Bayraktar TB2 drones against Russian ground forces, a weapons system whose effectiveness was demonstrated in last year's war between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The result is an initial Russian push that dramatically underperformed expectations. The Ukrainians have not only won a propaganda and morale victory, but also bought time for the external supporters in Europe and the United States to get aid to Ukraine and impose punishing sanctions on the

Russian economy.

"The Ukrainians are now beginning to be resupplied in earnest both from the rest of the world and by virtue of what appear to be significant stocks of captured Russian equipment from routed and destroyed assault units," the military analyst Patrick Fox argues on Twitter. "The longer this conflict continues the better Ukraine will be positioned to defend itself."

**Is Russia's military not as mighty as the world believed?**

Though the initial Russian advance has been stymied, it is much too early to declare the Ukrainians the conflict's victor.

Militaries typically adapt during conflict; Russia's has the ability to change gears and adopt a strategy more appropriately tailored to the fierce Ukrainian resistance. There are already signs that Russia is moving to employ some of the most vicious tactics at its disposal, including large-scale bombing and sieges of Ukrainian cities.

Some analysts, like Kofman, argue that Russia has yet to commit its most effective forces. Russian air power and artillery have been used sparingly, a decision that's at odds with Russian military doctrine and will likely change as the conflict goes on. The invasion plan heavily employed weaker units, including conscripted soldiers, who can be blamed for some of the basic failures like vehicles running out of gas.

"Conscripts appear to be part of the







**Bombed out buildings in Ukraine**

problem," says Naunihal Singh, a professor at the Naval War College. "They are providing logistics and appear to be doing so poorly."

Others, like Friedman and Fox, see the problems running deeper than that. They argue that the failures of the Russian advance are so deep and comprehensive that they can't merely be explained by a few bad soldiers; they reflect an entire military organization that has not been adequately prepared for this kind of conflict. In this analysis, successful limited missions in Syria and Crimea did not reflect the Russian military's true abilities -

which have now been exposed as underwhelming.

"The Russian military is committing some very basic mistakes from the strategic to tactical levels," writes Rob Lee, a senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, on Twitter. "The Russian military has some very capable equipment, and they have some recent experience using them effectively. They are failing to properly employ those weapons and capabilities, which is more of a coordination, preparation, and leadership issue in my view."

Ultimately, it will take a while to know

which side of this analytic divide is right - whether Russia's early failures are a result mostly of bad strategy or rotten military institutions. And even if the pessimists about Russia's army are correct, it does not mean the Ukrainians will ultimately repulse the Russian invasion.

"Russian shortcomings are probably not going to matter in the long run. They have enough capacity to brute force this thing," Friedman warns.

But the question of why Russia has failed so far does matter, in no small part because it determines just how painful the war will be for Putin.

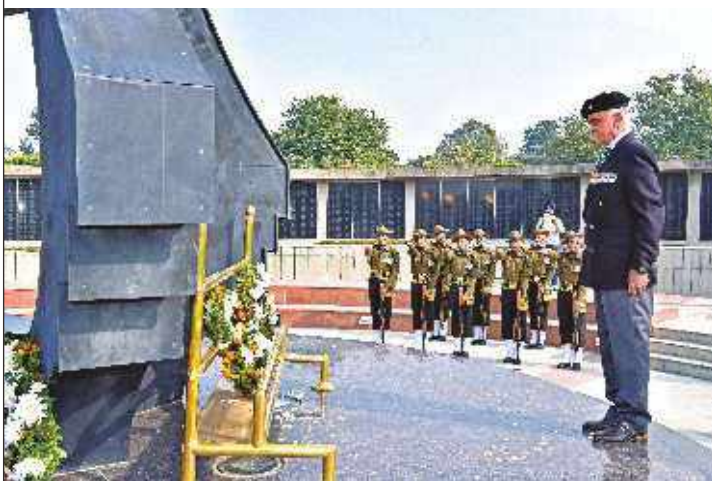
Every day that the fighting drags on, Russia experiences more casualties, more economic pain, and more international pressure. A drawn-out conflict raises the risk that Putin's regime will face growing domestic resistance - be it from mass anti-war protests or a crisis of confidence among the Russian political and military elite.

If Russia can adapt its strategy and bring its true might to bear, Ukraine's army might be defeated in not-too-long a time frame. But if the Russian military is a fundamentally broken institution and severe failures continue to crop up throughout the operation, the invasion could prove far more costly to Russia than anyone anticipated.

Courtesy: Vox Media

First published on Feb 28, 2022

## Glimpses from past Military Literature Festivals



# Col Douglas MacGregor on Clayton Morris' Talk Show

## The Current State and Future Prospects

Ukraine was reeling from the targeted strikes from Russia on 10-11 October 2022. Much of the country was without water and electricity because of the critical infrastructure strikes. It was a signal that Russia knew what was happening behind the curtain in Ukraine and could reach into wherever they liked. What happens when the soil freezes in November? Massive offensives?

Colonel Douglas MacGregor, a former senior advisor to the United States Secretary of Defense and a renowned author on military strategy made predictions on a talk show "Redacted" with Clayton Morris on 12 October.

This transcript is based on the talk show and has been summarised at places for brevity.

### Is this a Turning Point in the War?

"Conflicts are not static. War is an ever-changing state, if you will, and for the last seven months, even though people in the West will never ever admit it, the truth is that President Putin has exercised enormous restraint with regard to the use of his military power.

"We've never seen more than percent of the Russian Ground Force in Ukraine and most of the regular Russian Ground Force was subsequently withdrawn after the first four months during which the Ukrainian Army that we built over several years was largely destroyed. What you have in Ukraine now are is a mix of various volunteer organizations, militias some Allied Forces like the Chechens and Cossack volunteer organizations.

"They've turned out to be very good fighters plus the Wagner mercenary group



Col Douglas MacGregor, former senior adviser to the US Secretary of Defense

has also turned out to be very effective on the ground but the real Russian army, with its combat forces has largely pulled out of the fight. I thought they would come back in August but apparently the decision was made not to do that and what has happened now I think in the Kremlin is that Putin and his advisors have all concluded there's no chance of negotiating an end to this conflict. I think he really clung to that hope even in the middle of April, when it was clear that we, in London, would not permit Zelenskyy and Keefe to make any sort of a compromise to accept neutrality, for instance, off the table.

"So now we're dealing with a different Russia and what you saw yesterday in three waves were missiles and loitering munitions attacking specific targets all over Ukraine. This is something that they've always been able to do. They have

the precision guided munitions and missiles just as we do.

"This time they not only hit so-called critical infrastructure, they also hit the secret police headquarters of the Ukrainian state, which is a notorious organization engaged in murdering people and forcing people into enemy gunfire at gunpoint, recruiting at gunpoint. But they also hit a number of analysts cells – places where people are putting together intelligence pictures.

"I think we're seeing a glimpse of what's going to happen later on this fall, which I predict will be major offensives on the ground once the soil freezes. That's coming and this will be much closer to what a lot of us thought would happen at the very beginning – massive offenses designed to utterly annihilate what remains of the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

"The Western media is trying to paint







Russian bombardment of telecommunications antennas in Kiev, March 1, 2022.

these Russian air strikes and these attacks as inconsequential, that they're not they're not really hurting Ukraine. I've heard this from a few propaganda mainstream media outlets over the past hours.

"I'm just going through the laundry list of targets. Hitting Polish forces that were amassed and ready to invade Russia proper, hitting NATO targets, hitting thermal power plants. There are people who are fleeing Ukraine in droves right now because they have no fresh water. They have no running water. They have no electricity. They have no internet so the Western media says these attacks were inconsequential, Ukraine is fine. What do you say to that.

"President Biden apparently felt compelled to call or at least his handlers felt compelled to have President Biden call Zelenskyy and reassure him that we will continue to supply him that we back him, there will be no change.

"At the same time Zelenskyy pleaded for more air defense systems because the Russian attacks also destroyed a part of Ukrainian air defenses. So if someone is

suggesting this was not consequential we have to look at those developments and we rapidly conclude no that's wrong. Zelenskyy is in a panic unquestionably. They've got serious logistical problems moving things around in the country.

"Suddenly Russia has decided enough is enough and we're not going to exercise the restraint we have in the past.

### On Air Defence Systems

"Well keep in mind that the so-called HIMAR system (High Mobility Rocket System) is largely manned by so-called contractors. Presumably that consists of Americans in civilian clothes working on contract for the Ukrainian government via some other mechanism that we've created could also be Europeans but these systems take a long time to learn how to operate let alone maintain. Something called NASAMS which is a surface to surface and service to air missile system designed to protect point targets with a very complex radar systems – one of the best in the world – was in Kiev and

it's being destroyed. The way you overwhelm point air defense systems is that you launch lots of missiles and rockets and eventually you're going to overwhelm any system regardless of how good it is – that's what the Russians did in this operation. They targeted air defense sites and overwhelmed them. So Zelenskyy wants more of these but then he's also got to have contractors operate them because his soldiers are not trained to do it.

### On Manning of Weapon Systems and Running the War

"The people engaged in direct fire combat on the ground are Ukrainians. Now there are reports of large numbers of Polish soldiers in Ukrainian uniform making up for losses that occurred over the last few months because, as you point out, most of Ukraine's best forces are gone, they've been killed or wounded.

"Ukrainians have lost roughly 100,000 dead and, perhaps, 200,00 or 300,000 even 400,000 wounded. They started out with an army of 600,000. Remember we spent eight years building this Army up with the express purpose of attacking Russia, that's what it was designed to do. That's why the Russians attacked it and ultimately we wanted to put missiles into eastern Ukraine with which we could threaten Russia. So again eastern Ukraine had to be neutralized and that's why the Russians intervened but the Russians as I pointed out earlier have always exercised great restraint because, first of all, this is another Slavic country, another Orthodox Christian Slavic country, they're not interested in killing large numbers of people. They didn't want to destroy a lot of infrastructure the areas where Russian forces are sitting in Southern and Eastern Ukraine where they simply wanted to guarantee equal rights for the Russians in Ukraine with other Ukrainian citizens. That was the point agreements which were never honoured, so the bottom line is at this point you're looking at cannon fodder.

"People without much training being rounded up put into uniform handed an AK, put behind machine guns, put into tanks and armoured fighting vehicles. Do they get training? Some have had good training but the vast majority haven't had much so the casualties have been very high, but once you move above the



tactical level and you move up to what we would call division or corps levels you find NATO staffs are actually running the show. In other words people from France, Great Britain, United States other countries are doing this – the systematic planning and setting forth proposals for what should happen next. There's a lot of evidence that the Ukrainian president has not taken our advice very well and he's determined to attack, attack, attack and attack, largely because I think he sees himself in a position where he has everything to lose and not much more to gain. So he thinks he can wear down the Russians. The problem is that for every one Russian killed or wounded, you have five, six or seven Ukrainians being killed or wounded.

"The Russians economized, they've run a fairly cheap inexpensive defense while the Ukrainians have run very expensive offenses. Now Ukraine is in a very serious crisis. It may not survive particularly when this major offensive begins in November-December time frame and the ground is frozen. I don't know what the Ukrainians will do because then they will face the regular Russian army – large numbers of Russian army troops not just volunteers and Allied units but the Russian army and it will have the operational freedom to do what many Russians wanted to do at the beginning, which is anything that is dangerous or threatening to them can be targeted and destroyed. It'll be a very different war that's coming.

### On Russia's Winter Operations

"I'm not on distribution from the Russian general staff but when I look at the arrival of Russian forces in the theater and they're arriving in groups spread around Ukraine and various places. They're doing a lot of training and preparation right now.

"They will then move to operational axes of advance something we expected to see at the beginning of the war that we did not see and then they will strike very hard and very deep and whatever is still in front of Russian forces in Ukraine will be annihilated. That will be their mission – destroy them annihilate them.

"Where will the Russians stop? I suspect they'll stop at the Dnieper River. They've never been interested in crossing

that. They don't want to go into what is historically Ukraine, which is west of the river. That's where the Ukrainians live. They're not Russified – they are real Ukrainians. He doesn't want to go over there but he's going to take Odessa. He's going to take Kharkiv – these cities will be taken once and for all as a result of these offenses and then there's not a great deal we can do.

"Anybody in the West, unless they want to go to war with Russia, I see no appetite anywhere in Europe for anyone to go to war with Russia with a possible exception of the Poles and, even there, the consensus supporting war against Russia is cracking slowly but surely. In the United States no one's even interested.

### On Taking Odessa and Zelenskyy Future

"That's anybody's guess. I couldn't even begin to conjecture what would happen to Zelenskyy. He could be removed by his own people. He could simply get onto an aircraft and fly to one of his mansions in Miami or Venice or somewhere else that have been provided to him.

"I have no idea but as far as the Russians are concerned Odessa has always been a Russian city. It was never part of Ukraine. The same thing is true for Kharkov. These were Russian cities from the very beginning and they were Russian speaking. That doesn't mean Ukrainians haven't moved in there. They have and Odessa the population now consists of Ukrainians because they pushed a lot of Russians out. But from the vantage point of Moscow at this stage they're not going to tolerate that nonsense any longer. They're going to take these places but they're going to do it as the Russians always do things – very methodically, very deliberately.

"This new Commander who's just been named is a very able person, he has a great reputation, he did good work in Syria for the Russians and he is a tough-minded individual. He's now going to have forces and he's going to have capabilities at his disposal that his predecessors have never had. That's why I think the Washington Post suggested this is a turning point. They're right, it may not be what they think but it's a turning point.

### On Belarusian Involvement

"Russia has a population of perhaps 145 million. So even though it's land mass is large, the population is small. Its Army has not modernized over the last several decades and the Russians are now trying to hastily modernize it – provide new equipment, new communications equipment and perhaps even new tactical organization. That will not happen overnight.

"There's no longer any great distinction between so-called white Russia and great Russia there was, but certainly not since the Second World War and I think they'll be more concerned about defending the border against any interest that Poland may have in attacking them because remember Minsk is a city that was historically in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. This notion of a white Russia – it was further East so that you got all of these historical interests at play and this is the final point that I need to make – we have no role in this, it is not part of our world and the only interest we have in this place is in bringing peace to it.

"There are many people – Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Slovakia – they all have agendas that involve territory populations and that's not our agenda. We don't want to be involved in that. We just want them to get through this with minimal loss of life and get back to business and if you're going to argue, well the Russian army is too small and too incompetent to threaten anyone, but on the other hand, if Putin harbours the ambition to conquer Europe and invade NATO, you can't have it both ways.

"So the point is – no there's no interest in attacking NATO and there's no interest in a war with NATO. We should recognize that and find as quickly as possible a solution that people can live with it won't be as good as it would have been several months ago.

"Ukraine is going to look at the loss of territory but this has happened repeatedly over a thousand years in Europe. This is nothing new. You have to make peace and that will include some changes that some people may not like."

Courtesy: Redacted

First published 12 October 2022





## Larry C. Johnson, former analyst at the CIA "Ukrainian Army Has Been Defeated"

**Mike Whitney**

**Question 1 – Can you explain to me why you think Russia is winning the war in Ukraine?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – Within the first 24 hours of the Russian military operation in Ukraine, all Ukrainian Ground Radar Intercept capabilities were wiped out. Without those radars, the Ukrainian Air Force lost its ability to do air to air intercept. In the intervening three weeks, Russia has established a de facto No Fly Zone over Ukraine. While still vulnerable to shoulder fired Surface to Air Missiles supplied by the U.S. and NATO to the Ukrainians, there is no evidence that Russia has had to curtail Combat Air Operations.

Russia's arrival in Kiev within three days of the invasion also caught my attention. I recalled that the Nazi's in Operation Barbarossa took seven weeks to reach Kiev and the required seven more weeks to subdue the city. The Nazis had the advantage of not pulling punches to avoid civilian casualties and were eager to destroy critical infrastructure. Yet many so-called American military experts claimed that Russia was bogged down. When a 24 mile (or 40 mile, depends on the news source) was positioned north of Kiev for more than a week, it was clear that Ukraine's ability to launch significant military operations had been eliminated. If their artillery was intact, then that column was easy pickings for massive destruction. That did not happen. Alternatively, if the Ukrainian's had a viable fixed wing or rotary wing capability they should have destroyed that column



**Russian Army trucks approach the Chonhar checkpoint on the Ukrainian border, 24 Feb 2022.**

from the air. That did not happen. Or, if they had a viable cruise missile capability they should have rained down hell on the supposedly stalled Russian column. That did not happen. The Ukrainians did not even mount a significant infantry ambush of the column with their newly supplied U.S. Javelins.

The scale and scope of the Russian attack is remarkable. They captured territory in three weeks that is larger than the land mass of the United Kingdom. They then proceeded to carry out targeted attacks on key cities and military installations. We have not seen a single instance of a Ukrainian regiment or brigade size unit attacking and defeating a comparable Russian unit. Instead, the

Russians have split the Ukrainian Army into fragments and cut their lines of communication. The Russians are consolidating their control of Mariupol and have secured all approaches on the Black Sea. Ukraine is now cut off in the South and the North.

I would note that the U.S. had a tougher time capturing this much territory in Iraq in 2003 while fighting against a far inferior, less capable military force. If anything, this Russian operation should scare the hell out of U.S. military and political leaders.

The really big news came this week with the Russian missile strikes on what are de facto NATO bases in Yavoriv and Zhytomyr. NATO conducted cyber security



training at Zhytomyr in September 2018 and described Ukraine as a "NATO partner." Zhytomyr was destroyed with hypersonic missiles on Saturday. Yavoriv suffered a similar fate last Sunday. It was the primary training and logistics center that NATO and EUCOM used to supply fighters and weapons to Ukraine. A large number of the military and civilian personnel at that base became casualties.

Not only is Russia striking and destroying bases used by NATO regularly since 2015, but there was no air raid warning and there was no shutdown of the attacking missiles.

**Question 2 – Why is the media trying to convince the Ukrainian people that they can prevail in their war against Russia? If what you say is correct, then all the civilians that are being sent to fight the Russian army, are dying in a war they can't win. I don't understand why the media would want to mislead people on something so serious. What are your thoughts on the matter?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – This is a combination of ignorance and laziness. Rather than do real reporting, the vast majority of the media (print and electronic) as well as Big Tech are supporting a massive propaganda campaign. I remember when George W. Bush was Hitler. I remember when Donald Trump was Hitler. And now we have a new Hitler, Vladimir Putin. This is a tired, failed playbook. Anyone who dares to raise legitimate questions about is immediately tarred as a Putin puppet or a Russia stooge. When you cannot argue facts the only recourse is name calling.

**Question 3 – Last week, Colonel Douglas MacGregor was a guest on the Tucker Carlson Show. His views on the war are strikingly similar to your own. Do you agree with MacGregor that the real purpose of goading Russia into a war in Ukraine was "regime change"?**

**Second, do you agree that Ukraine is being used as a staging ground for the US to carry out a proxy-war on Russia?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – Doug is great analyst but I disagree with him "I don't think there is anyone in the Biden Administration that is smart enough to



Shopping center in Kiev damaged by Russian shelling on 21 March 2022.

think and plan in those strategic terms. In my view the last seven years have been the inertia of the NATO status quo. What I mean by that is that NATO and Washington, believed they could continue to creep east on Russia's borders without provoking a reaction. NATO and EUCOM regularly carried out exercises "including providing "offensive" training" and supplied equipment. I believe reports in the United States that the CIA was providing paramilitary training to Ukrainian units operating in the Donbass are credible. But I have trouble believing that after our debacles in Iraq and Afghanistan, we suddenly have Sun Tzu level strategists pulling the strings in Washington.

There is an air of desperation in Washington. Besides trying ban all things Russian, the Biden Administration is trying to bully China, India and Saudi Arabia. I do not see any of those countries falling into line. I believe the Biden crew made a fatal mistake by trying to demonize all things and all people Russian. If anything, this is uniting the Russian people behind Putin and they are ready to dig in for a long struggle.

I am shocked at the miscalculation in thinking economic sanctions on Russia would bring them to their knees. The opposite is true. Russia is self-sufficient and is not dependent on imports. Its exports are critical to the economic well-being of the West. If they withhold wheat,

potash, gas, oil, palladium, finished nickel and other key minerals from the West, the European and U.S. economies will be savaged. And this attempt to coerce Russia with sanctions has now made it very likely that the U.S. dollar's role as the international reserve currency will show up in the dustbin of history.

**Question 4 – Ever since he delivered his famous speech in Munich in 2007, Putin has been complaining about the "architecture of global security". In Ukraine we can see how these nagging security issues can evolve into a full-blown war. As you know, in December Putin made a number of demands related to Russian security, but the Biden administration shrugged them off and never responded. Putin wanted written assurances that NATO expansion would not include Ukraine (membership) and that nuclear missile systems would not be deployed to Romania or Poland. Do you think Putin's demands are unreasonable?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – I think Putin's demands are quite reasonable. The problem is that 99% of Americans have no idea of the kind of military provocation that NATO and the U.S. have carried out over the last 7 years. The public was always told the military exercises were "defensive." That simply is not true. Now we have news that DTRA was funding biolabs in Ukraine. I guess Putin could





Russian and Belarus militaries have conducted numerous joint exercises together and share doctrine and equipment

agree to allow U.S. nuclear missile systems in Poland and Romania if Biden agrees to allow comparable Russian systems to be deployed in Cuba, Venezuela and Mexico. When we look at it in those terms we can begin to understand that Putin's demands are not crazy nor unreasonable.

**Question 5 – Russian media reports that Russian "high precision, air-launched" missiles struck a facility in west Ukraine "killing more than 100 local troops and foreign mercenaries." Apparently, the Special Operations training center was located near the town of Ovruch which is just 15 miles from the Polish border. What can you tell us about this incident? Was Russia trying to send a message to NATO?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – Short answer""YES! Russian military strikes in Western Ukraine during the past week have shocked and alarmed NATO officials. The first blow came on Sunday, March 13 at Yavoriv, Ukraine. Russia hit the base with several missiles, some reportedly hypersonic. Over 200 personnel were killed, which included American and British military and intelligence personnel, and hundreds more wounded. Many suffered catastrophic wounds, such as amputations, and are in hospital. Yet, NATO and the western media have shown little interest in reporting on this disaster.

Yavoriv was an important forward base

for NATO (see here). Until February (prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine), the U.S. 7th Army Training Command was operating from Yavoriv as late as mid-February. Russia has not stopped there. ASB Military news reports Russia hit another site, Delyatyn, which is 60 miles southeast of Yavoriv (on Thursday I believe). Yesterday, Russia hit Zytomyr, another site where NATO previously had a presence. Putin has sent a very clear message""NATO forces in Ukraine will be viewed and treated as combatants. Period.

**Question 6 – Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been lionized in the western media as a "wartime leader" and a modern-day "Winston Churchill". What the media fails to tell its readers is that Zelensky has taken a number of steps to strengthen his grip on power while damaging fragile democratic institutions in Ukraine. For example, Zelensky has "banned eleven opposition-owned news organizations" and tried to bar the head of Ukraine's largest opposition party, Viktor Medvedchuk, from running for office on a bogus "terrorist financing" charge. This is not the behavior of a leader that is seriously committed to democracy.**

**What's your take on Zelensky? Is he really the "patriotic leader" the media makes him out to be?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – Zelensky is a

comedian and an actor. Not a very good one at that in my view. The West is cynically using the fact he is Jewish as a diversion from the size-able contingent of Neo-Nazis (and I mean genuine Nazis who still celebrate the Ukrainian Waffen SS unit's accomplishments while fighting with the Nazis in WW II). The facts are clear""he is banning opposition political parties and shutting down opposition media. I guess that is the new definition of "democracy."

**Question 7 – How does this end? There's an excellent post at the Moon of Alabama site titled "What Will Be The Geographic End State Of The War In Ukraine". The author of the post, Bernard, seems to think that Ukraine will eventually be partitioned along the Dnieper River "and south along the coast that holds a majority ethnic Russian population." He also says this:**

*"This would eliminate Ukrainian access to the Black Sea and create a land bridge towards the Moldavian breakaway Transnistria which is under Russian protection. The rest of the Ukraine would be a land confined, mostly agricultural state, disarmed and too poor to be build up to a new threat to Russia anytime soon. Politically it would be dominated by fascists from Galicia which would then become a major problem for the European Union."*

**What do you think? Will Putin impose his own territorial settlement on Ukraine in order to reinforce Russian security and bring the hostilities to an end or is a different scenario more likely?**

**Larry C. Johnson** – I agree with Moon. Putin's primary objective is to secure Russia from foreign threats and effect a divorce with the West. Russia has the physical resources to be an independent sovereign and is in the process of making that vision come true.

*Larry C Johnson is a veteran of the CIA and the State Department's Office of Counter Terrorism. Larry provided training to the US Military's Special Operations community for 24 years.*

Courtesy: The Unz Review

First published on 21 March 2022



## The Neo-Nazis of Ukraine

# The Azov Battalion of Ukraine's National Guard

G. Sampath

**W**hen Russia annexed Crimea in February 2014, it faced no military resistance. Ukraine did not have an adequate number of combat-ready troops to mount a defence. Subsequently, when Russia-backed separatists took over government buildings in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region as a prelude to full-fledged insurgency, the Ukrainian military again proved unable to quell the rebellion. It was against this background that the Azov Battalion was formed in May 2014.

The Azov began as a military infantry unit made up of civilian volunteers drawn from far-right, neo-Nazi groups that were active in Ukraine, such as the Patriot of Ukraine gang and the Social National Assembly (SNA). With its highly motivated band of fighters, the Azov unit recaptured the strategic port city of Mariupol from the separatists. Following this crucial military triumph – which had eluded the official forces of Kyiv – the Azov unit was integrated into the National Guard of Ukraine in November 2014.

In 2016, the Azov set up its political wing, the National Corps Party, under the leadership of Andriy Biletsky, an ultra-Nationalist who was a Member of Parliament from 2014 to 2019 and has said on record it is Ukraine's mission to "lead the white races of the world in a final crusade... against Semite-led Untermenschen [inferior humans]".

The military uniforms of the Azov feature Nazi insignia and its fighters have been photographed with tattoos of Nazi symbols such as the swastika. On the eve of the launch of National Corps, its members took out a Nazi-style raised-fist,



**Azov Battalion is a volunteer unit of Ukraine's National Guard mostly of Russian-speaking people from Luhansk and Donetsk**

torch-lit march through the streets of Kyiv. Members of the Azov militia also do street patrols where, in the name of enforcing what it calls 'Ukrainian order', they have been known to attack Roma and other ethnic minorities, and LGBT events. The Ukrainian National Guard has released videos of Azov fighters greasing bullets with pig fat, apparently for use against the Muslim Chechens fighting among the Russian forces.

### Rights Violations

Different human rights bodies, including the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Amnesty International, have accused Azov fighters, along with those from other volunteer battalions, of human rights

violations, including torture, kidnappings, and extra-judicial executions. Over the years, the U.S. stance on the Azov has swung between proscription (driven by acknowledgement of its neo-Nazi politics) and sly collaboration (on the grounds of geopolitical pragmatism). In 2015, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution stating that military aid for Ukraine cannot be used for funding, arming or training the Azov Battalion. But in 2016, the ban was rolled back, reportedly under Pentagon pressure. Since then, there have been unsuccessful efforts by Congress members – one of whom has described it as a "neo-Nazi paramilitary militia" – to designate the Azov as a 'Foreign Terrorist

*Contd on page 27*





## The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

# Wargaming Scenarios: Military-Technical Factors

**Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd**

### Backdrop

The roots of the current military crisis in Ukraine can be traced back to the events surrounding the breakup of the former USSR. The USSR was one of the two superpowers in the bi-polar era. However, it was a wounded giant that had, in fact, not really recovered from the staggering manpower and material losses of World War II. Its economy was highly dependent on export of oil and gas. America engaged it in a geo-economic competition. It started the Star Wars arms race. In the 1980s, the USA made a deliberate effort to bring down the prices of oil globally by engineering an oil glut. Oil prices went into free-fall (\$10- 30 a barrel) and severely derailed the Soviet economy. Afghanistan added to the hemorrhaging.

The USSR was an over militarized state. By 1990, it simply collapsed from what Paul Kennedy calls economic overreach and imperial over-stretch. A superpower went down without a shot being fired and the world was shocked. A uni-polar global order, now led by America and the West, came into being. The Soviet Union splintered with many of its republics in Eastern Europe and Central Asia seceding. There was chaos in Russia and it struggled to restore order.

### NATO Expansion

The West had initially promised that there would not be even an inch of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe (US Foreign Secretary James Baker's assurance to Gorbachov). All these verbal assurances, however, were violated with impunity. As a result of Russian military and economic



weakness, NATO expanded eastward in four distinct phases:-

**Phase One 1990.** Poland, Hungary and Czech Republic – three former Warsaw pact countries joined NATO.

**Phase Two 2004.** Seven countries to include Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria and Slovenia

followed suit.

**Phase Three 2009.** Albania and Croatia joined NATO.

**Phase Four 2017-2019.** Montenegro and Macedonia followed suit. Thus, by 2019, some 14 countries in Eastern Europe had Joined NATO.

President Vladimir Putin of Russia

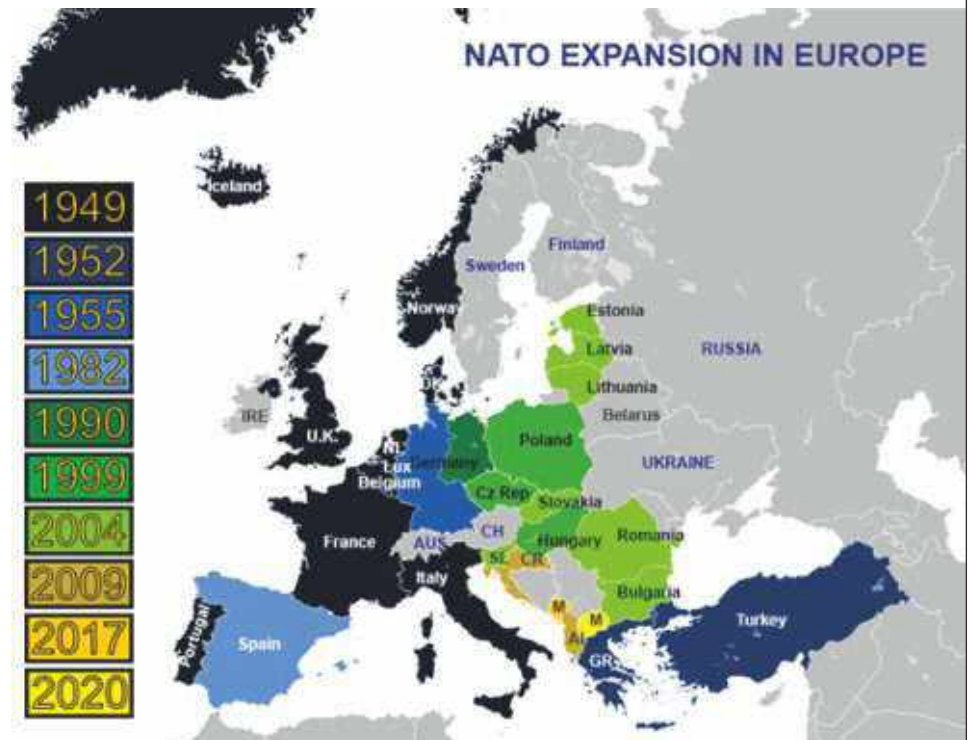


rapidly started closing the conventional military gap. By 2008, Russia hit back hard in Georgia and then in 2014 it captured Crimea in Ukraine. The present crisis has really been precipitated by the clear change in military-technical capabilities, which have altered the local conventional military power balance in Eastern Europe. Putin is now determined to change the security architecture in Europe to reflect these military realities and has virtually issued demarches to the US and NATO to renegotiate the security equations in Europe. He has mobilized the largest number of troops on the border of Ukraine in a clear coercive deployment, a use of force without war to re-negotiate security terms in Europe. If he can do it without war it would suit him eminently. The danger is that if he does not get the outcomes he seeks, he is fully prepared and ready to go to war.

In a clear escalation, the Russian Duma recommended recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces in Ukraine, where Russian separatists are fighting and, on 21 February, Putin duly announced recognition of these two states. Economic sanctions did not deter him as he feels Russia's core strategic interests are involved and he has articulated his red lines so publically that there is no chance of him recalling his troops without enforcing his red lines. He would lose great face domestically and internationally and he simply cannot afford that. Putin has acted decisively as he is fully prepared for the next steps in the military escalation ladder.

#### Military – Technical Factors

It is my contention that these sea-saw in the fortunes of Russia and the West can be traced back to the swings in the conventional military power balance between the two blocks from 1990 to date. These were largely focused on gaining superiority in air power and anti-air defenses. From World War II onwards, air superiority had become a decisive war winning factor. The Korean War saw a stalemate in air power and that shaped the stalemate on the ground. The Vietnam War saw US war planes and helicopters taking huge losses (over 3400 lost) from



**“In a clear escalation, the Russian Duma recommended recognition of Donetsk and Luhansk provinces in Ukraine, where Russian separatists are fighting and, on 21 February, Putin duly announced recognition of these two states.”**

rudimentary Soviet Air defences and surface-to-air missiles (SAMs). The Americans deeply studied these and learnt major lessons. They began to make a serious bid to regain air superiority. They learnt from Israeli experiences in the 1967 and 1973 Conflicts.

By 1973, low level Russian SAM-6 and SAM-7 missiles had inflicted fearful losses to aircraft flying at the low level to evade radar. Meanwhile, USA had fielded a number of new fourth-generation fighters like F-15, F-16 and F-18 as also the AWACs and AEWs. Then came the precision guided munitions (PGMs) by 1990, which created a

significant military technical revolution (Revolution in Military Affairs) with far reaching impact. These enabled aircraft to bomb from mid and high altitude without losing accuracy. Thus, they could stay out of the low firing SAM envelopes. The US demonstrated this in the first war against Iraq, when Soviet-era weapons were decimated and air power paved the way for a decisive victory.

The USSR had imploded as a result of economic decline and these military technical factors added to Russian weakness. Thereafter, it was a uni-polar world with USA as the sole superpower based on its conventional military superiority in air power. Things began to stabilize in Russia only when Putin took charge around the turn of the century. Slowly, the Russians began to close the air power gap with their Su-27, Su-30 and Su-35 jet fighters along with MiG-29s and their own AWACs and PGMs. Thus, by 2008, we once again saw the Russians asserting themselves in Georgia. The Americans had sought to regain superiority by investing heavily in stealth technology and fielded stealth aircraft like F-22, F-35 fighters and B-2 bombers and beyond-visual-range (BVR) missiles for air-to-air combat. The problem was this technology was frightfully expensive and





It is estimated that Russia has deployed some 1,50,000 Russian troops around Ukraine

stealth aircraft could not be fielded in large numbers because of cost factor.

Thus, in 2014, we saw Russia again capturing Crimea and seizing parts of Donbas. Today, we are seeing the Impact of the Russian S-400 and S-500 Triumf missile systems upon the Eastern European battlefield. These air defence (AD) missile systems have radars that can look out to 600 kms and pick up stealth aircraft. They have multiple missiles that can engage enemy aircraft from 40 out to 400 kms. They can achieve Anti Access & Area Denial (A2AD) capabilities and totally deny the airspace over the combat area. This, and a whole host of other weapons, which Russia had tested in Syria have today given it the confidence to decisively challenge the USA and NATO enforced status quo in Eastern Europe and seek a radical re-structuring of the security architecture in Europe. This is a decisive inflexion point and the crisis in Ukraine is a direct outgrowth of the shift in military-technical factors in favour of Russia.

The simple fact is that the USA and NATO have ruled out military retaliation and are relying primarily on economic sanctions to deter Russia. The implications are clear - USA is in no position now to take on Russia militarily in its own backyard. This is what has clearly emboldened Russia to exploit the

**“It is simply a case of stake analysis. Russia has crucial strategic stakes in Ukraine. It is the direct historical invasion route and abuts Russian borders. It has vital mineral reserves like Uranium, Titanium and natural gas, etc. Russia simply cannot afford to let it become part of NATO.”**

military-technical advantage it has gained in recent years. It has now gone ahead despite threat of economic sanctions and recognized the Russian majority states of Donetsk and Luhansk giving a fait accompli to US and NATO. However, the crisis is far from over.

Russian redlines were not Donetsk and Luhansk but non-inclusion of Ukraine in NATO and no stationing of offensive weapons in the 14 East European nations recently incorporated into NATO. These have not been met and Russia, to my mind,

will pursue them doggedly. Are we seeing the multi-polar moment?

## **Use of Force Without War: Op Parakram Analogy**

To back his demands Putin had deployed some 1,50,000 Russian troops around Ukraine. To cite an analogy - it was like Operation Parakram, India's massive deployment on Pakistan's border after the terror attack on its parliament. This is using military deployment for coercion. The aim is to clearly threaten the use of force to achieve tangible results. This is the use of force without war. That is what Russia is doing currently. Will it work? Only if the use of force threat is credible. India lacked a clear military edge over Pakistan then and our political will to wage war was very tenuous. In Russia's case, they have the military edge locally and their intent to invade if their demands are not met is deadly serious. The USA and NATO have already thrown in the towel by clearly stating they will put no boots on the ground and restrict themselves to economic sanctions. Russia has now moved troops into Donetsk and Luhansk provinces of Ukraine. Should Ukraine retaliate, Russia will escalate dramatically as its military is fully poised to do so.

## **Stake Analysis**

It is simply a case of stake analysis. Russia has crucial strategic stakes in Ukraine. It is the direct historical invasion route and abuts Russian borders. It has vital mineral reserves like Uranium, Titanium and natural gas, etc. Russia simply cannot afford to let it become part of NATO. It now has the military capability to stop NATO and can wreck Ukraine whenever it wants to. US and NATO can do little more than enforcing economic sanctions. Conversely, America has few strategic stakes in Ukraine except to needle Russia and stop the Nord 2 gas pipeline as part of the famed economic sanctions. Real economics now comes in significantly. The Nord 2 Russian gas will cost Germany \$270 per 1000 cubic feet, whereas the American gas will cost them a \$1000 per 1000 cubic feet. The US, perhaps, would be happy to see a war in Ukraine, which stops the Nord 2 gas and forces Germany to buy from USA. France





Ukrainian forces outside the capital Kiev, 2 April 2022.

and Germany have major economic linkages with Russia and are already very uneasy with the US resolve to push Russia to invade Ukraine for American profit in gas. That is why President Macron of France is making the most energetic efforts to stop the war.

What about Russia? Its stakes in Ukraine are simply crucial. Putin has clearly announced Russian red lines. He cannot backtrack. With Chinese help he can deal with western sanctions which will hurt Germany and France equally. The simple fact is that Putin cannot afford a military pull back with no concrete security outcomes. Initially, he seemed inclined to give negotiations a chance. He had written a letter to Joe Biden, in December 2021, spelling out his demands for security restructuring in Europe. In January, he got a reply that seemed rational to the Russian foreign minister Lavrov. Putin decided to give the negotiators a chance. Immediately, the US hardened its stance and began to boast that they had coerced Russia into backing down and that Ukraine had the right to choose its form of government and alliances. Russia simply stopped the withdrawal and increased the number of troops around Ukraine to some 1,90,000. In fact, out of Russia's 12 Combined Arms Armies (corps) 11 are now deployed

around Ukraine. They have staged forward their tanks, self propelled artillery and S-400 and S-500 missile systems. The Su-35 fighter bombers, attack helicopters and Iskander missiles have been deployed. The Russians were carrying out a major military exercise in Belarus with their 41st Army. This was to end on 20 February but Belarus has announced that Russian troops will stay on till NATO forces are in Poland, etc. The forces in Belarus are directly poised to strike at the Ukrainian capital of Kiev and destroy the main command and control node. Stepping on the escalatory ladder the Russian Duma recommended that Russia recognise Donetsk and Luhansk. Putin announced that on 21 February, throwing down the gauntlet. Should Ukraine respond militarily it will be the pretext that Russia needs for a limited or partial invasion of Ukraine.

Simply stated, Putin will try his best to get without war the realignment of the security architecture in Europe by his coercive military deployment. If it works, well and good. The point to note is that if it does not, he is determined to go ahead and use major military force to underline his intent. That military reality force is now fully poised on ground.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: Feb 2022

## The Azov Battalion

*Contd from page 23*

Organisation'. For all that, Azov social media channels are rife with videos of militia members training with American-made weapons.

Similar contradictions were also on display, for instance, in the way Facebook has reacted to the Azov. In 2016, it designated the Azov battalion a "dangerous organisation". In 2019, it placed the Azov in the same category as the Islamic State (IS) and banned it. But after the Russian invasion on February 24, Facebook reversed the ban, allowing expressions of praise for the Azov. Significantly, the Azov has always had a pan-Ukrainian dimension, with documented links to American white supremacist groups such as the Rise Above Movement (RAM). It has volunteer fighters from different parts of Europe.

When Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a "special military operation" to carry out a "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine, he appeared to be referring to the neo-Nazi militias such as the Azov, who – with the blessings of the Ukrainian state – have been at the forefront of Kyiv's military campaign against the Russia-backed separatist groups. Until the Russian invasion, many in the Ukrainian mainstream viewed the rise of the Azov with concern. After all, they were a law unto themselves and did not defer to the state – while their military units could operate independent of the Ukrainian chain of command, their street patrol units did not answer to the police, and their defiance of the law went unpunished. But the Russian invasion – belying its stated aim of denazification – may well end up laundering the Azov's neo-Nazi baggage, as seen with Facebook's U-turn, and strengthen the far-right forces, not just in Ukraine but beyond as well, which isn't good news for Europe's liberal democratic order.

Courtesy: The Hindu  
First published on March 20, 2022





## The Russia-Ukraine Conflict

# Wargaming Scenarios: Strategy and Options

**Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd**

### Analysis of Precedents

If Putin decides to go to war what options does he have? To empirically analyse these options let us take a look at past precedents – namely the invasion of Georgia in 2008 and the capture of Crimea in 2014.

**Georgia 2008.** The CIA had started its series of colour revolutions in Eastern Europe to spread democracy. Under that pretext anti-Russian regimes were being installed on the Russian borders. Putin was elected in Russia in year 1999. In 2003, a pro-West President Shaakashvili took power in Georgia. Georgian territory posed serious threat to Russian Muslim underbelly of Chechnya. In April 2008, at the Bucharest Summit, it was announced that NATO would welcome inclusion of Georgia and Ukraine. This was a clear Russian red line. Russia began massing troops on the borders of Georgia. It encouraged Russian separatists in Abkhazia and Ossetia to intensify their actions. Russian separatists in Ossetia began to shell Georgian villages. Georgia now made the mistake of launching ground assaults in Ossetia and captured the separatist stronghold of Tskhinvali. This was the precise pretext the Russians were looking for. Their troops were in position and, on 8 August, they launched a massive counterattack. It began with a major cyber attack and electronic warfare operations to jam communications. The Russian 58th Army attacked across the mountains via the Roki tunnel and cleared all of Ossetia and took some more territory ahead. Concurrently, the Russian Black Sea fleet blockaded the coast of Georgia and Russian troops made



Russian invasion options into Ukraine

**“On 28 February 2014, Russian troops moved in swiftly and occupied the whole of Crimea without a shot being fired. They held a referendum and, by 18 March, had simply incorporated Crimea into Russia.”**

amphibious landings in Abkhazia. They quickly moved inland and cleared the whole of Abkhazia. They moved beyond that province and seized the cities of Zugdidi, Senaki, Poti and Gori. By 12th August, it was all over and the French negotiated a ceasefire. Russia recognized

Ossetia and Abkhazia as independent states. They vacated all other Georgian territory. This was the first war in Europe in the 21st century.

**Ukraine 2014 - The Capture of Crimea.** US persisted with its colour revolutions. In February 2014, as part of the Orange Revolution the pro-Russian President Yankovich of Ukraine was deposed and fled to Russia. His successor once again began to talk of joining NATO. Russia saw a clear violation of its red line in Ukraine. Russian forces were already in the leased naval base of Sevastapole. On 28 February 2014, Russian troops moved in swiftly and occupied the whole of Crimea without a shot being fired. They held a referendum and, by 18 March, had simply incorporated Crimea into Russia. Concurrently, they backed Russian separatists in Donbas region and instigated revolts in the Oblasts of Donsk and Luhansk. A number of





Russian troops in civil clothes but with heavy weapons also moved into these rebel provinces, almost like a repeat of Georgia. What was noteworthy was the speed and decisive nature of this operation. Russia had clearly asserted its red lines in Ukraine and enforced them in a swift coup de main operation. The US and NATO could do nothing.

#### The Current Crisis

The current crisis stems from Putin's determination to make the altered military realities count on ground in Europe. As Prof Meersheimer says, Putin is seeking to change the entire post Cold War security architecture in Europe and enforce a Monroe doctrine variant. He is seeking written guarantees for non-inclusion of Ukraine in NATO and assurances about non-stationing of offensive weapons in the countries drafted into NATO in the last two decades. Towards this end, he has forward deployed some 1,90,000 troops around Ukraine. Next, he went ahead and recognized the breakaway provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk in a clear escalatory move that underlines his determination.

**“There are two option limited war or full scale offensive. Limited war would see Russian forces from the East making a dash for Kharkiev (former capital of Ukraine). Forces from Crimea would advance upon the port city of Mariopole.”**

But, were Donetsk and Luhansk his red lines? What are his military options in case diplomacy fails to deliver on what he had demanded? US and NATO have already refused to give written assurances and asserted that Ukraine as a sovereign state has the right to choose its form of government and what treaties it will join.

This amounts to a deadlock and, if talks break down, what will a military invasion of Ukraine look like? There are primarily three options:-

**Georgia Redux.** The Ukraine scenario

today is remarkably similar to the situation in Georgia in 2008. Like Abkhazia and Osetia, the two Russian speaking states of Donetsk and Luhansk have separatists in full scale revolt. Russia has also sent in its troops in muftis inside. Firing incidents have started on the borders of these two provinces. Russia has already recognized their independence and troops have started moving in. In this option Russian troops would move beyond the Line of Contact to the border of these provinces. So a Georgian redux style operation could see occupation of and escalation in these two districts. While troops from Donbas are engaging Ukrainian troops on the border frontally, Russian forces from Crimea would hit them in the rear. This would consolidate occupation of these two provinces and certain other territories to give tactical depth to these states.

**Limited War Option.** What next will depend on what Ukraine does militarily. Any military response would provide the pretext/justification of what would follow next. There are two option limited war or full scale offensive. Limited war would see Russian forces from the East making a



dash for Kharkiev (former capital of Ukraine). Forces from Crimea would advance upon the port city of Mariopole. Naval landings could be mounted to seize the port city of Odessa. Thus, Ukraine would be cut off from the sea and become a landlocked country dependant on Russia. This option entails fighting in built-up areas to secure cities and capturing and holding ground. This can cause heavy casualties and take a lot of time as cities can be defended street by street.

**Fullscale War Option.** Prof Meershimmer, noted political scientist of the University of Chicago, feels that Russia will not aim to seize and defend territory in Ukraine (as it could get bogged down in an Afghanistan like quagmire). The Russian aim would be simply to wreck Ukraine as a functional state. Towards this end, this could unfold with massive cyber attacks and electronic warfare strikes to paralyse communications. The Russians would rapidly gain air and naval supremacy and commence operations with massive air strikes, cruise missile and tactical ballistic missile strikes. Massive artillery suppressive fires will be used to destroy anti-tank missile and shoulder-fired SAMs. The main attack will come from Belarus and aim straight for Kiev – the capital city. Key command and control centres (presidential palace, Ministry of Defence and Interior, Parliament, etc) would be knocked out. Concurrently, forces from the East would go for Kharkiev and the breakaway provinces of Donesk and Luhansk. Naval landings would seek to seize the port cities of Odessa and Mariopol. It would be a swift blitzkrieg style operation that will encircle and bypass major centres of resistance and inflict heavy damage by air and missile strikes and heavy fire assaults. The aim would be not to capture and hold Ukrainian territory but wreck Ukraine as a functional state. The operation should not last more than one week. At the end of it Russians could declare a unilateral cease fire and withdraw from most of Ukrainian territory less the districts of Donesk and Luhansk, which will now be independent states.

So which option will Russia take? One view is that since whichever option is adopted US and West will impose economic sanctions – Russia might prefer a massive Full scale option to impose regime change in

**“A number of respected American pundits of geopolitics (to include Henry Kissinger, Prof Meershimmer and Stephen P Cohen) have been advising America to not drive Russia into Chinese arms and not take on these two major powers together.”**

Kiev. That would highlight Russian military power and capacity and would deter any further adventurism against Russia. West has Imposed only the first tranche of graded sanctions yet and is waiting to see the option Russia will take finally. Will Russia be satisfied with just the breakaway provinces of Donesk and Luhansk (which were never its stated) red lines? Or will it go for limited or full scale invasion? It all depends on the risk taking appetite of Putin.

### **Western Options – Need for a Strategic Response**

So far, Western nations have stated that crippling economic sanctions would be imposed and have rushed token forces to other East European states that have earlier joined NATO. Economic sanctions could include:-

- Close Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline. This incidentally would cause enormous economic losses to Germany also.
- Impose blocking sanctions on large Russian banks, energy and defence companies and energy projects.
- Sanctions on Russian Oligarchs and their families.
- Impose restrictions on secondary markets in Russian bonds.
- Exclude Russia from Swift global electronic payment system based in Belgium. This would be a last resort option.

### **Strategic Response**

Writing in the 11 February issue of the Foreign Affairs magazine, Michael McFaul has made the eminently reasonable suggestion that USA should not respond knee jerk and tactically by offering

defensively minimal concessions to stave off the crisis. Instead, President Biden should seize the diplomatic initiative with a grand strategic and comprehensive bargain for enhancing European security. This would be analogous to the Helsinki Accord of 1975. This would resuscitate and amend defunct arms control agreements and provide the bigger framework of European security of which Ukraine per se, would only be a sub set. USA has low strategic stakes in Ukraine and is playing a losing hand.

A number of respected American pundits of geopolitics (to include Henry Kissinger, Prof Meershimmer and Stephen P Cohen) have been advising America to not drive Russia into Chinese arms and not take on these two major powers together. In fact, Kissinger had said, “It should be settled maxim of US foreign policy never to take on more than one major Asian power at a time.” China is the real peer competitor of the USA in the long term. It has almost matching economic power and is fast catching up in military power. It will prove to be far more dangerous than Russia could ever be with its economic constraints. It would be prudent for America to designate its main threat clearly. If it is China, it makes eminent strategic sense to seek détente with one while going full steam to contain the other. Nixon had done that by a détente with Mao's China when USSR was the main threat. Today, the situation is reversed and a détente with Russia makes eminent sense. It will allow the USA and the West to focus its energies on China. The desire to take on China and Russia together sounds macho, but is highly unrealistic. Given Biden's disastrous performance against Afghanistan the world would be forgiven for being somewhat skeptical. That, however, is the problem. Only a self-assured and confident leader would refrain from knee jerk, tactical responses and think strategic and long term. Where monthly popularity ratings decide responses it would be overly optimistic to expect such a clear headed response from President Biden. Post Afghanistan he has little room for manoeuvre.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
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# An Assessment of Military Operations (Part 1)

## Russian Doctrine & Prelim Ops

**Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd**

### Gerasimov's Hybrid War vs Traditional Russian War Doctrines

A few days before the start of the Russia–Ukraine war, IMR had done an in house war-game (Feb 2022 issue). Based upon known Russian doctrines and recent demonstrated combat performance in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Syria - we had forecast that Russian likely war aims would be to seriously wreck Ukraine as a functional military state and attempt regime change. They would advance on multiple thrust lines but seek to retain ground only in Donetsk and Luhansk provinces in the East and Crimea and the coastal areas in the South. These would be terrain objectives that would be retained at any cost. Russia had a huge advantage in airpower, missile power and traditional artillery firepower. Its T-72 and T-90 tanks were clearly superior to the Ukrainian T-80 and T-64 tanks especially in optronics and night fighting capabilities.

**The Gerasimov Doctrine of Hybrid Warfare.** The Chief of Russian General Staff Gen Valery Gerasimov had enunciated a whole of government doctrine for warfare based on a combination of hard and soft power in 2013. This entailed use of regular and irregular forces (conventional and sub-conventional forces) and coherent use of cyber warfare, electronic warfare, information warfare, disinformation, political, diplomatic and economic tools to gain victory. Based on this Gerasimov Doctrine, the Russians had made impressive use of hybrid warfare in 2014 to foment insurgencies in Russian speaking areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. They captured significant chunks of these provinces (around 30 per cent), which declared themselves as independent (a la Abkhazia and Osetia in Georgia). Just



Map of NATO allies and bases

before this conflict Russia recognized these as independent states. Hybrid war had worked very well so far in both Georgia and Ukraine.

**Transition from Hybrid War to Regular Warfare.** The key question here is - when on 24 Feb President Putin announced his decision to launch a "Special Operation" in Ukraine with the stated aim of destroying Ukraine's military potential and carrying out De-Nazification, was he not making a direct transition from hybrid war now to full scale conventional war? From 2017 onwards, the US had been heavily arming Ukraine with Javelin ATGMs and shoulder-fired Stinger missiles. In July 2021, US, Polish, Ukrainian and Latvian troops had held a joint military exercise in Ukraine (Ex Three Swords). This entailed over 1200

troops and 200 tanks and armoured vehicles along with air power elements. Tactics to counter a Russian attack had been worked out in detail. Russian sources indicate that plans were being hatched to mount an invasion of the Russian held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk and concurrently ask for membership of NATO. This would involve US and NATO troops in this conflict. It was this exercise that had convinced President Zelensky that, if Russia attacked, US & NATO forces would come to his aid. In December 2021, in yet another provocation Ukraine and USA co-hosted a major naval exercise (code named Op Sea Breeze) on the Black Sea in which 34 nations' navies took part. American B-52 bombers made practice nuclear bombing runs against Russia and a



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ramming incident almost happened between a Russian destroyer and a British naval vessel.

Finally, in December 2021 itself, US and Ukraine foreign ministers signed the US-Ukraine Charter of Strategic Partnership that was said to be guided by the 2008 Bucharest Summit (where the idea of including Georgia and Ukraine in NATO was first mooted). By end-Dec 2021, Ukraine was a de facto member of NATO for all practical purposes and Russia was apprehending an attack on the separatist held areas of Donetsk and Luhansk. Some 60,000 Ukrainian troops were massed against this Donbas region. That is why Russia had begun mobilizing its forces on the Ukrainian border in a massive exercise of compellence designed to seek written guarantees that Ukraine would not join NATO and no offensive weapons would be deployed in 14 East European countries that had joined NATO. (In December 2021 itself, Putin had written to President Joe Biden clearly seeking these written guarantees).

To be credible, any such compellence exercise has to be structured for a seamless transition to actual kinetic operations. When that finally happened on 24 February 2022, the level of combat had clearly to shift from hybrid warfare to

full-fledged conventional military operations with a clear option to cross the tactical nuclear threshold if USA or other NATO countries intervened. The continuation of the hybrid war mindset after onset of full scale military operations was, in hindsight, a clear miscalculation. This highlights the tension between the Gerasimov Hybrid War Doctrine and the traditional Russian way of war. This mismatch between the two mindsets has characterized this conflict. In trying to win the information war you cannot afford to lose or impede the outcome of the ground war.

### Force Restraint

From the very outset of this war, the Russian campaign has been characterised by a surprising degree of restraint that flies in the face of the traditional Russian way of war. This has always relied on mass and scale – especially in the use of suppressive fires. From the purely military point of view massive suppressive fires were badly needed to neutralise huge numbers of Javelin anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs) and Stinger shoulder fired surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) that had been liberally supplied to Ukraine. Most military analysts were, therefore, surprised to find a near total absence of

the Russian Air Force (VKS) for extended and extensive bombing campaigns. Even more surprising was the near total absence of large scale artillery and multi-barrel rocket launcher (MBRL) fire assaults on cities and built up areas - especially in the initial stages of the war.

The Russian first phase SEAD (Suppression of Enemy Air Defences) campaign was confined to just one single day. Contrast this with the US 40-day air campaign in Iraq and the 80-day air interdiction campaign by the US and NATO in Yugoslavia. Given troops to task calculations, the overall Russian force level deployed was far too less to cater for the reduction/ isolation of some 15 or more cities, unless use of heavy fire power was envisaged. Besides, there was a near total absence of Russian cutting edge equipment like T-14 Alamy tanks and even Active Protection Systems (APS) on the T-72 and T-90 tanks employed (despite the dense anti-tank environment they had to operate in). Like the Egyptians had done in 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the Russians seemed to prefer to operate under the area denial umbrella of their Triumf S- 400 missiles deployed in Belarus and Russia proper. Though the S- 400s have worked quite well, this denied the Russian troops the heavy air support they could easily have counted on – given the air power asymmetry between the two sides.

So what explains this baffling and most uncharacteristic force usage restraint by the Russians?

### Cultural Factors and Intelligence Failure

There is a widespread belief that Putin was misled by his intelligence (FSB) to seriously under estimate the degree of resistance that the Ukrainian armed forces would put up. It was mentioned that, perhaps, accurate intelligence was available but senior FSB officers lacked the moral courage to put it up to Putin. They only tried to reinforce his dominant perception that, like in Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine itself in 2014, the opposition would fold up and surrender without a fight. There is indeed some truth in this premise. The Russians went in for just a one-day air campaign and even as the 41 Combined Arms Army was heading for



Kiev from the Belarus border, an air assault formation (perhaps elements of a Guards airborne division) captured the Antonov Hostamel airport (just 23 kms from Kiev) in a brilliant coup de main operation. Military experts now expected them to hold this airhead till link up by the land-based tank columns moving in from Belarus. Given the 150 kms they had to cover, this could have been done in two or three days. To everyone's surprise the airborne forces left the air base and charged up to Kiev, the capital, even as Putin demanded that Ukraine surrender. The Ukrainian's put up stiff resistance and recaptured the vacated Hostamel air base. The airborne forces almost walked into a trap as it were. No operation can be premised on the expectation that the enemy will just surrender. There does seem to have been a major intelligence failure of humanint or even a deliberate trap.

Most Russian military officers I have spoken to have stressed that this nostalgic perception of people to people relations was not just confined to President Putin but was a widespread cultural blind spot in the entire Russian military. Many Russians and even people of Belarus have relations in Ukraine and Kiev indeed was once a important centre of Russian culture. As such, there was a clear cut and widespread desire to restrict force usage against kindred people. This cultural constraint cum Intelligence error tended to make military planning clearly subjective in the initial phase of the conflict. The Indians and Pakistanis too were once one people culturally and linguistically. Yet they have, since 1947, fought four major wars and one long hybrid war in J&K. This has been characterised by particular viciousness on Pakistan's part.

## DETAILED ANALYSIS - CONDUCT OF OPERATIONS

### Phase One - Coercive Deployment

The Russian command level HQ at Varyinch (80kms from Donbas) seemed to be the controlling HQ for this operation. Tanks, missile launchers and artillery were moved from the far-eastern military districts of Siberia to raise two new Combined Arms Armies (CAAs are

equivalent of Indian corps). These were the 4th and 20th CAAs. Of Russia's 12 CAAs, some 11 were deployed around Ukraine. Another estimate felt that out of some 170 Battalion Tactical Groups some 87 were used against Ukraine. In numerical terms this amounted to some 1,50,000 troops that were subsequently raised up to 1,90,000. in terms of troops to task analysis, if encirclement/capture of 10-15 Ukrainian cities was involved, this force level was clearly inadequate. It could only make sense if it intended to use heavy air power and suppressive artillery fire power to carry out this task and compensate for low force levels.

The 41st CAA was sent for a 10-day exercise to Belarus. This positioned it to strike directly at Kiev. After termination of the exercise it was retained there itself. The Ukrainian forces were organized into 14 armoured, airborne and mechanized brigades and had mobilised a large territorial militia and also called up reservists. The defender, thus, clearly outnumbered the attackers but the Russians had an overwhelming technological edge.

In December 2021, President Putin had written a letter to President Joe Biden demanding written guarantees for non-inclusion of Ukraine in NATO. This caused a flurry of diplomatic activity in Europe. However, the dominant perception in USA and Europe seemed to be that Russia was bluffing and this force posturing was just a coercive military deployment to compel NATO to negotiate a new security architecture in Europe. The Ukrainians themselves were most nonchalant about the Russian deployment and dismissed it as bluff and bluster to Indian students who took their advice and did not evacuate in time. With modern satellite surveillance each and every tank, gun and truck could be picked up with ease. No force concentration can be hidden in this day and age. What can be kept secret is the intention. Was the force just posturing or would it really strike? It must be said that the Russians were able to keep this secret well and Russian maskirovka (deception) operations were highly successful in keeping the world guessing.

Putin gave ample chance for a

diplomatic solution till the very end. This delayed the offensive and caused it to run into the spring thaw, which generates slush and mud and impedes cross country manoeuvre. As part of information operations the Americans tried to leak Russian military plans in the media and announced 16 February as the D Day. This, perhaps, forced Russia to delay the operation. It was finally launched a week later on 24 February with a near formal declaration of war (a special operation) to destroy Ukraine's military potential and de-Nazify the country. Russia officially recognized the separatist provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk as independent states and cited their full liberation as the primary territorial objective. It must be noted that from 2014 onwards the Ukrainians had deployed some 60,000 of their best troops in this region and attacking them directly would have amounted to a rather costly frontal attack on a very live line of contact. Hence, any Russian operation would have to advance along multiple thrust lines that would tie down and divide Ukrainian forces and mask the main objective. So, was Kiev then a deception operation as subsequently claimed? This merits further analysis. However, after the initial surprise, the Russian forces quickly readjusted to the changed scenario and now carried out their operations with far greater deliberation and with due caution. They changed their overall operational design from rapid manoeuvre to set piece siege operations and increasingly greater use of suppressive fires.

### Suppression of Enemy Air Defences (SEAD)

As stated, the Americans had carried out a 40-day air campaign in Iraq for SEAD and interdiction of enemy communications and infrastructure including destruction of Republican Guards armoured reserves. In Yugoslavia, the air campaign had extended for over 80 days. Hence, most military observers were baffled when the Russian Air Force finished its SEAD campaign in a single day. The Russian Air Force (VKS) used MiG-29 and MiG-35 fighters as also SU-27 and SU-30s along with SU-25SM fighter bombers.







Given that Ukrainians had extensively deployed Stinger shoulder-fired SAMs, bulk of attacks would have had to be from mid- to high-altitudes (to stay out of the shoulder-fired SAM envelope). This would necessitate use of PGMs for ground attack.

It is not known what percentage of munitions employed were PGMs or just plain gravity bombs, which can be quite inaccurate. The bulk of damage, however, was done by the 9K720 Iskander short range ballistic missiles (200 miles range). These were equipped with decoys to degrade enemy air defences and the Ukrainian S-300, Tor and Buk SAMs failed to intercept any of these. The Kalibr and Klub cruise missiles were also used extensively. Russians claimed to have struck 11 enemy airfields, destroyed 18 radars and a number of S-300 missile batteries on this first day itself. In hindsight, these claims appear

exaggerated and the Bomb Damage Assessment (BDA) seems to have been flawed.

Many Ukrainian fighters escaped by moving out to western Ukraine and some are said to have flown out to Romania before the Russian attack. Many S-300 batteries also were dispersed initially. They survived and were active much later in the course of the fighting. The Russians seemed to have relied heavily on the area denial capability of their S-400 and S-500 Triumf missile systems. From Belarus these downed a Ukrainian SU-27 fighter at a range of 150 kms over Kiev, setting a world record for the distance of engagement. The impression one gets is that like the Egyptian Army in the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Russians were more inclined to rely upon the Anti-Access and Area Denial (A2AD) capability of their Triumph missile

systems. These were apparently quite effective as is proved by their ability to protect a 65 km long convoy of assault tanks and other vehicles for days on the outskirts of Kiev. But this also ruled out much air support by the Russian air force due to closure of air space. This was badly needed to suppress the swarms of Javelin ATGMs and the Stingers. These kept taking pot shots throughout the campaign. The Ukrainians were advised by the Americans to ambush rear/logistics echelons and they appear to have taken their toll. The road axes were not protected adequately due to a paucity of infantry. Amazingly, the Russian air force was largely absent from the skies over Ukraine, after the initial day's SEAD attacks.

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# An Assessment of Military Operations (Part 2)

## Air and Ground Operations

**Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd**

### AIR ASSAULT OPERATIONS

After initial SEAD strikes on 24 February (the first day of the offensive) a large train of Mi-28 transport and Hukou attack helicopters was seen flying towards the Hostomel airport. It was attacked by air and missile strikes and possibly also by MBRLs. Elements of an air assault formation (possibly one of the Guards airborne divisions) landed and seized the Antonov airport at Hostomel. The giant Ukrainian AN-225 transport aircraft (the world's largest) was destroyed in the fighting here. As per standard practice, military experts expected them to hold an airhead (to fly in reinforcements and supplies) and await a land link-up with the tank columns of the 41st Army that were crossing over from Belarus border. Given the distance of approximately some 150 kms, the link-up would at best have taken 2-3 days. However, what followed was somewhat unorthodox and confusing. Instead of holding the airhead, the airborne troops left it and charged straight for Kiev some 23 kms away. Reportedly, the 141 Motorised National Guards Brigade under Chechen Maj Gen Magomed Tusaev charged into Kiev. They were surprised by the stiff resistance and the Javelins and artillery took a heavy toll. Reportedly, they lost some 58 armoured vehicles to the ATGMs and the Chechen Maj Gen was killed. Finding the Hostomel airfield unoccupied the Ukrainians recaptured it, thus, denying the airhead for flying in reinforcements and logistics supply. Apparently, this coup de main operation was planned at the highest level because President Putin himself called upon Ukrainian forces to surrender. Later, he personally praised the sacrifice of the paratroopers. There definitely was a major failure of intelligence here. On what intelligence basis was such a bold



Northern sector thrust lines

operation launched on the enemy capital? It could not be based merely on the expectation that the Ukraine forces would not fight and surrender tamely? That cannot be the basis of operational planning and there seemed to be no fall back option or Plan B in this coup de main operation. It seemed to be based on very subjective parameters and assumptions.

### GROUND OPERATIONS

The Russian advance began on multiple thrust lines. As assessed by IMR, it was a full scale invasion option. Rapid progress was made in first 3-4 days with spear heads covering over 150 kms to reach the outskirts of Kiev. Thereafter, the emphasis shifted to siege warfare – surrounding cities, isolating the entry and exit routes and pounding cities savagely with rockets, cruise missiles and conventional artillery. Humanitarian corridors were agreed on by both sides to let civilians flee the cities. Some 6.5 million

Ukrainians have been internally displaced and over 3.5 to 5 million have been forced to flee to Poland and other neighboring countries. The pace of operations has been slowed down greatly partly due to need for logistical pauses and very heavy and dogged resistance by the Ukrainian army, which used their Javelins ATGMs and Strella SAMs to cause fairly substantial attrition. However the simple ground reality is that neither US nor NATO are putting boots on ground nor will they enforce any No-Fly Zones. So, theoretically, Russia has all the time in the world to methodically and steadily but surely grind down the Ukraine military in a meat-grinder war of attrition, which could carry on for months. The longer it lasts the more Ukraine will suffer. Unfortunately, it will also have a fearful impact on the global economy that was staging a tenuous recovery from Covid. Let me now cover the operations in the Northern, Eastern and Southern sectors in detail.







Eastern sector thrust lines

## Northern Sector

The Russian forces attacked in the Northern sector toward Kiev the capital and Kharkiev (former capital and financial hub which had the T-80 tank factory here).

**Kiev.** The 41st Army charged across the Belarus border towards Kiev on two thrust lines west of the Dnieper river, while elements of 36th Army advanced along the east bank towards Chernobyl nuclear plant and further on to Hostomel airport. These thrust lines made very rapid initial progress and in just 2-3 days were on the outskirts of Kiev. Thereafter, operations slowed down to try and isolate and then besiege Kiev, while they carried out precise Iskander TBMs and Kalibr cruise missiles strikes and limited bombardment by MBRLs. They made a few probes towards Kiev city centre but were repulsed. The satellite imagery on 4th/5th day of war showed a huge 65 km long convoy stretched on the road to Kiev. This included assault tank echelons, which should have been moving cross country but were stuck to the road due to the slush and mud caused by the spring thaw. The convoy remained stuck like that for a couple of days. Had the Ukrainian Air Force been active, this would have led to a disaster but apparently the convoy was well protected by the slant range of the S-400 missiles from Belarus and remained

**“Strangely, almost no attacks were made by aircraft or cruise missiles on key command and control targets like the Presidential palace, Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior. This, to my mind, is a cardinal mistake of this war.”**

largely unscathed. It did not seem as if the Russians were planning to fight in the streets of Kiev, which were heavily defended by Javelin ATGMs and Stinger SAMs and would have entailed heavy troop casualties and collateral damage to the civilian population. Some experts felt this was a deception operation designed to keep the world's attention riveted towards Kiev, while they made major advances in the East (Donbas) and the south sea coast. Cruise missiles were used to destroy the Antonov aircraft manufacturing plant and oil storage depots. Strangely, almost no attacks were made by aircraft or cruise missiles

on key command and control targets like the Presidential palace, Ministry of Defence or the Ministry of Interior. This, to my mind, is a cardinal mistake of this war – the failure to target the top political and military leadership of Ukraine in a pinpoint and concerted manner.

**Sumy.** The 20th Army elements advanced on to Sumy and surrounded and bombed the city heavily.

**Kharkiev.** The 6th Army mounted heavy and sustained attacks on Kharkiev. It was surrounded and pounded to rubble. The tank manufacturing plant was destroyed by cruise missile strikes and bitter fighting took place on the streets. The Russians claim to be in control of the city but this is disputed by the Ukrainians.

## Eastern Sector

This was the scene of major hostilities since 2014 and daily exchanges of artillery and mortar fire were taking place along the line of contact (LOC). Russians claim that Ukraine had massed some 60,000 of its best troops opposite Donbas and were planning to launch an offensive to take back the 30 per cent or so of the territories of the break-away districts of Donetsk and Luhansk, which was under Russian control. Attacks in this sector, therefore, were largely frontal and heavily contested. As per the Russians, it was to pin down Ukrainian forces in the North and not let them reinforce this sector that attacks were launched concurrently on Kiev and Kharkiev in the North.

- The Russian 8th Army mounted fierce attacks on the Luhansk district and, by end of March, claimed to have liberated some 93 per cent of its territory.
- The Russian 49th Army mounted fierce attacks on Donetsk district and, by end of March, claims to have liberated 56 per cent of its area. It also mounted operations towards Mariupol to link up with troops operating out of Crimea to establish a land corridor for Crimea.
- In Phase II of the Russian operation they could complete the capture of the entire Donbas region and possibly try and encircle and annihilate the 60,000 or so Ukrainian troops operating against the Donbas region by encircling them from North and South in a major pincer movement.



### Southern Sector

This encompasses the coast of Ukraine on the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. The three major ports here are Sevastopol (already with Russia on lease since decades) and now part of Russian occupied Crimea. The other major ports are Odessa and Mariupol. Russian Marines and Army made the most impressive gains here and have almost cut off Ukraine from the sea and made it a land locked state.

- The Russian 58th Army and the Marines have advanced on Mariupol, laid siege to it and reduced the city to rubble by very heavy bombardment and missile strikes. The Russians claim to be in control of Mariupol, though Ukrainians claim that pockets of resistance remain. Mariupol and Kharkiev are the two major cities where the Russians have employed their standard tactics of capturing cities and the firepower used has been fearful. The land link up of Crimea with Donbas is now complete and is a major and significant gain.

- The Russian 22nd Army and Marine elements advanced on and Quickly captured the coastal port city of Kherson (the first major city with a population of 300,000) that fell to the Russians. They then moved on and surrounded the port city of Mykolyiv and pounded it fiercely. Parts of the city have fallen to the Russians. Army elements and Marines have also advanced and captured the nuclear power plant complex of Zaporizhzhia. This is the largest nuclear plant in Europe with 6x950 MW reactors (only one functional). They have also captured the Aneshader nuclear plant which has 25 per cent of the power generation capacity of the whole of Ukraine. Thus, almost all nuclear facilities in eastern Ukraine are now under Russian control.

- While the world's interest was riveted on Kiev, the Russians have made the most impressive advances in the South and have captured almost all the major seaports of Ukraine and cut off its access to the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. If Russians could induct fresh troops here they could drive up north along both banks of the Dnieper river and partition Ukraine into Eastern and Western parts along the Dnieper river. This



Southern sector thrust lines

**“The American aim seems to be to prolong this war for a couple of months to humiliate Putin and impose maximum attrition on his war machine. This amounts to fighting the Russians till the last Ukrainian man.”**

could well be attempted by the Russians in Phase II of the operations.

### Major Outcomes and Lessons Learnt So Far

The Russian invasion of Eastern Ukraine is now in its second month. It began as a swift war of manoeuvre but now has turned into an inexorable attrition nightmare. Western propaganda is trying to claim it as a pyrrhic victory for Ukraine, which they armed very heavily with Javelin ATGMs and shoulder-fired Stinger SAMs, which they claim had won the war in Afghanistan. These claims are over-hyped. Certainly, these defensive missiles have, to an extent, slowed down

Russian operations and have been used to target their follow-on and logistics echelons. However, in no way can these tactical defensive weapons by themselves win the war for Ukraine. They can only serve to prolong it.

The American aim seems to be to prolong this war for a couple of months to humiliate Putin and impose maximum attrition on his war machine. This amounts to fighting the Russians till the last Ukrainian man or building standing. In the bargain, no one seems to care for the highly adverse impact on the global economy that has been struggling to recover from the impact of Covid pandemic. Nor does this approach show any sensitivity to the cost of human suffering of the people of Ukraine who have been callously dumped by the West.

The expenditure rate of these Javelins and Stingers missiles has been enormous. Zelinsky now wants 500 of these per day at an estimated missile replacement cost of \$39 million per day. It is virtually impossible for even US and NATO to supply at such lavish scales.

Russian interdiction has now destroyed many oil storage depots, ammunition dumps, tank and aircraft manufacturing plants in Ukraine. They have captured all the Ukrainian nuclear plants in east Ukraine and control the







Russian apprehension that this war is likely to spread and escalate remains to be seen. They are clearly retaining their most advanced weapon systems for a time when they apprehend that they may have to fight NATO and American forces. So, we have not heard the last of this conflict and that is worrying. The Russians are clearly apprehending a widening and escalation of this conflict and are clearly husbanding their cutting edge resources. We have seen no T-14 Armata tanks or active protection systems in this conflict despite the very dense anti-tank environment.

Traditionally, Russians maintain momentum by employment of fresh second and third echelons, which are carefully kept out of the battle for when the first echelons will run out of steam. Will Phase II see an induction of fresh troops and more material? That will depend on Russia meeting its minimal objectives – they say these have largely been met.

The use of the Russian air force has been rather limited. This failure to press home air superiority has needlessly extended this conflict.

Meteorological factors like the spring thaw and slush were not given adequate importance.

Use of tactical ballistic missiles (Iskanders) and cruise missiles (Kalibr) have been impressive and very effective.

Over 1000 of them have been used in this war for pin-point destruction of targets.

Biden's talks of Ukrainian sovereignty and calls for regime change in Russia are rather hypocritical and contradictory.

Economic sanctions could backfire if the dollar stops being the world currency for oil trade. Sanctions will hit Europe very hard and cause stagflation in the US economy.

water supply and power to most cities. Sadly, it is doubtful how long the Ukrainians can last in the face of such heavy punishment.

In a pure war of attrition, Russia is bound to prevail. Each day that the war lasts will tilt the war more in Russia's favour. No amount of Western propaganda of an impending collapse of material and moral support for the war in Russia can hide this basic military fact. They may win the war on television and captive social media, the ground reality,

however, will inexorably shift in Russia's favour. In a meat grinder war of pure attrition Russian missile power, air power and fire power will prevail. Abraham Lincoln's words – "You can fool all of the people some of the time; you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time" – may come back to haunt these shrill spin masters.

Russian force usage has been very uncharacteristically restrained. Whether this stems from cultural factors or a

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# HYBRID WAR

## Western Propaganda On a Massive Scale Information War in the Ukraine Conflict

Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd

**W**inning wars is all about gaining information about the enemy and denying him the same information about one self. Thus, information warfare is as old as war itself. However, in recent times, it has been waged most successfully over the mass media. During World War I, it was primarily waged over the print medium using newspapers, magazines and books to promote one's own narrative and counter that of the enemy. It was used to wage unrelenting propaganda wars to sustain the morale of one's own population and erode that of the enemies. In World War II, radio became the prime mass media that could reach across continents. Radio and print media were widely used to conduct some very successful psychological operations and information war for narratives dominance. After the war, TV became the prime mass media and its all out telematic assault was first used in the Gulf Wars. Now the Internet and social media have become the most influential mass media. These have overridden all the previous tools of mass media – whether print, radio or TV. Social media is a paradox – highly personalized yet open to mass outreach as far as manipulating the mind on a massive scale is concerned.

### Social Media and Telematic Assault

The present Russia-Ukraine War has seen the massive impact of social media and television in waging information war at a global level. Social media has now become the greatest tool of reaching out to individual minds and, thereby, influencing the mass mind in a manner



Anti-Putin propaganda in the Western press

**“Big Tech giants of the US-based social media were blatantly partisan in this war. They permitted calls to assassinate Putin, demonise the Russians as a race and went out of the way to push the Ukrainian narrative in this war.”**

that supersedes the impact of all legacy mass media tools like print, radio and even TV. Donald Trump in USA and the BJP in India had also realised the overwhelming

impact of the social media to challenge the customary dominance of mass media. Its message is so personalized and yet has such massive outreach that it is instrumental in shaping the mass mind. Today, its impact supersedes the impact of traditional mass media. Today, some 2.7 billion viewers use Facebook every day, some 206 million use Twitter and some 122 million use YouTube daily. These social media platforms, therefore, have major role in shaping public perceptions and opinion. Big Tech giants of the US-based social media were blatantly partisan in this war. They permitted calls to assassinate Putin, demonise the Russians as a race and went out of the way to push the Ukrainian narrative in this war. The truth is that hundreds of former US Government officials from the







Protesters march in Melbourne, Australia against the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 26 Feb 2022

Departments of Defense, FBI, Homeland Security, etc. work in these companies to peddle the US Government narratives. There is a revolving door policy between Big Tech and US Government agencies (eg, Jerarad Cohen of US State Dept and Joseph Rozek of the US Dept of Defense and many others are now with the social media platforms) playing a blatantly partisan role. In fact, these platforms had received some \$44.4 bn worth of contracts from the Pentagon and Dept of Homeland Security to spread stories of violent extremism during the Global War on Terror.

## Network Battalion 65

Another CIA sponsored cyber army called Network Battalion 65, hacked into Russian Nuclear Institute files and published them openly on the net to spill Russian nuclear secrets. All these cyber warriors have every day been posting hundreds of video clips (some taken from video war games, previous conflicts and military exercises) showing destruction of Russian military equipment by Javelin missiles and Stinger SAMs. Even as they advertise American military equipment, they create a hype that Ukraine is winning the war against all Russian odds. The impression they generate is of an impending Russian military collapse of will and morale and a coup that could

**“This hype about a Ukrainian victory is plastered all over the social media. It is then picked up by the echo chamber of US electronic media – CNN and BBC – and relayed all over the world.”**

overthrow Putin in Moscow. In actual fact, Putin's popularity rating has shot up to 80 per cent in Russia post this conflict.

This hype about a Ukrainian victory is plastered all over the social media. It is then picked up by the echo chamber of US electronic media – CNN and BBC – and relayed all over the world. The Third World media also dutifully picks up this western narrative and parrots it to create a climate of global opinion against Russia. The Russian view point has been totally blanked out in this war.

As it is, RTV and Sputnik have been banned by USA and Western Governments to block out the Russian viewpoint entirely. The wartime tactic of spreading disinformation to undermine morale of the rival camp has received a technical boost as seen in hundreds of

false videos being circulated during this war on social media and then on to the TV screens. Fake narratives and lies are being promoted shamelessly.

## Western Propaganda Playbook

Alwyn and Heidi Tofler, in their famous book – War and Anti War – had listed six basic propaganda ploys or tools. These are:-

**Atrocity Accusations.** These have most skilfully been employed in Ukraine with civilian deaths in Bucha being touted as not just atrocities but as genocide. The Russians have reacted angrily to these accusations – calling them fake and deliberately staged. With such fierce air attacks, tank battles and artillery barrages – civilian casualties are bound to occur on a large scale. The surprise is that despite huge amounts of ammunition expenditure the civilian casualties are comparatively much lower than what we have seen in Iraq and Syria. Ukraine prohibited all males from 16 to 60 to leave the city battlefields. They armed some 18,000 civilians – thus, making them legitimate targets. Now they are coming up with strident atrocity accusations that are used to justify more economic sanctions against Russia and additional weapons shipments to Ukraine.

**Hyperbolic Inflation of Stakes.** It gives the national audience a feel that everything that they hold dear is at risk. Thus, the Ukraine War has been made into a hyperbolic contest between Democratic and Autocratic regimes. India is being pressurised to take the side of democracies. Ukraine is hardly an ideal democracy and no better than Russia in democratic freedoms and practises. Corruption is, perhaps, more rife in Ukraine than it is in Russia. Yet the entire struggle is being elevated to that moral plane of democracies vs dictatorships.

**Demonisation or Dehumanisation of Opponent.** Putin has been called a war criminal and killer by no less than President Joe Biden himself. The Russian military in general and, especially Putin in particular, are being demonised. This is destroying any chances of resolving this crisis peacefully. How can you negotiate with killers?

**Polarisation.** Those who are not with us



are against us. India is being pressurised to condemn Russia and not buy cheap oil and weapons from them. This, even as Europe continues to buy massive quantities of oil and gas from Russia every day.

**Claims of Devine Sanction.** Islamists freely invoke Allah's support and blessings for their wars. Even western democracies stridently invoke God's support in what they claim to be a just war. Justice is simply defined. Whatever they do is just - whatever the enemy does is unjust. The invasions of Afghanistan, Panama, Iraq, Yugoslavia, Libya, Syria, etc, were all just and humane (regardless of the destruction caused and the number of civilians killed)! The Russian invasion of Ukraine alone is evil! Killing 1,30,000 civilians in Hiroshima and 80,000 in Nagasaki was just and moral – Bucha alone is evil.

**Meta Propaganda.** Propaganda that discredits the other sides propaganda is termed as meta propaganda. It calls into question everything that comes from the enemy. All statements made by Russian military are said to be lies and fabrications. Ukraine alone is telling the truth. Its aim is to produce “whole sale” disbelief in whatever the enemy says.

#### Out Sourcing Propaganda

Dan Cohen, writing in the Mintpress.news.com, has blown the lid off a massively funded, specialized PR campaign that is being run by several entities associated with the governments of US, UK and NATO to portray the war in Ukraine to suit western agendas. The Strategic Communication Narrative is to depict the Ukrainian military as a tiny but righteous David standing up to a brutal Russian military Goliath and winning outright. Not widely known is the fact that behind this massively successful propaganda campaign are a group of international PR firms working directly with the Ukraine foreign ministry.

Just hours after the beginning of the Russian military campaign, an anonymous figure who runs a PR firm in Ukraine, started collaborating with Ukraine's foreign ministry. A slew of some 150 international PR firms collaborated to commence a massive propaganda Blitz. This PR juggernaut was led by PR Network



A video with a corpse moving, falsely claimed to be in Ukraine, was circulated on social media platforms.

**“While greatly playing up Russian losses, the Western media has completely blanked out the very heavy punishment taken by the Ukraine armed forces and logistical infrastructure. Over time, this will widen the gulf between propaganda and reality to unbridgeable levels.”**

co-founder Nicky Regazzoni and Francis Ingham. Francis Ingham, incidentally, is a top consultant loosely connected with the UK government. Reportedly, he sits on the UK Government's Communication Services Strategy & Evaluation Council.

Dan Cohen also mentions Yuroslav Turbil – a communication Specialist – who has worked with several US Government organizations. He is credited with creating a dossier containing key messages, approved language and other data to run the Ukraine PR campaign. Dan says the story of the Snake Island heroes (taken from famous incident in the German Ardennes offensive) and the Ghost pilot of Kiev (who in his lone SU-27 supposedly

shot down half the Russian Air Force, are all credited to him). These were hugely popular and catchy stories. Unfortunately, in the end stories remain just that - stories. Art work and posters for these PR campaigns to promote the heroism of the Ukraine armed forces was done by Stephen Bandera. Dan Cohen says he was a one-time Nazi collaborator, who had earlier led an organization that had murdered thousands of Jews and ethnic Poles in World War II. These posters celebrated Molotov Cocktails – as Bandera smoothies. These posters listed Russia, Belarus, North Korea, Syria, etc., as incurable diseases and also created racist and violent depictions of Russians in general and Putin in particular.

There is an Army of lobbyists working to send more weapons to prolong the conflict in Ukraine. A tremendous media hype has been created of a heroic Ukraine that has thrashed an incompetent and lumbering Russian military. The problem is that this narrative most deliberately underplays the huge military differential between the two sides. Despite sweeping Western propaganda, Ukraine's forces have taken very heavy losses. Over a 1000 Iskander tactical ballistic missiles (TBMs), Kalibr and Yakhont cruise missiles have been fired which have reduced over 40 Ukrainian cities to rubble. More to the point, most oil refineries, petrol and lubricants storage facilities and ammunition dumps of Ukraine, have been destroyed. This will severely erode the



Ukrainian capacity to continue the fight. Each day that the war lasts, those losses will mount and increase the pressure on the Ukraine military and population. Some 5.5 million have had to flee to neighboring countries and over 7 million have been displaced internally. Over time, this will take a cumulative toll. The longer the war lasts, the more vulnerable the Ukraine military will be to a sudden collapse of logistical stamina and the will to go on. The ability to continue fighting is premised upon a continual supply of arms, fuel oil and lubricants and huge stock piles of ammunition. While greatly playing up Russian losses, the Western media has completely blanked out the very heavy punishment taken by the Ukraine armed forces and logistical infrastructure. Over time, this will widen the gulf between propaganda and reality to unbridgeable levels.

## **Use of Intelligence Speculation & Analysis as Propaganda**

NBC News reported that the US has been using intelligence leaks and even half-baked intelligence analysis as part of their information war. Most of the time, the intelligence cited is not rock solid. It is not based on hard evidence. Low confidence inputs based on mere analysis or even plain false and fake inputs are passed on as hard facts. Over time, this is eroding the reliability of information put out by the US. US officials conceded they were using intelligence releases not to tell the truth but to influence decisions of Putin. A former MI 6 chief said these were more designed to manipulate than inform. Some examples of this genre are the initial reports leaked about Russian plans to attack Ukraine. These were designed to delay the Russian attack. Then there was the claim that Russia had asked China for supply of weapons and spares. Then, Intelligence was put out that Russia was planning to use chemical and biological warfare agents (this was to cover up the US funding of some 32 bio-warfare labs in Ukraine). Critics in the US decried this imperial narrative control by a democratic government openly manufacturing the consent of its public to be lied to for their own good and get limited strategic gains. This could badly

**“One problem of this overwhelming global Information dominance is the trap of believing your own propaganda and treating this as the ground reality and not the fictive reality. This can lead to highly flawed estimates of the situation and a loss of objectivity in military planning.”**

erode credibility in the long run. Thus, all the hype about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq had later proved to be outrageous lies. The disenchantment with the American narrative building exercise is setting in rather early in this war. Most of this is see-thru and blatant propaganda that is eroding US credibility.

Like in the Gulf war, the danger now is the West getting carried away by its own propaganda and failing to analyse objectively the military outcomes in the field. There is a frenzied chorus from retired American Generals who feel that Ukraine has actually won the war and, with a little more of heavy weapons support, it can inflict a humiliating defeat on the Russian Army and push them back across the border. This has led to many futile Ukrainian counter-attacks that have been decimated by the Russian artillery and air. As the relentless attrition grinds down the Ukrainian armed forces, there could be a sudden collapse a few weeks down the line as the interdiction of Ukraine's petrol oil and ammunition begins to take its toll.

## **Conflict Termination: Unconditional Surrender?**

Then there is the aspect of conflict termination. President Biden calling Putin a killer and war criminal virtually closes the window for any dialogue for conflict termination. It takes us back to the two World Wars, when such maximalist

stances were adopted and the call was for unconditional surrender. Is the US expecting Russia (armed with some 6,300 nuclear warheads) to surrender unconditionally? Russia will get disintegrated and economically destroyed but will never use weapons of mass destruction against the beloved US? The logic is very weird and could result in a nuclear catastrophe at the global level. Such levels of subjective thinking are very dangerous and could lead us to dead ends where crossing the nuclear threshold becomes entirely possible. Driving a nuclear armed adversary across a dead end drop is risky business at the best of time.

## **Russian Information War**

Maskarovika and Disinformation have been an integral part of Russian strategic thought since World War II. In 2013, Gen Valery Gerasimov had propounded the Russian Whole-of-government Approach or Hybrid war doctrine. This entailed a judicious mix of conventional and sub-conventional warfare as also a coherent mix of hard and soft power options in terms of information war, cyber war, propaganda, disinformation and deception coupled with use of political, diplomatic and economic tools to prevail in any conflict.

**Maskarovika in Ukraine.** The massive Russian military deployment against Ukraine could be seen by the whole world via all-weather satellites – accompanied by UAVs and American AWACS and JSTARS flying over Poland and other East European countries bordering Russia. Yet the Russians were able to keep their intentions secret till the very end. Indian students in Ukraine were told it was all bluff and bluster and there was no need for them to go back. Most of them stayed back on the assurances of the Ukrainian authorities and had to face major problems in evacuation during the hot war. The head of German Intelligence was equally caught off guard and had to be flown out from Kiev at the very last minute when the war started. The French chief of intelligence reportedly had to resign as he failed to anticipate the Russian invasion. Even though President Biden was warning the world of an impending Russian invasion, perhaps, he actually did not





believe it himself. He and most Western leaders felt Putin was just bluffing and was using the coercive military deployment merely as a show of force to get US and NATO to revamp the European Security Architecture. The Americans had spelt out 16 February as the date of attack. Putin had meanwhile given a very fair chance for extended negotiations to resolve the crisis. However, this only served to delay the launch of the operation and caused it to get bogged down in the mud of the spring thaw – especially around Kiev.

### Winning the Information War

With the deployment of over 300,000 experts by the CIA in support of the Ukraine war effort, USA has succeeded entirely in winning the information war. The social media and electronic and print media are flooded by the Ukrainian narrative. One major advantage that the Americans have is the English language, which is a global link language. Information wars are waged at three levels – global, regional and local. Russia and China are able to hive off their social media domains from Western social media and, thereby, protect their local domains. However, the information domain at the global and regional level is all dominated by the Western narratives. The Russian and Chinese both tightly control their own domestic social media and, to a great extent, are able to insulate their domestic populations from the adverse impact of the enemy's information war. India has major lessons to learn here because Indians use all Western social media systems and there are no firewalls to protect the local information domain.

However, one problem of this overwhelming global Information dominance is the trap of believing your own propaganda and treating this as the ground reality and not the fictive reality. This can lead to highly flawed estimates of the situation and a loss of objectivity in military planning. Perhaps, key organizations and individuals may know the truth but the general perception that is fashioned by the relentless info-war assault on the social, electronic and print medium, is so overwhelming that, overtime, it overrides and perhaps shapes the actions of the elite leadership itself.

### Information Overkill

Buoyed up by the Western narratives of Ukraine's military success, a lot of retired US Generals are pressing for a Ukrainian counter-offensive to throw out all Russian forces from Ukraine's soil. This narrative is overly optimistic and dangerously flawed. It does not take into account the very heavy and severe punishment inflicted on Ukraine's militaries logistics and infrastructure. In specific, Russian interdiction by tactical and cruise missiles, air and artillery has destroyed a great deal of Ukraine's oil refining and FOL storage capacity as also underground ammunition depots. Over time, these cumulative losses are bound to have a significant impact on the ability to conduct prolonged and concerted operations. Each day that the war continues will tilt scales in favour of Russia. The next few weeks will be critical.

### Nuclear Threshold

Also, the US generals are clearly losing

all sight of the dangerous nuclear threshold. Russia has the largest number of nuclear warheads in the world. American Generals feel Putin is bluffing with his nuclear sabre rattling. Before Russia invaded Ukraine they had felt his force deployment was also a bluff and he would not invade – just use posturing to get the West to renegotiate the security architecture in Europe. They were wrong then. If they prove wrong a second time about nuclear thresholds, the consequences could be catastrophic for the whole world.

### Demographic Weakness

What this war has highlighted, however, are the severe manpower shortages in Russia. Russia traditionally used to rely on heavy fire power and sheer mass. The mass is now clearly missing. Russia has no second or third echelons or even the Operational Maneuver Group (OMG) to exploit the success gained by the leading troops of the first echelon. This was standard Russian doctrine in the Cold War. Russia now is simply recycling and reusing the same troops after giving them time for rest and refit. The same had been seen in Afghanistan. Five Motor Rifle Divisions were sent in initially and this force level was maintained throughout the war. Despite great escalation of support to the Mujahideen by the CIA and Saudi Arabia, this force level was not increased. The use of heavy and unrestrained fire power in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Syria, however, saved the day. It was uninhibited by any presence of the media or mobile phones on the ground to record images. The large scale presence of the media in Ukraine is becoming a major hindrance for Russian forces to use excessive fire power. Frankly, for the time being, they have lost the information war. They may as well have to focus on winning the ground battle – however, brutal and bloody it becomes. Russia has now articulated pragmatic and achievable aims and should be able to achieve them in phase two.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
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# Mass Deception as a new kind of warfare

# Big Tech, Social Media

# and Info War

## Information Weaponsied in the Ukraine War

Devsena Mishra

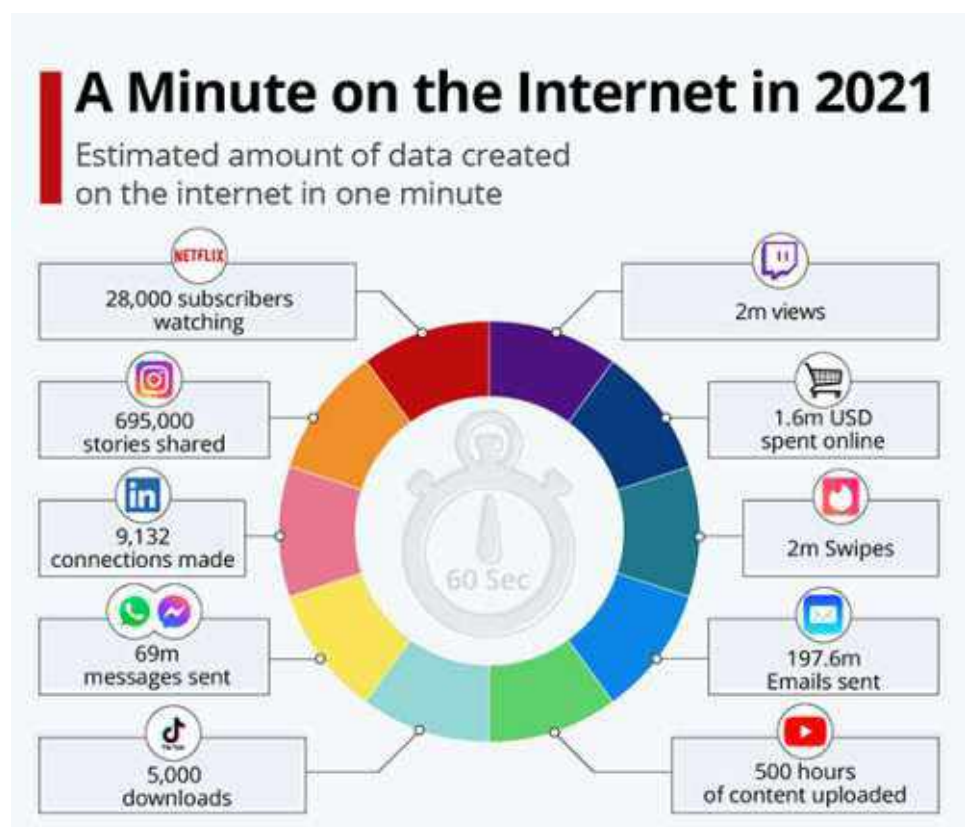
Russia-Ukraine war is not the first war of the Information age but it certainly marks the beginning of a new and dangerous trend in Information Warfare. The ease with which more than half of the world's population is being denied to their basic right - the right to freedom of 'opinion' and 'expression,' the way 4.9 billion internet users have been made hostage to tech platforms' filtered worldview (on the click of a mouse), must be a matter of concern for all responsible countries of the world!

The plight of Ukrainians is heart-wrenching and cannot be justified but that is one side of the War, and knowing the other side, no matter whether it's black or white, comes under the most celebrated definition of individual freedom as well!

From the beginning, it appears that for the Big Tech club, this war offers a perfect moral terrain to test their enormous digital might (accumulated over the years) - to see how much their improvisation can influence social, political, and geopolitical events to shape the destiny of a War, in real-time! But what if this pilot completed successfully? Will it be called the loss of Russia alone!

### Recent Developments

On 16th March, while introducing Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to U.S. Congress, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (in an emotional gesture) led the members of the house in chanting "Slava Ukraini" (Glory to Ukraine). The virtual address of Ukraine's social media star



President aired live, received millions of views, likes, comments, re-tweets, impressions, and shares across the world. Within a few minutes of the live stream, almost all major social media platforms got flooded with public reactions/emotions in the support of Zelenskyy and an equal proportion of hatred against Russian President Vladimir Putin. From the beginning, Zelenskyy's moves took the internet by storm, and everything related to him was 'viral' on

social media platforms, and that was, perhaps, a sufficient reason to hail the 'glory' of a President, whose country was in the middle of a war!

Before ending his speech, Zelenskyy played a 2 min 20 seconds video too, where mass devastation of his country by Russian troops, along with scenes of good old days and present scenario were presented in a single frame (with slow music in the background). The video was so perfectly composed that it makes one



wonder whether the Ukrainian President is sitting inside a bunker with his troops (from where he often posts pictures and videos on his Instagram/Twitter/YouTube/Facebook etc.) or with his 'Kvartal-95' studio staff!

If the Russia-Ukraine war would have been a movie or a reality show, it would have been declared a global blockbuster by far and Zelenskyy would have been nominated for an Oscar 2022 (through online voting lines)! But unfortunately, this is not the case. In between these much-celebrated 'glories', standing ovations, routine social media lives, and heroic press conferences; there are some grim realities of War and some real numbers that exist too.

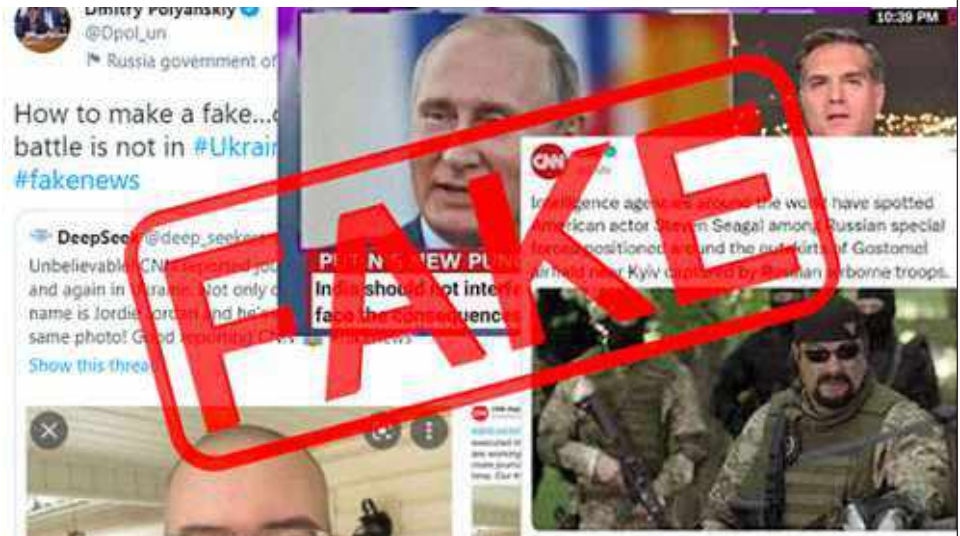
War has already caused grave damage to common Ukrainians, their properties, infrastructure, and source of livelihood are severely destroyed. According to a recent UN report, War in Ukraine damaged over \$100 billion worth of infrastructure and inflicted hundreds of civilian and military casualties. And if the conflict drags on, it risks creating a "devastating freefall into poverty" and "extreme vulnerability" for millions of people. There are also estimates that if the War protracted at the current pace, the rest of the world will soon start feeling the heat as well, and all prospects of post-Covid global economic recovery will get seriously affected!

But far from all these real-life challenges, the Ukrainian President is busy fighting a different kind of war.

### **Weapon of Mass 'Deception' and New Front Lines**

It is said that "control people's perceptions of reality and you control them." Applying aggressive PR campaigns to deceive the real objectives/status of the War, is a part of a long and tested Western strategy. But what has changed now is that this time it turned more open, blunt, precise, and real-time, with the help of big tech platforms and their political/diplomatic executives.

It is interesting that when Russian troops marched toward Ukrainian borders, Zelenskyy sent an SOS call to Meta executives to block Russia's media outlets from posting to Facebook in



During the Ukraine War propaganda has relied on a flood of fake news disseminated at lightning speed.

**“Applying aggressive PR campaigns to deceive the real objectives/status of the War, is a part of a long and tested Western strategy. But what has changed now is that this time it turned more open, blunt, precise, and real-time, with the help of big tech platforms and their political/diplomatic executives.”**

Ukraine and to cut off Facebook and Instagram in Russia itself. Nick Clegg, former deputy Prime Minister, United Kingdom, and current Policy Affairs head of Meta (who was promoted to the position a few days before the War) responded to that call by not only blocking Russian Media in Ukraine but by making 'temporary' changes in the platform's overall policy toward hate speech too (so that Ukrainian can post 'death threats' to Russians and Putin). According to Bloomberg's report, from the beginning of war, Clegg was in constant touch with Zelenskyy and his staff, he is sending them regular updates

over emails, and facilitating them by providing additional features such as blocking pro-Russian accounts, hiding their friend lists, and blocking ads from Russian businesses, etc.

When asked an explanation for such motivated moves by Russian prosecutor, Nick Clegg tweeted that: "Our policies are focused on protecting people's rights to speech as an expression of self-defense in reaction to a military invasion of their country."

Now the question comes if media which Russian government controls is called 'state-controlled,' then how Meta can be called 'free' medium, after such politically motivated steps and 'special gestures,' taken by a former political executive?

It is interesting that for every social media/big tech product that the Russian government blocks in their country, there are VPNs and Onion Routers kind of service protocols to surpass that and to open the gates of the dark web for Russians but when a normal internet user, sitting in a third country, try to access Russian media outlets from Google, a "403 - Forbidden. That's an error," message returns to their screen (as an extra token for the so-called liberty)!

### **Volunteer Hackers and Digital Mercenaries**

On 27th February, Mykhailo Fedorov, Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine and Minister of Digital Transformation, called out all







The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy on a trip to Mykolaivshchyna near Odessa

hackers of the world to join Ukraine's "IT Army," and help the country to fight on the cyber front. On the same day, pro-Ukrainian hackers of the infamous 'Anonymous' hacker group launched a series of cyberattacks against websites of the Russian government, their financial institutions, media, and businesses. Within 48 hours, they claimed to take down over 300 Russian government platforms. As per the latest updates, more than 300,000 volunteer hackers (mostly millennials and teenagers) from different parts of the world have already joined the fight from Ukraine's side. Through a telegram group "IT Army of Ukraine", these volunteers are coordinating with each other, disrupting Russia and the neighboring Belarus government and their critical infrastructure, including Railways, and electricity grids, sharing the location coordinates of Russian tanks and troops with Ukrainian forces, and launching simultaneous propaganda war against Russia, with a simple and innocent claim—"they are fighting for what is right and what is truth."

Covering the key in charge of this entire campaign, Mykhailo Fedorov, The New York Times article (published on 12th March) says: "The work has made Mr. Fedorov one of Mr. Zelensky's most visible lieutenants, deploying technology and finance as modern weapons of war." In

**“From a simplistic view, it appears healthy participation of pro-active internet users to bring down the evil army of invaders but what if this trend becomes the new normal!”**

fact, "Mr. Fedorov is creating a new playbook for military conflicts that shows how an outgunned country can use the internet, crypto, digital activism and frequent posts on Twitter to help undercut a foreign aggressor."

Now Mykhailo Fedorov has a new request, which he again tweeted from his official account: "If Apple and Google notify all the smartphones in the world about the constant Russian shelling of Ukraine, all the people would force their governments to close the sky over Ukraine because of war horrors."

From a simplistic view, it appears healthy participation of pro-active internet users to bring down the evil army of invaders but what if this trend becomes the new normal! Can the trend of running such a global war recruitment exercise and activism campaign, on the basis of morality

and truth, bypassing all geopolitical talks/negotiations/efforts and other sovereign nations' own national interests, be called moral and just, in all the cases, all the time? And what if in the future, some real terror regime will start a similar open hacking cum social campaign against the world? Then what would be the moral basis to fight against that kind of war?

## Smartphones, Fast Internet, and Influencers cum War Fighters

On 18th March, a video of the Ukrainian president went viral on media, when he paid a visit to civilians wounded by attacks on Ukraine, at a hospital in the capital Kyiv and met a teenage girl receiving treatment for shrapnel wounds. Seeing the president next to her, the little girl started crying out of joy, and then she told the Ukrainian Premier how he is popular on "TikTok," adding: "everyone supports you in TikTok," it prompted Zelensky to smile and he joked: "Yes? So we have occupied TikTok?" The girl replied, "all talks are about you, it is all about you."

This light-hearted moment is, unfortunately, the reality of common Ukrainians at the moment, which is also called the first "TikTok War" of our time! The country is under serious attack but Elon Musk's Starlink's fast internet services are healing the wounds of Ukrainians with TikTok, Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, Twitter, and FB lives.

From the beginning of the War, social networks have been flooded with videos from Ukrainian civilians documenting their live experiences of War, and the images of women and teenagers/kids posing for selfies, shooting 'TikTok' videos (wrapped in blankets in underground bunkers, army tanks in the streets, and so on.), playing music instruments amid the debris of buildings destroyed by shelling, etc. are going viral everywhere. Ukrainian social media influencers, who usually post videos of their travel, fashion, movies, foods, etc., have now started sharing their war experiences posing with combat gears and machine guns and they have virtually turned into 'war-fighters' on the battlefields of social networks.

If this social influencing game would



have played out between the two countries, then it would still be called OK, but the problem lies in the unfair acceleration of this trend, at the global level. While on one hand, all major social networks have restricted Russian content from their platforms, on the other hand, they encouraged battalions of social media influencers (Ukrainians/Non-Ukrainians) to run a one-sided campaign against Russia.

We must note that there are millions of social influencers (cum paid workers of tech clubs) with direct access to billions of smartphone users! Encouraging them to leverage their access to spread propaganda for objectives of a War, under the guise of morality, truth, democracy, freedom, and 'western values,' kind of things, is certainly more dangerous than the state-controlled propaganda machines!

#### State Controlled vs. Internet Controlled

The Russian news editor, who unfurled an anti-war sign behind the newsreader on a live TV show and flashed a placard with words like: "Stop the war," and "Don't believe the propaganda. They are lying to you here," earned a social media star and international celebrity status overnight for her 'daring' act of speaking against the government and army of her country (from Zelensky to Macron, everyone praised her for this act). But the question is- Will a regular internet user who expresses his/her views in support of Russia, be allowed to become a celebrity/influencer on the U.S.-controlled tech platforms? Forget about expressing support for Russia, even accessing the Russian side of the story is being completely forbidden in the so-called platforms of freedom and democracy!

So what is worse, State-controlled media or Big Tech club-controlled internet?

#### Occupying the moral 'High Grounds'

It is often said that wars of self-interest usually end when the winner's interests are satisfied but wars of morality are often "longer and bloodier."

In 2009, while launching NATO's new strategic concept, former US Defense

Sectary James Mattis said: "we need a new Strategic Concept that reconciles war's grim realities with the human aspirations of our own people and the global audience," as changing character of war in the information age will require military forces that recognize that "capturing perceptions" is the new 'high Ground' in today's conflicts, as "the moral is to the material as three is to one."

From the beginning of the War, the focus of Ukraine is on holding the moral high grounds with the help of information weapons- Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Telegram and TikTok and they certainly have an edge here. But there is an interesting side of this superficial moral high ground as well.

From Churchill to World War II's 'Darkest Hour' to Pearl Harbor to '9/11,' to Terrorism to Third World War, in his speeches, Zelenskyy- the moral warrior of the social media age, is using every occasion to call out his allies and partners to turn this war into a global crusade for democracy, liberty, peace, and freedom! But at the same time, with the full support of the narration industry behind his back, he is quite assured that he will never be called an 'aggressor,' a term which is more frequently used for the Russian President (who on the contrary consistently cautioning the world to refrain from contributing to any kind of escalation).

#### Influence on India

In his article "To Be or NATO be: Putin's War on Ukraine Is Also a Western Creation," former foreign secretary, Kanwal Sibal writes: "The propaganda against India by the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Economist and so on shows that a free press is no guarantee of objective information."

The approach of Indian media (print/electronic/social) in this entire event exposed our vulnerability and vacuum in the narration industry too, Kanwal Sibal summarized our situation more precisely when he wrote: "The Ukrainian crisis has also exposed how our own press is incapable of reporting responsibly on international affairs. It is treating the Russian assault on Ukraine as a quasi-assault on India, with an outpouring of emotional sympathy for Ukraine and castigation of Russia as the

aggressor, ignoring the complex causes of the conflict and the need for mature, balanced, and factual reporting, with due consideration of not being entirely out of line with the country's foreign policy interests in search of TRPs."

This war has many lessons for the countries like India, where not only in traditional media but on new-age tech platforms too, the western bloc has an absolute and ever-increasing dominance!

We observed that how social media policies can be relaxed for 'violent speech,' tech mercenaries (army of hackers) can be recruited online, funds to run the War can be crowd-sourced via crypto, releasing coordinates of troops movement to enemies has become the new definition of morality, and the War itself turn into a military show streaming 24/7 in smartphones, now should we continue to enjoy this free entertainment or take some steps for the future war preparedness?

#### What Next - Weaponization of AI?

In the Russia-Ukraine crisis, one thing which comes out in open is that every single western product or idea - from food to money to social media to technology is a potential strategic weapon! And a decision on how, when, and where to launch it, will not be taken by voting in the UN!

If the weaponization of information via social networks is capable to attack the 'wetware' of billions of people, what would be the scale of damage when AI will be weaponized in the future? We must note that all these tech platforms already have inbuilt AI capabilities, it is only a matter of convenience and choice of Big Tech and their PR staff to leverage it for their goals or not!

With 100 percent market access, we have given a free pass to Big Tech club in our Narration Industry (and their related economy) but what would be our future options when AI would be weaponized against our own strategic interests? And how are we planning to tackle the situation?

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
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# Weaponization of AI in the Russia-Ukraine War

Devsena Mishra

Before the war, there was a lot of hype around Russia's AI projects and there was a +threat to the future of civilization from that, now whether Russia used AI in the Ukraine operation or not, cannot be confirmed with any certainty, except for some hyped news headlines that are based on a 2019 press release on Kalashnikov Zala Aero's AI visual identification capabilities for its unmanned aircraft and news around Zala KYB-UAV, but on the contrary, it is Ukraine which transformed this war into the first High Tech, Social Media and AI War of the Century!

In the middle of the Ukraine War, Clearview AI, an American face recognition company, entered the battlefield to help Ukrainian forces through its powerful AI tools, database and other capabilities, and their face recognition system proved a lethal weapon in the war against Russian forces. This Peter Thiel-backed startup, founded in 2017, is already quite controversial in its home country for the abuse of similar technology against common social media users. By mid-2021, there were headlines in the Western press on how this secretive company and its AI tools can end the idea of 'privacy' on the internet! But overnight it turned into a rock star and a game-changer, in the middle of the Russia-Ukraine War, where it helped Ukrainian forces with over 2 billion images, stolen from the Russian social media company -

Vkontakte, to wage attacks against Russian forces and now team Clearview AI is being celebrated for such heroic contributions in the War!

These days Clearview AI's CEO Hoan Ton-That is giving interviews to the media that how "upsetting and devastating" it was to watch the images of women and children coming out from the battlefield and how that pushed him emotionally to do something as a company to help Ukrainians in the War. And Clearview AI is not the only US company that got emotionally or morally provoked to participate in the War, the whole Big Tech club got provoked, and the entire Silicon Valley got morally provoked too! And then there is news that how in the middle of the War, a conversation between two Russian soldiers got automatically captured, transcribed, translated, and analyzed using artificial intelligence algorithms, developed by another US company called Primer. Several unsecured Russian transmissions have been posted online, translated, and analyzed on the social media.

And this does not stop only here! Every

single US tech platform and social networking site that not just Russians or Ukrainians but the entire globe is using to explore about the War, every single platform where people talk/share or present their views on the Russia-Ukraine crisis, have embedded advanced AI algorithms, that are recording these response/reactions and emotions in the real-time, so every single misuse, manipulation, influence and any sort of information operation using these capabilities, to influence the global perception in a War, also comes under the idea of 'Weaponization' of AI.

It's not that Russia does not possess these capabilities, their military systems are also well equipped with advanced AI capabilities but it's more about a tendency and entitlement to transform your War into some kind of a global moral crusade, as 'Morality' is contagious!

And this makes one more curious to explore what's exactly is the philosophy behind the Weaponization of AI?

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: July 2022



# Cognitive Warfare in the Ukraine War

## Live Streaming of Psychological Experiments to Persuade and Influence

Devsena Mishra

**M**isinformation, Propaganda, Narratives, Info War, Psy Ops and other non-kinetic tactics of World War II and Cold War phase, are rapidly getting replaced by tools of the 21st Century, that are more concise, precise, targeted, and at the same time largely 'extremist' in their approach. These are designed keeping the continuously reducing attention span of targeted viewers and the needs of hyper-empowered 'homo digitalis' in mind.

In the classic war strategies, it is often said that the best deceptions are based on ambiguity, mixing fact and fiction so that one cannot be disentangled from the other. In all the previous forms of psychological operations, whether leaflets, loudspeakers, radio, print and electronic propaganda, the truth remained an important ingredient of use and the key idea was that for manipulation to be effective, it had to be based (to a maximum extent) on some Truth and Credibility, otherwise it would not work in the long run. But all that is now a thing of the past. Those strategies belong to a phase when deceptions or manipulation operations used to be some irregular events, not a 24/7 live-streamed reality! In the world of bite-sized content and streaming communications, the philosophical concepts of 'Art of War' have mostly been replaced by psychologically fascinating 'Art of Lying' and the ideas of fact, logic, truth and credibility are gradually becoming obsolete and



**“Ukrainians are trapped in besieged Ukrainian cities, lacking access to food, water and essential services. But, interestingly, from day one of the war, providing 'uninterrupted internet' connectivity to civilians tops the list of priorities for the Ukrainian government.”**

ineffectual.

So how the future recipe of psychological experiments will taste with these new ingredients? Russia-Ukraine

War offers a perfect snapshot of that future!

After over 40 days of stunning speeches and standing ovations, massive cheerleading campaigns, TikTok manoeuvres, Instagram/ Twitter/ YouTube revolutions and all-out internet invasion, some horrific images of Ukrainian civilian casualties started coming out to the surface, and the world heard the “silence of ruined cities and killed people,” as Zelenskyy rightly quoted in his Grammy award message. These images do not go well with the much celebrated “heroic victory” of the Ukrainian President, yet he shared them with the global audience with some kind of 'guarantee' that neither the blame nor the accountability for this whole episode would ever come to his shoulders!

After all, it is Russia, the aggressor who committed these “war crimes.” NATO partners who betrayed the Ukrainians and the rest of the world are further making it worse! So where is the fault of Zelenskyy in all this? He is only doing the job that best suits him, carrying the image of “servant leader” (that elected him to chair) managing public opinion/ perceptions, and giving perfect shots for this live-streamed war series, in real-time! But how do those millions of Ukrainians who turned 'refugees' overnight and those who lost their families and dear ones in this nonsensical campaign for “NATO membership” see all this? How they perceive the role of their social media hero President whom they elected to end the war not to accelerate it, perhaps, will







Zelenskyy, the star of *Servant of the People* series ran his entire presidential campaign virtually.

never come to the light!

According to UN reports, Ukrainians are trapped in besieged Ukrainian cities, lacking access to food, water and essential services. But, interestingly, from day one of the war, providing 'uninterrupted internet' connectivity to civilians tops the list of priorities for the Ukrainian government. As of now, United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in partnership with Elon Musk has provided over 5,000 Starlink satellite internet terminals to Ukraine, which are largely up and running despite missiles and cyber attacks.

From absolute internet control to weaponization of public opinion, in many ways, the Ukraine war is a classic case of 21st-century Cognitive Warfare, pilot-tested successfully!

### 'Persuade, Change, Influence and Command'

"Communication is a kind of war, its field of battle is the resistant and defensive minds of the people you want to influence. The goal is to advance, to penetrate their defenses and occupy their minds," writes Robert Greene in his book *"The 33 Strategies of War"* (2006).

In the middle of the Ukraine War, the White House invited selected social media influencers on a zoom call to guide them on how to educate their millions of followers spread across the world, about

**“In the middle of the Ukraine War, the White House invited selected social media influencers on a zoom call to guide them on how to educate their millions of followers spread across the world, about U.S. policy on Ukraine.”**

U.S. policy on Ukraine. The White House digital strategy director tweeted: "An astonishing amount of people are learning about the invasion of Ukraine through digital creators who have begun to cover it," and "we take that really seriously, and are working to make sure those creators have the ability to have their questions answered."

That in simple words was an open invitation for social media influencers to join NATO Psy Ops and Cognitive Warfare against Russia.

### What is Cognitive Warfare?

"Cognitive Warfare is the weaponization of public opinion by an external entity," for "influencing public

and governmental policy" and "destabilizing public institutions," defines NATO's report: *'FALL 2020 - Cognitive Warfare - An Attack on Truth and Thought.'* The study says that Cognitive Warfare is different from earlier forms in the sense that it is not limited to controlling the "flow of information" rather it is a fight "to control or alter the way people react to information." It highlights the "power of words/ ideas and non-kinetic war," citing how "the Soviet Union watched the collapse of the Iron Curtain," and the impact of the power of "blue jeans and rock and roll."

The document which mentions Russia 54 times, China 20 times, and Iran 6 times, citing how these three had waged cognitive attacks against the Western bloc through misinformation/ false narratives campaigns about the Corona outbreak, highlights how the combination of social media, news networks, automation algorithms, artificial intelligence, neuroscience, psychology, and sociology is paving the way for a dangerous future and talks about adopting the "defense forward" doctrine of the USA, which means "preemptively preventing and proactively searching for attacks."

A careful look at the Ukrainian leadership approach in this war reveals that it is largely inspired by findings of such NATO reports on psychological and cognitive warfare.

Cognition refers to "the mental action or process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses," and Cognitive Warfare attempts to influence this process and its internal mechanism. A recent definition comes from Oliver Backes and Andrew Swab of Harvard's Belfer Center, in their published work in Dec 2019 that says: "Cognitive Warfare is a strategy that focuses on altering how a target population thinks – and through that how it acts."

If we look around, from a teenager to adults to senior citizens, what are the sources for acquiring knowledge and understanding through "thought, experience, and senses," in this Google's system of the world?

According to a recent report *"Digital 2022 - Global Overview,"* there are approx



4.95 billion Internet users in the world (62.5% of the global population) and 4.62 billion active social media users, who spend on an average 6 to 7 hours daily online. India comes in the list of countries where people spend more time than the average on the Web and now Gen Z (the generation born between 1997 and 2012) is the biggest target audience of these platforms. Major activities, which information prosumers (one who both consume and produce) perform online, include keeping up-to-date with news/events, watching/producing videos, TV shows/ movies/ gaming, live streaming content and chatting with family/ friends and social networks. And most importantly, all these activities they perform not with a routine mindset, there are inbuilt elements of 'addiction' in these algorithms that are the product of ongoing research on psychology, neurology, sociology and science of influence, designed to affect the 'wetware' of the human brain, which is also called the "grey matter" of the brain in which opinions/ perceptions are formed and decisions are made.

If Media is psychological and cognitive warfare's most useful weapon then Content is its ammunition. Advanced research in the domains of Artificial Intelligence (AI), psychology and neuroscience has the potential to impact the cognitive functioning of human brains and when this potential gets leveraged for the psychological operations in real-time through a device that people carry 24/7 in their hands, the results are simply remarkable!

#### **Zelenskyy's Leadership Approach**

In the middle of the Russia-Ukraine War, Netflix decided to stream Ukrainian President Zelenskyy's political series "Servant of the People" again! It is a political TV series created and produced by Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who stars a 30-year-old history teacher, who got unexpectedly elected as the President of Ukraine (after a video of him ranting about the corrupt system goes viral). The series, which is the product of Kvartal 95 studio (a studio founded by Zelenskyy in 2003) ran for three seasons from 2015 to 2019. It is interesting that, while the series was still



Working trip of the President of Ukraine to Kharkiv Oblast.

**“From the 2019 election to the 2022 War, the internet and Western help were always on the back of Zelenskyy, and if one keeps the virtual propaganda aside, it seems like a classic case of installing a puppet leadership!”**

on the air, in 2018, Kvartal 95 studio registered a political party similar to the title of the series "Servant of the People," and the whole election campaign of Zelenskyy was orchestrated to establish this narration that Zelenskyy in reel life and real life was the same.

Zelenskyy ran the entire presidential campaign on a virtual mode, avoiding human contact with his electorate, and addressed his voters through YouTube shorts, TikTok and Instagram posts and garnered millions of views. An article "The World Just Witnessed the First Entirely Virtual Presidential Campaign," published in Politico magazine on April 24, 2019, mentions that: "He not only traded on the

image of a complete outsider, he also did no face-to-face campaigning, made no speeches, held no rallies, eschewed travel across the country, gave no press conferences, avoided in-depth interviews with independent journalists and, until the last day of campaigning, did not debate."

The article further notes that Zelenskyy's "virtual-first strategy" allowed him to run his campaign "on general themes and vague promises and to avoid issuing detailed positions on policy issues," and the entire campaign was focused on the "discontent with the way things are—and lambasting Ukraine's business and political elites for making them that way." And finally, it concludes thus, "the U.S. and the West can help ensure that the choice Ukrainian voters have taken in electing an ambitious but untested political newcomer pays off and does not plunge Europe into an accelerating conflict with Russia."

In a nutshell, from the 2019 election to the 2022 War, the internet and Western help were always on the back of Zelenskyy, and if one keeps the virtual propaganda aside, it seems like a classic case of installing a puppet leadership!

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: March 2022





# Double Edged Economic Warfare

## Sanctions Against Russia and Russia's Counter-Attack

Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd

The US has weaponized economic sanctions in a very major way in the post-Cold War period. Heavy handed economic sanctions have been applied against several countries to include Iraq, Iran, Syria, Libya, North Korea and now Russia. Economic sanctions were imposed on Russia in 2014 itself after its takeover of Crimea. In the build-up to the current war in Ukraine, the primary Dissuasion and Deterrence Strategy of the US and the West was the threat of imposition of very serious economic sanctions. Hence, their primary means to dissuade or deter Russia was via stringent economic sanctions and supply of defensive weapons to Ukraine.

Sanctions usually take the form of:-

- Trade sanctions.
- Energy sanctions.
- Financial sanctions.
- Sanctions on Individual companies.
- Travel sanctions.

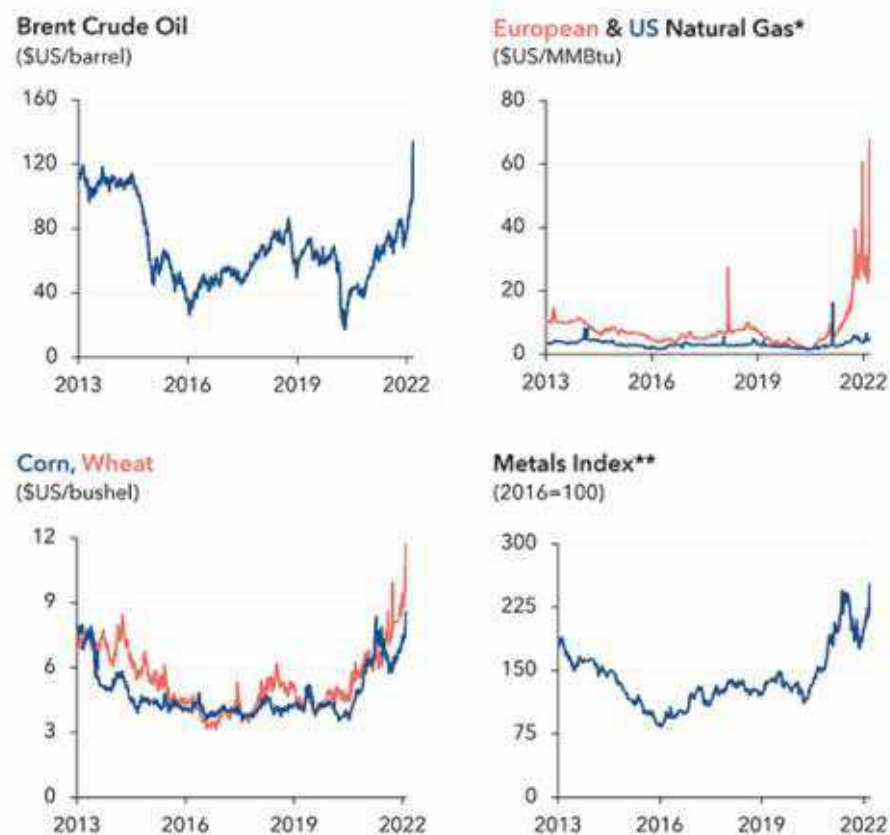
The sanctions enforced in 2014 had caused a 5 per cent drop in Russian GDP. What were the specific economic sanction threats that were held out to deter a Russian invasion of Ukraine? These were :-

- **Close Nord Stream 2 Gas Pipeline.**

This new gas pipeline has been constructed from Russia to North Europe (primarily to supply Germany). It was designed to bypass Ukrainian territory (where existing gas and oil pipelines were routinely being pilfered). America has been very clear to block this pipeline so that it could sell its own gas to Europe. The economics were stark. Nord Stream 2 gas would cost the Germans \$270 per 1000 cubic feet. Gas from the USA would cost them almost five times at \$1000 per cubic feet. Stopping Nord Stream 2

### Growing pressures

Prices for energy, grains, and metals soared since the invasion of Ukraine, signaling that inflation rates are poised to accelerate.



Source: Bloomberg, USDA, Datastream, and IMF staff calculations.  
Note: \*European & US natural gas prices use the Dutch TTF and Henry Hub as proxies, respectively. \*\*Base Metals Price Index includes aluminum, cobalt, copper, iron ore, lead, molybdenum, nickel, tin, uranium, and zinc.

IMF

would hurt Europe badly, especially Germany and France.

- **Impose Full Blocking Sanctions** on large Russian banks, energy companies, defence companies and oil projects.
- **Freeze Russian Foreign Exchange**

**Reserves** in American and European banks (Some \$300 billion worth of Russia's total Forex reserves of \$630 billion was parked in US and European banks). In a blatant breach of global trust, US and the West would simply seize these Russian



Forex reserves.

- **Sanction Key Russian Leaders.** Key Russian leaders, Oligarchs and their families would be targeted individually for sanctions. This was supposed to hurt key decision makers in a pointed manner and ostensibly spare the ordinary Russian citizens.

- **Exclude Russia from SWIFT.** SWIFT - Society for Worldwide Interbank Telecommunications - headquartered in Brussels has 11,000 banks as members globally. Swift is the global electronic payment system based in Belgium. This step was deemed the equivalent of an economic nuclear strike and was deemed a last resort option. China has developed its own equivalent of Swift. It may not want to opt out of SWIFT, but if forced out or thrown out, it would not mind as it has its own viable options to supplant SWIFT. So has India, which has developed the Rupaya as an option.

#### China as Ally for Economic War

In anticipation of these sanctions, Russia had built up huge foreign exchange reserves (\$630 billion) based on the export of natural gas and oil at elevated prices and its very favourable balance of trade position. Russia had been under sanctions since 2014 and had worked out its slew of countermeasures. Putin had visited Beijing for the Winter Olympics in December 2021. The two leaders had detailed discussions and worked out a formula of "Friendship without limits". Russia would rely heavily on China for bailing it out from the application of harsher financial sanctions. This could entail Chinese purchase of Russian oil and gas and a concerted attempt to replace the Dollar as the international currency of oil trade. China had a platform similar to SWIFT accepted in 180 countries. India has UPI and Rupaya. The threat of Western sanctions, however, completely failed to deter Russia from its projected invasion of Ukraine.

Surprisingly, the very first sanction came from Germany when it refused to certify the Nord Stream-2 pipeline. The UK put some Russian individuals and entities under sanctions (which the US and other countries had already done so). Most people felt that it was too little too late



Gas pipelines between Europe, Russia and Caucasus

and the economic sanctions had failed in the primary task of deterring Russia from invading Ukraine.

Initially, the economic sanctions did seem to be making a huge impact. The Russian stock market tumbled dangerously and the Russia had to stop the trading in the stock markets and flight of capital from the country. The Rouble plummeted dangerously against the Dollar. It fell from 80 Roubles to a dollar to over 160 Roubles to a dollar. A number of Western multinational firms shut shop in Russia and moved out causing large scale dislocation and loss of jobs. The US claimed that a large number of highly qualified Russians also began to flee the country with this exodus of Western firms.

The West had weaponised its banks and financial systems to hit hard at Russia. It was a virtual act of war. It also seized over \$300 bn of Russian Forex reserves in American and European banks. Inflation rose sharply in Russia from 9 per cent in February 2022; it was expected to rise to 17% by the end of the year.

#### Russian Response to Economic Sanctions

Russia today is the most sanctioned country in the world. It is very certain that before the launch of the Ukraine offensive, Russia must have war-gamed the economic war scenarios and come up with some response options.

**Defensive Measures.** Normal defensive measures against economic sanctions include:-

- **Building up a Large War Chest of Forex Reserves.** Russia had built up a huge forex reserve of \$630 billion.
- **Capital Controls.** Prevent flight of capital from the country.
- **Increase Interest Rates.** Russia increased these up to 20 per cent.
- **Forced Capital Conversion.** Force gas payments in Roubles. This was a master stroke that stopped the steep fall of the Rouble and, in fact, it came back to 80 Roubles to a dollar.

Russia well understood that Europe was badly dependent as Russian natural gas and oil, not just for heating homes but also for running its metallurgical industries like Aluminium and Copper smelting plants, etc, but also for power generation.

Russia was supplying almost 13 per cent of the global crude oil exports. Taking it out of the global markets suddenly was bound to have huge implications in terms of oil availability and prices. This could easily have been foreseen but strangely was not. For a time, oil prices shot up to \$130 a barrel before sliding back to \$100 a barrel. In fact, the steep rise in oil and gas prices themselves helped to pay Russian costs of the war. It was Europe that kept buying Russian oil and gas on the sly and





contributed the most to Russia's war chest during this conflict.

Europe imports nearly a fourth of the world's crude oil imports. However, what is astounding is the sheer level of Europe's dependence on Russian oil and gas. Consider this:-

- 50% of Russia's crude goes to Europe.
- 65% of its petrol products go to Europe.
- 90% of Russian piped gas is exported to Europe.
- Transportation costs are lowest for Russian gas and oil due to geographic proximity to Western Europe.

Economically, therefore, it makes no sense for Europe to impose such sanctions on Russia which would, first and foremost, hurt Europe the most.

It is just that Europe lacks the autonomy to defy American political pressure. The pain of these sanctions will hurt Europe the most. This will increase as the war drags on and one can already see an erosion in the French and German positions on conflict termination.

For a time, oil prices shot up to \$130 per barrel, before they came down to \$100 and started inching upwards again. At this rate, it is feared they could shoot up to \$150 a barrel and induce a severe global recession. Petrol prices started going up in the USA to over \$5 per gallon.

**Double Whammy.** The world was emerging out of the Covid pandemic induced economic shock. The US had given a huge stimulus package and pumped in so much money that ports could not handle the ships catering to the consequent rise in demand. This was leading to huge pileup of shipments and overcrowding in ports. Now the shock of the Ukraine war is pushing the US and global economy into a stark recession. Inflation in US was at a 40-year high. \$7 trillion worth have been lost on the US stock markets, which are bleeding badly. Nasdaq was down 28 per cent, Dow Jones was down 12 per cent and S&P was down 16 per cent.

**Impact of Biden's Switch to Renewable Energy.** It is noteworthy that Biden had stopped oil and gas extraction/production in the US to switch to renewable energy in a bid to check global warming. Thus, oil and gas supplies were already going down and prices were

## How sanctions have evolved following the changes agreed between the EU, the UK and the US by 3 March 2022

Financial, civil and travel restrictions	EU	US (OFAC)	UK
No entry	✓	✓	✓
Asset freeze	✓	✓	✓
Closure of correspondent bank accounts and suspension of payment clearing	✗	✓	+
Restrictions on financial transactions (e.g. securities transactions and lending)	✓	✓	✓
SWIFT	+	+	+
Restrictions on the activities of the Central Bank of Russia	✓	✓	✓
Cash transfers to DPR/LPR	✓	✓	✗
Sectoral sanctions	EU	US	UK
No export or import to/from DPR/LPR	✓	✓	✓
No investment in DPR/LTR	✓	✓	✓
No export of goods in the transport sector*	✓	✓	+
No export of technology goods or dual-use goods**	✓	✓	✓
No export of goods in the energy sector	✓	✓	✓

Announced
 In place
 Not in place

rising in the US even before the war in Ukraine started. Europe today stands to lose the most in this economic war. Structurally, it is very heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas. To delink from Russian oil and gas, Europe will need to create infrastructure that could take a number of years to come up.

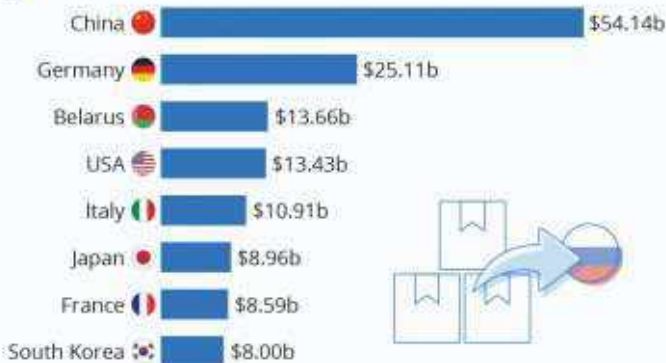
Despite all talk of sanctions, European countries have continued to buy Russian gas and oil on the quiet. Russia has offered to sell oil to India and China at discounted prices. India has rightly rebuffed all

Western moralising and hypocrisy on this subject and purchase of Russian energy has gone up six times. Sanctions have pushed up the prices of oil and gas and paradoxically increased Russian earnings during this war despite all sanctions. The Russian reaction to American seizure of their Forex reserves was to demand all payment for their oil and gas in roubles. This one step immediately shored up the steeply falling price of the rouble. It had fallen from 80 roubles to a dollar to some 160 roubles to a dollar. The rouble has



# Russia's Trade, Oil & Gas Exports and Sanctions

## Russia's Most Important Import Partners



Source: UN Comtrade Database

## Russia's Main Imports



\* Product groups based on 2-digit SITC Rev. 4 commodities  
Source: UN Comtrade Database

## Russia's Most Important Oil Export Partners

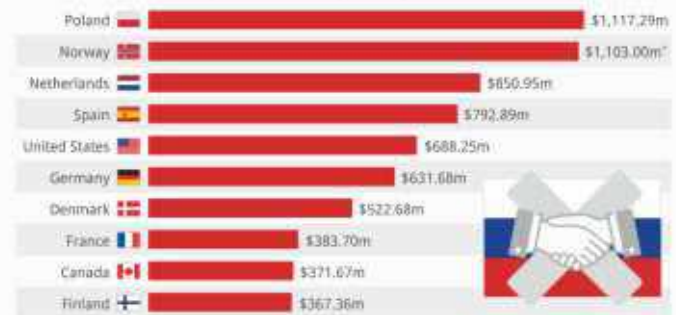
Trade value of crude oil exports from Russia in 2020, by destination country (in billion USD)



Source: UN Comtrade

## The Countries Hardest Hit By Russia's Trade Ban

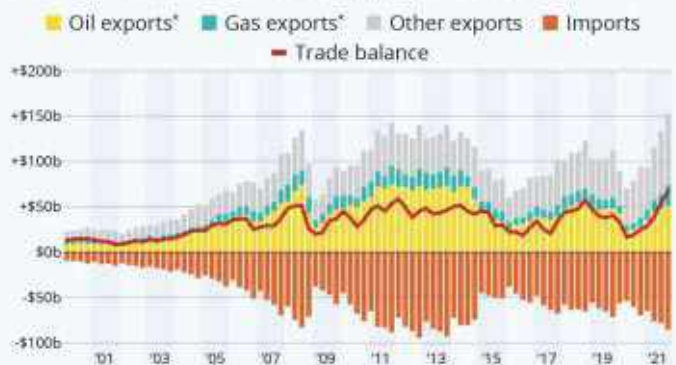
Value of sanctioned food exports to Russia by country (in million U.S. dollars)



\* Seafood products only  
Sources: The Wall Street Journal, Russian Federal Customs Service, International Trade Centre

## Russian Trade Surplus Surges Amid Rising Tensions

Russia's international trade in goods since Q1 2000



\* Oil exports incl. crude oil and oil products; gas exports incl. natural gas and liquefied natural gas

Source: Bank of Russia

## Russia Makes More Money on Fossil Fuels Than One Year Ago

Daily Russian fossil fuel revenues in May 2021/May 2022 and components of change



Does not add up due to rounding and conversion from Euros on June 14, 2022  
Source: Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air





now not only recovered and come back to its earlier value but made gains despite the lauded sanctions. In fact, today the rouble is amongst the strongest performing currencies against the dollar.

This steep rise in energy prices has caused high inflation in the US and Western economies. Russia has gained from this rise in the value of its oil and gas exports and has actually profited in this war.

Saudi Arabia was callously snubbed by Joe Biden for its proximity to Donald Trump. It, therefore, refused to follow American dictates to over produce and lower the price of oil. The US now seems hoist with its own petard of sanctions.

## Energy Prices Wind Fall

- Phil Rosen wrote on 16 May 2022 that soaring oil and gas prices have helped Russia more than triple its current account surplus, to \$96 billion (its largest in 28 years).
- Russia today has a current account surplus of \$95.8 billion in the past few months of 2022 as per Central Bank data.
- This is more than triple the \$27.5 billion from the same time span last year.
- Russia oil exports revenue is up 5 per cent since the start of 2022. (As per reports of International Energy Agency) revenue from oil and gas sales as well as Moscow's strict capital controls have helped prop up Russian rouble to the world's top performing currency against the dollar.

## Food Grains

Russia and Ukraine are both major producers of food grains (wheat, barley and maize) as also of fertilisers. Ukraine also used to export major quantities of sun flower oil.

Ukraine is the fifth largest exporter of wheat. However, today all its sea coasts are blockaded. It has lost the key ports of Sevastopol, Mariupol and Kherson. Odessa port, from where bulk of food grains are exported, is under Russian naval blockade.

Ukraine also used to export Phosphate and Nitrogen based fertilisers. This fertiliser supply has also been disrupted. Fertiliser prices are now above \$60 per 1000 cubic feet. Reduced supply of food and fertilisers could affect some 6 billion

people globally. It could create severe malnutrition in the Middle East, Africa and South America. Especially countries like Somalia, Egypt, Algeria and countries in Latin America would be severely impacted. Some 2 billion humans could face malnutrition as a result of this war.

## Summary of Economic Impacts

A major long term economic impact of the Ukraine war will emerge from the complete erosion of trust in global financial Institutions and global economic governance.

By grabbing some \$300 bn (out of Russia \$630 forex reserves) which were parked in American and European banks, the US has severely eroded trust at the global level. This will lead to a sharp polarisation. China, India, Russia and other major economies will now think twice before putting forex reserves in American or European banks. This could spell the end of globalisation as we know it.

**Impact on Russia.** The cost of the Ukraine war has been almost a billion dollars per day. Paradoxically, this has been offset by European purchase of Russian oil and gas at virtually a billion dollars a day. Since the war began, Europe has contributed over \$60 bn to the Russian war chest by its continued import of Russian oil and gas. The simple fact is that infrastructurally, Europe cannot de-link itself from Russian energy supplies for at least 3-5 years more. There is also the cost of new infrastructure that will have to be created. Russia has put in place strict currency control, heightened interest rates and stopped flight of capital.

The sanctions have dismally failed to deter the Russia Invasion or even slow down its prosecution of the war. The sanctions on Russia will bite only in the long term. In the short term, the US and European economies are also paying a steep price in terms of inflation caused by elevated oil and gas prices, services disruption in global food and fertiliser supply and disruption of value chains. In the long term, Russia may face a GDP drop of 15 per cent if the sanctions continue unabated. The short-term impact, however, has been quite the reverse of what was expected.

**Impact on Ukraine.** The toll in terms of human lives and civilian and military infrastructure has been horrific indeed. No amount of Western propaganda can paper over this painful reality. Ukraine's basic infrastructure has been destroyed. Some 40 of its cities and towns have been razed to the ground. The war has diverted human resources from labour to the military. 6-7 million Ukrainians have been displaced internally and some 5 million have gone out as refugees to the rest of Europe. The most severe consequence has been the loss of 80 per cent of Ukraine's coast line and all its major ports - Sevastopol, Mariupol and Kherson. Besides, the Russian Navy has blockaded Odessa. This has led to a severe choking of 90 per cent of its wheat and food grains exports and 50 per cent of its energy supplies. Ukraine has become a landlocked country and the total loss of its seaports will lead to a collapse of 40-50 per cent of its GDP.

The US and Europe have fought Russia virtually to the last Ukrainian soldier without soiling their hands. By engaging in direct combat.

**Impact on Europe.** The sanctions seem to have backfired rather badly on Europe. These severe consequences can be listed as:-

- **Inflation.** This is at 8 per cent. It had briefly touched 10 per cent. Due to Covid the fiscal space to deal with this inflation is badly restricted.
- **Price of Food.** This has created a global crisis that could lead to famines in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. This is steeply pushing up inflation.
- **Price of Energy.** Europe is inextricably linked with Russia, as it's most proximate source of energy. Europe has ended up paying for the Russian cost of this war due to elevated prices of oil and gas.
- **Asylum Costs.** There is the direct cost to ensure the housing, feeding and welfare of some 5-6 million refugees from Ukraine.
- **Defence Costs.** The USA has pumped in some \$40 billion worth of arms aid already and more is in the pipeline. Europe is also supplying weapons, equipment and ammunition.

*Contd on page 111*



# Electromagnetic Activities in the Ukraine War

Maj Gen Harvijay Singh, SM, Retd

An interesting technique of monitoring GPS radiofrequency interference gives excellent surveillance inputs: it signals impending military activity. Leading up to the Russian invasion, American geospatial analysis companies reported continual and increasing GPS interference in Donbas. Russians were jamming space-based assets using a Russian R-330Zh Zhitel EW system.

## Electronic Warfare Operations

While these are early times to analyse the success of EW operations, contemporary EW capabilities are discussed.

Ukraine manufactures a wide range EW equipment, its Armed forces may have acquired and fielded some of these and improved on their legacy systems. Chances are that they are very few in numbers to make any noticeable impact. This state is similar to their Tanks. Ukraine has the largest number of Tanks in Europe – all obsolete, lacking adequate protection, outgunned and no match to the Russian Tanks.

Ukraine has developed the Bukovel-AD anti-UAV system, to counter the Orlan-10 UAV of Russia.

Bukovel-AD detects UAVs at 100 km, effective range of up to 50 km. Its Radio Frequency countermeasures interfere with the datalink between the UAV and its Ground Control Station (GCS). It can jam the Global Positioning System (GPS) and Global Navigation Satellite System (GLONASS) control and navigation signals, with a maximum suppression range of 16 km. During the Russian troops build-up, Bukovel-AD was deployed in Donbas and tested against the Russian UAV Orlan-10.

(Orlan-10 is a medium-range, multi-



Mandat-B1E R-330UM

purpose UAV. It has a capability of aerial reconnaissance, observation, monitoring, search and rescue, jamming, detection of radio signals, and target tracking in hard-to-reach terrains.)

Frequent use of UAVs by Russian-backed rebels in Donbas was the driver behind development of the Nota EW system, designed for perimeter protection, detecting and jamming UAVs at a range of 20 km. The system also has the ability to jam cellular communications within 1 km. It is intended to operate predominantly in a stealth mode and commence jamming only upon the detection of a threat. In addition to its anti UAV role, Nota also has the capability to detect RF signals - GSM, VHF, LTE, and CDMA - radar emission in the L, S, C, and X frequency bands, and the GPS, GLONASS, and BeiDou satellite systems. It

apparently is a very versatile equipment.

The Mandat-B1E R-330UM is intended for cancellation of ground communication channels with both fixed and programmable frequency-hopping, regardless of the type of modulation used, with speed up to 1000 hops per second within HF and UHF frequency bands. Selective jamming (both on time and frequency) as well as barrage jamming to disrupt and jam all previously detected frequencies.

The Anklav system has the ability to jam and interfere with the control and telemetry channels used by precision-guided munitions - and UAVs in the 400-2,500 MHz frequency range. It has a range of up to 40 km using directional antennas, and up to 20 km with omnidirectional antennas. It has reportedly been effectively used in Donbas.

Russia has used EW technologies in





recent years in combat in Syria and the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine.

Russian doctrine favours rapid employment of EW to paralyze and disrupt the enemy early in a conflict. There was an expectation that the Russian invasion of Ukraine would follow in the wake of a massive EW attack from the start. Nothing really noticeable has however happened so far. There may be many reasons but some that appear logical at this stage are as under:

- The Russians perhaps underestimated Ukrainians resistance / overestimated their own abilities. They joined the battle without EW assets and now it may be too late to integrate them with their road bound extended moving/stationary military columns. Simply owning EW hardware is not enough. Operational integration requires planning, coordination, and training. Commanders have to develop these instincts as a part of their Operational Art learning and plan.
- The Ukrainian Army is likely to be operating decentralized with paramilitaries and armed civilians thrown in. Not many useful Command and Control and telemetry targets will be available for conducting EW by Russian forces.
- Russian EW systems and concepts are tuned towards massed and integrated armies. Unlike the Indian Army, they have not operated in a CI environment and have little experience of targeting isolated and individual targets.
- Fearing a wider conflict with NATO, the Russians do not want to expose the electromagnetic signatures of their EW equipment or tactics at this stage of the war.

Conclusively, EW activities in Ukraine 2022 have been rather mild as compared to expectations. High-end, multidomain attacks are missing so far. The tempo could increase when and if the forces join into a more intense conflict and Russia decides on a manoeuvrist approach rather than be confined to roads in slow moving convoys.

Looking back from the 2014 invasion of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas it abundantly clear that UAVs and Space Based Assets and their electronic countermeasures have a big role to play in all future war.

Courtesy: LinkedIn

# Cyber Warfare in the Ukraine War

**Maj Gen Harvijay Singh, SM, Retd**

Russia's land war in Ukraine is in some ways an extension of its long running Cyberspace war against the country. Leading up to the war, on 14 Jan 2022, a day after US-Russian negotiations on Ukraine's future in NATO failed, a cyberattack took down more than a dozen of Ukraine's government websites. The attack on Ukrainian websites included a warning to "be afraid and expect the worst".

On 15 Feb, another cyber-attack took down multiple government and bank services. This time, unlike in 2017, the Russians will avoid a spill over to avoid escalation of the Cyberwar.

Ukraine secure under the promise of NATO protection was a late starter. They deployed a government-led volunteer Cyber unit that is designed to operate offensively. They launched a few DDoS attacks against Russian websites, infrastructure businesses, such as energy giant Gazprom, banks, government websites. On 27 Feb 2022, it targeted websites registered in Belarus.

However, this is not a regular trained and coordinated group. These Ukrainian novices can create havoc with unplanned, uncoordinated OT attacks. Their aggressiveness can spill over to critical structures on both sides with unmanaged consequences; Cyber when used as a weapon needs to be cautiously handled to a plan by specialists.

## Pre-War Cyber Softening and Electromagnetic Activities

As Russia was gearing up for its kinetic attacks, Ukrainian government websites

were hacked in Jan/Feb 2022 and defaced with messages suggesting the DDoS attack was in response to the country's pro-Western stance. They used new and destructive malwares: WhisperGate and HermeticWiper; wipers disguised as ransomware to corrupt local disks by overwriting the Master Boot Record (MBR).

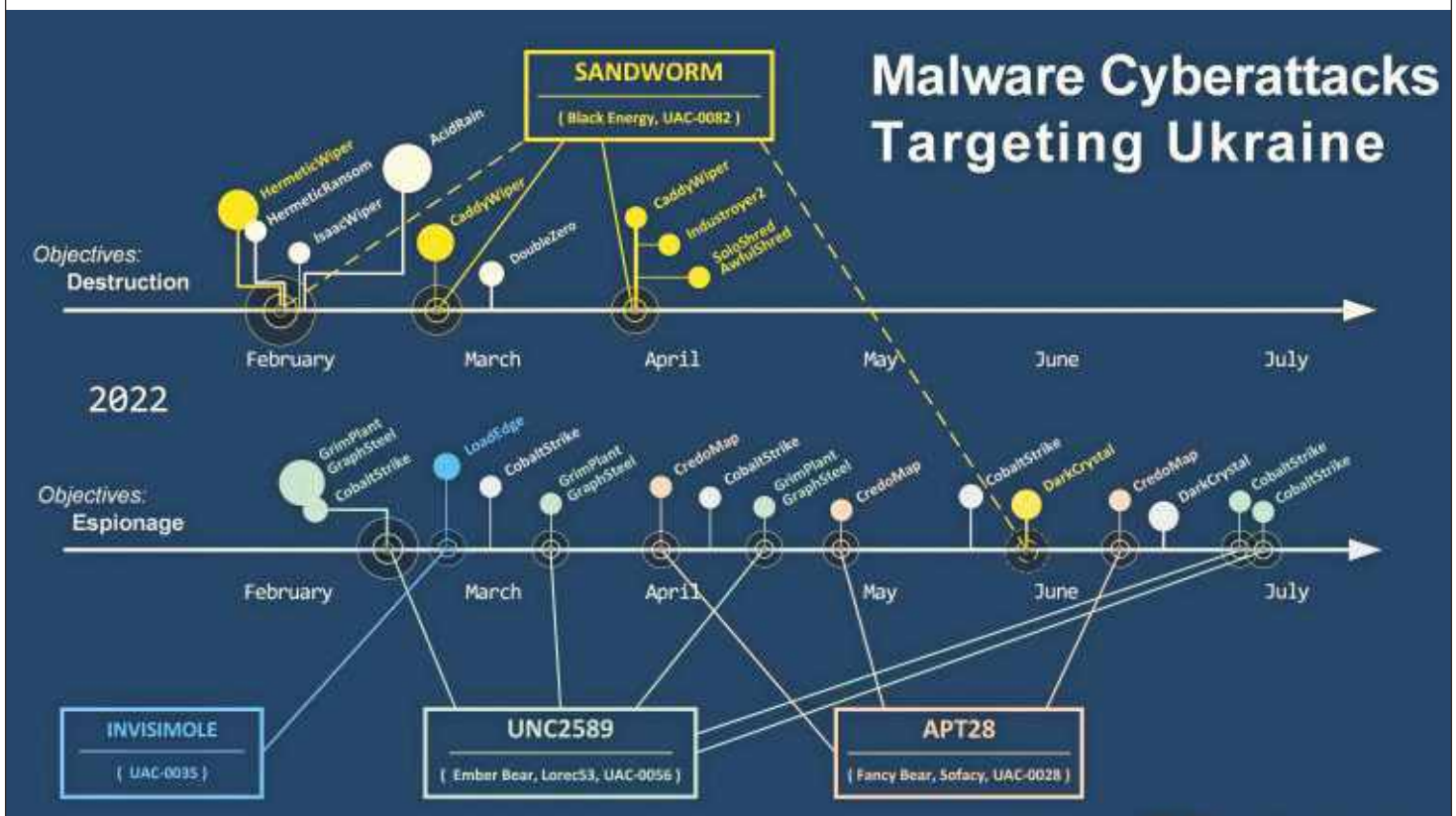
Consequent to the significant Cyberwarfare and Electromagnetic Activities (CEMA) preceding and, perhaps, even during the initial stages of the Russian offensive and the scale thereof has receded considerably. This raises the question-why? Why have they not attacked electricity and railway grids to unsettle movement of western arms in Ukraine?

- Are they waiting for the right moment?
- Or have their capabilities been vastly overestimated?
- Why have they failed to defend the large-scale destruction of their tanks and ships? Are their tactics flawed?
- Or are they lagging behind the west in capabilities and are helpless against modern guided weapons?

Are they exercising restraint? Not really, the reported brutal attacks on civilians bear testimony to that. Surely their capability is not what had been feared.

US Cyber Command Director General Paul Nakasone has however challenged the idea of Russia's CEMA inactivity. He talks of a series of destructive attacks in Ukraine, including targeting of the country's satellite communications





system in March. "We'll know more with passing years as information comes out," he has claimed.

Another view is that the Ukrainians are doing better.

Ever since Ukraine fell victim to two separate destructive cyberattacks in 2015 and 2017 on its power grid and key institutions, Kyiv has made significant investments to improve cybersecurity of its networks with substantial assistance (financial and technical) from the US and European Union.

Ukraine's defensive capability, backed by the hunt forward and defend forward support from US and NATO allies have been effective in blunting the edge of Russian Cyber attacks! Ukrainians are 'visibly' using social media well for propaganda, with President Zelensky leading from the front.

In the Cyber Space, many Russian governments and financial institution websites have been attacked, taken offline, and sometimes replaced with anti-war messages.

In the Tactical Domain, Ukrainian urban warriors seemingly destroy Russian

**“Ukraine's defensive capability, backed by the hunt forward and defend forward support from US and NATO allies have been effective in blunting the edge of Russian Cyber attacks!”**

tanks and other armoured vehicles at will. Also, the sinking of Russian Flagship Moskva compliments their fighting skills while raising doubts of the Russian ability to defend.

Hunt Forward operations by the US Cyber Command involve physically sending cyber protection teams to foreign nations on their request to hunt for threats on their networks. According to reports, they have since 2018 deployed teams more than 28 times to 15 nations including Ukraine to bolster defense against Russian cyberattacks.

A new development has been that of Ukraine being admitted to NATO accredited Cooperative Cyber Defence Centre of Excellence (CCDCOE), a cyber knowledge hub, research institution, training, and exercise facility as a contributing member on 4 Mar 2022. While it is not the first non-NATO member to be admitted, it is significant because Russia's motive for this 'Special Military Operation' is to maintain a physical buffer between the eastward encroachment of NATO. Russia's response to this sly inclusion of Ukraine in the Western community albeit in the Cyber Space is awaited.

Another significant development of this war is volunteer hackers from around the world launching uncoordinated attacks on Russian government and infrastructure; in a Networked world a seeming bully will be targeted universally. Russians have had several government websites knocked offline and some rail operations in Belarus disrupted.

Courtesy: South Asia Defence & Strategic Review  
Partly published in May 2022





## Russia Less Vulnerable to Sanctions Than Europe Western Sanctions Are Irrelevant

Ambrose Evans-Pritchard

**I**n a matter of hours, the world order turned drastically less favourable for the western democracies.

Russian troops launched their anticipated attack on Ukraine on 24 February, as Putin cast aside international condemnation and sanctions and warned other countries that any attempt to interfere would lead to "consequences you have never seen."

Vladimir Putin's seizure of Ukraine elevates Russia into a full-spectrum commodity superpower, adding critical market leverage over global grain supply to existing strategic depth in energy and metals.

We wake up to the sobering reality that Russia is too pivotal for the international trading system to punish in any meaningful way. It influences or determines everything from bread in the shops, to gas for Europe's homes and power plants, to supply chains for aerospace and car plants, or soon will do if Kyiv falls.

Who knew that almost 90 per cent of Europe's imports of rapeseed oil comes from Ukraine, or Spain's jamon iberica depends on grain feed from the black earth belt of the Ukrainian steppe?

Ukraine turns Putin's neo-Tsarist empire into the Saudi Arabia of food, controlling 30 per cent of global wheat exports and 20 per cent of corn exports.

It is not just Brent crude oil that has spiked violently, hitting an eight-year high of US\$102. Aluminium smashed all records on 24 February. Chicago wheat futures have hit US\$9.32 a bushel, the highest since the hunger riots before the Arab Spring.

Do not confuse this with inflation. Rocketing commodity prices are a transfer

of wealth to exporters of raw materials. For Europeans at the sharp end, it acts like a tax, leaving less to spend elsewhere. It is deflationary for most of the economy. If it continues for long, we will slide into recession.

So while there is brave and condign talk of crippling sanctions against Russia, it is the West's pain threshold that is about to be tested. My presumption is that Fortress Russia will endure this contest of self-reliance more stoically than Europe's skittish elites.

Sanctions are of course imperative as a political statement. The West would be complicit if it did nothing. But the measures on the table do not change the equation.

The debate in Parliament over whether to hit a few more oligarchs or restrict City access for more Russian banks has bordered on parody: Brits talking to Brits in a surreal misunderstanding of raw geopolitics, as if Putin was going to give up his unrepeatable chance to snatch back Kyivan Rus and shatter the post-Cold War dispensation of Europe because David Lamy is vexed by golden visas.

Nor does the temporary German suspension of Nord Stream 2 change anything. The pipeline was never going to supply extra gas this decade. The Kremlin's purpose was to reroute the same Siberian gas, switching it from the Ukrainian corridor to the Baltic, depriving Kyiv of self-defence leverage.

Once Putin controls Ukraine, Nord Stream 2 instantly becomes irrelevant.

The cardinal error was made in June 2015 when Germany went ahead with the bilateral pipeline just a year after the annexation of Crimea, signalling that the

first Anschluss of 21st Century Europe would go unpunished, or worse, that it would be rewarded with a strategic prize.

If you want to date the death of a sovereign democratic Ukraine, it was that Merkantilist decision. Royal Dutch Shell was an abettor. Putin got our measure.

The 36 per cent fall in the MOEX index in Moscow on Thursday morning means that western investors with a Russian portfolio through pension funds or ETFs have lost money. It does not mean that Russian is being forced to its knees, as some would have it.

Nor does the modest decline in the rouble imply unmanageable economic stress. Russia's exchange rate mechanism is designed to let the currency take the strain, cushioning the internal budget against shocks.

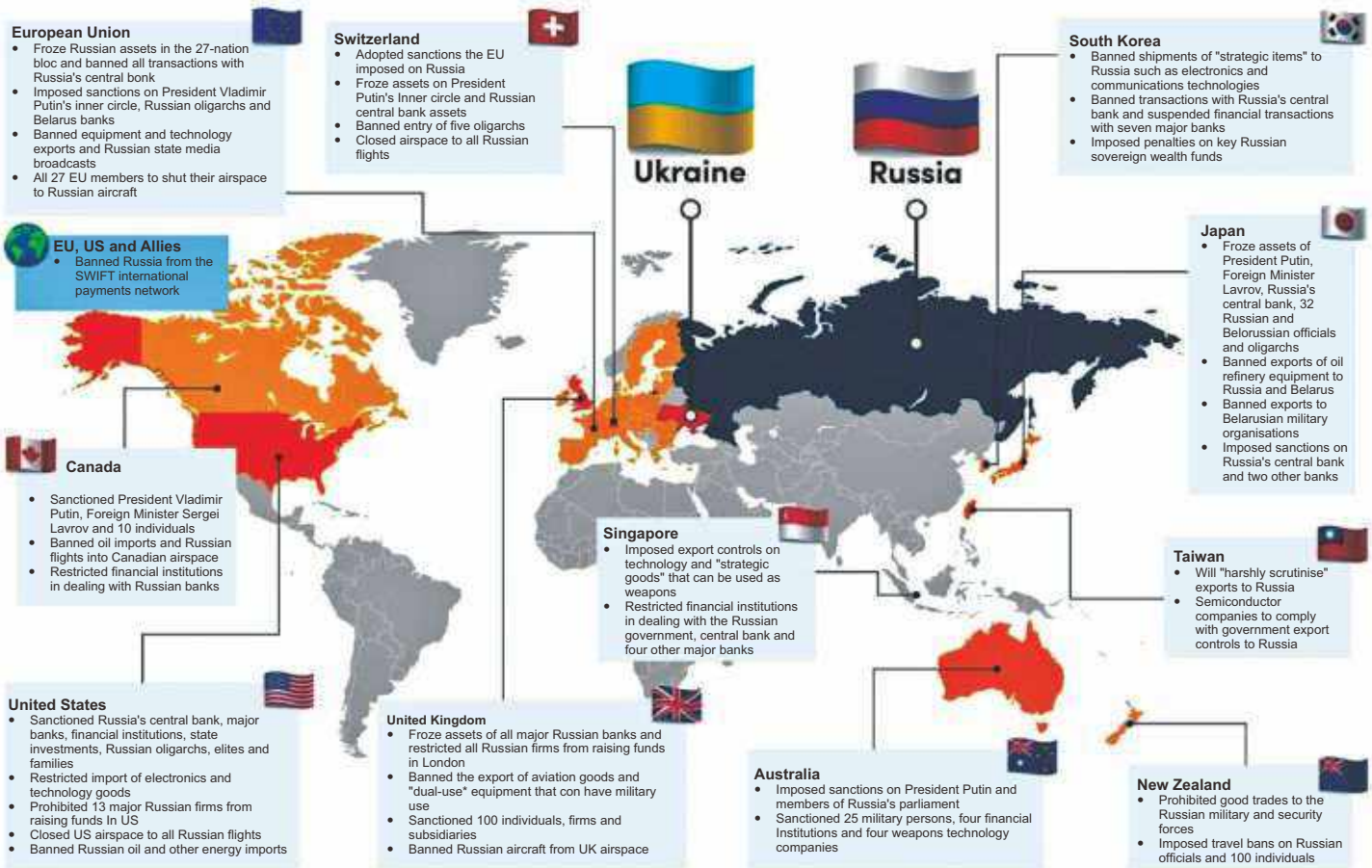
Russia is sitting on \$635bn of foreign exchange reserves. It has a national debt of 18 per cent of GDP, one of the lowest in the world. It has a fiscal surplus and does not rely heavily on foreign investors to finance the state. This renders US sanctions against new issuance of sovereign bonds a mere nuisance.

The Kremlin is enjoying a windfall gain from commodities. Benchmark gas futures contracts for March have hit extreme levels of €120 a megawatt hour. Russia is earning \$700m a day from sales of oil to Europe and to the US, which needs heavy Urals crude to replace sulphurous Venezuelan barrels for its refineries.

The harsh truth is that Europe would spiral into crisis within weeks if flows of Russian gas were cut off - by either side. The short-term loss of revenue for the Kremlin would be a small fraction of Russian gold,



# SANCTIONS ON RUSSIA OVER UKRAINE INVASION



Infographic: Clara Ho

Source: CNA/Reuters

euro, and dollar reserves. There is no symmetry in this. Whatever the rhetoric, energy business as usual will proceed.

The US and Europe can and will enforce a technology blockade, restricting Russia's access to advanced semiconductor chips, acting in tandem with Taiwan's TSMC and Korea's Samsung. This will hurt but it will take time. Russia has stockpiles. It has its own producers able to make mid-level chips down to 28-nanometres.

China may be irritated by how far Putin has gone in Ukraine but it will not join Western sanctions. Nor will it stop Chinese companies supplying chips to Russia through deniable middlemen and plugging some gaps in technology.

Putin can reasonably calculate that Western zeal for sustaining this hi-tech embargo will wane before it does irreversible damage to Russia.

Europe has vetoed expulsion of Russia from the SWIFT nexus of global payments for fear of the systemic blowback into its own banks, and because it would have

made it hard to pay for Putin's oil, gas, metals, and grains - leaving aside the risk that Russia might go all the way up the retaliation ladder.

The US itself is ambivalent over shutting down SWIFT because it would accelerate the de-dollarisation of global finance.

If the US plays its trump card, it risks losing the card. China and Russia already have their own payment systems that could be linked for bilateral trade.

So one watches the western pantomime over sanctions with a jaundiced eye, knowing that almost everything being discussed is largely beside the point, and that only military strength matters when push comes to a 200,000-man military shove.

The errors that led to this lie in years of European disarmament, the result of both wishful thinking by a complacent elite and because of fiscal austerity imposed by EU commissars during the eurozone crisis, with no regard for the larger strategic picture.

It is the fruit of periodic "resets" in relations with the Putin regime, invariably forgiving his sins, and dressing up commercial self-interest as if it were an attempt to lure him away from a Chinese axis of autocracies.

The final trigger was Joe Biden's decision last July to override Congressional sanctions against Nord Stream 2, selling out Ukraine in a deal with Angela Merkel.

President Biden thought he could "park" Russia on one side and focus on China. He appointed a known Russophile as a key adviser on Russia. He neglected to appoint a US ambassador in Kyiv, long leaving matters in the hands of a junior with a taste for the quiet life, to the point of toning down cables to the White House that might have raised alarm.

Putin drew the conclusion that this was his moment to strike.

Courtesy: The Telegraph  
First published on Feb 24 2022





# Putin Has Revitalized the West's Liberal Order

Kori Schake

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has unleashed a chorus of despair—beyond the cost in Ukrainian lives, the international order that the U.S. and its allies built after World War II is, we are told, crumbling. The writer Paul Kingsnorth has declared that the liberal order is already dead. The Indian journalist Rahul Shivshankar has argued that "in the ruins across Ukraine you will find the remains of Western arrogance." Even the brilliant historian Margaret MacMillan has written that "the world will never be the same. We have moved already into a new and unstable era."

The reverse is true. Vladimir Putin has attempted to crush Ukraine's independence and "Westernness" while also demonstrating NATO's fecklessness and free countries' unwillingness to shoulder economic burdens in defense of our values. He has achieved the opposite of each. Endeavoring to destroy the liberal international order, he has been the architect of its revitalization.

Germany has long soft-pedaled policies targeting Russia, but its chancellor, Olaf Scholz, made a moving and extraordinary change, committing an additional \$100 billion to defense spending immediately, shipping weapons to Ukraine, and ending the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which was constructed to bring gas to Germany from Russia. Hungary, thought to be the weakest link in the Western chain, has supported without question moves by the European Union and NATO to punish Moscow. Turkey, arguably the most Russia-friendly NATO country, having bought missile defense systems from Moscow, has invoked its responsibilities in the 1936 Montreux Convention and closed the Bosphorus strait to Russian warships. NATO deployed its



Ukrainians carried signs opposing the war and Russia President Vladimir Putin during a street march in Bangkok, Thailand, Feb 27, 2022

**“Turkey, arguably the most Russia-friendly NATO country, having bought missile defense systems from Moscow, has invoked its responsibilities in the 1936 Montreux Convention and closed the Bosphorus strait to Russian warships.”**

rapid-reaction force for the first time, and allies are rushing to send troops to reinforce frontline states. A cascade of places have closed their airspace to Russian craft. The United States has orchestrated action and gracefully let others have the stage, strengthening allies and institutions both.

We are a long way from the ultimate

outcome of Russia's invasion, but even if Ukrainian military forces cannot prevail or President Volodymyr Zelensky and his government are killed or captured, it's difficult to see how Putin's broader gamble succeeds. If Zelensky falls, another leader will step forward. Even Russian-speaking Ukrainians have become anti-Russian. The scene depicted in Picasso's *Guernica*, one of wanton and barbaric violence, is the best Putin can hope for: Conquering Ukraine will require unspeakable brutality, and even if Moscow succeeds on this count, foreign legions are flowing to Ukraine to assist an insurgency in bleeding Russia's occupation. If Ukraine fends off Russia's assault, it will be welcomed into NATO and the EU.

The Ukrainian government that so recently seemed mired in corruption and division has been outstanding: President Zelensky has refused to flee and inspired resistance; outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian military forces seem to have held their own. They understand that



they're in a battle of ideas, establishing, for example, a hotline for Russian prisoners of war to call their families.

Civil activism is the lifeblood of free societies, and Ukrainians have been excelling, including the sunflower lady, who cursed Russian soldiers; civilians lining up to collect arms and make Molotov cocktails, or change out street signs to confuse the invaders; and breweries retooling to produce weaponry.

Ukraine's tenacity and creativity have ignited civil-society energy, corporate strength, and humanitarian assistance. The hacker group Anonymous has declared war on Russia, disrupting state TV and making public the defense ministry's personnel rosters. Elon Musk's SpaceX has promised to help keep Ukraine online. The chipmakers Intel and AMD have stopped sending supplies to Russia; BP is divesting from its stake in the Russian energy giant Rosneft; FedEx and UPS have suspended service to Russia. Norway's sovereign wealth fund is cutting all its investments in Russia. YouTube and Meta have demonetized Russian state media.\* Belarusian hackers disrupted their country's rail network to prevent their government from sending troops to support the Russian war. Polish citizens collected 100 tons of food for Ukraine in two days. Bars are pouring out Russian vodka. Iconic architecture in cities all over the free world is lit up with the colors of the Ukrainian flag to show solidarity. Sports teams are refusing to play Russia in international tournaments. The London Philharmonic opened its Saturday concert by playing the Ukrainian national anthem, and the Simpsons modeled Ukrainian flags. This is what free societies converging on an idea looks like. And the idea is this: Resist Putin's evil.

Although we in the West sometimes lose faith that our values are universal, Putin certainly believes they are. Otherwise, why attempt to conquer a country to prevent it from succeeding? And why threaten prison sentences for Russians giving aid to Ukraine? Plenty of Russians seem to share our perspective: Protests took place in scores of Russian cities over the weekend, and thousands of people were arrested. The Russian tennis star Andrey Rublev wrote no war please



Police officers detain a woman during a protest against Russian military action in Ukraine, in central Saint Petersburg on March 13, 2022

**“China has squirmed at having its longtime support for an individual state's sovereignty balancing its political position of not enforcing sanctions by having to limit financing by Chinese banks for Russian goods because of the risk of exclusion from the global financial order.”**

on the lens of a TV camera during an interview. Russian soldiers are allowing civilian protesters to halt their tanks. Rumors abound that Putin has fired the chief of his military's general staff. Reports have emerged that oligarchs such as Oleg Deripaska are calling for an end to the war.

Nor is the liberal international order just a project of the transatlantic alliance. The UN may not have been able to prevent Russian aggression, but it served its purpose of forcing accountability onto governments for their positions. Kenya's ambassador to the UN reminded us all that smaller powers, countries that suffered imperial conquest, are some of the biggest beneficiaries of a system that affirms "the sovereign equality of states, and states' inviolable rights to territorial

integrity and political independence." Japan has joined many of the Western sanctions against Russia, while Southeast Asian nations such as Singapore and Indonesia have condemned the invasion.

China has squirmed at having its longtime support for an individual state's sovereignty conflict with its just-christened friendship treaty with Russia, balancing its political position of not enforcing sanctions by having to limit financing by Chinese banks for Russian goods because of the risk of exclusion from the global financial order. Russia's argument that Ukraine isn't really a state may seem consonant with China's position toward Taiwan, but worldwide reaction to Russian aggression ought certainly to give Beijing pause before it considers an attempt to subjugate Taiwan.

Those of us already living in free societies owe Ukrainians a great debt of gratitude. Their courage has reminded us of the nobility of sacrifice for just causes. As Ronald Reagan memorably said, "There is a profound difference between the use of force for liberation and the use of force for conquest." What Ukrainians have done is inspire Americans and others to shake ourselves out of our torpor and create policies of assistance to them, in the hopes that we might one day prove worthy of becoming their ally.

Courtesy: The Atlantic  
First published on February 28, 2022





# A War Like No Other

TP Sreenivasan

**T**he current Russia-Ukraine war has no parallel in history. No country has ever invaded another country, which is in no position to deliver the outcome that the aggressor desires even if the latter is vanquished or even destroyed. The security guarantees that Russia wants can be given only by the US and NATO which are not in the war. No disproportionately powerful nation has ever bogged down for nearly a month in a much weaker neighbouring country without attaining its objectives.

When Russia amassed troops around Ukraine, in November 2021 after US and Ukraine agreed on a new charter, it repeatedly stated that there would be war only if Ukraine was admitted to NATO. No ultimatum was given either to NATO or to Ukraine and no demands were made. President Putin began with security guarantees by demanding that NATO should not extend eastwards, but ended up with nostalgic thoughts about the glory of the Soviet Union and putting the blame for the collapse of the Soviet Union on Lenin, Stalin, Brezhnev and Gorbachev for giving nationalities to the Republics and by giving them discretion to secede from the Soviet Union. Was there a war ever started with such a far-reaching agenda?

The decision of the US and NATO to fight a devastating war with sanctions alone is another new feature of this war. But the sanctions have gone beyond the worst warnings of CATSAA, which are hurting not only the target nation, but also a host of unintended victims, including the sanctioning countries themselves. If this war were to be won with sanctions alone, it would be the emergence of a new kind of warfare, which may be more merciful, but more widespread in its consequence.

This is also perhaps the first major war being fought on the internet by propaganda and counter propaganda by some of the most technologically

## NATO in Europe



Since 1949 when it was founded by 12 nations, NATO has grown to 30 members

advanced nations of the world. This is totally unbalanced as the sanctions have deprived Russia of many platforms for propaganda. Since Putin's aggression is becoming more and more ineffective on the ground and the cyber space is not available to him, he has been driven to threaten the use of nuclear weapons. If Putin ever uses nuclear weapons, he will be remembered as the only one in history who will have used it against intolerable propaganda and sanctions.

A war being attributed to a single individual is not unheard of in history. But, in this case, one does not hear anything about a Politburo or a group of Generals advising him, though some Russian Generals seem to have perished on account of the war. There are theories that the war is being fought in Putin's mind, which has been shaped by the KGB. His warnings to traitors of a natural and

necessary self-purification of society for the sake of the country are ominous in this context.

Since this is an exceptional war, its end will also be exceptional. A conventional surrender either by Putin or Zelensky is unthinkable. It follows that the war will be prolonged beyond expectations interrupted only by some pretence of negotiations. Russia and even NATO virtually ignored the offer of Zelensky to give up its ambition to join NATO and to reintegrate the two provinces, which declared independence and got recognised by Russia. In other words, no one knows how to end this war. It remains as meaningless today as it was on February 24, 2022. As Biden prepares to leave for Europe to consult NATO leaders, the possibility of a wider conflict comes into view.

The unique features of this war do not



end there. The David and Goliath story resurrected three days after the war began, ostensibly because the expected blitzkrieg did not happen. Indeed, we saw the rise of David beyond all proportions. Never have we seen a war in which the underdog became a valiant hero even when he was alive. Whether it was because of a grand plan, which went awry or the triumph of a strategy to conquer without undue damage to life and property is yet to be determined.

Where have we seen a President fighting for his own survival getting access to the Parliaments of the world and receiving a standing ovation? These cannot be accidents of history. These must be the harbingers of a new world order. These must be the birth pangs of a configuration of nation states never witnessed before in history. The world cannot be unaware of the likelihood of the emergence of a powerful authoritarian leadership if Putin wins with the support of China. The future of the world will depend on when the west will decide to enter the war to preserve its predominance.

For the major powers of the world, the war presents unprecedented choices. China's "no limits" alliance with Russia seems to be weakening as days pass. It sees the Ukraine war as a rehearsal for the fight for Taiwan. In his conversation with Biden, Xi Jinping spoke at length on the issue and expressed concern that some in the US were sending danger signals on Taiwan, hinting that there was room for exploring how firm the US will be in the event of Chinese action on Taiwan.

China seems to believe that Putin may be unable to achieve his expected goals,



The results of the vote at the United Nations General Assembly deploring the Russian invasion of Ukraine, on 2 March 2022. India abstained.

which puts Russia in a tight spot. Launching a nuclear war would put Russia on the opposite side of the whole world and is therefore unwinnable.

Some Chinese analysts believe that "at this point, Putin's best option is to end the war decently through peace talks, which requires Ukraine to make substantial concessions. However, what is not attainable on the battlefield is also difficult to obtain at the negotiating table. In any case, this military action constitutes an irreversible mistake." China may well be learning from this war a lesson with regard to its intentions towards Taiwan.

India is under greater pressure than ever before to dilute its policy of abstention as the war rages on. Purchasing of oil from Russia at this point is a red rag for global opinion. While everyone realises that India has vital interests in Russia, its new alignment with China raises questions of more vital

interests in safeguarding our democratic credentials. We cannot discount the public opinion against Russia by attributing it to western propaganda. Australia's assurance that the Quad understands the Indian position is no great comfort for India.

Now that the biggest challenge India faced in the early part of the war in the form of rescuing Indians stranded in the war zone has ended, a more critical appraisal of our position is warranted.

A war like no other warrants a solution like no other.

*TP Sreenivasan is a former Ambassador of India and a member of the National Security Advisory Board and presently the DG of the Kerala International Centre.*

Courtesy: Chanakya Forum  
First published on 21 Mar 2022

## Glimpses from past Military Literature Festivals





## Russia's Doctrine and US Int Assessment is Ominous **Use of Nuclear Weapons by Russia Cannot be Ruled Out**

**Maj Gen Deepak K Mehta, Retd**

**R**ussia's invasion has killed thousands of people, displaced nearly 10 million, and raised fears of a wider confrontation between Russia and the United States - by far the world's biggest nuclear powers.

Within days of Russia's Feb. 24 invasion, Putin put the country's deterrence forces - which include nuclear arms - on high alert, citing what he called aggressive statements by NATO leaders and Western economic sanctions against Moscow.

Russia's deputy foreign minister said, on 10 May, that a decision on the possible use of nuclear weapons was clearly set out in Russia's military doctrine, when asked if Russia would rule out a preemptive tactical nuclear strike on Ukraine. "We have a military doctrine - everything is written there," Alexander Grushko was quoted by state news agency RIA as saying.

Russia's official military deployment principles allow for the use of nuclear weapons if they - or other types of weapons of mass destruction - are used against it, or if the Russian state faces an existential threat from conventional weapons.

The decision to use Russia's vast nuclear arsenal, the biggest in the world, rests with the Russian president, currently Vladimir Putin.

U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns said, on 7 May, that Putin believes he cannot afford to lose in Ukraine and cautioned that the West could not ignore the risk of the use of tactical nuclear weapons by Moscow.

"We don't see, as an intelligence community, practical evidence at this point of Russian planning for a deployment or



Russia's Yars intercontinental ballistic missile systems

**“Nuclear brinkmanship from Putin has been unprecedented. He ordered a snap nuclear wargame before the invasion and days later put his nuclear forces on high alert.”**

even use of tactical nuclear weapons," Burns said. He cautioned, though, that "the stakes are very high for Putin's Russia."

### **Circumstances for Strike**

Russia has, however, accused NATO countries of a "hybrid" confrontation that now "dangerously balances on the edge of

open military clash." "Such a move would be able to trigger one of the two emergency scenarios described in our doctrine," as per Russian strategists, adding "if Western countries try to test our resolve, Russia will not back down."

Nuclear brinkmanship from Putin has been unprecedented. He ordered a snap nuclear wargame before the invasion and days later put his nuclear forces on high alert. And the Kremlin has repeatedly signaled it could resort to nuclear weapons if it determines the West's intervention in the conflict goes too far.

As the conflict drags on, and Russia's conventional forces suffer surprisingly heavy losses while its economy reels, the prospect that Putin might resort to using weapons of mass destruction is increasing. Moscow has already demonstrated that it is



willing to use hypersonic missiles for the first time in a war.

A decree signed by Putin on June 2, 2020, said Russia views its nuclear weapons as "exclusively a means of deterrence". It repeats the phraseology of the military doctrine but adds details about four circumstances under which a nuclear strike would be ordered. These include reliable information of a ballistic missile attack on Russia and an enemy's attack "on critical state or military installations of the Russian Federation, the incapacitation of which would lead to the disruption of a response by nuclear forces."

### US Intelligence Assessment

Putin could view the prospect of defeat in Ukraine as an existential threat to his regime, potentially triggering his resort to using a nuclear weapon, a top US intelligence official has warned. The warning came in an assessment from intelligence chiefs briefing the Senate on worldwide threats.

The Director of National Intelligence, Avril Haines, told the Senate's Armed Services Committee that Putin would continue to brandish Russia's nuclear arsenal in an attempt to deter the US and its allies from extending further support for Ukraine.

The Russian leader would not use a nuclear weapon until he sees an existential threat to Russia or his regime, Haines argued.

But she added that he could view the prospect of defeat in Ukraine as constituting such a threat, the report said.

"We do think that [Putin's perception of an existential threat] could be the case in the event that he perceives that he is losing the war in Ukraine, and that NATO in effect is either intervening or about to intervene in that context, which would obviously contribute to a perception that he is about to lose the war in Ukraine," Haines told the committee hearing.

She added that the world would probably have some warning that nuclear use is imminent.

The prediction for Ukraine is a long, gruelling war of attrition, which could lead to increasingly volatile acts of escalation



Russia's Sarmat has a maximum takeoff capacity of over 200 tons, and attack range up to 18,000 kms

**“Putin, who has repeatedly expressed resentment over the way the West treated Russia after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, says Ukraine has been used by the United States to threaten Russia.”**

from Putin, including full mobilisation, the imposition of martial law, and if the Russian leader feels the war is going against him, endangering his position in Moscow even the use of a nuclear warhead, the report said.

Putin, who has repeatedly expressed resentment over the way the West treated Russia after the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union, says Ukraine has been used by the United States to threaten Russia.

He justified his Feb. 24 order for a special military operation by saying Ukraine had persecuted Russian speakers and the United States was keen to enlarge the NATO military alliance in a way that would endanger Russia.

### The Likelihood

IMR's assessment of the likelihood of Russia using nuclear weapons, most likely scenario and US response is given below.

Putin is more likely than not to use nuclear weapons in the war in Ukraine if he faces devastating defeat. Nuclear weapons are the ultimate tools of last resort; any rational leader would consider using them if his or her regime (or life) were on the line.

Putin presumably expects his threats will induce NATO to abandon Ukraine. However, if he believes he is facing defeat or a costly stalemate—or has a chance of success through sharp escalation—there is some risk he will carry out his threats.

If Russian forces suffered a humiliating defeat in the campaign to control Donbas, Putin could be pressed by hardliners to deliver on his nuclear threats; but he is unlikely to do so, since this would only galvanize a harsh US and allied response without providing any significant military advantage.

### Most Likely Use Scenario

Washington and Moscow have walked away from several treaties to control the deadliest weapons, including one that outlawed intermediate-range nuclear missiles that could threaten Europe. The only remaining nuclear pact between the two sides is the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, which limits deployed strategic weapons to 1,550 each. Biden and Putin agreed last year to extend it until 2026. The treaty does not cover any of the thousands of smaller, or





A Russian Iskander-M dual-capable missile system on display, September 8, 2016.

“battlefield,” nuclear weapons in their respective arsenals, including at least 2,000 in Russian stockpiles, according to public estimates.

Putin would seek to create fear instead of rage. Thus, nuclear weapons would be used in Ukraine rather than on NATO territory, and they would be used against military, not civilian, targets. Any attack would likely involve detonating half a dozen low-yield air bursts (in order to minimize fallout) against well-entrenched Ukrainian military positions.

Putin might begin with the ostentatious movement of nuclear forces, such as sending weapons to Russia's Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad. He could order a “demonstration” or possibly a detonation at a Russian test range.

Putin may hope that just by crossing the nuclear threshold, he would so shock Ukraine and its Western backers—and so terrify allied publics—that they would back down rather than risk further escalation.

The risk of nuclear use through a mistake or blunder is higher than through intent. Many Russian battlefield systems are dual-capable and also designed to unleash both conventional and nuclear or chemical warheads. It could be exceedingly difficult to know when the Russian military has decided to pursue a nuclear option. It is difficult to know if the S-300 battery packs a conventional

warhead or a nuclear one.

## Likely US and Allied Response

One possible response to Putin's nuclear use would be to negotiate some kind of resolution in which all parties could declare Potemkin victories and find a solution before nuclear weapons are used.

If the Russian attack caused little damage, NATO might first try to issue an ultimatum with the aim of reaching a settlement on the Alliance's and Ukraine's terms.

A non-nuclear military response (eg, conventional strikes on military bases and infrastructure in Russian territory) would probably not be decisive and would appear inadequate to many.

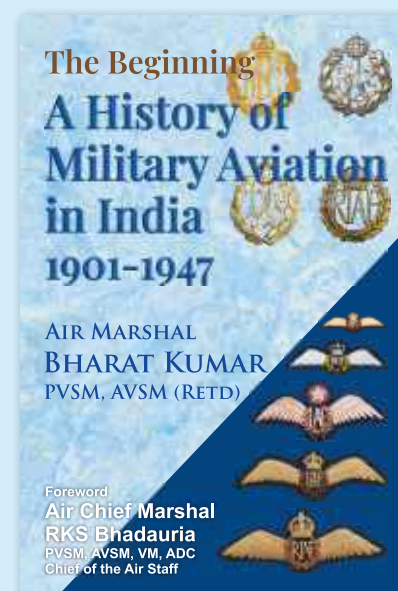
Defending Ukraine may simply not worth risking a nuclear escalation. But there are also serious implications of not doing it. Absence of a US nuclear response would gravely weaken the credibility among both friends and adversaries of the entire strategy of deterring nuclear attack through the prospect of US nuclear retaliation.

If Putin resorted to the use of nuclear weapons, the United States and its allies would need to respond quickly and decisively to ensure that Putin paid a heavy price for crossing the nuclear threshold.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published; May 2022

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# Russia Prepared for Nuclear Warfare Nukraine?

TP Sreenivasan

A shudder went down the spine of the world when the N-word was heard across news channels on the third day of the Russian attack on Ukraine. It sounded as though President Putin had ordered his nuclear force to be in full preparedness to act, but it was soon clarified that it was only an order to the nuclear force to be ready to defend the country in the event of an attack. That brought the temperature down and the world heaved a collective sigh of relief. But it was ominous that he made the world aware of his nuclear capability at a time when Putin confronted unexpectedly stiff resistance from Ukraine and tough sanctions from the US and the European Union. The nuclear button is susceptible to accidental use by sick, mad, or frustrated rulers. Mercifully, the button in their hands will pass through several levels of scrutiny in seconds before the weapons are launched.

Many years ago, I was at a summit meeting between Prime Minister Morarji Desai and President Leonid Brezhnev in the Kremlin. While a visibly unstable and forgetful Brezhnev was reading his address, I was suddenly gripped by the fear of an accidental click of the nuclear button by the Soviet leader. I shared my anxiety with the then foreign secretary by passing a slip to him. He quickly replied saying, "Don't worry, at this stage, it must be a fake button on his table!" Putin is too young and too smart to be deceived with fake buttons, but his state of mind and determination may lead to a catastrophe.

It was not long ago that Putin had played a video of the trajectories of Russian missiles raining havoc on major US cities to an audience to demonstrate that his nuclear arsenal was sophisticated, its range was long and its lethality was



Russia has started test flying the first new Tu-160 Blackjack supersonic strategic bomber.

absolute. Russia keeps several of its missiles targeted and ready to launch against its enemies. Moreover, Putin had stated more than once that he would not hesitate to use nuclear weapons if anyone posed a threat to his country. He does not subscribe to the theory of non-first use of nuclear weapons like India and China have. Russia is more like Pakistan which claims that it has tactical nuclear weapons, which can be used for the multiplication of forces at its command. Countries that have a sense of inferiority about their conventional capabilities are the ones that threaten to use nuclear weapons. A threat assessment is crucial, but it may happen also because of fear, ambition, or sheer madness.

Countries like North Korea and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons to rectify the imbalance in conventional capabilities compared to powerful nations. Israel maintains a nuclear option to meet the threat of

chemical weapons. Since the weapons are made abroad without any fundamental research in their own countries, their safety standards are a matter of concern for the world. Russian weapons are not known for accuracy or foolproof targeting. Concerns of safety and accidental use exist about Russian nuclear system also.

I recall that the US was gravely concerned about the command and control systems of India when we declared ourselves a nuclear weapon state in 1998. After the initial anger and imposition of sanctions, the US gave us a series of briefings on command and control systems. That was the first time that some of us entered the Pentagon. But our scientists and strategists found the briefings elementary. They assured us that our systems were far ahead in the matter of safety and inadvertent use.

Needless to say, the Russian announcement of nuclear alert, whether for offensive or defensive purposes, will







A Russian fifth-gen Topol-M ICBM being loading into the silo.

have its adversaries take countermeasures as they consider necessary. They may have serviced them thoroughly, made them even more lethal, and targeted them more accurately. In other words, the stage is set for a nuclear war, even if it does not take place.

The personality of President Putin is also a matter of concern for the world. Even his friends hold him in awe as a former KGB agent and a confirmed Russian nationalist. His recent statement indicated that he sees himself as the saviour of Russia. He is known to be ruthless in pursuit of his goals and uncompromising. His mood today may also be one of frustration and even despair, and his characteristic paranoia may have worsened. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov is a seasoned strategist and diplomat, but he is known to be more his master's voice rather than his conscience-keeper. No global leader appears to be available for him to get the right advice at the right moment. Nuclear weapons in his hands may well be doubly dangerous.

The nuclear weapons issue came into the present discourse in another bizarre manner. As part of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Belarus had held Soviet nuclear weapons. Now, there is considerable speculation that things

would have been different if they had kept the weapons for themselves and not returned them to Russia. The obvious answer to that is Russia, as the successor state of the USSR, became a nuclear weapons state, but the other former Soviet republics became non-nuclear weapons states. The NPT regime ordained that they should sign the NPT as non-nuclear weapons states and transfer all nuclear materials to Russia or to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). There was no way in which they could hold on to the Soviet nuclear weapons.

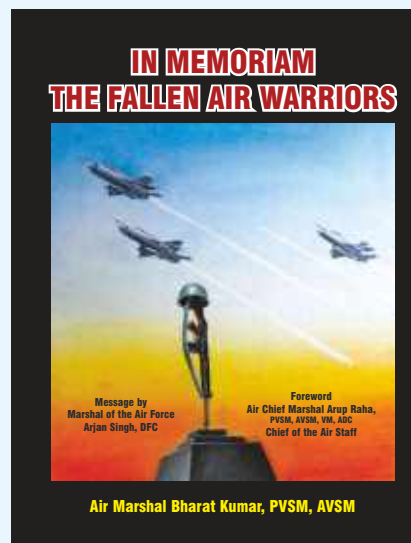
Even more bizarre is the decision taken by Belarus to declare itself a nuclear weapons state after a national referendum. Do they expect to get back the weapons they gave to Russia? Or do they have the capacity to make their own weapons? But the Belarus president is known for unconventional thoughts and actions.

The talk of nuclear weapons at this crucial time is extremely dangerous and may lead to unforeseen consequences. It has already moved the hands of the Doomsday Clock closer to the moment of a global nuclear catastrophe.

*TP Sreenivasan is a former diplomat.*

Courtesy: Open The Magazine  
First published on 1 Mar, 2022

## Every Formation and Unit Must Have This Book to Remember the Fallen Heroes



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# How the World Will Know If Russia Is Preparing to Launch a Nuke?

Lily Hay Newman

**W**hile tensions over a possible nuclear attack on Ukraine remain high, experts say surveillance will likely catch Russia if it plans to do the unthinkable.

This week, NATO is conducting its regular, long-planned nuclear strike exercise known as "Steadfast Noon" to practice deploying fighter jets used to carry nuclear weapons. And Russia is expected to conduct its own nuclear drills sometime this month—as it typically does—in reaction to NATO's exercises. While these rehearsals don't involve actual bombs, they come at a fraught moment, given Russian president Vladimir Putin's recent suggestion that the Kremlin could deploy nuclear weapons in its war against Ukraine.

Officials from the United States and the United Kingdom have emphasized that they do not see indications that Russia is actively preparing to launch a nuclear strike. And the signals the global community has to draw on in monitoring the Russian nuclear weapons program, while not infallible, are robust. That means the world would likely know if a nuclear attack were imminent.

"We take any nuclear weapons or nuclear saber-rattling very seriously here," White House press secretary Karine Jean-Pierre told reporters earlier this month. But, she added, "we have not seen any reason to adjust our own strategic nuclear posture, nor do we have any indication that Russia is preparing to imminently use nuclear weapons."

Similarly, Jeremy Fleming, director of the UK's GCHQ intelligence agency, said last week, "I would hope that we will see



Russian rockets launched during strategic Exercise Kavkaz-2020 at the Kapustin Yar training ground, Russia, 26 Sep 2020

**“Officials from the United States and the United Kingdom have emphasized that they do not see indications that Russia is actively preparing to launch a nuclear strike.”**

indicators if they started to go down that path." He added that there would be a "good chance" of detecting Russian preparations.

"With Russia, the arsenal is old and established, much like the US's nuclear weapons program," says Eric Gomez, a

senior fellow at the Cato Institute focused on arms control and nuclear stability. "Russia is very much enmeshed in the international and bilateral arms control treaties that provide a lot of transparency. They're not an open book—no country is. Everyone still has certain secrets that they preserve. But if you can keep satellite or aircraft sensors trained on key spots, you can catch it if things are moving or dispersing."

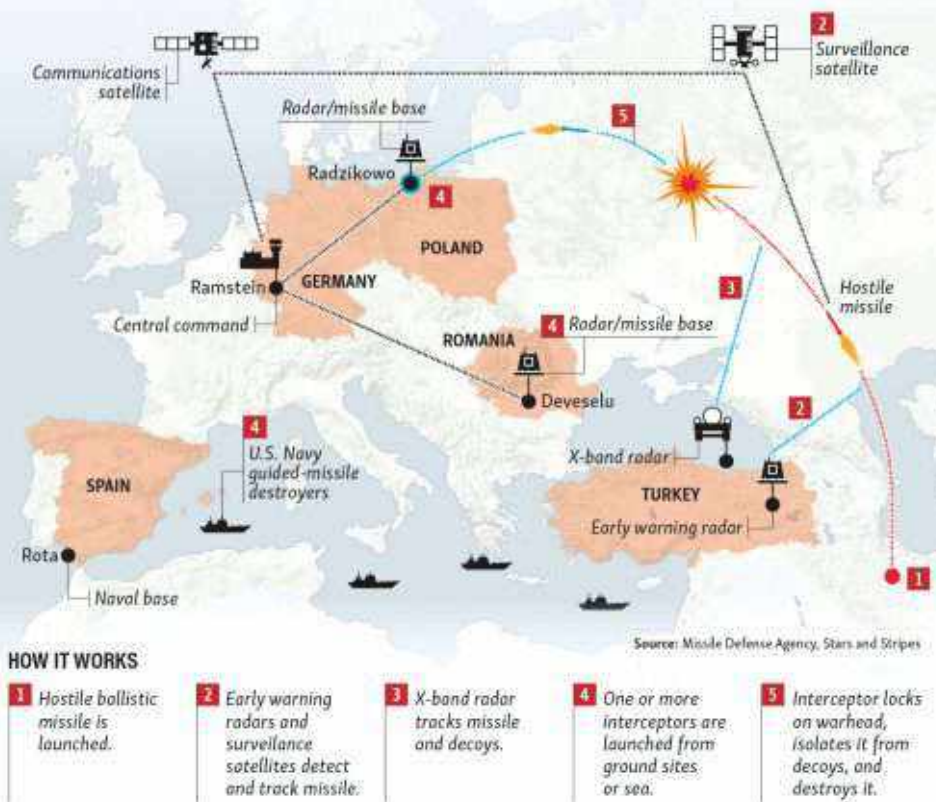
As is the case in the US and among other world nuclear powers, Russia's intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarine-launched ballistic missiles are always deployed and in a constant state of readiness. Known as "strategic" nuclear weapons, these bombs are meant to target cities or large industrial targets—probably what you think of when you





## EUROPEAN MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM

A high-tech 'shield' aimed at protecting Europe from **ballistic missile threats** is a step closer to being established. This is how it will work:



### European Missile Defence System

imagine a nuclear bombing. The "tactical" nuclear weapons that are of more immediate concern in a Russian strike on neighboring Ukraine are smaller and meant for more contained attacks, namely in battle zones. These bombs are also known as "battlefield" or "nonstrategic" nuclear weapons and have never been used in combat.

Russia's nuclear bombs are stored in military facilities and would need to be transported and loaded into either aircraft or launchers for deployment. Pavel Podvig, who runs the research organization Russian Strategic Nuclear Forces, notes that the global community knows the location of the roughly 12 nuclear weapons storage facilities around Russia where this activity would likely originate. He adds that the US has intimate knowledge of most of the sites because it worked with Russia to improve the physical security of the repositories between 2003 and 2012 as part of an initiative called Cooperative Threat Reduction.

**"US has intimate knowledge of most of the sites because it worked with Russia to improve the physical security of the repositories between 2003 and 2012."**

"The procedure for deploying these weapons would include a number of steps," says Podvig, who is also a senior research fellow at the UN Institute for Disarmament Research. "First taking these weapons out of their bunkers, loading them on trucks, and driving them to an airfield-moving them closer to the delivery systems-and doing a checkup procedure. My understanding is, you would see the movement of the launchers, the missiles, the aircraft. It would be a pretty visible operation, and

quite frankly, I think Russia would want it to be visible."

Global powers monitor each others' nuclear weapons programs through a combination of aerial and satellite surveillance and other signals intelligence. The analysis is part art, part science, as monitoring of North Korea's nuclear program has particularly shown, given the country's extreme isolation. And while GCHQ's Fleming and other researchers caution that there is never perfect information, global knowledge of Russia's nuclear program and long-standing intelligence operations inside the country will likely allow international observers to spot any Russian nuclear preparations.

"What we've mostly seen from North Korea is technology tests where they're showing off a lot in the public space to send specific signals internationally and domestically," Cato's Gomez says. "With the Russians, it's a different situation. In the lead-up to Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February, the Biden administration was putting out a lot of intelligence saying, 'We're seeing a buildup of troops here and these units moving to these places,' and I think that would very likely be the playbook if they saw signs of Russian nuclear preparations."

Podvig also notes that another version of Russia's nuclear weapons staging could involve transporting the weapons to forests and then readying the strike under tree cover to minimize aerial visibility. Such an approach would still be detectable during the transport phase and could offer a sort of hybrid in which the exact nature of Russia's plan remains unknown, but the activity still sends an escalatory signal to Ukraine and the world.

"I don't see why Russia would want to hide the deployment," Podvig says. "But even if it wanted to, I think they will not have the certainty that they could be successful. I would assume that US intelligence and everybody is watching those sites. The Americans cannot have absolute certainty that they will see it, but Russia does not have certainty that they will not."

Courtesy: Wired

First published on Oct 18, 2022



# A Possible Nuclear War Scenario

## An IMR Assessment

**T**he risk of nuclear war is greater today than at any other time since the Cuban missile crisis. In 1945, when the United States destroyed two Japanese cities with atomic bombs, it was the world's sole nuclear power. Nine countries now possess nuclear weapons, others may soon obtain them, and the potential for things going terribly wrong has vastly increased.

Before the attack on Ukraine, the five nuclear-haves under the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) — the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia, China, and France — had reached agreement that the use of nuclear weapons could be justified only as a purely defensive measure in response to a nuclear or large-scale conventional attack. In January 2022, those five countries issued a joint statement affirming that “a nuclear war must never be fought and can never be won.” A month later, Russia invaded a non-nuclear country, Ukraine, and threatened nuclear attacks against anyone who tried to help that country.

President Vladimir Putin and other Russian officials have been ominously threatening to use nuclear weapons in the war against Ukraine. The long-range ballistic missiles deployed on land and on submarines are Russia's only nuclear weapons available for immediate use.

An intentional or inadvertent Russian attack on a NATO country could be the beginning of World War III.

If Russia decides to attack Ukraine with “tactical” nuclear weapons, the transportation to military bases, mating with cruise or ballistic missiles, loading on planes, etc will be observed by the US in real time.

President Joe Biden has made clear that any use of nuclear weapons in Ukraine would be “completely unacceptable” and “entail severe consequences.”

### Likely Scenarios

- Russia might use a nuclear weapon by
  - Detonation over the Black Sea, causing no casualties but demonstrating a resolve.
  - A decapitation strike against the Ukrainian leadership.
  - A nuclear assault on a Ukrainian military target.
  - The destruction of a Ukrainian city, causing mass civilian casualties.

### US Response

According to The New York Times, the Biden administration has formed a Tiger Team of national-security officials to run war games on what to do if Russia uses a nuclear weapon.

Biden administration's strategy is of “deliberate ambiguity.” But everyone hopes that some form of back-channel diplomacy is secretly being conducted. The Russians have probably been given a message about how harshly the US might retaliate if they cross the nuclear threshold. But misunderstandings, miscommunications, and mistakes can lead to a nuclear catastrophe.

Some experts feel that if Russia uses a nuclear weapon in Ukraine, American nuclear retaliation should be the last resort. Instead, the US should opt for horizontal escalation, solely with conventional weapons. Russia's Black Sea fleet might be sunk in retaliation, and a no-fly zone could be imposed over Ukraine, even if it meant destroying anti-aircraft units on Russian soil.

During the summer of 2016, the US national-security team secretly staged a wargame in which Russia invades a NATO country in the Baltics and then uses a low-yield tactical nuclear weapon against NATO forces to end the conflict on favorable terms. The security team reached widely divergent conclusions about what the

United States should do. Some decided that the United States had no choice but to retaliate with nuclear weapons. Choosing a suitable nuclear target proved difficult, however. One committee recommended a nuclear attack on Belarus—a nation that had played no role whatsoever in the invasion of the NATO ally but because it was a Russian ally.

Others argued that retaliating with a nuclear weapon would be a huge mistake. It would be more effective to respond with a conventional attack, they recommended, and turn world opinion against Russia for violating the nuclear taboo.

Others preferred “a muscular diplomatic response” to the nuclear strike, not a nuclear or conventional military response, combined with some form of hybrid warfare. The United States could launch a crippling cyberattack on the Russian command-and-control systems tied to the nuclear assault and leave open the possibility of subsequent military attacks.

### Tactical Weapons

During the Cold War, the United States based thousands of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons in NATO countries and planned to use them on the battlefield in the event of a Soviet invasion. In September 1991, President George H. W. Bush unilaterally ordered all of America's ground-based tactical weapons to be removed from service and destroyed. The United States was developing precision conventional weapons that could destroy any important target without breaking the nuclear taboo. But Russia never got rid of its tactical nuclear weapons.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: May 2022





## Russian Nuclear Operations - Part 1

# Preparation-to-Launch Command

Kartiteya Sethi

In a televised address to the Russian people on 21 September, Putin explicitly raised the specter of a nuclear conflict. Despite being regarded as a very low likelihood scenario, the potential implications of such a scenario are huge.

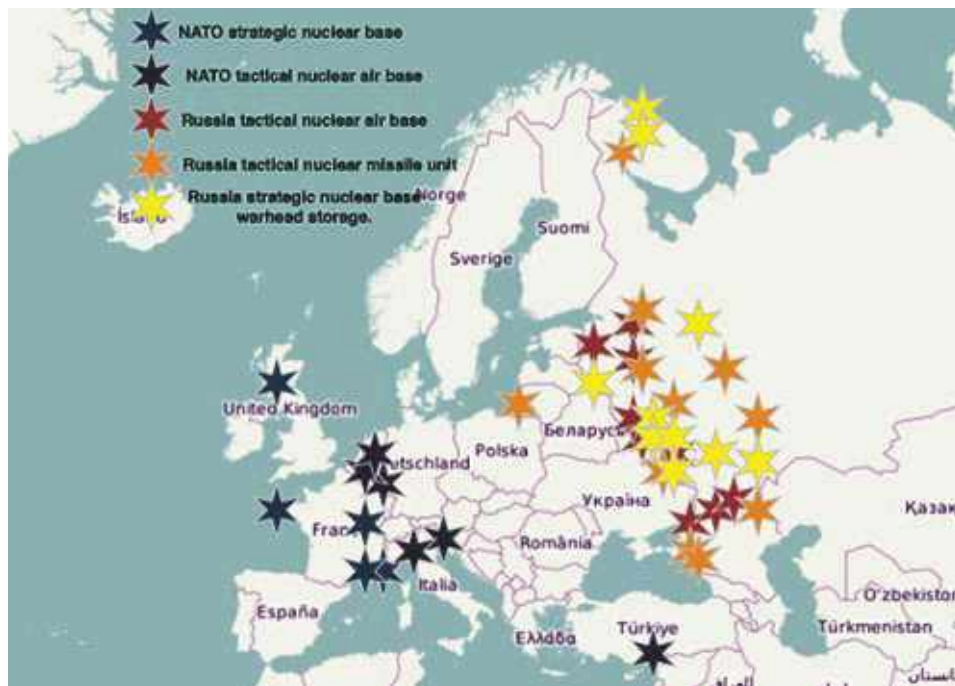
This article tries to give the reader-at-large an idea about what is involved in launching a tactical nuclear strike.

The push for partial mobilization is bound to escalate the situation in Ukraine. Losses are mounting exponentially and with the influx of inexperienced conscripts who lack any meaningful knowledge of the weapon systems would further make the situation even more dire.

There is no justification to use nuclear weapons in a conflict with a non-nuclear state. But according to Russia, the only feasible way to put an end to the conflict is to use nuclear weapons. The chances of a nuclear device detonation have become uncomfortably high.

Russia's Strategic Rocket Forces possess a wide variety of nuclear weapons platforms and devices. Russia currently has approximately 6000 warheads. They vary in their yield and the safety mechanisms. Most of the devices are equipped with a standard dialable yield system, which according to the target can be adjusted. They also possess a wide variety of platforms to deliver the said devices ranging from ICBMs to artillery shells.

As per the Russian state, current conflict would call for the use of tactical nuclear weapons to deter Ukrainian advances all the way up to the border of Russia. The most important factor is the launch time preparedness. The long range ballistic missiles are at the highest level of readiness. The inherent problem of long range liquid fueled missiles meant that



Deployment of NATO and Russian tactical nuclear weapons and nuclear bases

**“As per the Russian state, current conflict would call for the use of tactical nuclear weapons to deter Ukrainian advances all the way up to the border of Russia. The most important factor is the launch time preparedness. The long range ballistic missiles are at the highest level of readiness.”**

they had to be fueled immediately before launch, this was solved by the R-36 series

which were fueled only once, when they are placed in the silos. After that the missiles are ampulised/sealed and kept in this state ready for launch. As a result, the time needed to wind up the guidance system's gyroscopes became the main constraint on launch readiness rather than the several hours that the missile previously needed to launch.

R-36M missiles were the first liquid-fuel missiles that used a so-called cold launch method, in which the missile main engine did not start until the missile had been ejected from the silo by a special charge: a pressure accumulator. This launch method reduced the heat and acoustic load on the missile and allowed the fuller use of silo volume.

The development of the automated system of combat management and the introduction of third-generation missile





The Russian 9K720 Iskander is a mobile short-range ballistic missile system. It is replacing the OTR-21 Tochka system.

systems with on-board computers provided the RVSN the technological capacity to remotely alter missile flight assignments and alter nuclear force use scenarios in response to changing circumstances. Since the flight trajectory of missiles moving along the combat route must constantly be recalculated as the location of the launchers changes, the adoption of fourth-generation systems (the R-36M2, RT-23UTTH, and Topol) provided the capability for quick retargeting, which was crucial in the case of mobile systems. Therefore, there were no new technological challenges while changing the targeted coordinates.

During the pre-war time silo-based missiles would have been reprogrammed with "neutral" flight assignments (aimed at targets in the ocean). Fourth-generation systems are now on combat duty with zero flight assignments. These changes were largely symbolic, however, because it takes no more than a few minutes to retarget systems in accordance with operational plans for their use.

It is the tactical systems that require more time for getting ready to be deployed on the battlefield. Russia has many of them. The warhead must be prepared, mated to the desired platform (usually cruise missiles but in some cases smaller warheads can be mated to the S-300/400 series to deny the airspace to the enemy).

From transporting the warhead to the location, calibrating the gyroscopes (if the

device has them), programming the detonation yield, testing the on board power system and finally mating the device to the platform on the appropriate bus. This will take several hours and will be detected by satellites, drones and people.

For instance, if Russia wishes to deploy the Nuclear weapon from a ground based launcher to detonate above the Black Sea/forward areas of Donetsk. It is highly likely the platform of choice is going to be a Mig-31. It is important to know that the control of the missile launch will be remote and may not be in the hands of the pilot.

If they choose to use a ground based launcher (static or mobile), it is highly likely the following steps will be followed :

1. The General Staff gives the proper directives to the armed forces' services regarding the use of nuclear weapons when the decision to use nuclear weapons has been taken and the precise scenario for their use has been determined.
2. The Central Command Center of the General Staff (which serves as the Supreme High Command Central Command Center) transmits the necessary authorization codes and unlocks certain launchers to issue the command to employ nuclear weapons.
3. The combat management signal for the Rocket Forces initially travels to the Strategic Rocket Forces Central Command Center before being forwarded to the regiments whose launchers are to be employed.

4. The on-duty staff must input the authorizing codes and launch the missiles when the order to employ weapons and the authorizing codes have been sent. The command and control system also allows for the capability of firing missiles without the involvement of personnel on lower levels directly from the Supreme High Command Central Command Center.

5. Automated launch preparations begin as soon as the launcher receives the launch command. The response time—the period of time between the transmission of the launch command and the actual launch—depends on the missile and launcher, as well as their condition at the moment the command is received.

6. Prior to launch, the missile's guidance system must be activated (the switch to onboard power supply, the activation of the gyros, etc.), and the first-stage propulsion system (or the pressure accumulator in a cold-launch system) must be ignited.

7. When the launch command is received, the transporter-launcher (ground or rail) stops, the launcher is secured in the soil with hydraulic supports, and the canister containing the missile is raised to a vertical position. After this, the pressure accumulator is ignited and the missile is fired from the canister.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: Sep 2022





# Russian Nuclear Operations – Part 2

## Silo to Target and Aftermath

**Kartikeya Sethi**

Assuming the missile has left the silo and is on the way to the target, the questions arise where it will strike and what would be the damage done. The target and the yield will be the focus of this article.

The ability to select the yield according to the target is a big advantage and will be fully utilized by the planners/commanders of the Strategic Rocket Forces.

Given below are the possible targets which the rocket forces might choose to target.

Destinations :

1. Kiev
2. Odessa
3. Forward areas of Donetsk
4. Black Sea
5. Kherson

The yield would vary according to the targets enumerated above.

**Kyiv** : This target might have been on the list since days before the starting of the war. In order to eliminate the political leadership and top military commanders, Russia might use a more precise weapon of choice. The civilian losses will be extremely high if such an option is exercised. The yield of the device used for this might be under 100KT as they would be primarily targeting the leadership(civil and military) which is stationed underground.

**Odessa** : Russia might choose to go after the port in Odessa to permanently cripple Ukrainian exports. To go through with this, they might employ a device under 50KT.

**Forward Areas of Donetsk** : They might utilize the warheads with yield less than 25 KT to stop the advances of the Ukrainian army. They might use several of

**“A detonation over the Black Sea will have the least amount of damage to human life and practically no fallout. Russia might get chided by the international community and even the neutral parties will raise alarm and criticize the action. But that would be it.”**

them on the battlefield. This would permanently deny the Ukrainians advance through the region.

**Black Sea** : The target which would most likely be hit would be No. 4 Black Sea. A detonation above the black sea would serve three purposes : i) Send a signal to all the parties to back out from Southern Ukraine and stall the counter offensive ii) Limit the amount of backlash and condemnation Russia will receive from the international community. iii) A detonation above the Sea will drastically limit the fallout and since wind might pick up towards the Russian side, they would be much safer. In this case, they might go ahead with a device with a yield exceeding 100KT, possibly 250KT to send a bigger message.

**Kherson** : This region might be of interest to the ground forces of both sides. They have been fighting fierce battles for the past many weeks. To cut off the

Ukrainian reinforcements and the front line troops and to keep the artillery out of the reach of the rest of the region, they might target Ukrainian military detachments with smaller 10-15KT warheads in several locations.

### Impact and Aftermath

A detonation over the Black Sea will have the least amount of damage to human life and practically no fallout. Russia might get chided by the international community and even the neutral parties will raise alarm and criticize the action. But that would be it. It will serve to scare Ukraine and NATO and will stop the counter offensive. Russia will be able to hold out much longer. The Russian military might be sent further to consolidate the gains and take over the vacated territories. Peace negotiations will start with terms favorable to Russia.

However, employing this device over Kyiv would entail a much more difficult situation for all. The Russians might have defeated Ukraine completely but winning the war will be pyrrhic. Civilian casualties would be very high. The high radiation fields will make rescue operations almost impossible.

This act will serve to distance all close allies of Russia and will further isolate Russia. Western nuclear forces would be ready for further escalation and prepare for pre-emptive strikes on Russian positions. There might be a possibility of severing Kaliningrad from the rest of Russia. Extensive conventional strikes by Western air forces would render Russian air defence ineffective and they will proceed to neutralize Russian nuclear platforms and command centres, the only



option would be a fully fledged World War or Nuclear War.

A strike on Odessa would earn Russia the ire of the entire world. It will not only cripple Ukraine's ability to export its produce but complicate issues like food security. This will serve to isolate Russia from Africa, Turkey and even China. Only conventional means would be used by Ukraine to deploy even more advanced western weaponry on Russian positions in Ukraine. NATO presence could be seen in Ukraine after such a strike in order to deter further nuclear strikes. Crimea would be cut off from the Russian Federation. As per the escalation vortex, cyber and space options will be employed by the West but they might not retaliate in a nuclear way. Crippling attacks on the Central government, military services and nuclear command and control centres would limit Russia's options. The Russian economy would be in a complete disarray without the possibility of ever recovering.

Battlefield engagements on the front lines in Donetsk and Kherson will stop the advance of Ukrainian troops. It would inflict major military losses on Ukraine. The fallout would be immense and the region will become inhabitable for many centuries to come. Russian troops might advance in the fields of high radiation with specialized equipment and platforms. They would not be able to consolidate the gains due to radiation. This action will cause immediate cessation of all hostilities but Russia will suffer from the fallout, additional sanctions and a non-existent economy. Ukraine will have to give up the claim to its territories in the East and South. Retaliation will not stop there, the Russian Navy will face the brunt and lose its entire Black Sea fleet along with several submarines. Strong disapproval would be forthcoming from countries which may be neutral (China) in the form of sanctions from them as well.

In the end, the desired result is the de-escalation of the situation. Dialogue should be the way forward.

#### Assessment and Possibilities

In view of the foregoing, what are the possibilities about the use of nuclear



Russian forces can fire small nuclear warheads using conventional artillery, such as the Malka SP gun

**“The majority of the experts believe that the possibility that Putin will use a tactical nuclear weapon is low but is growing.”**

weapons by Russia.

In an interview with 60 Minutes, US President Joe Biden was asked what he would say to Russian President Vladimir Putin if he considered using tactical nuclear weapons. His response was “Don’t. Don’t. Don’t. It would change the face of war unlike anything since World War II.” In a televised address to the Russian people on September 21, Putin explicitly raised the specter of a nuclear conflict by saying, “Those who try to blackmail us with nuclear weapons should know that the weathervane can turn and point towards them.”

The majority of the experts believe that the possibility that Putin will use a tactical nuclear weapon is low but is growing. As Putin runs out of options and feels worried about losing the war, the threat of nuclear escalation rises.

Some of them assessed that such an event is quite probable as a means of sending the Ukrainians a signal they should stop fighting and start talking, if not

capitulate entirely. The experts assessed that the only reason Putin would take such a drastic action would be to force Kyiv to stop fighting and agree to Russian conditions.

However, some of the experts believed such a possibility remains highly improbable. According to them, “the Russian leadership has very little to gain from a military standpoint and everything to lose with regards to strategic consequences.”

In addition, the experts view such a possibility as a complete sea change in the course of the war. It would embolden the Ukrainian population even more, potentially shift opinions in Russia itself, and lead the international community into uncharted territory regarding the proper response. Some of the experts argued that such a decision would drastically diminish, if not eliminate, the remaining support Russia has in Europe and the world.

Experts believe that Putin is aware of the consequences of such a decision and is not deterred from using such a weapon. As one expert put it, Putin “is almost completely sure that the Western powers will never strike Russia with nukes because of the war in Ukraine,” and is therefore undeterred by a Western response.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: Oct 2022





# Russia Claims US Funding Bioweapon Facilities

## US Denies, Warns Against False Flag Op

Kunal Kaushik

As Russia began to assault military sites in Ukraine, there was suspicion that the US Biolabs, which were built in Ukraine for the purpose of research and defence, would be targeted as well. Under the "Biological Threat Reduction Program," the US has six such facilities in Ukraine.

### Natural News Report

The United States manufactured biological weapons in Ukraine near the border with Russia, revealed the website [www.naturalnews.com](http://www.naturalnews.com) on 4 March.

The official website of the U.S. embassy in Kiev deleted all evidence of Ukrainian biological weapons laboratories. The documents on the labs were public knowledge until February 25, 2022 when they were deleted from the website of the U.S. diplomatic headquarters in that country, the report said.

On 9 March, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said that documents unearthed by Russian forces in Ukraine showed "an emergency attempt to erase evidence of military biological programmes" by destroying lab samples. These documents included important construction, funding and license details for biological weapons labs in Ukraine, it added. But Washington erased these documents from the Internet and was becoming less transparent with this critical information, it added.

The report noted that that was happening at a time when the world's population was waking up to the reality of for-profit biological weapons research, laboratory leaks, and the development of



US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland testified before a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Ukraine on March 8, 2022, in Washington, DC, about "research facilities" in Ukraine (shown on the map above).

**“The US Defense Department funded at least 15 different biological laboratories in Ukraine. These are not Chinese or Russian biolabs. At least eight of them are bioweapons labs.”**

predatory vaccines and diagnostics. These biological laboratories, it pointed out,

generated pathogens of pandemic potential that exploit human immune systems and were the basis for medical fraud, malpractice, vaccine-induced death and genocide.

The US Defense Department funded at least 15 different biological laboratories in Ukraine. These are not Chinese or Russian biolabs. At least eight of them are bioweapons labs operated exclusively by the Pentagon, the publication denounced.

These labs “consolidate and secure pathogens and toxins of security concern” to carry out “enhanced biosecurity, biosafety and biosurveillance measures” through “international research



partnerships," it said.

The Pentagon also facilitated the clearance process for Ukrainian scientists to work with pathogens of pandemic potential.

The network of biological laboratories included facilities in Odessa, Vinnytsia, Uzhgorod, Lviv, Kiev, Kherson, Ternopil, Crimea, Lugansk and two suspect facilities in Kharkiv and Mykolaiv, [www.naturalnews.com](http://www.naturalnews.com) said.

### 30 Labs Found by Russian Forces

The Russian Armed Forces found 30 biological laboratories in Ukraine, which were possibly involved in biological weapons production, Igor Kirillov, the head of the radiation, chemical and biological defence of the Russian Armed Forces, told reporters on 8 March.

The Russian Defense Ministry's spokesperson Igor Konashenkov said that documents recovered were being analyzed by the military, adding that the Pentagon had been experiencing difficulties in continuing its secret biological experiments with the start of the Russian offensive in Ukraine. Konashenkov said facilities in Ukraine were developing components for biological weapons, noting that in the near future, the ministry would release its analysis of the received documents.

He said Washington "planned to carry out research on bird, bat and reptile pathogens", as well as on African swine fever and anthrax... Bio-laboratories set up and funded in Ukraine have been experimenting with bat coronavirus samples," Konashenkov added.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in a press conference later said, "The Americans carried out this work in complete secrecy. Just like how they work in other former Soviet states, creating their military-biological labs right along Russia's borders."

The Pentagon's Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) is the project's customer, and a corporation linked with the military department, notably Black and Veatch, is involved in project implementation, he stated.

Kirillov noted that the work was being done in three primary areas.

- Monitoring of the biological situation in the proposed areas for the deployment



Russia has accused the US of funding biological weapons research in Ukraine

of military contingents from NATO member states.

- Collecting of harmful microbe strains and their transfer to the United States.
- Research into prospective biological weapons agents that are peculiar to a given place, have natural foci, and may be transmitted to humans.

Kirillov gave the following example: since 2021, the Pentagon has been implementing the project "Diagnostics, Surveillance and Prevention of Zoonotic Diseases in the Armed Forces of Ukraine" with a total funding of \$11.8 million; in 2020-2021, the German Defense Ministry conducted a study of pathogens of the Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic disease in Ukraine. fever, leptospirosis, meningitis, hantaviruses as part of the Ukrainian-German initiative to ensure biological security at the external borders of the European Union.

Under the pretext of testing means for the treatment and prevention of the coronavirus infection, several thousand samples of serum from patients, primarily those belonging to the Slavic ethnic group, were taken from Ukraine to the Walter Reed Research Institute of the US Army, he added.

### US Admits 'Biological Research Facilities'

The United States has admitted that

Ukraine hosted "biological research facilities," expressing concern that they could come under the control of Russian forces, as Moscow made advances following its military offensive in the country.

US Under-Secretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland expressed concern during a Senate hearing on Ukraine on 8 March, after Russia published documents showing that Kiev was ordered to urgently eliminate traces of what was deemed as a biological weapons program, financed by the Pentagon.

"Ukraine has biological research facilities, which in fact we are now quite concerned Russian forces may be seeking to gain control of, so we are working with the Ukrainians on how they can prevent any of those research materials from falling into the hands of Russian forces should they approach," she said.

Documentation was received from Ukrainian biological research laboratories on the urgent destruction of dangerous pathogens on February 24, including anthrax, cholera, and the plague, in what could be a cover-up of Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC) violations.

*Contd on page 84*





# BIOLOGICAL WARFARE

## The Global Menace of Biological Warfare A Red Alert !

Maj Gen (Dr) GD Bakshi, SM, VSM, Retd

In 1975, the nations of the world had gotten together to sign the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention to ban manufacture, storage and use of biological warfare weapons. Yet, in 2019, the world saw the disastrous spread of the Covid-19 pandemic that infected 523 million people globally and killed some 6.3 million. It caused a hit of over two trillion dollars to the global economy and nearly caused a recession. Even as the world was emerging from the Covid pandemic, we now hear reports of a Monkey Pox virus rearing its head. The world is still to get to the bottom of the origin of Covid-19. Was it a natural epidemic, an accidental leak from the Wuhan Institute of Virology or worse – a staged accident to gain deniability for the deliberately induced pandemic? China and the World Health Organisation (WHO) made a mockery of that investigation.

We now have received Russian reports of incriminating material recovered from some of the over 30 bio-warfare labs that the US Department of Defense had funded and run in Ukraine. This could have been dismissed as propaganda but for the fact that most of it is confirmed from open

**"USA had established a series of biological warfare laboratories in former Soviet states like Kazakhstan, Georgia and Ukraine. Ukraine had become a virtual bridge head for research in Bat Corona viruses, Avian Flu, and Congo-Crimean Hemorrhagic fevers. These countries were natural foci for the spread of these viruses into Russia."**

sources in the USA itself. So, where will it all end? Will the world die out from induced pandemics long before it will die of global warming or a nuclear winter?

War is an abomination but a war fought honorably – where soldier show

great courage and self-sacrificing altruism in defence of their nation and its values – does have its redeeming features. But wars waged by toxins and poisons represent a horrible sickness of the human mind. In 2019, China was getting panicky about America's mounting pressure over Taiwan, South China Sea, Hongkong and Xinjiang. There were indications that it apprehended that the USA was going to unleash the Bat Corona virus on it. So, perhaps, it decided to strike first and unleashed Covid-19 upon the world. The world economy was grievously hit and was showing tenuous signs of recovery when the Ukraine War started.

However, China was not the only country working on Bat Corona viruses and other such lethal pathogens. So was the United States. What is more, the USA had established a series of biological warfare laboratories in former Soviet states like Kazakhstan, Georgia and Ukraine. Ukraine had become a virtual bridge head for research in Bat Corona viruses, Avian Flu, and Congo-Crimean Hemorrhagic fevers. These countries shared bat and bird populations with Russia and as such were natural foci for



the spread of these viruses into Russia. Their use could be disguised as natural outbreaks of diseases. So, apart from spreading democracy to Russia and its neighbours, Ukraine and Georgia were turned into major bridgeheads for destabilization and the spread and projection of viruses and pathogens to kill the people of Russia in their millions (if need arose for such attacks). These labs were not for defensive research (as claimed) but offensive in orientation. Like Pakistan, Ukraine and Georgia were most enthusiastic about renting out their territory to the US and NATO for hostile actions designed to destabilise Russia. Inherent in all this was the diabolical design of first spreading disease and misery and then selling vaccines, ventilators, protective clothing, face masks and drugs to make huge profits. Such thinking represents a vile sickness of the human mind that is dangerous for the future survival of the human race.

The sad historical fact is that both World War I and II had originated in Europe. Europe now seems determined to ensure that not only World War III starts again in Europe but is fought by the vilest means, that may include nuclear, biological and chemical warfare weapons of mass destruction (WMD). They preach rationality and humanistic values to the rest of mankind. Their actions, unfortunately, are premised upon greed and zero sums games that usually end in horrendous conflicts and world wars. This urge for domination, control and economic exploitation is at the root of all wars and conflict. Dangerous pathogens and toxins are being made in laboratories in many countries and stored on a massive scale for actual use. This is unprecedented and dangerous and could end the human race itself. The world may not die with a nuclear bang but could well end in a sick whimper with another devastating pandemic.

There is an urgent need to strengthen and add teeth to the biological warfare convention and monitor all such facilities in all countries and impose the harshest sanctions for violation. A section of the elite in the major powers seem to imply that the globe is overpopulated and biological warfare would serve a

**“Dangerous pathogens and toxins are being made in laboratories in many countries and stored on a massive scale for actual use. This is unprecedented and dangerous and could end the human race itself. The world may not die with a nuclear bang but could well end in a sick whimper with another devastating pandemic.”**

Malthusian purpose by decimating the number of humans on this planet. This would ease pressure on scarce and dwindling resources. This is the type of ghoulish thinking that was behind the Jewish Holocaust. There is an urgent need to name and shame the people behind this sick thinking and ensure that the 1975 Toxin and Biological Weapons Convention is adhered to most strictly by all the nations of the world.

#### **US Biological Warfare Efforts**

The Covid pandemic broke out in the end of 2019 and caused severe panic and distress all over the globe. The large-scale panic induced by the pandemic forced analysts all over the globe to frantically research the latest advances in this fast emerging domain of weaponising viruses and pathogens as WMD. The analysts realized that despite the Biological Convention of 1975, almost all major powers (USA, China, and perhaps Russia and even Europe) were feverishly engaged in biological warfare research and development. This was mostly justified as defensive research to pre-empt nature or safeguard one's country from such attacks by hostile nations.

The United States was leading the pack. Not only was it conducting the research on its own soil but under Dr Fauci's "Gain of Function" (GOF) research programme was outsourcing this research

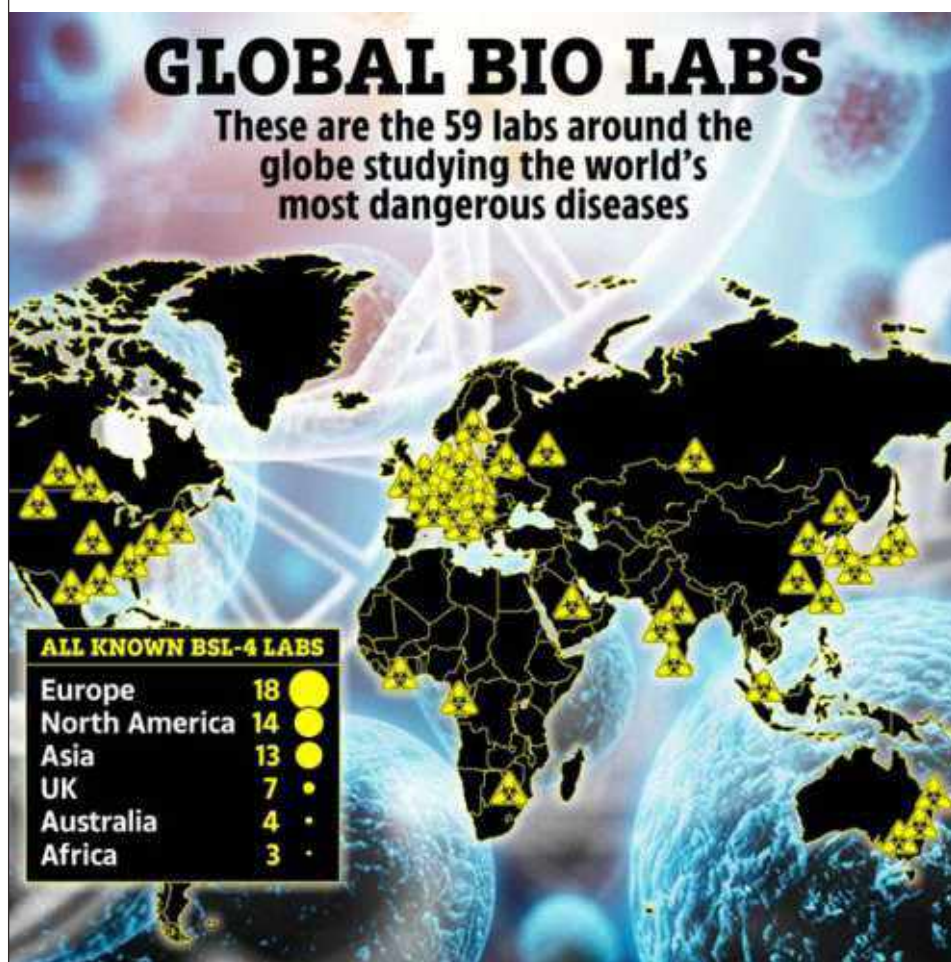
to China, Eastern Europe and other destinations – so that if there was a leak, local populations in other countries would suffer the consequences. Mainland USA would be safe from such accidents. Surprisingly, most of the information was available in open sources on the Internet itself. From these open sources it is possible to piece together a fairly accurate picture of the bio-warfare programmes of the USA. Those of China have already been studied in great detail.

US Army Medical Research Institute of Infectious Diseases (MIRD). The American Army MIRD is located at Fort Detrick in Maryland. It has been conducting research on dangerous pathogens like Bat Corona viruses, Ebola, MERS, etc. In July 2014, the American Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) ordered a safety audit inspection of this biotech facility. It concluded that it lacked facilities to decontaminate waste water. As such, this could lead to leakage of dangerous pathogens. It ordered a temporary halt on all such research at Fort Detrick. Thus, in 2014, (during President Obama's administration), the US Government paused all Gain of Function (GOF) research being conducted in the US. GOF research was defined as “research reasonably anticipated to confer attributes that enhance pathogenicity and transmissibility in mammals.” It was alleged by Senator Rand Paul that this temporary federal pause in GOF research funding was cleverly sought to be bypassed by Dr Fauci, the head of US National Institute of Health (NIH). His solution seemed simple - off shore such research, give it to the Wuhan Institute of Virology through an NGO (led by Peter Dszak of US Eco-health Alliance). He was given a grant of \$3.7 million to offshore these research projects to China and other countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and South East Asia. Of this, some \$3 billion grant, some \$600,000 was given to the infamous Wuhan Institute of Virology in China.

There was another underlying/unstated intention. From countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, such pathogens could exploit local vectors like birds and bats and spread the contagion to Russia or China and other target







The Sun tabloid 21 Dec 2021

countries. Clever play of words was used to obfuscate the GOF aspects of the research being outsourced. There were direct accusations by Republican Senator Rand Paul on the floor of the Senate to this effect. What precisely was GOF? Some defined it as introduction of a mutation that enhances the genes' functional properties. It either increases virulence or transmissibility in humans. One biologist Charles Schmidt stated that GOF was all in the eye of the beholder. (Cited in BMB Today member magazine of the American Society for Biochemistry & Microbiology, 21 Nov 2021 Issue). Subsequently, after the Covid pandemic broke, Dr Fauci would play upon these nuances in the American Senate to strenuously deny that he had funded any GOF research in China. The Bat Corona virus program in China was funded through the Eco-Heath Alliance NGO of Peter Dszak. Dszak was later part of the

**“On 24 February, the Pentagon is said to have issued panic instructions to the Ukraine Ministry of Health to destroy the pathogens and viruses stored in those labs along with all document-tation pertaining to these research activities.”**

WHO investigating team!

However, the fact is, full-fledged biological warfare labs were funded and built by the US Department of Defense itself (either through Defense Advanced Projects Research Agency (DARPA) or Defense Threat Reduction Agency

(DTRA)). The funding by the US Department of Defense clearly underlined the hostile or offensive nature of this biological research. It was not so much for prevention of outbreak of diseases but for waging offensive biological warfare in hostile states.

**Kazakhstan-based Research Institute for Bio-Safety Problems.** The Khazakstan National Centre for Biotechnology received millions of dollars from the US Government. This location was considered ideal for Bat Corona virus research as it borders both China and Russia. In 2019, a study on Bat Corona virus lineages from Khazakstan was published by this institute. It conducted a deep study of bat fauna and noted great similarities in bats of China, France, Spain and South Africa. Bats from Khazakstan migrate to China and Ukraine. Reportedly, this institute had a store house of 278 pathogens and strains of some 48 infectious diseases.

**R Lugar Centre Georgia (Tbilisi).** This covert US bio-weapons laboratory was ideally located to target Russia and do research in animal and bird species native to that region. The Tbilisi bio-lab in Georgia was also engaged in Bat Corona virus research and research in animal and bird species native to that region. Vectors like migratory birds and bats were selected to spread viral infections into Russia and cause pandemics like Avian Flu and Bat Corona viruses.

**Ukraine as a Bridge head for Biological Warfare?**

The biological warfare infrastructure in Georgia and Kazakhstan, however, was modest compared to the large and elaborate infrastructure established in Ukraine by the US Department of Defense and agencies like DARPA and DRTA. Actually, the Ukraine programme predated the 2014 GOF research offshoring drive. In fact, in 2010, US Senator Dick Lugar had applauded the opening of the Interim Central Defense Laboratory in Odessa (Ukraine) on the Internet. He had announced that it would be instrumental in researching pathogens used by bio-terrorists. The Level 3 bio-safety lab, he said, would be used to study Anthrax,



Putrefaction and Q Fever as well as other dangerous pathogens. The US Embassy in Kiev had, on its website, details of US funding of biological research labs studying dangerous viruses and pathogens. These details were hastily taken off from the embassy website on 25 Feb 2022, a day after start of the Russian invasion.

Victoria Nuland, US Deputy Secretary of State, was forced to admit in the US Senate in Apr 2022 about the establishment of US-funded bio-labs in Ukraine. In fact, she even expressed apprehensions that those dangerous pathogens should not fall into the hands of the advancing Russians!

The Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi had expressed serious concern about US military and biological activities in Ukraine. These, he alleged, violated the Convention on Prohibition of Development, Production and Accumulation of stocks of Biological and Toxin weapons. In fact, he accused the US of having 336 bio-labs in same 30 countries. Of these, he alleged, some 26 bio-labs were located in Ukraine alone.

On 24 February, the Pentagon is said to have issued panic instructions to the Ukraine Ministry of Health to destroy the pathogens and viruses stored in those labs along with all documentation pertaining to these research activities.

The American National Academy of Sciences had, in 2011, published details of US Department of Defense-funded bio-lab in Odessa that was doing research in dangerous pathogens. The Americans were funding creation of deadly pathogens like African Swine Flu and respiratory viruses. The Fact Sheet of the US Embassy also cited these details in open sources on the Internet.

The Russians stated that their operations directed towards Kiev and Kharkiev were also tasked to capture these bio-labs. All the bio-war labs in Eastern Ukraine were also secured and, though most of the toxins and documentation was destroyed, the Russians claim interrogation of the lab employees and captured documents did reveal considerable details of the covert American biological warfare programme in Ukraine.

The Russians have carried out an



**WHO told Reuters that it had strongly recommended to Ukrainian government to destroy high-threat pathogens to prevent any potential**

**“On 24 February, the Pentagon is said to have issued panic instructions to the Ukraine Ministry of Health to destroy the pathogens and viruses stored in those labs along with all documentation pertaining to these research activities.”**

analysis of these documents captured from the bio-labs and gave out the details in a press conference held during the war by the Russian defence ministry. They highlighted the following:-

- Since 2014, there was a network of more than 30 labs for bio-warfare established in the territory of Ukraine, with financial and organizational support from the US Department of Defense.
- These were engaged in research programs to study especially dangerous pathogens and viruses.
- Customers for these programmes were the US DTRA.
- An agreement for joint bio-warfare

activities was concluded between US Defense Department and Ukrainian Ministry of Health. The real recipients of funds were the labs run by Ukraine MoD located in Leviv, Odessa, Kiev and Kharkiev. Some \$32 million of funding was provided for these labs.

- Biolabs were aided by US DTRA and a civilian contractor firm – Black Viatch.
- The pathogens being studied were Avian Flu, Bat Corona virus, Congo-Crimean hemorrhagic fever, Leptosprosis and Hanta viruses. All these have natural foci in Ukraine and Russia and, hence, their use could be disguised as natural outbreaks of disease.

The three key projects being run were:-

- **P-781 Project on Bat Corona Viruses.** This was to study ways of transmitting diseases to humans through bats. This was being done primarily in the bio-labs in Kharkiev and the R Luger laboratory in Tbilisi in Georgia. Main contractor, however, was Ukraine and a total sum of \$1.6 mn was spent on this Bat Corona virus project.
- **UP-4 Project Avian Flu.** This was aimed at detection of diseases in birds that pose greatest danger to humans and have maximum potential for destabilisation of epidemiological situation in a region for





limited periods of time. They studied routes of bird migrations and determined which of them passed through Russian territory. They determined places of greatest congestion of birds where it would be possible to infect whole flocks with dangerous pathogens. Russians claimed that there was an outbreak of Avian Flu in 2021 and 6 million birds of poultry stock had to be destroyed.

- **U-P-8 Project.** This aimed to study pathogens of Congo-Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever as also Leptospirosis and Hanta viruses.

- **German Research.** Russians claimed that Germany also conducted its own military and biological programme in Ukraine, which also focused on the Congo-Crimean Hemorrhagic Fever in conditions of Europe. For this project the Bernhard Nocht Institute of Tropical Medicine (of Hamburg, Germany) cooperated with Public Health Centre of the Ukrainian Ministry of Health. German experts, it claimed, visited Ukrainian hospitals in Kiev, Kharkiev, Odessa and Leviv to study features of causes of disease in local populations. The project was said to be funded by Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Bundeswehr. This research seems more defensive in orientation.

- There was work on Pathogenic Bacteria (Plague Brucellois and Leptosprosis – especially strains resistant to drugs). The Odessa bio-lab was focusing on Plague, Anthrax, Cholera and drug resistant strains of Tuberculosis as also Dirofilaria – a disease transmitted by mosquitos. This last one had actually spread in Kherson (which supplies water to Crimea).

- Finally, the Americans seemed to be collecting blood serum and DNA samples of the ethnic Slav populations in Ukraine to facilitate research for targeting particular ethnotypes. These studies looked into influence of pathogens on humans taking into account racial and ethnic factors. The aim was to develop biological weapons for specific action or “Ethnic weapons” to target particular social groups and ethnicities – in this case Russian Slav ethnicity. (Details taken from by the Russian

Ministry of Defense briefing on the subject during the conflict).

These are indeed serious allegations and deserve to be investigated impartially by an empowered global body like the WHO or a special UN-mandated body set up to enforce the Biological Warfare Convention of 1975. There is a dire need to strengthen the Biological Warfare Convention of 1975 in terms of strict monitoring of all bio-medical research facilities dealing with dangerous viruses and pathogens in all countries of the world. There must be a new treaty on monitoring all such facilities and for stringent global action on any country that violates this Convention. Such research facilities in all countries must be monitored and severe sanctions imposed – at par with the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. The world cannot take this threat lightly and must get together at once to enforce the ban on biological weapons. It would be madness to let such weaponised pathogens proliferate and pose a serious danger to mankind - defensive or offensive. All nations have agreed not to produce, manufacture, store and use biological warfare weapons. This treaty must be given strong teeth and implemented with the greatest strictness. The sham of an investigation carried out by WHO in Wuhan must not be repeated. Otherwise, after the Bat Corona virus, the world may have to face many more juiced up viruses that have been spliced in the lab. The global economy has taken a very severe knock. We are heading towards planetary doom and suicide if some disgusting cowards want to fight wars by spreading highly infectious diseases. The way a nation fights shows us their essential character. We cannot afford a new and sick paradigm where cowardly nations wage war by spreading viruses and pathogens in a way that is deniable.

Our planet's future is at stake today and we must act.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: May 2022

## US Funding Bioweapon Labs

*Contd from page 79*

### US says Russia 'spreading disinformation'

Both Washington and Kyiv have denied the existence of laboratories intended to produce biological weapons in the country.

Russia asked for a meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) to address its allegations of "biological activities" carried out by the US in Ukraine. They claim that the Pentagon's Biological Threat Reduction Programme has been working with the Ukrainian government to ensure the security of pathogens and toxins stored in the laboratories.

The United States has accused Russia of using a UN Security Council meeting, on 11 March, for "lying and spreading disinformation". The US claimed that the Russian accusations were part of a potential false-flag operation.

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said Russia was playing out a scenario put forth in the UNSC, in February, by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken that President Vladimir Putin would "fabricate allegations about chemical or biological weapons to justify its own violent attacks against the Ukrainian people."

Pentagon press secretary John Kirby called the Russian claim "a bunch of malarkey," but in testimony to the Senate Intelligence Committee, CIA Director William Burns also noted grave concern that Russia might be laying the groundwork for a chemical or biological attack of its own, which it would then blame on the US or Ukraine in a false flag operation.

UN disarmament chief Izumi Nakamitsu also told the council she was aware of reports about the allegations, and said, "The United Nations is not aware of any biological weapons programmes."

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: March 2022



# Renaissance of Nuclear Deterrence

# Nukes Can No Longer Be Relegated to Background

Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh

**T**he war in Ukraine, and Russia's nuclear threats are bringing about a renaissance of nuclear deterrence and rearmament. It has resulted in the geopolitical context deteriorating to the point where progress on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation seems almost impossible.

The nuclear element has been operating in the background of this conflict from the beginning of the war when on 24 February. President Putin said, "Russia remains one of the most powerful nuclear states. Moreover, it has a certain advantage in several cutting-edge weapons. In this context, there should be no doubt for anyone that any potential aggressor will face defeat and ominous consequences should it directly attack our country."

Incidentally, on 3 January 2022, the leaders of the five nuclear weapon states had in a joint statement stated, "We affirm that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. As nuclear use would have far-reaching consequences, we also affirm that nuclear weapons-for as long as they continue to exist-should serve defensive purposes, deter aggression, and prevent war."

This opening line of the statement was first made by President Ronald Reagan and Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at their summit in Geneva in 1985.

## Downsides of nuclear deterrence becoming visible

For nuclear-weapon states and their allies, the mutual threat of total



A US Titan nuclear missile sitting in its Cold War silo waiting to be launched

annihilation serves to prevent wars and thus guarantees peace and security. In the current crisis, however, the downsides of nuclear deterrence are becoming visible.

In the war against Ukraine, Russia is using the nuclear threat to facilitate war and increase its chances of a favourable outcome: Instead of employing its nuclear arsenal to defend or prevent conventional military escalation.

In the words of Vice Admiral Vijay Shankar; Russia has 'turned the idea of deterrence on its head'; and he stated that, "Moscow is using the deterrence value of its nuclear arsenal not to protect Russia but rather to provide space for

conventional action. The Kremlin introduced an explicit nuclear dimension through its various declarations."

The last time a nuclear weapon was used 77 years ago. Looking back over the past three decades, there's been an effort to design a nuclear order through treaties, understandings and patterns of behaviour intended to manage a process in which the role of nuclear weapons would be minimised and to make sure the complexities of it could be resolved. Nuclear weapons were supposed to move gradually into the background of world affairs.

Fred Kaplan in his introduction to 'The





The Russian navy has reportedly attempted to test a new nuclear-powered Poseidon torpedo designed to trigger radioactive tsunamis

Bomb' wrote, "For 30 years after the Cold War ended, no one thought, much less worried, about nuclear war. Now almost everyone is fearful. But fear takes the form of a vaguely paralysed anxiety. Because of the long reprieve from the bombs shadow, few people know how to grasp it's dimensions they've forgotten, if they ever knew." He said the holiday from history ended on 8 August 2017 when President Trump warned North Korea; "they will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen".

Jeffrey Lewis writing in 'War on The Rocks' has said, "A deterrent relationship is one in which our choices are sharply constrained by existential fear."

The war in Ukraine can be termed as a failure of deterrence. Kyiv didn't sufficiently deny benefits, impose costs, and/or encourage restraint sufficient to stop Russia from invading.

At the same time, the invasion was an extended, general deterrent failure for NATO and EU states who were unable to find the means to dissuade Russia from using force to settle territorial disputes which began with the annexation of Crimea.

Yet, some perceive Ukraine as a 'deterrent success' in terms of thresholds and confining the war to Ukraine as well as limiting the use of weapons of mass destruction. From this perspective the events since 24 February demonstrate the

**“The war in Ukraine can be termed as a failure of deterrence. Kyiv didn't sufficiently deny benefits, impose costs, and/or encourage restraint sufficient to stop Russia from invading.”**

reliability of nuclear deterrence.

#### **Russia's invasion of Ukraine: Both triumph and failure for nuclear deterrence**

After all, the NATO is not directly intervening in Russia's war. One of the reasons that they don't want a direct conflict with Russia - but not the only reason - is because at the end of the escalation ladder between Russia and the West is the possibility of the use of nuclear weapons.

Likewise, the nuclear threat has been operating for Russia as well - the leadership in Russia is aware that the US, UK, France and NATO as an alliance are nuclear-armed. They know that Russia also needs to take their nuclear weapons seriously. Presently, the conflict has been limited in scope but can this be solely attributed to the presence of nuclear

weapons on both sides.

Whereas there are those who doubt the credibility of NATO's nuclear deterrent and believe its weakness emboldened Russia's aggressive behaviour. Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been hailed as both a triumph and failure for deterrence. Can both be true? Paradoxically, that seems to be the case as there are proponents and opponents for both extremes.

An argument often presented is that Russia's war of aggression would not have taken place if Ukraine had possessed nuclear weapons. In fact, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Ukraine never had the command over the arsenal stationed on its territory. But, do nuclear weapons provide a blanket ban on use of conventional forces?

Nevertheless, possession of nuclear weapons has become more attractive to some countries in light of the Russian invasion. The breach of the Budapest Memorandum has no doubt shaken confidence in security guarantees.

#### **The paradox of nuclear deterrence**

At present, NATO and Russia have a mutual interest in not extending the war beyond Ukraine's borders. However, if Moscow fears a comprehensive defeat as the war progresses, it has the option of resorting to the use of tactical nuclear weapons.

President Putin's nuclear rhetoric been intended to sow fear in the minds of Western decision-makers to focus on the rising nuclear threat thereby shaping thinking regarding their physical intervention in the conflict and thus limiting assistance to Ukraine in order to mitigate the increased risk of Russian nuclear strikes. So far the role that nuclear weapons play appears to be the beginning of a new phase.

Tactical nuclear weapons and scenarios of 'limited' nuclear warfare have long been gaining importance. This broadening of nuclear deterrence, as demonstrated by Russia's threatening posturing, challenges the nuclear taboo that nuclear doctrines are supposed to reinforce. This reveals a paradox of nuclear deterrence- the more it is used and the broader nuclear threats are



framed, the higher the likelihood of a nuclearescalation.

Wars always assume a more destructive form. As terrible as scenes from war zones are; the tragedy compounds along with the risks of a world war if there were a mushroom cloud.

When great powers compete, to include fighting proxy wars through states which was first witnessed in Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta to the present conflict in Ukraine, they must manage escalation risks.

When nuclear states compete, the rungs of the escalation ladder can bring states to a point beyond which nuclear weapons lose their deterrent value and become a means to force capitulation.

The US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told CBS in September, "The Russian President's nuclear warnings are "a matter that we have to take deadly seriously." "We have communicated directly, privately at very high levels to the Kremlin that any use of nuclear weapons will be met with catastrophic consequences for Russia, that the United States and our allies will respond decisively, and we have been clear and specific about what that will entail," he said.

Russia's 2014 Military Doctrine and 2020 Basic Principles of State Policy of the Russian Federation on Nuclear Deterrence both state that it "reserves the right to use nuclear weapons in response to the use of nuclear and other types of weapons of mass destruction against it and/or its allies."

The Basic Principles state that Russian nuclear forces exist to protect "the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state."

President Joe Biden has said that if Russia uses nuclear weapons, their response would be "consequential depending on the extent of what they do will determine what response would occur."

"We have our own military potential. If anyone thinks that we won't use it if there is a serious threat, then they are mistaken," said Dmitry Novikov, Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Duma, Russia's lower house of Parliament. "And if you're ready to use

**"Russia is willing to bring nuclear fear and nuclear risk into play in the conduct of strategy at various escalation levels, through rhetorical and military means, and to use what it sees as bargaining power through fear of nuclear use."**

these kinds of weapons, we won't let ours get rusty."

As per Dr Matthew Harries of RUSI; the feeling is that "the moment of maximum danger would come if and when Russia faced a large-scale defeat and there was a threat to President Putin's grip on power. We may not be at that moment of maximum danger yet, but we're closer to it than we were at the beginning of the war. For that reason, it's not surprising that Putin has grasped the nuclear hammer he has in his toolbox again."

Elon Musk tweeted in response to a Twitter user asking his opinion on the possibility of a nuclear war and World War III. "If Russia is faced with the choice of losing Crimea or using battlefield nukes, they will choose the latter. We've already sanctioned/cut off Russia in every possible way, so what more do they have left to lose?"

#### **Fragilities in nuclear deterrence**

The war in Ukraine has highlighted certain fragilities in nuclear deterrence. Policy makers will need to articulate how the concept works to manage escalation thresholds as well as how it provides options that counter the Russian approach to coercion and the emerging Chinese concept of war control. Ukraine is the beginning of a new era.

Nuclear weapons are existential weapons and relate to the highest stakes a country feels it is risking. Hence the belief is that nuclear use is unlikely in the Ukraine war because of the grave consequences that could potentially

follow.

However, Russia has been willing to use what it sees as the power of nuclear risk and the fear of nuclear weapons as part of its strategy and concept of strategic deterrence.

Russia is willing to bring nuclear fear and nuclear risk into play in the conduct of strategy at various escalation levels, through rhetorical and military means, and to use what it sees as bargaining power through fear of nuclear use.

There was a chance to make nuclear weapons less relevant. But the Ukrainian conflict has proven otherwise and in fact will force more countries to weigh the necessity for developing a nuclear arsenal. We are in a world which has not been able to wean itself away from nuclear weapons and they are now increasing in importance.

The lesson probably remains that nuclear weapons have a role in strategy that the world hoped they wouldn't. The darker side of nuclear deterrence that the war is exposing needs to be understood if this cornerstone of global arms control is to remain. The Ukrainian War has exposed the risks and dangers of managing a crisis in a world in which nuclear weapons are a significant part of strategy.

There are now concerns that Russia may be entering a new phase of escalation with its annexation and declaration that it would defend newly annexed territories with nuclear weapons. In fact, on 26 October Shri Rajnath Singh the Raksha Mantri in a telephonic conversation with the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu while reiterating the need for an early resolution to the conflict through dialogue and diplomacy.

"The prospect of the usage of nuclear or radiological weapons goes against the basic tenets of humanity."

The truth is nuclear threats only really deter if they're considered credible and carry some degree of risk. Mere possession of nuclear weapons does not result in automatic nuclear deterrence. However, we should prepare to live in a world where nuclear weapons can no longer be relegated to the background.

Courtesy: First Post  
First Published: 3 Nov 2022





## The Compulsion in India's Position on Russia Large Bulk of Weapon Systems Are of Russian Origin

An IMR Report

India-Russia relationship still continues to remain strong. Russia has been a significant supplier of military equipment. India is also procuring the S-400 Triumf Missile from Russia, despite strong US opposition. A new ten-year defence pact between the two countries was being discussed. India-Russia annual trade is also worth about \$10 billion. India's support to Ukraine may mean Russia developing stronger ties with China and Pakistan. That can be a real-time threat to India's national security.

The Indian security establishment is keeping a close eye on the Russia-Ukraine developments and calculating the immediate and long-term impact on the country's defence capabilities.

About 70 per cent of Indian defence equipment are of Russian origin. However, India procures many parts of the Russian systems from Ukraine. This is because several manufacturing hubs remained with Ukraine after USSR disintegrated.

One of the main problems facing Indian forces has been servicing and maintenance of Russian military equipment since spare parts are in short supply and have to be imported not just from Russia and Ukraine but from other countries as well.

### Indigenisation

Amid the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, India issued a list of 107 sub-systems, on 24 March, that are to be banned from import and indigenised over the next six years. Several of the items on the list are meant for T-90 and T-72 tanks, warships, helicopters, infantry combat vehicles, missiles, ammunition and radars among others, all of which are procured from either Russia

### Russian Military Equipment In the Indian Armed Forces

Smerch multi-rocket system  
Grad multi-rocket system  
M-46 artillery guns  
T-55 Pillbox config  
T-90 Tanks  
T-72 Tanks  
BMP-II  
Konkurs ATGM  
Kornet ATGM  
OSA Surface-to-Air missile (SAM)  
Pechora SAM  
Strela SAM  
Shilka anti-air gun  
Tunguska anti-aircraft system  
Dragunov SVD  
Kalashnikov  
OSV-96 rifles  
NSV Machine gun  
BrahMos Missile

or Ukraine.

The subsystems or strategically-important line-replacement units – will now be “indigenised”, or procured only from the Indian industry. The import of these products will be phased out from December 2022 to the end of 2028.

Incidentally, both India and Russia were already working on a deal to indigenously manufacture the spares here through tie-ups, something which had come up for detailed discussion in 2019 between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russia President Vladimir Putin.

The government had, in December 2021, issued the first positive indigenisation list of subsystems, assemblies, subassemblies and other components.

Two thousand and five hundred imported items from that list have already been indigenised and the other 351 will stop being imported in the next three years.

### Russian-origin tanks

Amid the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine where the anti-tank missiles have achieved significant success against armour, the Indian Army is going to incorporate the lessons of the conflict in the design of its futuristic main battle tank.

The Indian Army has been one of the biggest users of Russian armour including the T-90, T-72 and BMP-series infantry combat vehicles which are the mainstay of the force.

In the Ukraine-Russia conflict, reports from the war zone have suggested that the Ukrainians have extensively used anti-tank guided missiles to exploit the weakness of the Russian armoured vehicles and achieved significant success too.

Indian armed forces have been keeping a close eye on the developments on the battlefield as a lot of equipment is common including the tanks being used there.

The inputs are being analysed and the lessons would be incorporated into the design of the futuristic main battle tanks that would be produced and used by the Indian Army in coming years.

The Indian Army earlier used to deploy these tanks only along the desert and plain borders with Pakistan but they have now become the face of Indian resolve along the China border too as large numbers are deployed there from Ladakh to Sikkim.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: May 2022



# India's Dependence on Russia's Arms

## US wants to wean away India

**Maj Gen Ravi Arora, Retd**

**U**ntil recently, India bought almost all its frontline weaponry from Russia. Researchers at the Stimson Center calculate that, about 85% of India's major weapons are overwhelmingly of Russian origin. Moreover, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) says that "new orders [from India] for a variety of Russian arms in 2019–20... will probably lead to an increase in Russian arms exports in the coming five years."

The Indian government's unwillingness to condemn Russia forcefully for its invasion of Ukraine seems to have raised the question amongst US leaders - how to wean the Indian military off its dependence on Russian arms. The fact is that, like all developing nations, India confronts an impossible trinity when it comes to weapons programs: It cannot simultaneously achieve autonomy, affordability and quality.

New Delhi has long talked of diversifying the suppliers to its huge armed forces, and even making more equipment at home, objectives that have taken on new urgency since Russia's invasion.

India has identified \$324 million worth of defence equipment it wants domestic firms to make this year, and avoid buying abroad, according to an online platform where the defence ministry lists its needs.

Defence transition is always a slow evolutionary process. Suppliers cannot be switched overnight.

### Russian Imports

India is the world's largest buyer of Russian weapons, although it has scaled



S-400 system purchased by India from Russia

back that relationship of late. Russia has historically supplied the majority of India's military hardware, including fighter jets and missiles, as well as almost all its tanks and helicopters. Modi's government has told the US the alternatives to moving away completely from Russian weapons imports are too expensive.

Over the past decade, India has bought more than \$4 billion worth of military equipment from the US and more than \$25 billion from Russia, according to SIPRI, which collects data on arms transfers. India's dependence on Russia for weapons against neighbors China and Pakistan is a big reason Modi's government has avoided criticizing Russian President Vladimir Putin

over the war in Ukraine. As the US, Europe, Australia and Japan piled economic sanctions on Russia, India has held off and instead continued imports of discounted Russian oil.

### Russia woos India

On the other hand, Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said, on 20 April, that Russia could give India any defence platform and weaponry it wants. He also termed the transfer of defence technology to India as "unprecedented" among the foreign nations that India has ties with.

Asked about the Sino-Indian border dispute, he said: "We welcome the



## MAJOR RUSSIAN WEAPONS SALES AND DELIVERIES TO INDIA (2016-2020)

Quantity Ordered	Weapon	Order Year	Delivery Year	Quantity Delivered
(250)	YaM2-238   Diesel engine	2016	2017-2020	(342)
(25,000)	9M113 Konkurs/AT-5   Anti-tank missile	(1988)	1992-2016	(25,000)
9	Garpun   Sea search radar	(1998)	2000-2016	9
(400)	P-2-10 BrahMos   Anti-ship Mi/SSM	(1998)	2006-2020	(205)
(426)	PJ-10 BrahMos   SSM	1998	2006-2020	(340)
140	Su-30MK   FGA aircraft	(2001)	2006-2020	(140)
6	RBU-6000   ASW MRL	(2003)	2014-2016	6
8	RBU-6000   ASW MRL	(2003)	2014-2020	8
300	T-90S   Tank	2006	2009-2018	(300)
(63)	295MT/Fulcrum-F   FGA aircraft	2008	2012-2020	(30)
(216)	PJ-10 BrahMos-A   ASM	(2012)	2014-2020	
25,000	9M119   Anti-tank missile	2013		(9,000)
236	T-90S   Tank	(2013)		
(200)	Ka-226   Light helicopter	(2015)		
149	BMP-2   IFV	(2018)		
4	Talwar   Frigate	2018		
4,321	Konkurs/AT-5   Anti-tank missile	2019	2019-2020	(1,500)
5,175	Igla-S   Portable SAM	(2019)		
464	T-90S   Tank	2019		
156	BMP-2   IFV	(2020)		
12	Su-30MK   FGA aircraft	(2020)		
12	AK-630 30mm   Naval gun	(2009)	2014-2016	12
8	AK-630 30mm   Naval gun	(2003)	2014-2017	6
29	MG-29SMT/Fulcrum-F   FGA aircraft	2010	2012-2016	29
10	AK-630 30mm   Naval gun	(2011)		
10,000	9M113 Konkurs/AT-5   Anti-tank missile	2012	2013-2017	(10,000)
(740)	AL-31   Turbofan	2012	2013-2020	(560)
42	Su-30MK   FGA aircraft	2012	2013-2017	(42)
16	AK-630 30mm   Naval gun	(2013)		
68	Mi-BMT/MS-17   Transport helicopter	(2013)	2014-2016	(68)
(2)	A-50Eh   AEW&C aircraft	(2017)		
(650)	48N6   SAM	(2018)		
(20)	S-400 Triumf   SAM system	2018		
(500)	9M114   Anti-tank missile	2019	2019	(500)
6	Ka-31   AEW helicopter	(2019)		
1	Project-97/II   Nuclear submarine	2019		
(300)	R-27R/T   BVRAAM	2019		
(300)	R-77   BVRAAM	2019		
(400)	R-73   BVRAAM	2019		
21	MG-29SMT/Fulcrum-F   FGA aircraft	(2020)		

( ): Uncertain data or estimate

Source: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

discussions between India and China”, adding that Russia wanted to further strengthen the trilateral Russia-India-China (RIC) format that he said was envisaged by Moscow way back in 1996 and made a reality.

### Affordability and Autonomy

Shifting toward buying more Western weapons systems and lessening its dependence on Russia, for instance, would bolster India's autonomy. But the country would have to sacrifice affordability, meaning it wouldn't be able to buy as much. India is spending \$5.5 billion on the Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile platform. The U.S.-made Terminal High-

Altitude Area Defense system costs about six times that much and isn't even as versatile.

India is highly unlikely to want to rely on anyone else for essential defense requirements. In its last full-scale war with Pakistan, in 1971, India found itself constantly short of artillery shells and had to secretly import mortars from Israel. Insufficient weapons on hand represent a loss of autonomy that no Indian government could possibly countenance.

### Self Reliance

For decades, India has tried to establish a local defense industry, building its own battle tank and jet. The Arjun, the Indian

Army complains, can not be part of any battle plans on the canal-heavy, militarized border with Pakistan. It weighs almost 70 tons and would collapse most bridges in the Punjab. By contrast, Russia's T-90 tank weighs less than 50 tons.

The Indian Air Force has a long list of reasons why the Tejas is not good enough: Its payload is smaller than the F-16's, the plane takes too long to service and so on.

Indigenization offers affordability and autonomy, at the cost of quality. The Indian state's toxic relationship with the private sector is one of the biggest obstacles to indigenizing weapons production. But if Indian leaders want a reliable and affordable pipeline of weapons of decent quality that arrive quickly enough to deter an aggressive China, they are going to have to fund domestic defence companies, increase military budgets, and field less powerful weapons until they can develop better ones.

### US Preparing Package

The US and its allies have sought to woo Modi's government as a key security partner – against China in the Indo-Pacific region. Links between the US and India have steadily deepened over the past two decades, with the two sides reaching agreements that allow for more interoperability between their military platforms.

The US is preparing a military aid package for India to deepen security ties and reduce its dependence on Russian weapons. The package under consideration would include foreign military financing of as much as \$500 million, which would make India one of the largest recipients of such aid behind Israel and Egypt. It's unclear when the deal would be announced, or what weapons would be included.

Washington wants to be seen as a reliable partner for India across the board, and the administration is working with other nations including France to make sure Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has the equipment it needs. While India is already diversifying its military platforms away from Russia, the US wants to help make that happen faster.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review

First published: June 2022



# Impact on Indian Military Supplies

**Air Marshal Anil Chopra, PVSM, AVSM, VM, VSM, Retd**

Since 24 February the world is engaged with the conflict in Ukraine that has now entered the ninth month. The geo-political action in the region had actually begun immediately after the dissolution of Soviet Union. Ukraine is the second largest European nation after Russia. Ukraine initially chose a foreign policy that would balance cooperation with the European Union (EU), Russia, and other influential countries. However, the 'Revolution of Dignity' of February 2014 culminated in the ousting of pro-Russian President Yanukovich. Fearing Ukrainian tilt to the West, Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, as it was critical to its Black Sea fleet. The strong pro-EU surge of public opinion here after moved Ukraine closer to the West. Ukraine was about to be admitted to EU and NATO. This was the final nail. NATO would have literally reached the Russian border. President Putin gave an ultimatum, and seeing no positive response, invaded Ukraine with an aim to install a pro-Russian government. The West responded with strong support to Ukraine and crippling economic sanctions on Russia. They are supplying Ukraine anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons among intelligence and communications support. Since Ukraine is presently neither a member of EU, nor of NATO, the West refrained from direct military intervention. They cannot even impose 'No Fly Zone'. Immediate concern for India was the rising oil and commodity prices, and risk of disruption of military supply chain from the two warring nations. Prime Minister Modi chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on March 13, 2022, to



**Many of IAF's Mi-17 helicopters have been manufactured at Kazan Helicopter Plant in Russia**

assess the impact of war on India's defence supplies from the region. Ever since, the Indian government has been engaged with Russia and other defence agencies to secure spare parts supplies.

## **India-Russia Military Linkages**

India and Russia have maintained very close relations since 1950s from the time of Soviet Union. During the Cold War, the two had a strong strategic, military, economic and diplomatic relationship. Even today Russia and India both term this relationship as a "special and privileged strategic partnership". The relations are built on five major components: politics, defence, civil nuclear energy, anti-terrorism co-operation and space. In 1971 war Soviet Union gave a great global strategic support to India while the West

led by USA was pressuring India. Russia and India are today members of international bodies including the UN, BRICS, G20, RIC and SCO. More recently as part of the economic cooperation the two have set a target of US\$30 billion bilateral trade by 2025. The major trade between the two is in defence, petrochemicals, pharma, and edible oils.

India began receiving defence equipment from Russia in mid 1950s. Today it is among the largest market for the Russian defence industry. Approximately 65% of the Indian military's hardware is of Russian origin. The total arms imports from Russia remain significant, albeit the percentage is gradually reducing.

India's Russian origin major defence systems today are the Sukhoi Su-30MKI,







An upgraded An-32 aircraft of the Indian Air Force at Kiev during the handing over ceremony.

MiG-29s, MiG 21 Bison, Beriev A-50 based AWACS, IL-76, An-32, Ilyushin Il-78MKI aerial refueller, Ilyushin Il-38, Mi-17 helicopters, Kamov Ka-31 and Ka-28, many surface-to-air missiles (SA-6, SA-8, 2K22 Tunguska), S-400 AD system, BrahMos cruise missiles, aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, numerous frigates, Sindhughosh class (Kilo-class) submarines, T-90, T-72 and T-55 tanks, BMP-2, Smerch and Grad multi-rocket systems, anti-tank guided missiles, machine guns, and Russian 7.62 mm AK-103/AK-203 assault rifle, among others

## India-Ukraine Relations

India-Ukraine relations began immediately after dissolution of Soviet Union. A Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation was signed in 1992. Ukraine is India's second largest trade partner after Russia among the former Soviet countries. The main items being imported by Ukraine from India are drugs, pharmaceutical production, ores and minerals, tobacco products, tea, coffee, spices, silk and jute. The main items imported by India from Ukraine are chemicals, equipment, machines and aircraft and marine engines.

Ukraine also supplies turbines for thermal, hydroelectric and nuclear power plants. Some of the defence equipment spares from Ukraine include the 130mm

**“During Aero India 2021, Ukraine signed four agreements worth Rs 530 crore (US\$70 million) with India.”**

medium guns, spares for T-72 tanks as well as the T-90 tanks, the OSA-AK surface-to-air missile system, and Tunguska anti-aircraft weapon system, and also the gas turbine engines of several ships of the Indian Navy. But India has alternative sources for many items, and in some cases indigenous sources.

Ukraine had also shown interest in participating in other hi-tech programmes of the Indian armed forces, such as in supply of anti-UAV systems and upgrade program of tanks which are in the pipeline. Also there was a proposal on the upgrade of Smerch multiple rocket launcher system. All these were still at initial discussion stages.

In 1998 Ukraine had opposed India's nuclear test and voted in favour of UN Resolution 1172 which condemned India's nuclear test. India was the first major country to recognize the annexation of Crimea and it has abstained from a resolution on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, justifying its decision

by saying that it was the choice of the people of Crimea.

During Aero India 2021, Ukraine signed four agreements worth Rs 530 crore (US\$70 million) with India which includes sale of new weapons as well as maintenance and upgrades of existing ones in service with the Indian armed forces. Significant areas of defence cooperation with Ukraine was upgrading of An-32 aircraft, which has more or less been completed. India has ordered 56 CASA C-295Ws for the Indian Air Force (IAF) from Spain. One day they will also take the load of An-32s. India had also got helmet mounted sights for MiG 21 Bison but IAF has surplus stock now with more squadrons winding down. India has found alternative vendors for most other defence imports from Ukraine. Effectively there will be no serious impact to Indian Armed Forces in case of supply chain disruptions from Ukraine.

## Indo-West Security Relations

Indo-US Defence Cooperation is today a critical component of bilateral relations. India and the US have come a long way. The two countries have inked four foundational security enabling agreements. All arms of the two militaries exercise regularly to improve interoperability. The two are working together in co-production, with major U.S. corporations like Lockheed Martin, Boeing, GE, among others, producing and exporting military hardware from India. U.S. and India are crucial partners in QUAD. India purchased some top end military hardware like P-8I, C-17, C-130, and Chinook, Apache, and M777 howitzer, among others. India and the US are expected to reach a target of USD 25 billion in military trade over the next few years. The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The bill was passed by the Senate on 27 July 2017. In October 2018, India inked a US\$5.43 billion deal with Russia to procure four S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile defence systems, while ignoring the CAATSA. India stood its ground. After India's neutral stand on Ukraine, there



were more in USA demanding action against India. Ground reality is that today India is an important player in Indo-Pacific and USA needs India to check rising China. India's refusal to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine did result in a serious divergence of views and created a 'trust-deficit' between the UK and India also, but in view of the comprehensive nature of the strategic partnership, the UK political leadership has also not publicly criticised or expressed its disappointment with India. India's strategic autonomy seems to work well.

### **The Centrality of the Indo-Pacific for India**

As security of Europe is central to most of the Western countries, for India, China remains the principal threat to its security. The West and India have congruence on the Chinese military's assertive policies in the Indo-Pacific, including its aggression against India. West's intent to deepen defence cooperation with India, seeking to provide an alternative to Russia, is fair desire, but currently ambitious. India's dependence on Russian arms and the phasing out of older Russian weapon systems and spares from India's armed forces, will take a few more decades. Currently USA is not inclined to step in on behalf of India against China. India needs Russia for its defence preparedness.

### **Implications for India's Military Supplies**

The war in Ukraine is an 'economic catastrophe' for the world, and comes on the heels of two years of Covid-19. Inflation is at near all-time high. The rise in prices of oil and gas, due sanctions on Russia, will impact India badly. Supply disruptions have hit global prices of wheat, soybean, fertiliser and metals like copper, steel and aluminium. Some of the metals are critical for defence manufacturing. India, have chosen to abstain during the voting in UN condemning Russia so as not to take sides. It is generally a wait and watch situation for many as situation remains fluid and full of "uncertainties". The war may also slow Indian economy and in turn capability to spare more money for defence. But India continues to perform better than most major economies.

Russian defence factories are currently busy producing military hardware for the war in Ukraine and also busy supplying to Belarus. They are also preparing and accumulating hardware for a possible showdown with NATO. Western economic sanctions will make Russia further cash-strapped, and it will affect defence production. Some of the Russian hardware maybe dependent on imports from the West. All this could impact military spares and equipment supplies to India. Both air and sea transportation may also get affected. There are small companies in Russia and in Eastern Europe who hold spares of select Russian systems. Indian security establishment is aware of these. Such spares could be routed through third countries. These options, I am sure, are being explored through agencies.

How the sanctions against Russia will affect India is still remains an open-ended area. If the West chooses to apply sanctions on anyone dealing with Russia, then the implications for India will be significant. It could impact spares and maintenance of the existing military hardware. India will surely ignore this, as it did for S-400 sanctions threat. India is analysing all aspects including stability in supply chain and making payments for ongoing projects and services amid sanctions on Russian bank. Alternative means of payments have been evolved, including Rouble-Rupee trade. It is hoped that wisdom will prevail on the West, because a weakened India would mean weakened fight against China in Indo-Pacific.

### **Spares from Alternative Sources**

India must look for suppliers in former-Soviet countries that have experience in retrofitting Soviet and Russian equipment with their own technologies. Poland has had MiG 29s, and has been upgrading its fleet of T-72 tanks. Even Georgia has also been doing the same for ageing armoured vehicles. We could learn from them or take spares. There are entities in former CIS countries selling such spares in black market.

### **Other Lessons for India**

The biggest lesson from the Ukraine

crisis was that India has to be ready to fight future wars with indigenous weapons. There is no soft power without hard power. We need to continue to build our hard power. Becoming a nuclear power was a wise decision, because it acts as a major deterrent. Ukraine once had nuclear weapons during Soviet time, but renounced them when separating from Soviet Union. They seem to regretting the decision because that would have meant deterrence.

Building an indigenous R&D environment and manufacturing base requires time. India must also start finding Indian companies or alternative sources for Russian spares to maintain the existing inventory. Government has taken many steps to promote Indian defence manufacturing, including, local industry friendly Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), larger Capital budget for "buy-India", raising foreign direct investment (FDI) limit for defence industry, funding for defence start-ups, defence manufacturing corridors with special facilities, among others. India now has a large no-import defence items lists.

International treaty or not, 'friendships between countries' will always come second to a nation's own security and self-interest. The so called a global rules-based-order is of convenience. Self-sufficiency in food, fuel or alternate power (nuclear power) and arms manufacturing is crucial. Anything can be weaponised. From financial protocols like SWIFT, civilian airspace, social media, sporting bodies, properties abroad and bank holdings. Private companies (like Google, Facebook) will take political sides. Can't depend totally on Google maps. India must create its own. It is so important to have own global satellite navigation system. India realised and took this call many years back. In view of media based perception and narrative war, India needs to have more global media outlets and reach like the WION channel. It is time to get going full-scale on Atmanirbharta.

Courtesy: Indian Aerospace and Defence Bulletin

First published on 3 May 2022





# How Will Sanctions Against Russia Impact Indian Economy?

## Trade, Energy, Commerce and Space Affected

Dr D Bhalla, IAS

In a joint statement, on 26 February, the United States (US), the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK), Italy, Germany, France, and Canada agreed on restrictive measures that will prevent the Russian central bank from using its foreign exchange reserves to undermine the impact of the sanctions. They also decided to cut off some Russian banks from the SWIFT inter-banking system, a move meant to isolate Russia from global trade.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication or SWIFT is a messaging system that facilitates cross-border transactions in a timely manner and has become the backbone of international financial trade.

Further sanctions were imposed on Russia by more countries, including the US in the days that followed. The sanctions imposed this time are huge and unprecedented. These are far tougher sanctions than ever before with far more participation by countries.

The United States banned Russian oil imports and Britain said it will phase them out by year end, decisions expected to further disrupt the global energy market, where Russia is the second-largest exporter of crude.

The Indian government has been reviewing the sectors likely to be hit hardest by the sanctions imposed by the USA, NATO allies, EU countries and others against Russia for its invasion of Russia and devising mechanisms to deal with the blow. The sanctions will have a harsh impact on strategically important sectors in India, especially defence.



The government has been assessing the impact on a regular basis internally through an inter-ministerial dialogue, listing out all Russian entities that are covered under American, European as well as UN sanctions.

India and Russia — and its predecessor, the Soviet Union — have long maintained a strategic relationship centred on five main aspects: political, counter-terrorism, defence, civil nuclear

energy, and space.

### Bilateral trade between India & Russia

India's bilateral trade with Russia during 2020-21 amounted to \$8.1 billion. Indian exports totalled \$2.6 billion, while imports from Russia amounted to \$5.5 billion, according to the commerce ministry.

While India exports electrical machinery, pharmaceuticals, organic chemicals,



iron & steel, apparel, tea, coffee, and vehicle spare parts to Russia, it imports defence equipment, mineral resources, precious stones and metals, nuclear power equipment, fertilisers, electrical machinery, articles of steel and inorganic chemicals, from the country.

Russia is a storehouse for all kinds of natural resources and Europe heavily relies on Moscow for imports of oil and gas, aluminium and copper and other such items. Strong sanctions are intended to achieve objectives quickly, so that they can be lifted as soon as possible.

The sanctions will not only “deeply impact” India's defence trade with Russia, they will “adversely impact” New Delhi's trade with Moscow when it comes to other commodities such as engineering goods, automobile components, pharmaceuticals, telecom equipment and agricultural products.

Several Russian banks have opened branches in India. These include VTB, Sberbank, Vnesheconombank, Promsvazbank and Gazprombank. Similarly, the Commercial Bank of India LLC, which is a joint venture of two major Indian banks — SBI and Canara Bank — is providing banking services in Russia.

#### India-Russia payment mechanism

This is not the first time that economic sanctions have been imposed on Russia. In 2014, after Russia's annexation of Crimea, the US and other western nations imposed economic sanctions, limiting the dollar trade between Russia and the rest of the world.

In 2019, India selected Chennai-headquartered Indian Bank for transacting with Russian bank VTB for payments for their imports. The idea was that these banks would have the least exposure to the US currency. It is unclear whether Indian Bank will be used for transacting with Russia under the current sanctions.

The move to oust Russia from SWIFT may disrupt trade with India, particularly that for fertilisers, which are crucial for the country's agriculture sector.

There is already a rupee-ruble arrangement that exists for government-to-government transactions. Therefore, that is unlikely to be affected by these sanctions and may continue for most

Major Indian Imports from Russia (Percentage of Total Russian Exports to India)



45%  
Gems and Jewelry

8%  
Fertilizers

26%  
Others

5%  
Iron and Steel

12%  
Petroleum products

4%  
Paper products

Major Indian Exports to Russia (Percentage of Total Russian Imports from India)



53%  
Others

7%  
Beverages and spices

18%  
Pharmaceutical products

6%  
Aircrafts and parts

12%  
Machinery and parts

5%  
Organic chemicals

**“India may consider alternative payment mechanisms for exporters if the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues for a long time and critical trade sectors such as gems and jewellery face a problem in international cash transfer.”**

payments.

Even in the aftermath of Western sanctions on Iran in 2012 because of its nuclear programme, India had designated Kolkata-based UCO Bank as the payment bank for Iranian oil. The account maintained deposits in euros, avoiding exposure to the US banking system.

The crisis will have an immediate effect on defence deliveries in the absence of a

new payment mechanism. India has a longstanding cooperation with Russia in the field of defence.

India may consider alternative payment mechanisms for exporters if the Russia-Ukraine conflict continues for a long time and critical trade sectors such as gems and jewellery face a problem in international cash transfer. Diamonds account for about 50 per cent of India's gems and jewellery exports. Many manufacturers have made payments in euros.

Traders could also explore using the BRICS bank for routing the bilateral trade. One public sector bank could be a nodal bank to monitor the debits and credits.

#### Secondary Sanctions

If secondary sanctions are activated, India will be hit the hardest. Secondary sanctions are generally imposed by the US on non-American citizens who are found to be involved in dealing with certain activities such as “assisting, sponsoring or providing financial, material or technological support for, or goods or services to or





US and European sanctions on Russia could conceivably jeopardise India's recent \$375 million BrahMos cruise missile export order from the Philippines

in support of persons blocked pursuant to the Executive Order", notes US-based law firm Holland & Knight. CAATSA is an example of secondary sanction."

Secondary sanctions carry the potent threat of cutting off the company from all business with the US or US companies. No company would ever run the risk of ever attracting secondary sanctions.

## Impact on Energy Supplies

The current Russian invasion of Ukraine — unlike previous wars in Iraq and Libya or sanctions against Iran — has had an impact not just on energy prices. The effects of shipping disruptions through the Black and Azov Seas, plus Russian banks being cut off from the international payments system, are extending even to the global agri-commodities markets.

Russia is not only the world's third biggest oil (after the US and Saudi Arabia) and the second biggest natural gas (after the US) producer, besides the No. 3 coal exporter (behind Australia and Indonesia). It is also the second largest exporter of wheat. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA), in its most recent report on February 9, estimated the country's shipments for 2021-22 (July-June) at 35 million tonnes (mt), next only to the 37.5 mt of the whole of European Union.

At No. 4 position in wheat exports,

**“Russia has urged India to deepen its investments in the sanction-hit country's oil and gas sector, and is keen on expanding the sales networks of Russian companies in Asia's third-largest economy.”**

after EU, Russia and Australia (26 mt), is Ukraine, at 24 mt. Ukraine, moreover, is the world's third largest exporter of corn/maize, with a projected 33.5 mt in 2021-22, after the US (61.5 mt) and Argentina (42 mt). Ukraine and Russia are also the top two exporters of sunflower oil, at 6.65 mt and 3.8 mt, respectively in 2021-22, as per USDA. If that weren't all, Russia and its next-door ally Belarus are the world's No. 2 and No. 3 producers of muriate of potash (MOP) fertiliser, at 13.8 mt and 12.2 mt in 2020, respectively, behind Canada (22 mt).

It should not surprise, therefore, that Russia's war on Ukraine did not stop at driving up Brent crude to \$110-15/barrel and international coal prices to unprecedented \$440/tonne levels. The shutting down of ports in the Black Sea also sent

prices of wheat and corn traded at Chicago Board of Trade futures exchange soaring to their highest since March 2008 and December 2012, respectively.

## Coal imports

India's coal imports from Russia in March could be the highest in more than two years as Indian buyers continue buying the fuel from a market that is now increasingly isolated by sanctions.

Russia, usually India's sixth largest supplier of coking and thermal coal, could start offering more competitive prices to Chinese and Indian buyers as European and other customers spurn Russia because of sanctions. Trade could also be boosted by a rouble-rupee trading arrangement.

Russia has urged India to deepen its investments in the sanction-hit country's oil and gas sector, and is keen on expanding the sales networks of Russian companies in Asia's third-largest economy.

Russia's oil and petroleum product exports to India have approached \$1 billion, and there are clear opportunities to increase this figure

Indian state-run companies hold stakes in Russian oil and gas fields, while Russian entities including Rosneft own a majority stake in Indian refiner Nayara Energy. Some Indian companies also buy Russian oil.

## What does that mean for India?

Skyrocketing global prices have made Indian wheat exports very competitive and in a position to at least partially fill the void left by Russia and Ukraine. Wheat from Gujarat, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh were being delivered by rail wagons or trucks at warehouses near Kandla port at Rs 2,400-2,450 per quintal, as against Rs 2,100 hardly 15 days earlier. This was above the government's minimum support price (MSP) of Rs 2,015/quintal for the new crop that will arrive in the markets from mid-March.

The Ukraine crisis has also led to prices of vegetable oils and oilseeds skyrocketing. That includes not just sunflower and its immediate competitor, soyabean. Palm oil in Malaysia has hit all-time-highs, even scaling 7,000 ringgits-per-tonne levels. The benefits of it should flow to mustard



growers in Rajasthan and UP, who are set to market their crop in the coming weeks. Mustard prices are ruling at Rs 6,500-plus per quintal, which is again above the MSP of Rs 5,050.

Brent at \$110-115/barrel is also helping lift the prices of cotton (because of synthetic fibres becoming costlier) and agri-commodities that can be diverted for production of ethanol (sugar and corn) or bio-diesel (palm and soyabean oil). High prices (above MSP) and a good monsoon (hopefully) can act as an inducement for farmers to expand acreages under cotton, soyabean, groundnut, sesamum and sunflower in the upcoming kharif planting season. That will serve the cause of crop diversification—especially weaning farmers away from paddy, if not sugarcane.

But there is a flip side. The ongoing Black Sea tensions are impacting fertiliser prices as well. Take MOP, a nutrient that India wholly imports. Out of the total 5.09 mt that was imported in 2020-21, nearly a third came from Belarus (0.92 mt) and Russia (0.71 mt). With supplies from there virtually choked, more quantities would have to be procured from other origins such as Canada, Jordan and Israel.

International prices of other fertilisers (urea, di-ammonium phosphate and complexes) and their raw materi-

als/intermediates (ammonia, phosphoric acid, sulphur and rock phosphate), too, have gone up in the past one month and more. These commodities essentially track crude and gas prices. It doesn't help when China is also India's largest supplier of urea (Ukraine was No. 3 in 2020-21, after Oman) and second largest of DAP (after Saudi Arabia).

In short, the challenges that Ukraine will present in the coming days are going to be vastly different from those in the aftermath of Corona. And this war and the associated sanctions are also different from those experienced vis-à-vis Iraq, Libya and Iran. The effects are not confined to oil.

### Space Cooperation

India's dependence on Russian space technology has reduced over the past few decades, but the two countries continue to collaborate through the Indian space agency, ISRO, and its Russian counterpart, Roscosmos.

ISRO's first group of four astronaut candidates for the planned crewed Gaganyaan mission completed their training for spaceflight in Russia in March 2021. It's unclear how the war in Ukraine will affect ISRO's plans.

The four candidates underwent their

year-long training at Gagarin Research & Test Cosmonaut Training Center (GCTC) in Moscow, beginning in February 2020. Their training continued through the pandemic, concluding in 2021. Subsequently, they returned to Russia for spacesuit prototype testing.

In 2019, ISRO also announced a Technical Liaison Unit (ITLU) in Moscow to "enable effective technical coordination for timely interventions on diversified matters with Russia and neighbouring countries for realisation of the programmatic targets of ISRO". ISRO ITLUs already reportedly exist in Washington DC and Paris.

### Nuclear Power

In 2009, the two countries entered into a major nuclear deal, with Russia agreeing to install four nuclear reactors at Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu, and one in West Bengal. Two units at Kudankulam are currently operational, and the third and fourth units are being prepared for installation. Russia is also aiding with the ongoing construction of the fifth and sixth units.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: March 2022

## Glimpses from past Military Literature Festivals





## Russian Invasion is a Test of Indian Diplomacy Neutrality Viewed as Tilt Towards Russia

**Maj Gen Deepak K Mehta, Retd**

India's neutrality in the Russia-Ukraine War could be viewed as a tilt towards Russia. To be coveted for support by both sides provided both opportunities and challenges, and could help shape India's foreign policy postures to deal with the geopolitical turbulence that lies ahead.

The Russia-Ukraine clash made India walk a fine balance between a values-based foreign policy and stark geopolitical compulsions.

India cannot evade the economic impact of rise in prices of oil and several other commodities including agricultural products like refined oil.

US, Russia and China have wooed India to toe their line due to its global geopolitical standing, derived from its geography, size, population, economic and nuclear weapons.

### India's Initial Posture

Amid the Russian attack on Ukraine, Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed for an "immediate cessation of violence" in his phone call to Russian President Vladimir Putin on 24 Feb 2022 and called for concerted efforts from all sides to return to the path of diplomatic negotiations and dialogue. He expressed his "long-standing conviction that the differences between Russia and the NATO group can only be resolved through honest and sincere dialogue", the PMO said.

This was a fine balancing act as it called for "immediate cessation of violence" – something the Western bloc would appreciate.



Prime minister Narendra Modi spoke to president Putin on 24 Feb and president Zelenskyy on 26 Feb.

Earlier, India expressed "regret" – an upgrade from expressing "concern", but stopped short of condemnation of Russia's attack on Ukraine.

One of India's initial concerns was the Indian community in Ukraine, mostly medical students. Most were helped to leave through land borders in neighbouring countries – Poland, Romania, Hungary and Slovak Republic – and many were air-lifted back to India. India also sent humanitarian aid and medical supplies to war-hit Ukraine in the evacuation flights.

External Affairs minister S Jaishankar got calls from the EU's High Representative on Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell and British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss. The ambassadors of the G7 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK, and US) and Ukraine met in Delhi to express

solidarity on what they called "Russia's unjustifiable military aggression".

### UNSC Discussion

India sat on the fence and abstained on two UN Security Council resolutions. India's abstention gave it the option of reaching out to both sides to find a middle ground as well as ensure the safety of its citizens in Ukraine.

India's actions and statement during the discussion on United Nations Security Council Resolution, which sought to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, indicate that New Delhi saw it as an issue between NATO and Russia that should be resolved through dialogue. It abstained from the vote saying, "It is a matter of regret that diplomacy was given up. For these reasons, India has chosen to abstain from the resolution."

There was Western criticism over





India's underwhelming and insufficient response at the UN Security Council to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. response was described as 'careful, avoid angering Putin at all costs' which expose its unpreparedness to step up to major power responsibilities or be a dependable partner.

But the fine print of India's explanation for not voting and PM Modi's conversation with Vladimir Putin show that India did convey the need for Moscow to step back.

Both at the UNSC and during the Modi-Putin phone call, New Delhi underlined the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations and immediate cessation of violence and hostilities. At the same time, India's abstention showed its unwillingness to jump on the US bandwagon for a 'strong collective response' to the Russian invasion after witnessing the aftermath of previous such responses in Libya, Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan.

India's statement at the UN Security Council, made in an emergency meeting, said, "The Security Council had met two days ago and discussed the situation. We had called for urgent de-escalation of tensions and emphasized on sustained and focused diplomacy to address all issues concerning the situation."

"The situation is in danger of spiralling into a major crisis. We express our deep concern over the developments, which if not handled carefully, may well undermine the peace and security of the region." He called for "immediate de-escalation and refraining from any further key to India's engagements in Afghanistan.

### Growing Russia-China Proximity

India is worried about the Russia-China axis too. India is conscious that the hostility between the West and Russia is likely to push Moscow further in the direction of Beijing.

One of the key players which has been cautious in its response to the Ukraine crisis is China which is the real cause of worry for India. China seems to be gaining the most out of the situation.

Russia has carefully scripted an alternative path out, by increasingly courting China bilaterally and also at global forums. China and Russia are both



Minister of state for civil aviation Gen VK Singh meeting Indian student evacuees at a Polish airport

permanent members of the United Nations security council and between them have a bilateral trade relationship of nearly \$150 billion. Russia has carefully cultivated China (or vice versa) to develop an alternative "Russian" standard of international payment and settlement system.

What is worrying from India perspective is, the growing dependency of Russia on China for its survival which could turn the tables for India. India has had several decades of warm relationship with Russia, unhampered by regime changes. India's dependence on Russian military equipment is a well-known fact. Growing proximity between Russia and China is a potential threat for future.

Russia has been calibrated in its statements on issues China is sensitive to, such as Huawei's 5G rollout, Hong Kong and Covid-19. Beijing and Moscow, however, do not always see eye to eye with each other. China does not recognise Crimea as part of Russia, and Moscow, formally speaking, takes a neutral stance on Beijing's claims in the South China Sea.

Is it not possible that China can use Russia-like pluck and revised history to lay claim to large parts of Nepal and march up to the Terai region? What if Russia backs China's aggression in the future?

### Comments

There are no permanent friends nor

enemies; only permanent interests. Building cooperative relationships based on common interests will continue to provide the sinews of crafting India's strategy.

With pressure piling from the western bloc, led by the US, this is a test for New Delhi to make a strategic choice — principles and values on one side, and pragmatism and interests on the other side.

India's dependence on Russia and the US for strengthening its military preparations can be expected to be leveraged by both Moscow and Washington to pressurise New Delhi in terms of alignments on issues contested between them.

Strengthening India's military power is an imperative and not a choice that can depend on foreign policy initiatives or depend on the goodwill of others.

The global chessboard of geopolitics is a mix of issue-based cross-purposes and theatre-specific agendas that often generate asymmetric perceptions. After dragging its feet, fence-sitting on Ukraine, India needs a gameplan.

Modi will have to use all his political and diplomatic skills and continuously navigate between competing US and Russian demands to ensure that India's interests are protected.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: March 2022



# India's Defence Ties With Ukraine Hit

## Value of contracts was rising before the war

**An IMR Report**

**T**he Ukraine crisis outcome is uncertain and Russia's future status as a weapons provider means looking at alternatives.

India is carrying out a detailed assessment of its security interests as a result of the Russia-Ukraine War. Prime minister Narendra Modi and the National Security Advisor Ajit Doval have closely monitored the situation and reviewed the situation and options for India with the top security brass.

India has been a traditional recipient of the Russian military hardware while in the last few years, it has been buying a large amount of American weaponry too. Ukraine is also a source of a lot of military equipment and spares including the equipment for the Antonov-32 aircraft.

Till a few years ago, India was relying solely on Russia for its military requirements and over 70 per cent of its hardware was of Russian origin. However, with an aim of avoiding putting all eggs in one basket, India started buying American equipment too with over USD 20 billion procurements done in the last 15 years.

The more immediate crisis is that diverse Russian materiel is awaiting delivery to India, for which substantial payments have already been made, alongside continually needed spares and components for the in-service kit to keep the military adequately operational.



Many Indian Navy destroyers use gas turbine engines built by Zorya-Mashproekt Gas turbine plant in Mykolaiv, Ukraine, which has been destroyed

**“For India, Ukraine was becoming a vital partner. New Delhi had chosen to increase its reliance on Ukraine in the repair and modernization of Soviet weapons, which constitute a large part of all armaments of the Indian armed forces.”**

### **Dependence on Ukraine**

For India, Ukraine was becoming a vital partner. New Delhi had chosen to increase

its reliance on Ukraine in the repair and modernization of Soviet weapons, which constitute a large part of all armaments of the Indian armed forces.

New Delhi's decision to partner with Ukraine was a consequence of Russia's inability to fulfill part of its Indian contracts because of the breakdown of technical cooperation between Russia and Ukraine after Russian aggression in Crimea and the Donbass. Moscow's lack of access to the Ukrainian defense industry was costing the Russian defense sector dearly.

The Kremlin was extremely concerned about this, since the weakening of its position on the Indian market was not only a loss of profitable contracts, but also of geopolitical influence in an extremely important region.

Russia's reduced presence in India — resulting in part from Ukrainian defence competition — generated a vacuum that would inevitably be replaced by U.S. influence.

Russia failed to increase the quality of its weapons systems and provided regular deliveries of defective products. For example, more than half of the 210 Su-30MK fighter jets bought by Russia are inactive due to maintenance problems.

The Kremlin tried to discredit Ukraine as a reliable and honest partner. Russian propaganda and information campaigns were regularly carried out to spread the false narrative that Ukraine and its military-industrial complex produced defective products, were massively corrupt and engaged in illicit arms trafficking around the world.

The Ukrainian defence industry was steadily expanding its presence on the Indian armaments market — replacing Russia.

#### Contracts with Ukraine

There were 400 contracts between India and Ukraine. The most promising areas of cooperation included:

- Modernizing of Indian tanks and armored vehicles and equipping them with guided missiles.
- Modernizing Indian radars and air defense assets.
- Designing and manufacturing Indian ships of various classes.
- Supplying components for existing Indian ships and submarines.
- Maintaining Indian aircraft and helicopters.
- Implementing joint Ukrainian-Indian research and development projects.

A large part of the defence design bureaus and the manufacturing facilities of the erstwhile Soviet Union are now in Ukraine. Ukraine had also shown interest in participating in other hi-tech programmes of the Indian Armed Forces, such as in supply of anti-UAV systems and upgrade programme of tanks which are in the pipeline.

Russia's aggression has hit a multiplicity of Ukrainian contracts, like the upgrade of around 60 IAF Antonov An-32 'Cline' transport aircraft, the supply of critical R-27 air-to-air missiles for Su-



Ukraine chalet at Aero India 2021. The Ukrainian defence industry was steadily expanding its presence on the Indian armaments market.

**“ In 2009 India signed a \$397.7 million contract with Ukraine for the upgrade of the 105 Soviet Era An-32 aircraft. However, in 2014, the Crimean crisis ruptured ties between Ukraine and Russia, throwing the contract in jeopardy.”**

30MKIs and the transfer of eight Zorya-Mashproekt M7N1EW gas turbines to power the Navy's four under-construction Talwar-class frigates. Two of these were being built at Russia's Yantar Shipyard and two at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), under a transfer of technology pact. The Ukrainian engines for the former two warships had reportedly been transferred to Russia, but not the ones intended for GSL.

In the past too, Russia-Ukraine conflicts have led to delays in the modernization of the Indian Air Force's An-32 transport fleet. In 2009 India signed

a \$397.7 million contract with Ukraine for the upgrade of the 105 Soviet Era An-32 aircraft. However, in 2014, the Crimean crisis ruptured ties between Ukraine and Russia, throwing the contract in jeopardy. India has signed several high profile defence deals with both Russia and Ukraine.

The extent of damage to Ukraine's military infrastructure is yet to be ascertained. It has to be assessed if the production lines for supply of spares for the various equipment and weapon systems in use with the Indian Armed Forces are operational or have seen damages in the conflict.

Some of the critical equipment that get their spares from Ukraine include the 130mm medium guns, spares for T-72 tanks as well as the T-90 tanks, the OSA-AK surface-to-air missile system, and Tunguska anti-aircraft weapon system.

Unlike Russia, payments to Ukraine will not be as affected since the country is paid in dollars and not facing any sanction.

Ukraine was also aiming to bag a contract from India on the upgrade of Smerch multiple rocket launcher system.

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# Spurred by Weak Western Response in Ukraine India Could Face a More Belligerent China

Maj Gen Deepak K Mehta, Retd

**T**he Ukraine War has shifted attention and focus of the West, away from the Indo-Pacific, from China's rise and the threat China poses to the existing world order.

India will have to grapple with a more belligerent China along its northern borders as a fallout of the Ukraine crisis. The Indian and Chinese armies have been locked in a border standoff since May 2020 along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in eastern Ladakh. Since then, the two sides held several rounds of military and diplomatic which have only resulted in partial disengagement of troops from friction points.

So far, India has walked the diplomatic tightrope between the US and Russia, given its own strategic compulsions. Warding off pressure from the US and its European allies to strongly oppose Russia's invasion of Ukraine, is a matter by itself. India hopes that purchase of the five S-400 Triumf surface-to-air missile squadrons, under the \$5.43 billion (Rs 40,000 crore) contract inked with Russia in October 2018, was an "urgent national security requirement" to counter aggressive neighbours like China and Pakistan. Hence, the US will not impose sanctions under CAATSA (Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act), which seeks to prevent countries from buying Russian weapons, by mounting a major diplomatic-military campaign with both the Trump and Biden administrations.

On the China front, India will need to keep an eagle-eye on the annual exercises of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) in



Chinese and Pakistan armies have exercised jointly both in Pakistan and China.

**“The ongoing confusion over the war in Ukraine could impact the LAC situation, as sanctions could drive Moscow into a 'Chinese embrace'. In that case, India would have to deal with the PLA threat by itself.”**

March-April along the 3,488-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) and be “prepared for any contingencies.

In addition to the stalemate along the LAC, the IA could face the emergence of

another front on its western flank from China's 'willing' affiliate Pakistan, with the aim of dividing India's already over-stretched forces and equally strained financial and equipment resources.

As it is, the PLA has shown no signs of de-escalating the 21-month-long troop confrontation in eastern Ladakh, even as it has systematically strengthened its military positions and infrastructure all along the LAC.

With the attention of the US-led West diverted to Russia's invasion of Ukraine instead of countering China in the Indo-Pacific, an emboldened Beijing is likely to indulge in muscle-flexing along the LAC, especially in the Arunachal sector.

Apart from conventional military capabilities, China's focus on space, cyberspace and “informatized” and



"intelligentized" warfare has been a major concern for India.

"China's latest demonstration of physically moving one of its disabled satellites into the graveyard orbit is bringing in newer threats in the race to weaponise the space domain, a domain hitherto considered relatively safe," IAF chief Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari said at a seminar on 24 February.

#### Quad's Focus

Furthermore, the inchoate and nebulous preemptive deterrent instrumentality like the naval-focused Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, initiated in 2007-08 as a China-containment strategy, and one which included Australia, Japan and the US, has, in its new avatar, proven ineffectual in discouraging Beijing's adventurism in Ladakh. Besides, all four Quad members are now preoccupied with dealing with the fallout from Ukraine's invasion and bracing themselves for a unified China-Russia front, in which the latter's military technology, expertise and know-how would be more aggressively mated and advanced by a financially flush and industrially forward Beijing.

India should now forcefully use its considerable diplomatic clout and its deep friendships on all sides to end the conflict and stabilise the region. The additional advantage in such a solution would be to persuade India's strategic partners including its Quad partners to turn back their focus on China and the Indo-Pacific.

#### Beijing-Moscow Axis

The ongoing confusion over the war in Ukraine could impact the LAC situation, as sanctions could drive Moscow into a 'Chinese embrace'. In that case, India would have to deal with the PLA threat by itself. And to do so it needs to summarily and significantly augment its economic and military capabilities.

India could well end up facing the brunt of this deadly security partnership between Moscow, Beijing and Islamabad. Pakistani prime minister Imran Khan's meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow on February 25, within hours of the latter having ordered his army's mobilisation against Kyiv, was 'significant.' It had



Indian and US Armies conducted the 18th edition of military exercise Yudh Abhyas on 14-31 October 2022, at Auli, Uttarakhand

**“India's 'nightmare scenario' is Washington deciding to confront a greater threat from Russia in its European backyard than from China, and opting for a strategic accommodation with Beijing.”**

firmly secured Putin's eastern flank, with the exception of India, which had opted to remain neutral. It is apposite to recall that Putin lifted sanctions on Pakistan in 2014, sold it Mi-35M Hind-E attack helicopters and conducted joint exercises with its army near Peshawar in October 2018.

India's 'nightmare scenario' is – Washington deciding to confront a greater threat from Russia in its European backyard than from China, and opting for a strategic accommodation with Beijing. Or the US conceding Chinese dominance in Asia to safeguard its European flank from an expansionist Russia.

#### India's Options

India needs to forge long-term

alliances with advanced materiel producing countries to eventually replace Russian equipment, in addition to 'realistically' beefing up its domestic defence manufacturing.

The government's disjointed and ad hoc approach to fostering military capability development has to stop. The MoD needs to optimise scarce financial resources and focus on immediate security threats and not on optics, like the recent strident official announcement that Indian industry had indigenised the manufacture of assorted military-grade nuts and bolts.

Instead of half-baked measures, India must make self-reliance in military requirements a concrete national mission, along with a special thrust on space, cyberspace and special operations. Moreover, a robust nuclear deterrence is required to deter all adversaries.

The ongoing situation on northern Borders warrants the Indian Army to re-align the operational tasking of its reserve formations to focus on the northern borders and refine warfighting capabilities in high altitude mountainous terrain.

India uneasily awaits the next Chinese misadventure on its borders. Unlike Ukraine, India is alone.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published: March 2022



# Stay Neutral in Russia's War India Following Principle of International Relations

**Lt Gen (Dr) Prakash Menon, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Retd**

**T**he fear generated by the global rampages of the Covid-19 pandemic looks set to be substituted by Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine. Indeed, it holds the potential to deepen ongoing global geopolitical confrontation between the United States and its allies on one side and the China-Russia combine on the other. The reverberations of the invasion and the reaction to them – though largely confined to economic sanctions at present – will have global ramifications and India cannot remain unaffected.

India's actions and statement during the discussion on United Nations Security Council Resolution, which sought to condemn Russia's invasion of Ukraine, indicate that New Delhi still sees it as an issue between NATO and Russia that should be resolved through dialogue. It abstained from the vote saying, "It is a matter of regret that diplomacy was given up. For these reasons, India has chosen to abstain from the resolution."

Considering that the invasion blatantly violates international laws, India's neutrality can also be viewed as a tilt towards Russia. Prior to the vote, President Vladimir Putin had spoken to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US officials had also reached out to India. To be coveted for support by both sides is what India should take note of because it provides a glimpse of both opportunities and challenges, and could help shape India's foreign policy postures to deal with the geopolitical turbulence that lies ahead.

## **Towards a cooperative relationship**

The preference to deal with military aggression through economic sanctions



Indian tanker Sunny Liger carrying Russian oil was denied service at both Swedish and the Netherlands ports in April 2022

**“The preference to deal with military aggression through economic sanctions may provide limited relief regarding the possibilities of a future war between NATO and Russia.”**

may provide limited relief regarding the possibilities of a future war between NATO and Russia. However, India cannot evade the economic impact of rise in prices of oil and several other commodities including agricultural products like refined oil. India has held back from hiking fuel prices despite global rise in the price of oil mainly due to the ongoing assembly elections. It will have to brace itself for further

inflation and the struggling economy can be expected to face additional headwinds.

India's dependence on Russia and the US for strengthening its military preparations can be expected to be leveraged by both Moscow and Washington to pressurise New Delhi in terms of alignments on issues contested between them. Currently, both are open to providing arms and military equipment but retain the option in different degrees to withhold spares and maintenance support. This strategic vulnerability is not easy to tackle in the short term and will play an inevitable role in adoption of India's foreign policies on issues at stake and more importantly in shaping its national security strategy.

Building cooperative relationships based on common interests will continue to provide the sinews of crafting India's strategy. In a world that is increasingly





slipping into coalition building mode, accompanied by an unbridled arms race, India has to deal with cross-cutting relations and the contradictions that arise from it. India, therefore, finds itself in varied political machinations that involve nations on either side of the global political divide. The recently renewed interest in India-Australia-US-Japan Quad indicated a shift in New Delhi's policy towards a cooperative relationship with Washington and its allies. This keeps an uneasy balance with India's membership in the BRICS, SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) and RIC.

In terms of grand strategy, India's interests are better served if it does not get involved in what are essentially the fights between various nations. India ought not to view the contemporary global churn as an ideological confrontation between liberalism and authoritarianism. Instead, as long as the international system is based on Westphalian sovereignty, any attempts that seek domination to undermine India's sovereignty must be the central concern. The contemporary worsening of relations with China are currently besieged by Beijing's attempt to dominate political and geographic spaces that are perceived in India as violation of the principle of sovereignty.

#### **Walking a tightrope**

The possibility that the US, Russia and China are mindful of India's alignment on various international issues may be indicative of India's relative weight on the global geopolitical scales. It is perhaps derived from the endowments of India's geography, size, population, economic and strategic wherewithal that include its nuclear weapons.

The worsening of US-Russian relations and the growing proximity between Russia and China has a major impact on India's external strategy. While calls for joining or moving closer to the US-led bloc are probably gaining traction in India's foreign policy discourse, there is the need for caution to go down that path.

The caution emerges from the first principle of international relations that there are no permanent friends nor enemies. This principle, if embraced,



Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev walk before a meeting of the council of heads of the SCO at Samakand, 16 Sep 2022

**“The worsening of US-Russian relations and the growing proximity between Russia and China has a major impact on India's external strategy. While calls for joining or moving closer to the US-led bloc are probably gaining traction in India's foreign policy discourse, there is the need for caution to go down that path.”**

supports the notion that India's preference for strategic partnerships is better suited than getting into any alliance relationship. In an alliance, a nation is committed to fight others' battles and weakens its ability to maintain strategic autonomy. On the other hand, the cornerstone of a strategic partnership is based on context. Therefore, India can team up with China on climate change, with the US on nuclear proliferation, and

remain neutral on Ukraine. India's multi-alignments as a strategy involving tightrope walking can perhaps be better described as one of being a bachelor/spinster leading a politically promiscuous existence.

The situation in Ukraine is still unfolding and Russia has surprisingly put its nuclear forces on alert. For India, it provides enough signals that when it comes to war, assistance from friends and partners are at best in forms that cannot provide succour to confront the power of military force where violence can kill, destroy or maim. Shaping and strengthening India's military power must, therefore, be independent of political calls to eschew violence and diplomatic attempts to maintain peace. Such calls can fall on deaf ears and diplomacy can fail.

For India, an effective military as the sword of the political leadership is an imperative and not a choice that can depend on foreign policy initiatives or the goodwill of others. Friends can help sharpen the sword but to expect them to fight for us is unrealistic. War in Ukraine speaks loudly of such reality. India must take the cue.

*Lt Gen (Dr) Prakash Menon (retd) is Director, Strategic Studies Programme, Takshashila Institution*

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## Learning From the Ukraine War

# Applying Lessons in the India-China Context

**Lt Gen PS Rajeshwar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Retd**

**T**he Ukraine War has been in progress since Feb 2022 and has affected the globe in many ways. While Russia chose to carry out a 'special military operation' in Ukraine, the genesis of the war can be traced back almost three decades ago. The seeds of the conflict had been sowed by the West in the aftermath of the Cold War with the retention of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), though the erstwhile Soviet Union stood dismantled in 1991. As the NATO membership expanded, its military alliance has almost doubled, making Russia increasingly insecure, finally resulting in this conflict. The impact is ubiquitous with shortages created in energy, food and fertilisers, disruption of global trade and security links, apart from dire economic and political consequences for nations severely hit by the pandemic.

India too has been facing the threat of a conflict with China since mid-2020, when the PLA, in a sudden operation in Eastern Ladakh, violated laid down agreements and existing protocols that had maintained peace on our northern borders. As is the Chinese wont, they put the onus of their aggressive actions on India's building of roads and bridges close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Some analysts also attributed it to India changing suo motu the status quo in Ladakh to a Union Territory. As a result, India has had to deploy substantial forces there to rebuild deterrence, which had diminished. The Ukraine war is being closely studied by India, China, and a number of other nations to derive contemporary lessons which are



**Indian Army soldiers display the tri-colour at Galwan in Ladakh**

applicable in various conflict scenarios.

### The Strategic Lessons

There are a number of takeaways at the strategic level as under:

- First, nations irrespective of their power can develop a deep sense of insecurity, which might become acute if lack of strategic communication or misperceptions about an adversary's intentions gain ground.
- Second, a series of military coercion manoeuvres spread over a long time connotes Hybrid War but a belligerent could use them as a prelude to initiate a conflict or a full-scale war as is taking place now. More importantly, conventional wars between nations can happen despite their deep economic links. Adverse financial and economic consequences are

then inevitable.

- Third, political aims in a war have to be based on own military capabilities vis-à-vis the adversary's (including those of its allies). Inaccurate assessments could lead to huge setbacks, forcing a hard reset of politico-military goals. "Wars are initiated based on a political aim, but the unpredictability of conflict often leads to the purpose not being immediately or wholly achieved. In these circumstances, what constitutes success for both sides can determine the future course of a war".
- Fourth, Russia has been greatly hampered by technological sanctions. "The United States has led our allies in banning the export of semiconductors to Russia. Since Moscow lacks its own advanced chip manufacturing capacity, without imports the Russian military





cannot replenish its precision-guided munitions".

- India's imports from Russia could now get delayed. Further, the Indian 'defence industrial complex' too will need to secure their hi-tech material supplies, having been tasked with domestic orders and desired defence exports.

Finally, while nations may plan for short and swift wars, once a war begins, its duration cannot be predicted. More so, when both sides here have hardened their stance, desire complete victory and are not prepared to negotiate. "Gen Mark Milley told Congress on Tuesday that he believed the Russia-Ukraine war would be a "very protracted" conflict." Hence it will be necessary for any nation with threatened borders to build national resilience in peace which lasts through the conflict. This demands a 'Whole of Nation' approach where risks are identified, strategies made and necessary capabilities developed.

#### The Military Lessons

Drones have played a huge role in the Ukraine War gathering data for assisting operational level assessments to execute tactical kinetic engagements. "Ukraine has made extensive use of drones, from the Turkish-made Bayraktar TB-2 to hobbyist drones supporting civil resistance. [...] Russia appears to have stepped up its efforts, employing systems like the Orlan-10 and the KUB-BLA loitering munition. Drones have been used in a wide variety of roles from carrying out strikes to guiding artillery and recording video that feeds directly into information operations". India has aptly developed a vibrant policy to encourage the nascent drone industry. The Armed Forces will need to be innovative in the use of drones, train properly and adapt their application to combat situations. With the proliferation of drones there is a need to take a de novo look at the concepts of air superiority and air space management.

The reliance of Russians on artillery is well documented. Once the operations were focussed on Donbas Region, they resorted to attritional warfare in which guns, missiles, and rockets took centre stage. "Artillery is one of the most



The 9A52-2T Smerch multiple launch rocket system. Indian fire power is mainly of Russian origin

**“The reliance of Russians on artillery is well documented. Once the operations were focussed on Donbas Region, they resorted to attritional warfare in which guns, missiles, and rockets took centre stage.”**

important components of Russian operations, and in terms of lethal capabilities it has become Russia's mission-critical force multiplier[...] Russian artillery is generally able to bring accurate artillery fire down on targets 3 to 5 minutes after UAV reconnaissance has identified them, but if a target is identified with EW direction finding, acoustic reconnaissance or counterbattery artillery radar, it will take Russian artillery approximately half an hour to bring inaccurate artillery fire to bear." We may have to reiterate the effective employment and synergy of firepower in our land doctrine.

The Russian cyber operations have often targeted Ukraine's critical infrastructure, independent of their kinetic attacks, but seem to have been

blunted due to continuous hardening of cyber defence by US tech companies and military cyber warriors. "Once conflict begins, cyber becomes much less useful. Physical attacks are more disruptive than cyber-attacks." Our armed forces, therefore, must secure the portion of cyberspace that they operate in during peace and war.

Information operations have become a key part of war outcomes. "Videos from the battlefield, leaked drone surveillance, and other forms of digital communications have made Russia's invasion of Ukraine the most internet-accessible war in history, turning Twitter, TikTok, and other internet platforms into primary sources of news on the war." The use of internet by Ukraine, enabled in good measure by Space X Star Link terminals, by military and civilians alike has become a huge force-multiplier.

We seem to have reached an inflection point in the traditional domains of warfare wherein each country has to seriously reassess the type of weapon platforms that they need to develop henceforth. "At a conceptual level, the promise of the small-versus-the big, of the modern battlefield, has to be explored by India's military planners. The shifting character of war favouring small platforms over big ones can work in India's favour if we can first decide at the Joint Services doctrinal level, the theory of application of the





Chinese spy ship Yuan Wang 5 is able to track missiles and satellites, docked in Sri Lanka on 16 August

concept for India's future battlefields." This aspect demands urgent examination by each of our three Services.

The man behind the machine continues to be the biggest factor in combat. "Another issue which has contributed to Russia's military woes is the low quality of its conscript force. Indeed, Ukraine has even turned images of Russian POW conscripts being allowed to call their mothers into a weapon in its information warfare." In our case, it is imperative that new recruits (Agniveers) are well and fully trained to ensure success in battle.

## The India - China Context

While the Ukraine war has brought war to Europe again, the challenges faced in South Asia, particularly by India, have been frequent and much greater. Dr S Jaishankar, our External Affairs Minister put it this way "Ukraine is not a precedent for China; such events have been underway in Asia for the past decade. So, this is a wake-up call for Europe to start looking at Asia. This is a part of the world with unsettled boundaries, terrorism, and continuous challenges to the rules-based order. The rest of the world has to recognise that problems are not going to happen, but that they are happening."

Following the 2020 Eastern Ladakh incident, India and China have maintained

**“In the last decade, China has been testing the waters from time to time. Its recent air violations and provocations for over a month in Eastern Ladakh and movement of research and survey vessel Yuan Wang 5 to Hambantota.”**

considerable armed forces opposite each other, and the situation is volatile and prone to escalation. "India and China failed to make any breakthrough in resolving outstanding issues on the remaining friction points in eastern Ladakh at the 16th round of military talks but agreed to maintain dialogue to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution at the earliest".<sup>16</sup> Disengagement has been achieved at Pangong Tso, Galwan and now PP 15, but it seems to be a long journey ahead for any resolution at Depsang and Demchok.

The imbroglio is summed up by Shri Shivshankar Menon, our former National Security Advisor. "Unlike past confrontations and face-offs, the framing of the (India - China 2020 border) crisis by

China as a sovereignty dispute - rather than as a border dispute which would be solved by give and take - makes it harder to settle". Moreover, the issue becomes acute considering that CPEC traverses close to the LAC.

China has a penchant for building a narrative about its belligerent behaviour. This is evident from Gen Wei Fenghe's statement at the Shangri La Dialogue. "China adopts a military strategy of active defence. China's military strategy adheres to the principles of defence, self-defence and post-strike response. It stresses that we will not attack unless attacked, but we will surely counterattack if attacked". China is likely to keep the LAC simmering for a long time, not only locking India's military power on its northern borders but also constraining development of maritime capabilities to counter an expanding PLA Navy presence in the IOR. We need to protect our territorial integrity and sovereignty by building a credible deterrence and steadily developing our military capabilities.

In the last decade, China has been testing the waters from time to time. Its recent air violations and provocations for over a month in Eastern Ladakh and movement of research and survey vessel Yuan Wang 5 to Hambantota, have affected Indian security interests adversely. Any increase in such acrimonious behaviour could ensue in the future and will have to be countered firmly.

Chinese scholars mostly view the Ukraine war in the context of the US as an adversary. "The Russia-Ukraine military conflict is another watershed event in the three decades since the end of the Cold War, in terms of the international security order, the major power dynamics and world economic development." The Chinese have surely drawn important lessons from the war. Their recent belligerence against Taiwan is part of hybrid warfare arising out of concerns about their 'One China' policy, perhaps encouraged by US ambiguity to get involved at this stage.

Doklam and Galwan incidents appear to have galvanised the Chinese to rapidly build up their military infrastructure on our northern borders. "Within its western regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, China is





**Capt Soiba Maningba Rangnamei of 16 Bihar Regiment during the clash with Chinese soldiers in the Galwan valley, Ladakh in June 2020**

constructing and upgrading dozens of airports and heliports - a large majority of which are military or dual-use facilities. Additionally, China is supplementing its airpower expansion with new roads, rail, and other infrastructure that are upgrading the PLA's logistics capabilities and enabling more rapid movement of troops, weaponry, and equipment." Further, a number of training exercises and live fire drills are happening to upgrade PLA combat skills opposite us. This portends military coercion in the future which could escalate into a full-fledged conflict.

All the while, it would be prudent to remain abreast of threats emerging out of Sino-Pak collusion, as envisaged by Sardar Patel over seven decades ago. "While our western and non-western threat to security is still as prominent as before, a new threat has developed from the north and north-east. Thus, for the first time, after centuries, India's defence has to concentrate itself on two fronts simultaneously".<sup>21</sup> This implies the need to use leverage with our strategic partners and ensure that Pakistan does not open another front in the event where China forces us into a conflict.

### **A Comprehensive View**

The context in which the Ukraine war is being fought happens to be quite different from the situation obtaining in case of the India-China context. Yet, there is much to

learn from this modern war to strengthen our deterrence and prevent any conflict on the northern borders. Some of the lessons learned, enumerated earlier, have already begun to be absorbed by the armed forces. In addition, certain other measures will help to build national security comprehensively.

The articulation of a National Security Strategy by a confident nation deserves the utmost attention, wherein a 'Whole of Nation' approach will end in success. It should address threats that include low intensity conflict, hybrid war and conventional war under a nuclear backdrop. Escalation dynamics will have to be thought through. This will galvanise all stakeholders, i.e., government and private sectors apart from civil society in contributing positively towards national security.

The country's resilience needs to be geared up meaningfully for the challenges ahead well in time. Peace-time efforts in strengthening our food, energy, material and technological stocks, and their supply chains then becomes crucial. It will greatly help the nation to absorb, adapt and respond to risks and setbacks that they would deal with in any conflict.

The armed forces are the primary instrument available to be employed in any war. Therefore, their combat edge has to be kept sharp. In our case, no stone should be left unturned in equipping and arming them within the timeframes that

we envisage a conflict to take place. This also means enhancing defence budgets to look after our continental and maritime ambitions. Atmanirbhar Bharat is a good step in building defence self-reliance which can be sufficiently augmented if we technologically collaborate with friendly countries.

For the armed forces, jointmanship and integration is a sine qua non for victory in a conflict. The urgent appointment of the CDS, therefore, becomes vital. A joint doctrine, integrated capability development and an overarching tri-services training philosophy will then need serious deliberation. The new domains of cyber, space and electromagnetic spectrum need to be given greater impetus if we are to fight successfully in a multi-domain environment.

### **Conclusion**

The Ukraine war has created an inflection point in global geopolitics. Most nations have to pick sides. India has clearly articulated its stance on the war which appears to be resonating well with most nations. A number of lessons are being learned at various levels of conflict and combat management. This conventional war was neither anticipated nor does it appear near any resolution soon. National security strategies of many nations are consequently being revised. China has been posing a grave threat to India over the last two years. Its belligerent behaviour and contentious build up towards our northern borders forebode a conflict. Building a credible deterrence against her is imperative. It thus becomes essential to invest in developing visible capabilities now rather than face an adverse situation arising due to their dearth. The takeaways from the Ukraine war and their swift implementation will go a long way in strengthening our nation and the armed forces, should we be pushed into any conflict.

*Lt Gen PS Rajeshwar commanded the Andaman & Nicobar Command and was the CISC later.*

Courtesy: USI Journal  
First published in Sep 2022



# Drones are changing warfare faster than war doctrines

## New Technologies Are in the Driving Seat

### New War Doctrines Will Follow

**Gen MM Naravane, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Retd**

**A**s the conflict in Ukraine enters its ninth month, the parties to the conflict have only hardened their respective positions. After attacks on strategic infrastructure like the Nord Stream pipeline and the Kerch bridge there is now an upping of the nuclear ante, amply demonstrating the widening dimensions of the conflict.

This war has brought to fore the urgent need to re-assess war-fighting doctrines and techniques, especially as armies the world over are always accused of training for and fighting as they did in the last war. While that may well be true it is also an unjust accusation – because it is near impossible to predict the character of future wars. The problem has only been exacerbated by the rapid pace of technological change and the inability of doctrines to keep pace with this change.

- In the past, military necessity and doctrines spurred innovation and technological developments.
- The roles have been reversed now, with technology-driven products hitting the shelves first, and doctrines being formulated or re-aligned to see how these new 'products' fit into the overall military capability development matrix.
- In World War I, the military necessity of breaking the stalemate caused by trench warfare, led to the development of the tank.
- In World War II, the requirement of being able to detect incoming German aircraft and scramble fighters in response,



Iranian kamikaze drones supplied to Russia and used effectively in the Ukraine War

led to the development of the radar.

- The doctrinal aspects of their battlefield employment were also in place by the time these products actually rolled out.

Fast forward to today. Drones or quadcopters, as we see and understand today, started making their appearance in the late 1990s, early 2000s. It was only a matter of time before these were modified for military applications and used for everything from surveillance to kamikaze attacks.

**Era of drones:** The point is that the technology came first, and now militaries the world over are scrambling to evolve doctrines that incorporate both drone as

well as counter-drone warfare. If the 20th century was witness to the see-saw battle between tank and anti-tank systems, the 21st century is going to be between drone and counter-drone systems.

Strategists and military planners and a plethora of think tanks the world over could not predict at the beginning of this century that just two decades later, drones and other unmanned systems would change the entire character of warfare.

The use of armed drones and other cutting-edge technologies in the ongoing Ukraine conflict has only brought into sharper focus the changing character of war in all domains. There is therefore a need to re-assess threat perceptions,







Russian military vehicles marked with the V symbol bombed by Ukrainian troops

future battlefield scenarios and consequent effects on force structuring and capability development, across the entire spectrum of conflict.

Just as the advent of the machine gun spelt the end of the era of cavalry, are these new technologies heralding the end of what were the mainstays of the 20th-century battlefield – main battle tanks, manned aircraft and large surface ships? The vulnerabilities of all three have been amply exposed and unmanned alternatives are already under testing. That is not to say that these platforms will simply disappear, but that they will have to evolve and adapt to the changing contours of the future.

Complex weapon systems and platforms take decades of R&D and once introduced into service continue for another three to four decades. Platforms being fielded now should be relevant well into 2050 and beyond.

Will they? Systems at the drawing board stage will have to be even more futuristic if they have to be around at the turn of the next century. This calls for a truly transformative approach with a dynamic interplay between doctrine and technology so that the armed forces get what they need and do not have to adapt to what is available by default.

- The recently concluded DefExpo 2022 saw a vast array of defence equipment and products on display.

- How many of them will still be relevant in the decades to come remains to be seen.

- What has not changed, however, is the primeval nature of war.

- The blood and gore, the death and destruction, and the humanitarian crisis that it leaves in its wake.

- What has also not changed is the centrality of land in all formulations.

**Defending land:** TR Fehrenbach, writing about the Korean War, had said, “Land is the persistent place where human beings become civilised and preserve the fullness of their humanity ... if you desire to protect it ... you must do this on the ground ... by putting young men into the mud.”

Technology will never ever supplant the necessity of having ‘boots on ground’. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is essentially about territory. If war is the means to achieve political ends, then that end translates to territory – its integrity and sovereignty – which can only be achieved by physical presence.

China could not prevent the speaker of the US House of Representatives, Nancy Pelosi, from landing in Taiwan. Simply because it did not have control of the land. That’s what war has been, is, and will be about – physical occupation of land.

Courtesy: Times of India  
First published on Oct 27, 2022

## Sanctions Against Russia

Contd from page 56

- **Reconstruction Costs.** Once the war is over there will be the huge costs of recreation of civilian infrastructure and rebuilding of devastated cities and towns.

### Global Impact

- **Erosion of Trust in Global Financial Governance.** Severe erosion of trust in global financial Institutions and governance will lead to a collapse of globalisation or at best a sharp polarisation between East and West.

- **Possibility of De-Dollarisation of Global Oil Trade.** As countries are forced to pay in local currencies or in Yuans. China is paying in Yuans and India in Rupee-Rouble terms.

- **Elevated Energy Prices will cause a High Level of Inflation.** (6% or more). This in turn could induce a recession at the global level. Chinese economy is taking down the Asian economy (due to Covid) and the US economy could drag the global economy into a recession.

- **Food Crisis & Famines.** Russia and Ukraine, between themselves, were exporting the bulk of food grains (wheat, barley, maize) as also cooking oil (sunflower oil). The prices of fertilisers will also impact food prices. Due to the heat wave, India has been forced to temporarily halt food grains export. The countries of the Middle East, Africa and Latin America could be severely impacted. Somalia receives almost all food grains imported from Ukraine and Russia and will soon face a disaster. This and other countries could face famines and severe food shortages - especially in Egypt, Algeria and some Latin American countries.

- **Double Whammy.** Covid and Ukraine have delivered a double whammy to the global economy. Covid induced financial stimulus packages have severely curtailed the fiscal space to now deal with any global recession. The reckless eastward expansion of NATO has entrained a disastrous series of unintended consequences, which are now clearly threatening the global economy not just with recession but severe stagflation.

Courtesy: Indian Military Review  
First published:

# Diplomacy in Defining the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

Lt Gen AB Shivane, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Retd

## Geopolitics Redefining International Relations

The twentieth-century Cold War era defined the great power rivalry and competing spheres of influence in an essentially bipolar world balanced by nuclear deterrence. However, the twenty-first century has been redefined by the United States (US)-led western brand of exceptionalism, Chinese belligerence, and Russia's resurgence sowing seeds of a multipolar strategic contestation in which all instruments of national power have been weaponised. It has also seen the rise of nations like India from the passivism of the galleries to activism in the global playfield based on national values and interests.

In this fragile geostrategic canvas, the Ukrainian conflict has not only accelerated global instability but is redefining the global order and creating new polarities. While the friction is embedded in the historical and geopolitical context the narratives are built around the expansion of spheres of influence or regaining perceived historically lost influence – in short, the US NATOfication, Russia's Russification, and China's Salamification. Foreign policy and diplomatic resilience of nations thus face Hobson's choice in pursuance of principled and pragmatic international relations.

## Key Geostrategic Trends of the Twenty-first Century

Five key geostrategic trends define this contemporary geostrategic canvas and its global implications.<sup>1</sup> These are as follows:

- International relations and liberal international order are not a linear trajectory but it's all about slants and crosses. It is now about managing the realignment of power rather than the balance of power and addressing a



US President Joe Biden, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and Russian President Vladimir Putin.

**“The Ukrainian conflict has not only accelerated global instability but is redefining the global order and creating new polarities.”**

multitude of threats to humanity much beyond just conflict. The art of international relations in the twenty-first century is thus to leverage the geopolitical opportunities for the furtherance of national interest through agile, flexible, and adaptive diplomacy. Further, the reality of new players in this concert of global diplomacy and their role in shaping global peace and prosperity cannot be side-lined.

- The world is seeing a transition to a multi-engagement order world order shaped by competition to secure strategic

connectivity with overlapping and often conflicting spheres of influence. However, it's not the model which is important but its elements that will determine not only war and peace but also the future stability of global energy, food security, global supply chain, financial system, environment security, health care, human rights, etc. Unlike, the nineteenth or twentieth century models, the twenty-first-century globalisation model will have a lot more geometry in terms of the participants who will promote decentralised approaches to global cooperation. Covid 19, Chinese coercive diplomacy, and the Ukraine conflict have established the need for decentralised globalisation. Conflict and lack of trust will thus result in decentralised investment and trade and usher in a retreat from the global interdependency model of globalisation wherein production centres were concentrated in the hands of a few.<sup>2</sup>

- Conventional wars are here to stay and





the twenty-first-century wars are never-ending wars with an ambiguous notion of victory or defeat. Hard power remains the most potent deterrence and respected instrument of national power. Yet, conflicts have become a kaleidoscopic phenomenon of information warfare where the first casualty is truth and history scripted in fallacies. Perception management has thus become the new centre of gravity and narratives are the weapons to capture the psycho-cultural high ground. As conflicts increasingly involve society and people nations will need to invest in this high ground.

- Rule-based world order or international norms of behaviour have ceased to exist. The present archival system is an exclusive model wherein the powerful call the shots and redefine norms at will. Reversing this global tide of authoritarian nativism requires the legal systems to be transformed and be more inclusive and relevant to contemporary challenges.
- Provision of covert weapons, proxies, and tools of sanctions are self-defeating as part of the long-term strategy. Sanctions are an abject failure in conflict resolution. Sanctions don't change nation states' behaviour but have an adverse ripple effect on the global system, particularly the third world economy. Sanctions, covert weapons, and proxies also create geopolitical instability and forge new powercentres.

### Diplomacy in Shaping Future World Order

The challenges of conflict prevention, conflict management, and conflict resolution have been made complex in twenty-first century international relations with great power rivalry, weakening of liberal international order, growing transnational threats, and rising nationalism and populism.

In these contemporary contestations, despite the US proclaiming the irresistible triumph of the West's liberal international order model, its new avatar is in reality populated by a multiplicity of several and diverse poles. The future thus envisages a complex multipolar order that would be politically pluralistic seeking multiple issues based on cooperative partnerships



French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy

**“The future thus envisages a complex multipolar order that would be politically pluralistic seeking multiple issues based on cooperative partnerships over strategic alignments.”**

over strategic alignments. Fundamentally in practice, such a multipolar order would be complicated and convoluted with leading actors cooperating in certain domains yet clashing in others, as their strategic interests interlocked with ever greater intricacy.<sup>3</sup> It is in such a model that nations will need to draw the cost-benefit of pursuing their national interest through more resilient and flexible diplomacy.

In *Diplomacy and the Future of World Order*, an international group of experts confronts these challenges to peace and conflict diplomacy. In doing so, they consider three potential scenarios<sup>4</sup> for the future, namely, a return to a Cold War-like situation, a return to the liberal rules-based order, and variable geometry multilateralism wherein nations collaborate on a case-by-case basis. Each scenario requires a different kind of diplomacy. The first scenario would likely

require transactional diplomacy; the second values-based, governance-based diplomacy; and the third "a concert depending on the issue" at the regional or functional levels that are based on specific challenges. The Book makes a strong case for concert diplomacy as the principal form of international cooperation in the twenty-first century. It is in such a multipolar global environment that India's stature will continue to grow in its rightful trajectory.

### Ukraine: A Defining Moment for Diplomatic Choices

The tragedy of the Ukrainian conflict is embedded in the historical past and geopolitical present. In particular, the Monroe Doctrine 1823, the Treaty of Versailles 1919, the Marshall Plan 1948, the Budapest Memorandum 1994, and the US-driven unilateralism of the last three decades post disintegration of the Soviet Union. Between 1997 and 2021, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expanded manifold in five tranches to bring the threat knocking on the Russian backyard.

Once a rejuvenated Russia recovered from the profound political and socio-economic crisis of the post-Soviet decade, the only question was when and where Russia would take a stand against the systemic encroachment of its periphery. Sooner than later, in continuity with the Soviet quest for Russification, and unease with the US-led NATOfication, led to





Russian President Vladimir Putin and PM Narendra Modi met on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, Sep 16, 2022

Russia's "claim to a sphere of privileged interests around its immediate periphery, which was staked out in the wake of the 2008 war with Georgia, and its refusal to accept the post-Cold War security order in Europe decisively affirmed with the 2014 annexation of Crimea."<sup>5</sup>

Next came Ukraine 2022, a West-enticed pawn in the game who was led down the garden path in an essentially Russia-US power play. The US-led Western proxy narrative changed from saving Ukraine to weakening Russia. Instead of peace, stability, security, and neutrality, the option exercised by the US and the West was arming and sanctions. Once again diplomacy took a backseat in preference to expanding/ curtailng spheres of influence with little concern for human miseries and catastrophic destruction. The art of conflict prevention and conflict resolution gave way to the science of conflict extension for selfish agendas. The Western narrative of Russia losing, "ostriches" the realities of Russia not only gaining large vital territory, but more importantly controlling the Ukrainian industrial heartland, its energy resources, its ports and shores, and making it a landlocked economically ravaged skeleton state.

Yet there are no angels in this conflict. US stubborn model of exceptionalism and unilateralism caused maximum instability rubbing the international rule-based order repeatedly. Examples of Vietnam,

**“India's stand in the Ukrainian conflict has been principled and bold in not only rejecting the strategic assumptions and hypocrisy of the West but also remaining neutral to the Ukrainian conflict without being pro or anti-Russia.”**

Iraq, Libya, Syria, Guantanamo Bay, Abu Garib, and more recently Afghanistan stand testimony to it. The US repeatedly violated the United Nations (UN) Security Council resolutions, including by withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal-Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA); recognising Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and recognising Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara.<sup>6</sup> The US also withdrew from the World Health Organization, the Paris Climate Change Agreement, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the UN cultural body. Yet two wrongs don't make a right especially when it causes destruction and loss of innocent human lives. China and Russia too rewrote the international rule book by insisting on national sovereignty being the most

important legal principle, one that trumps international law, humanitarian law, and human rights law. Then who is having the last smile? Is it the US Arms Industry (40 billion US dollars aid) and China who gets respite and "salamis" ahead? The sufferer is not just Ukraine but also the world hit by food shortage, energy crisis, inflation, poverty, and instability. Europe has been militarised and destabilised more than unified. The recession too stares at its face. No victor no vanquished.

## Indian Diplomacy-Mapping an Enlightened Post Liberal International Order

India as the largest democracy, a fifth of the world population, and the fastest growing economy with rejuvenated comprehensive national power stands at the cusp of strategic opportunity from being a spectator to a player in the global arena. India is no more a swing power but a balancing power of global recognition. It has taken the lead in confronting global challenges like the Covid vaccine, climate change, disaster management, sustainable development goals, counter-terrorism, and promoting global peace in the spirit of its philosophy of Vasudhaiv Kutumbakam. Principally, it has always emphasised the centrality of sovereignty and territorial integrity and upholding rule-based order adhering to the UN Charter 7. It believes that every nation has the right to carve its foreign policy based on its enlightened national interests and make choices based on a cost-benefit analysis.

The Ukrainian conflict has confronted India with difficult strategic choices. India's stand in the Ukrainian conflict has been principled and bold in not only rejecting the strategic assumptions and hypocrisy of the West but also remaining neutral to the Ukrainian conflict without being pro or anti-Russia. It marks the mapping of Indian diplomacy to an enlightened post-liberal international order. It seeks peace through cessation of hostilities, and conflict resolution through dialogue and diplomacy. Its position has been consistent and principled wherein it abstained a record eleven times at UN resolutions. India's diplomatic stance is mapping an enlightened world order and is seen as an inflection point in



international relations. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar alluded in *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*. "in a multi-polar world, with a multi-aligned foreign policy, India should spend more time chasing its interests instead of caring about pleasing others."<sup>8</sup>

Given the depth of strategic ties between New Delhi and Moscow and the warming up of New Delhi and Washington's strategic relationship, India will maintain its principled neutrality. The "China Problem" factor also weighs in this strategic triangle of neutrality. It is clear that there are no easy choices for India in the New Cold War and it would want to avoid a scenario where China has the last laugh. A weak and isolated Russia is not in India's interests and New Delhi will make efforts to help its traditional friend in its hour of need.<sup>9</sup> Russia also provides strategic leverage to India in the India-China rivalry. Both India and US too need each other to balance China, particularly in the Indo-Pacific. Besides growing trade and technology future lies with the West. Thus, diplomacy has to balance the Russia-West tug-of-war to safeguard its national interest. Another assumption will be that the US and West will be more understanding of India's neutral stand than Russia should it adopt an anti-Russia stand. So the strategic cost-benefit has been deliberately weighed in its calculus. India's vision remains to ascend to the international stage as a global player sans alliances yet leveraging multiple poles for its trajectory. China currently represents the most significant threat to its trajectory, and thus India while attempting to handle it within its resources would certainly need both US and Russia's support. The shift in the US focus to Europe away from the Indo-Pacific is perilous for an India facing China.<sup>10</sup> Russia's economic leanings and bonhomie with China diminishes the multipolarity India seeks. India's stand is thus not pro-Russia or pro-US, it's pro-India for the preservation of its core values and furtherance of its enlightened national interest. There is nothing known as absolute strategic autonomy; strategic dependence is suicidal; so strategic balancing and flexibility in pursuit of one's national interest are pragmatic.



**Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov met in New Delhi, India, on April 1, 2022**

India's diplomatic stand has been firm, forthright, and logical over European myopic geopolitics. The world recognises India's strategic and economic potential to be inevitably a player in this new Great Game. The Indian leadership's European outreach and the spate of high-level visits and interactions by European leaders with their Indian counterparts have met a common ground of understanding and institutionalised cooperation. It has also strengthened its multi-faceted partnerships and diplomatic relations in a multi-tiered and collaborative matrix at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Despite differences, trade has bonded the relationship between the two. The European Union (EU) is India's third largest trading partner and trade in goods between the two has increased by 30 percent in the last decade as per the European Commission inputs.

### **To Conclude**

India has batted well on the sticky Ukrainian diplomatic pitch. Yet it needs to learn multiple lessons as the conflict unfolds. Externally it needs to envision the dynamic geopolitical future and be prepared for the entire spectrum of contingencies employing all instruments of national power in symphony. Internally the challenges in the internal security domain and divisive trends eroding its pluralistic democracy pose threats to its national security and global image. There is a need for a bolder national unification

programme and to garner a strong economy to strengthen both hard and soft powers. Challenging times require an integrated people-centric national response which is the need of the hour.

Militarily India will have to fight its battles alone. No nation will step into another's conflict zone irrespective of strategic partnerships. Time is critical and India needs to be prepared to prevail with a sense of urgency. The sanctions and disruption of the global supply chain will certainly impact the nation like other parts of the world. It is thus imperative for India to achieve self-reliance, self-sufficiency and technology prowess in all spheres of national security. "Atmanirbharta" is the only way forward in the pursuance and preservation of national interest. We may be walking the talk in this direction but the need is to take giant leaps not baby steps with time sensitivity. Civil-military fusion too will need greater depth and collaboration on matters dealing with defence policies and transformation. Last but not least, diplomacy will be as strong as the nation's hard power and it is here that there is a need for greater commitment to attain the strategic vision of India as a great power.

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Courtesy: Centre for Land Warfare Studies  
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# Beijing's Ukrainian Battle Lab

David Finkelstein

**A**mong those observing the Russian military's ongoing operations in Ukraine, few will be watching and assessing its performance more intensely than those in the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA). Analyzing the wars of other countries continues to play an important role in Beijing's decision-making about military modernization, along with the PLA's own field experiments and its increasing use of big data, AI, and simulations. In the first phase of the Ukraine conflict, PLA analysts - who have traditionally held the Russian military in high regard - will undoubtedly find Russian operations wanting.

The People's Republic of China views the military element of national power, and natural resources, as Moscow's strong suits in its post-Soviet incarnation. Consequently, the success or failure of this operation will certainly color Beijing's views about the "comprehensive national power" of the Russian Federation in general and the state of the Russian armed forces in particular.

Second, assessing Russian operational performance may have very direct implications for the PLA's own recent and future reform and modernization choices. In 2016, the PLA underwent the most sweeping reorganization in its history in an attempt to better position itself to be able to fight modern information-age warfare. Some key aspects of that reorganization were based on what it learned from the United States. However, the PLA also incorporated lessons learned from Russia's New Look military reforms, which began in late 2008. The PLA's professional military journals often contain articles discussing the latest



Chinese J-15 fighters on the aircraft carrier Liaoning

**“The People's Republic of China views the military element of national power, and natural resources, as Moscow's strong suits in its post-Soviet incarnation.”**

developments in Russian military affairs, as well as those taking place in the U.S. joint force. And of course, the Chinese and Russian militaries are close institutionally, conducting general staff talks and attending each other's schools of professional military education. In November 2021, the two signed a "roadmap for closer military cooperation, 2021-2025," which, among other things, aims to normalize combined naval and air patrols such as the one they conducted a month earlier, through the Tsugaru Strait north of Japan. Therefore, assessing Russian

operational performance will be a high-priority task for PLA analysts as they move closer to their Russian counterparts.

Third, the Chinese and Russian armed forces have been conducting combined exercises with each other for many years. Russia's performance in Ukraine will provide the PLA with a sense of the difference between training and actual combat. This issue is of great importance for the PLA, which is all too aware of the fact that it has not seen large-scale combat since it invaded Vietnam in 1979. However, the PLA views the Russian military as having significant combat experience, and comparatively speaking they are right. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Russian military has fought in Chechnya, Georgia, Crimea, eastern Ukraine, Syria, and now all of Ukraine. Therefore, PLA operations research analysts will be leaning into their computer terminals following and assessing how Moscow is faring in its latest deployment. One lesson they may draw is that even for militaries with extensive experience, war remains a





difficult business.

Fourth, the technical performance of Russian weapons systems - their strengths and vulnerabilities - will be of particular interest. Although Beijing has a significant indigenous defense manufacturing sector, the PLA still has in its inventory Russian-manufactured or Russian-inspired weapons, systems, and platforms.

At this point, it is too early to state with high confidence what military professionals in China think they are learning from Russia's operations. Like others around the world, the PLA's analysts presumably are accruing data and trying to absorb what is unfolding in real-time, which is never easy. Moreover, the war in Ukraine is entering a new phase as the Russian military regroupes and refocuses its operations in the east and southeast. More than likely, the PLA's best analyses will be done months from now. Nevertheless, we can engage in some modest but informed speculation about what we suspect will animate PLA attention at the operational and strategic levels of conflict.

At the operational level, PLA analysts will notice that Russian operations to date seem to be violating some of the PLA's time-honored "Basic Campaign Principles". Four in particular seem to have gone by the wayside. First, the Russian military has clearly underestimated the "enemy" while apparently overestimating its own capabilities, a significant shortcoming. The operative PLA campaign principle is "know the enemy and know yourself". Next, based on the seemingly disjointed Russian operations conducted in the northern, eastern, and southern parts of Ukraine at the inception of hostilities, Moscow's operations will likely be judged to have violated the PLA campaign principle of "unified coordination". Third, apparent Russian problems with logistics and other combat service support functions will suggest to PLA analysts that Russia failed to follow the principle of "comprehensive support". Finally, from the very beginning, Moscow's military planners failed to adhere to, nor seemingly even attempted to achieve, the universal principle of war: "surprise," which the PLA's campaign principles state



Chinese PLAN have for many years carried out demonstration of amphibious landings to intimidate Taiwan

**“ The PLA will likely be wondering, if not incredulous, about the apparent lack of "jointness" in Russian operations. Moscow's Ukraine campaign looks very much like ground-force-centric combined arms warfare.”**

as "take the enemy by surprise". Moscow's problems in this regard have been compounded by Washington's public deployment of intelligence, which should suggest to observers in Beijing the increasing difficulty in this day and age of achieving strategic-level surprise.

As long-time students of Russian doctrine, the PLA will likely be wondering, if not incredulous, about the apparent lack of "jointness" in Russian operations. Moscow's Ukraine campaign looks very much like ground-force-centric combined arms warfare - the very type of warfare that the PLA is trying to move beyond for major operations. In November 2020, after 20 years of experimentation, the PLA totally

revamped its doctrine for joint operations. The new PLA paradigm for joint operations, known as "Integrated Joint Operations", calls for unity of effort and integration among the services across land, sea, air, and key high-tech battlespace domains such as cyberspace, outer space, and the electromagnetic spectrum - all under a unified command and control structure. Moreover, the PLA intends to push joint operations down to the tactical level, whereas previously joint operations were reserved for large-scale campaigns. The Integrated Joint Operations concept is driving multiple dimensions of PLA activity - national and theater-level organizational structure, command-and-control authorities and architectures, the development of capabilities, training, as well as professional military education. Instead of demonstrating elegant 21st-century joint operations with high-tech assets - as the U.S. military does and the PLA aspires to be able to do - Russia, the PLA will observe, seems to be reverting to ground, air, and missile attacks employed as blunt instruments. These Russian operations do not exemplify the "operational art" that the PLA hopes to be able to implement. And because the PLA has been an ardent student, if not admirer, of Russian doctrine for decades, PLA strategists and planners can only be wondering, "why?"



Chinese DF-31A long-range missiles are paraded in Beijing to mark the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II in September 2015.

Next, as the PLA is the "armed wing of the Chinese Communist Party," it is a political force as well as a military force. The PLA has a corps of political officers to enforce discipline, strengthen the link between the military and the party, attend to civil-military dynamics, and deal with the personnel aspects of warfare. As such, the PLA will pay close attention to reports about the human and cognitive dimensions of the war. PLA analysts will read reports about poor morale among Russian troops, alleged desertions, lack of tactical communications discipline, indiscriminate attacks against Ukrainian noncombatants, and accusations of war crimes. They will also pay attention to stories about protests in Russia by citizens who are opposed to "Putin's war" and Moscow's repressive responses. At the same time, PLA political officers and others will likely marvel at how well Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has wielded information warfare and strategic communications as a force multiplier. Indeed, Zelensky and the Ukrainian military are in fact practicing what the PLA refers to as the "Three Warfares" - public opinion warfare, psychological warfare, and legal warfare. Reading these stories will undoubtedly vindicate for the PLA their continuing emphasis on "political work" among the troops and the local populace and will justify the PLA's new joint doctrine addressing both political work and national mobilization. These stories from

## **"PLA will devote considerable resources during and after this conflict to absorbing the lessons of Russia's invasion of Ukraine."**

the battlefields of Ukraine will also likely provide additional data points underscoring for political officers and others why the PLA must remain a political force. They will also raise questions about the efficacy of the post-Soviet iteration of the political commissar system in the Russian armed forces.

Beyond the operational and tactical, Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the international responses it catalyzed is likely generating discussions about larger order strategic-level issues, such as the implications of strong international economic sanctions for the future of Chinese national security, the ability of liberal democracies across regions to present a united front in the face of a common galvanizing threat, the inherent power of alliances, and the rapid return of the United States to a global leadership role. And while the government in Beijing denies any political parallels between the situation in Ukraine with that of Taiwan, the PLA and others may find both operational and strategic lessons from the

Russo-Ukrainian war to be relevant to that scenario.

Among the weightiest strategic-level issues generated by the Russo-Ukrainian war will be the issue of nuclear deterrence. One can imagine that PLA analysts and others in the Chinese national security community will study the role that Russia's possession of a serious nuclear deterrent is playing in shaping the choices of the United States and NATO in their responses to Moscow's operations, including the early decision not to intervene militarily. Doing so will likely validate Beijing's decisions, made long before the Ukraine war, to increase the size and survivability of its nuclear arsenal. At the same time, it could also raise questions about the future efficacy of China's long-standing "no first use" nuclear doctrine. One suspects the nuclear issue will be looked at long and hard by Beijing's military and civilian strategists.

Overall, then, we should assume the PLA will devote considerable resources during and after this conflict to absorbing the lessons of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. If the past serves as prologue, there will be no rush to judgment. There will be symposia, conferences, debates, articles, and books dissecting all dimensions of the war. At the operational and tactical levels of war, those lessons will either validate or result in adjustments to issues such as doctrine, including tactics, techniques, and procedures, the optimal employment of systems, and even political work. Strategically, such lessons may even affect future nuclear doctrine and impact Beijing's calculus for the potential use of force. Officials in Beijing continue to state that this conflict is not something they wished to see. We should take that statement at face value. Nevertheless, the Russian military campaign is providing the PLA with another "battle lab" from which it will continue to learn as it studies the wars of other countries.

*David M. Finkelstein is a retired U.S. Army officer and director for China & Indo-Pacific Security Affairs at CNA, Arlington.*

Courtesy: War on the Rocks  
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# China Can Help End The War in Ukraine But only if the US plays its cards right

Harun Yilmaz

**T**he ongoing war in Ukraine is the first global crisis where China, the great power, might serve as a mediator in the tripolar system.

Since the very beginning, Washington has not been treating China as an irrelevant party in this European crisis. Instead, it has been actively trying to divert Beijing from its chosen course of careful diplomacy.

Indeed, a recent leak confirmed that US officials spent at least three months trying to persuade their Chinese counterparts to help them deter Russian President Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine. And over a week into active conflict, the Americans are still eager to get the Chinese involved. After all, they know sanctions may not have sufficient impact on Russia without the support of the second-biggest economy in the world and that China's Xi Jinping is perhaps the only person who can convince Putin to rethink his actions and alter his plans.

However, Washington is also aware of the fact that, when Russia and the US had a confrontation in the past, China has consistently chosen the path of careful diplomacy to protect its national interests. Nevertheless, today there appears to be a clear possibility to convince China to play an active role in the Ukraine crisis and help contain Moscow's aggression.

Today, China supports the rules-based world order in which nation-state sovereignty is respected - it is not in favour of militarist revisionism or interventions. It also desires to maintain a stable relationship with the US, because the



Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands

**“ China has consistently chosen the path of careful diplomacy to protect its national interests. Today there appears to be a clear possibility to convince China to play an active role in the Ukraine crisis and help contain Moscow's aggression.”**

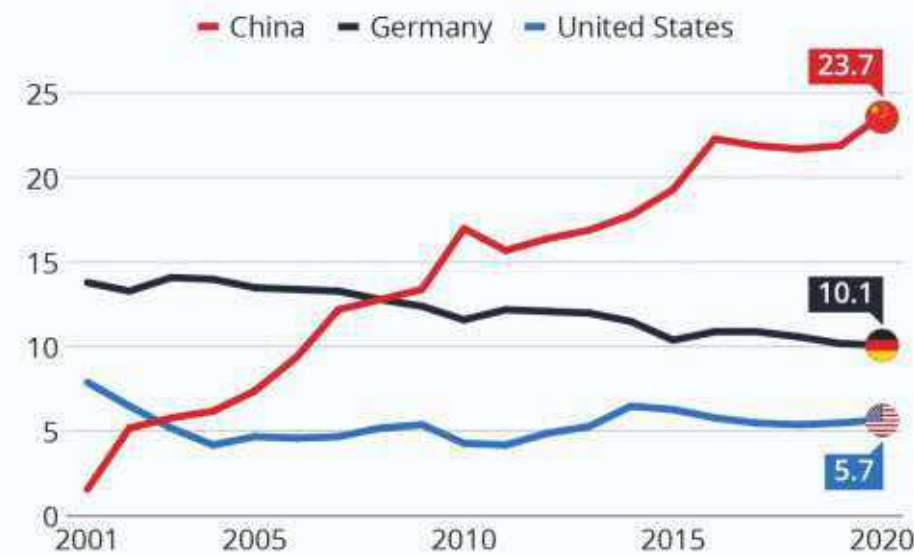
current political and economic status quo serves it well. China's high-profile commemoration of the 50th anniversary of US President Nixon's visit to Beijing in February 2022 was a display of such desire.

In this context, there is a reason for China to choose to be directly involved in the Ukraine crisis. And Beijing has already made some moves signalling this change in strategy. When the United Nations Security Council voted on a draft resolution on ending the Ukraine crisis, for example, China opted to abstain rather than vetoing it alongside Russia. The Western observers viewed this move as a success towards Russia's international



## China's Rise to Russia's Most Important Trade Partner

Share of Russian imports from selected countries (in %)



Source: Germany Trade & Invest

isolation. Furthermore, at least two of China's largest state-owned banks (Bank of China and ICBC) announced their decision to restrict financing for purchases of Russian commodities on February 25.

On the same day, President Xi called Putin and encouraged him to negotiate with the Ukrainian government. This had an impact, and Moscow announced that it was ready for ceasefire negotiations. On February 28, when asked about Beijing's stance on Ukraine, Wang Wenbin, the spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said, "China and Russia are strategic partners, but not allies." On March 3, China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank suspended and started reviewing all activities relating to Russia and Belarus.

So what are the missing pieces of the jigsaw to convince Beijing to use its influence over Moscow to mediate a ceasefire and eventually a peace agreement in Ukraine?

First of all, there is mistrust. Beijing does not believe it has much to gain from demonstrating strong support for

**“Many Chinese analysts think the only "thank you" China will get for supporting the US in the Ukraine crisis would be increased Western support for Taiwan, a more aggressive NATO, and another round of anti-Chinese alliance building in its neighbourhood such as the AUKUS.”**

Washington. Indeed, many Chinese analysts think the only "thank you" China will get for supporting the US in the Ukraine crisis would be increased Western support for Taiwan, a more aggressive NATO, and another round of anti-Chinese alliance building in its neighbourhood

such as the AUKUS. It is an open secret that the priority of American diplomacy in Asia is building alliances against China. Beijing's deep distrust of the US was perhaps the main reason why the Chinese officials initially dismissed the intel the Americans shared on Russia's invasion plan as psychological warfare.

Another reason why Beijing is not yet fully convinced that it should involve itself in the Ukraine crisis alongside the West is that so far American strategists have only shown it sticks. The American administration and media have long been threatening to paint China with the same brush as the Russian aggressor if it does not agree to cooperate. Moreover, Washington has been pressuring India - a member of BRIC - to apply sanctions against Russia. If it succeeds, Beijing knows that it can much more easily present China to the global community as a force against peace.

To convince China to use its influence over Moscow to end this crisis, the US needs to start offering Beijing carrots. There is a need for a realist approach akin to the one successfully utilised by Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon half a century ago. To achieve peace, the tripolar system demands more prudence and less idealistic assumptions or messianism. Yet, after demonising China since Trump's presidency, Washington might find it tricky to change public opinion right now.

In international relations, very often a stable balance of power is necessary for peace among conflicting powers. The West needs China to control a declining and revisionist Russia. And as it grows weaker, Russia will become more dependent on China's economic support and security guarantees. As a result, China can easily guarantee the balance of power and be the mediator to end the current crisis. The world might only be missing a realist decision-maker like Kissinger or Nixon to help us cross the ideological trenches and build peace in Europe.

Courtesy: Al Jazeera  
First published on 4 Mar 2022



## COMMENTARIES

# How the Ukraine Crisis Ends

Henry Kissinger

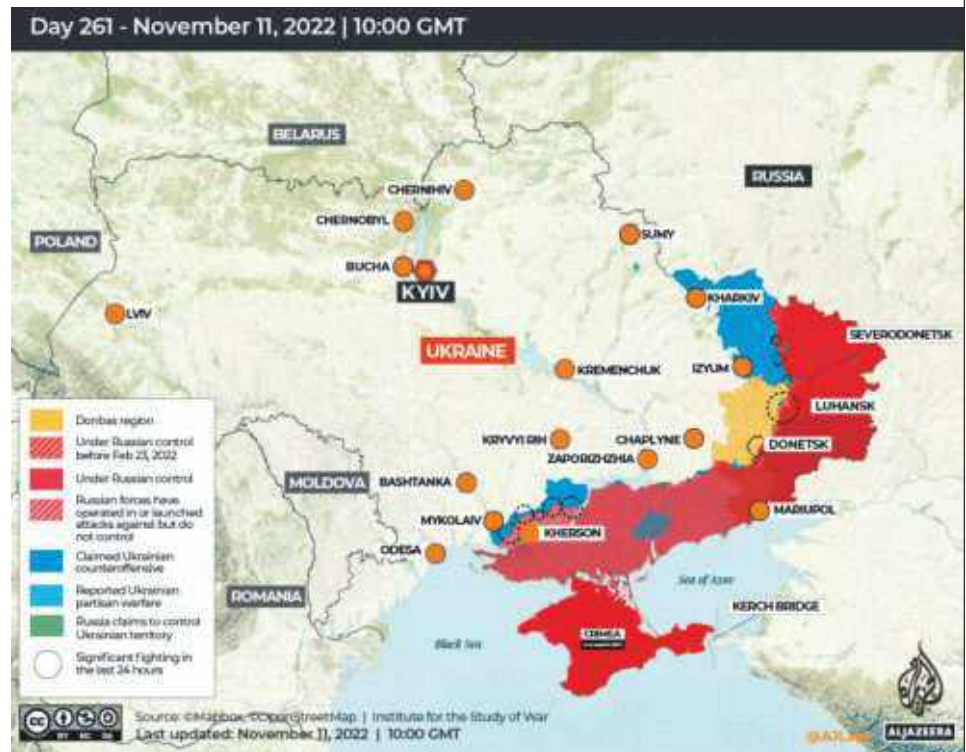
Public discussion on Ukraine is all about confrontation. But do we know where we are going? In my life, I have seen four wars begun with great enthusiasm and public support, all of which we did not know how to end and from three of which we withdrew unilaterally. The test of policy is how it ends, not how it begins.

Far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown: whether Ukraine joins the East or the West. But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side's outpost against the other – it should function as a bridge between them.

Russia must accept that to try to force Ukraine into a satellite status, and thereby move Russia's borders again, would doom Moscow to repeat its history of self-fulfilling cycles of reciprocal pressures with Europe and the United States.

The West must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. Russian history began in what was called Kievan-Rus. The Russian religion spread from there. Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then. Some of the most important battles for Russian freedom, starting with the Battle of Poltava in 1709, were fought on Ukrainian soil. The Black Sea Fleet – Russia's means of projecting power in the Mediterranean – is based by long-term lease in Sevastopol, in Crimea. Even such famed dissidents as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn and Joseph Brodsky insisted that Ukraine was an integral part of Russian history and, indeed, of Russia.

The European Union must recognize that its bureaucratic dilatoriness and subordination of the strategic element to domestic politics in negotiating Ukraine's



By 11 Nov, Ukrainian troops had reclaimed dozens of settlements in an advance on Kherson after Moscow announced its withdrawal

**“The West speaks Ukrainian; the East speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to dominate the other – as has been the pattern – would lead eventually to civil war or breakup.”**

relationship to Europe contributed to turning a negotiation into a crisis. Foreign

policy is the art of establishing priorities.

The Ukrainians are the decisive element. They live in a country with a complex history and a polyglot composition. The Western part was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1939, when Stalin and Hitler divided up the spoils. Crimea, 60 per cent of whose population is Russian, became part of Ukraine only in 1954, when Nikita Khrushchev, a Ukrainian by birth, awarded it as part of the 300th-year celebration of a Russian agreement with the Cossacks. The West is largely Catholic; the East largely Russian Orthodox. The West speaks Ukrainian; the East speaks mostly Russian. Any attempt by one wing of Ukraine to







Anti-NATO pro-Russia protest in Feodosiya, Ukraine, Nov. 6, 2006

dominate the other – as has been the pattern – would lead eventually to civil war or breakup. To treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation would scuttle for decades any prospect to bring Russia and the West – especially Russia and Europe – into a cooperative international system.

Ukraine has been independent for only 23 years; it had previously been under some kind of foreign rule since the 14th century. Not surprisingly, its leaders have not learned the art of compromise, even less of historical perspective. The politics of post-independence Ukraine clearly demonstrates that the root of the problem lies in efforts by Ukrainian politicians to impose their will on recalcitrant parts of the country, first by one faction, then by the other. That is the essence of the conflict between Viktor Yanu-kovych and his principal political rival, Yulia Tymoshenko. They represent the two wings of Ukraine and have not been willing to share power. A wise U.S. policy toward Ukraine would seek a way for the two parts of the country to cooperate with each other. We should seek reconciliation, not the domination of a faction.

Russia and the West, and least of all the various factions in Ukraine, have not acted on this principle. Each has made the

**“Russia would not be able to impose a military solution without isolating itself at a time when many of its borders are already precarious. For the West, the demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.”**

situation worse. Russia would not be able to impose a military solution without isolating itself at a time when many of its borders are already precarious. For the West, the demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.

Putin should come to realize that, whatever his grievances, a policy of military impositions would produce another Cold War. For its part, the United States needs to avoid treating Russia as an aberrant to be patiently taught rules of conduct established by Washington. Putin is a serious strategist – on the premises of Russian history. Understanding U.S. values

and psychology are not his strong suits. Nor has understanding Russian history and psychology been a strong point of U.S. policymakers.

Leaders of all sides should return to examining outcomes, not compete in posturing. Here is my notion of an outcome compatible with the values and security interests of all sides:

- Ukraine should have the right to choose freely its economic and political associations, including with Europe.
- Ukraine should not join NATO, a position I took seven years ago, when it last came up.
- Ukraine should be free to create any government compatible with the expressed will of its people. Wise Ukrainian leaders would then opt for a policy of reconciliation between the various parts of their country. Internationally, they should pursue a posture comparable to that of Finland. That nation leaves no doubt about its fierce independence and cooperates with the West in most fields but carefully avoids institutional hostility toward Russia.
- It is incompatible with the rules of the existing world order for Russia to annex Crimea. But it should be possible to put Crimea's relationship to Ukraine on a less fraught basis. To that end, Russia would recognize Ukraine's sovereignty over Crimea. Ukraine should reinforce Crimea's autonomy in elections held in the presence of international observers. The process would include removing any ambiguities about the status of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol.

These are principles, not prescriptions. People familiar with the region will know that not all of them will be palatable to all parties. The test is not absolute satisfaction but balanced dissatisfaction. If some solution based on these or comparable elements is not achieved, the drift toward confrontation will accelerate. The time for that will come soon enough.

*Henry Kissinger was US secretary of state from 1973 to 1977.*

Courtesy: The Washington Post.  
First published on 5 March 2014





# The Ukrainian Crisis: The War That is Changing Relations, Rules

**S Gurumurthy**

**H**aving pushed Ukraine into war, the US does not know how to save it. Having started it, Russia does not know where to end it. Having been pushed into the war, Ukraine does not know how to come out of it. It accuses its adversary Russia saying it is an invader and charges that its friends are betrayers. The UN Security Council keeps on meeting without any result. The global TV network for which the war is a reality show, a boon, keeps demonising Russia and valourising Ukraine. What the desperate Ukraine needs is a ceasefire. It is running from pillar to post – from India to Turkey to France, to Israel, to Japan – pleading with them to talk to Putin for a ceasefire. Everyone is talking to everyone else.

But Biden is not talking to Putin and Putin is not talking to Zelenskyy. This is the sad state of the efforts to stop the war. Poor Zelenskyy. What he is now saying to end the war – that we will not apply to join NATO, we will remain neutral – had he said that before, the war would not have started. Russia has staked everything – its goodwill, its economy and its last atom bomb – like a jihadi, making the West shudder to think of taking it head on. But the war is bound to end. When is the only question. When it does end, Russia would have got all that it wanted and Ukraine would have given all that it had denied. And the West would have realised and the world would have known how needless the war was. But, what kind of world will the pointless war leave behind?

## A world of distrust

## The worst outcome of the Ukraine



Overview of HVP Systems across the world and migration state to ISO 200022. The figure is based on information provided by SWIFT and country-specific HVP system providers.

**“The worst outcome of the Ukraine war is that it has shown that anything and everything can be politicised and weaponised – from financial transaction systems like SWIFT, to banks, private companies like Google to civilian airspace.”**

war is that it has shown that anything and everything can be politicised and weaponised – from financial transaction systems like SWIFT, to banks, private companies like Google to civilian

airspace. SWIFT is a high security neutral financial network created by an NGO and used by 11,000 financial institutions in 200 countries. By jamming this critical network, the Ukraine war has destroyed the most basic of mutual trust among nations. Take India. The share of Google in Indian email accounts is 62 per cent. Were India to fall foul of the West, the entire country can be brought to a halt by Google. Each nation or group of nations will now look for alternatives.

Another message is that even Switzerland, which remained neutral in the two world wars, can't remain neutral in a West vs others scenario. A telling message of the Ukraine war is that no country can trust even the global commons. It leaves behind a world of distrust. It will increasingly force each nation to be on its own – atmanirbhar being the Indian idiom for it, the very antithesis of globalisation. An alternative



A Taiwanese jet intercepting an H-6 bomber from China over the East China Sea

to SWIFT is already underway with some 63 central banks collaborating on a new payments system.

## US leadership dented

The Ukraine war seems to have dented the US global leadership in more than one sense. First, it has delivered the most telling message that the US can't protect its own protégé. Next, that it had to solicit a virtual meeting between Biden and Xi Jinping (XJP) to get China to the US side or to end the war itself, exposed its weakness. Donald Trump would perhaps have handled Russia and Ukraine differently, not allowed China to be the proverbial monkey between two tigers, the US and Russia.

Anyway the two-hour talk Biden had with XJP did not go well for him. XJP reportedly snubbed Biden saying "those who tied the bell to the tiger must untie it," clearly blaming NATO for the war. XJP used the talk to advance China's claim to be equal to the US, saying they should jointly shoulder "international responsibilities" for world peace and tranquility. According to a Chinese report, XJP seems to have said that one hand cannot clap, suggesting that NATO should have a dialogue with Putin and address his security concerns, implying NATO expansion as the issue. XJP, of course, has also spoken in support of the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states. He seems to have insisted on bringing the China-US ties under turmoil over a host of issues,

**“By subtly encouraging the US vs Russia scenario in Ukraine, China had ensured that the focus of the Biden regime was more on Russia and Ukraine and less on containing China.”**

including Taiwan, Hong Kong, Xinjiang and Tibet, on "right track" – something completely beyond the agenda of Biden on that day.

The US media had reported that Biden threatened XJP. On the contrary, he seems to have got snubbed. Biden's effort to wean China away from Russia has failed at the minimum. If this is what the US got from China, The Wall Street Journal reported that Saudi Arabia and the UAE declined calls from Biden to ease oil prices unless the US supported them in Yemen and elsewhere. Arab allies of the US have refused to toe its line. Israel did criticise the Russian attack but its stand was so nuanced as not to take the side of the West. Turkey's position is identical to Israel's.

Al-Jazeera even sees a strong alliance between Russia and UAE. Another collateral setback to the US is Syrian president Assad's visit (after 11 years) to UAE about which the US could only lament

that it was "disappointed and troubled". Syria and Russia are close. On top of it all, Saudi Arabia, whose oil has been priced in US dollars for five decades, is considering pricing it in Yuan for sales to China. One more important development. The Chinese foreign minister was invited for the first time to the meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. These are not ordinary developments. The Ukraine war has undoubtedly eroded US influence over even its allies.

## China's Taiwan angle

China seems to have gained far more than it has invested in Ukraine. By subtly encouraging the US vs Russia scenario in Ukraine, China had ensured that the focus of the Biden regime was more on Russia and Ukraine and less on containing China. Being surreptitiously privy to and supporting Russia on Ukraine action, Beijing has gained an IOU from Russia if in future it has to move on Taiwan. XJP's firm and equal dealing with Biden has dented the US capacity to confront China on Taiwan. If Biden had secretly conceded more to XJP on Taiwan as some reports say, China would have hit a jackpot.

Despite that, if the US had drawn a blank with XJP, it would have been a disaster for Biden. China's Ukraine strategy seems intended to advance its efforts to grab Taiwan – its greatest ambition and top most priority of XJP. The Ukraine war has exposed the limitations of the US and the West to step in to save its non-formal ally. The Taiwan Relations Act only ensures defence supplies by the US to Taiwan and nothing further. In comparison to Ukraine, which the US recognises as an independent nation, Taiwan's status is much inferior. If China makes a decisive move against Taiwan, the US could do very little given its show in Ukraine - to say nothing of the Afghanistan debacle.

## India's Growing Stature

Despite being part of Quad and with deep strategic partnership with the US, India's neutrality, with an implicit pro-Russian tilt, was a calculated geo political risk India took at the very start of the Ukraine war. Subsequent developments not only won under standing but also



acclaim for it. A displeased America had to concede India was an exception among its allies. Surprisingly, amid the raging Ukraine war New Delhi became the centre of hyper diplomatic activity. Scott Morrison, the Prime Minister of Australia, a Quad constituent, had a virtual meeting with the Indian Prime Minister, promised investments and said that the Quad nations understood India on Ukraine. Fumio Kishida, Prime Minister of Japan, another Quad member, paid his first official visit abroad to India. And keeping aside the differences between the two on Ukraine, he signed six strategic agreements and committed to investing \$42 billion in the next five years. The Greek foreign minister was in Delhi on March 22 and 23 and the Oman foreign affairs minister was in Delhi for two full days, March 23 and 24.

China and India have had border clashes for the last two years. Surprisingly, its foreign minister Wang Yi is visiting Delhi on March 25 - a significant development. India's independent position on Ukraine is itself a message to China that India would withstand US pressure. If it can lead to some trust and understanding between China and India on the borders, that can pave the way for an informal Russia-China-India axis for future. Naftali Bennett, the Prime Minister of Israel, a US ally, is making a four-day long visit to India in April first week at the invitation of "his friend" Indian Prime Minister Modi. India is boldly going ahead with the purchase of Russian oil amid US sanctions on Russia.

Though India has not voted for Russia, it has taken a firm position on the discovery of a bio-weapon facility in Ukraine funded by America. And America, despite loosely calling India shaky on the Ukraine war, has not applied the CAATSA law to stop the sale of Russia's missile system to India. Undoubtedly, the Ukraine war diplomacy has shown India's rising stature. The greatest tribute to India's policies came from the most unlikely of quarters, Pakistan. Praising India's foreign policy as free and independent, Prime Minister



**“America, despite loosely calling India shaky on the Ukraine war, has not applied the CAATSA law to stop the sale of Russia's missile system to India.”**

Imran Khan said, "India is allied with America and is part of the Quad alliance and yet it is neutral on Ukraine, imports oil from Russia despite US sanctions, because its policy is oriented to the betterment of its own people."

#### Shift away from the dollar?

The war's collateral impact may be on the US dollar and the global financial order itself. With the dollar-based globalisation already under stress, the role of the greenback in the global financial system may decline. The dollar power enabled dominance of the financial economy over the real economy, particularly the commodity economy. The US sanctions which are bound to affect the Russian oil sale, may also affect the US dollar.

The strength of the US dollar depended, said two Harvard economists in 2006, not on the laws of economics but on the laws of physics, which said a dark matter sustains the universe. The dark matter which sustains the dollar value, they said, is the insurance that the US system and geopolitical power provides to

the dollar. That insurance is what is under stress since 2008. With the rise of Asia and China, the US dollar cannot be said to continue to have the same insurance value. The share of USD in the global forex reserves has touched a 25-year low of about 59 per cent.

If important nations shift to their own fiat currency based trade like the Rupee-Ruble arrangement between India and Russia and if an alternative to SWIFT can be found, the move away from dollar can accelerate. For instance, if India and China begin paying for their trade in their fiat currencies rated to the US dollar and at the year-end pay the net in terms of the dollar, the overall demand for the dollar will contract rapidly. It is the demand for the dollar that sustains its value. These kinds of developments post the Ukraine war can have a far reaching impact.

To end, in just weeks the needless Ukraine eruption has disrupted the world as if forever. Thanks to it, the post-cold war world already stands on its head – disrupting old relations, making new ones, undermining existing power centres, creating new, multiple influence centres. Its impact will keep unfolding for a long time.

*S Gurumurthy is Editor, Thuglak, and commentator on economic and political affairs*

Courtesy: The New Indian Express  
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# The US Bubble of Pretend

## Audiences vulnerable to unprincipled broadcasting

Patrick Lawrence

It is perfectly obvious by now, to anyone who cares to look, that mainstream media in America and the other Western powers are not reporting the Ukraine crisis accurately.

Let me try that another way: The government-supervised New York Times and the rest of the corporate-owned media on both sides of the Atlantic lie routinely to their readers and viewers as to why Russia intervened in Ukraine, the progress of its military operation, the conduct of Ukrainian forces, and America's role in purposely provoking and prolonging this crisis.

So far as I know, this is the first war in modern history with no objective, principled coverage in mainstream media of day-to-day events and their context. None. It is morn-to-night propaganda, disinformation and lies of omission - most of it fashioned by the Nazi-infested Zelensky regime in Kiev and repeated uncritically as fact.

There is one thing worse than this degenerate state of affairs. It is the extent to which the media's malpractice is perfectly fine to most Americans. Tell us what to think and believe no matter if it is true, they say, and we will think and believe it. Show us some pictures, for images are all.

There are larger implications to consider here. Critical as it is that we understand this conflict, Ukraine is a mirror in which we see ourselves as we have become. For more Americans than I wish were so, reality forms only in images. These Americans are no longer occupants of their own lives. Risking a paradox, what they take to be reality is detached from reality.

This majority - and it is almost



A vast majority of Americans form opinions from images which appear in the Western media

**“This is the first war in modern history with no objective, principled coverage in mainstream media of day-to-day events and their context.”**

certainly a majority - has no thoughts or views except those first verified through the machinery of manufactured images and "facts." Television screens, the pages of purportedly authoritative newspapers, the air waves of government-funded radio stations - NPR, the BBC - serve to certify realities that do not have to be real, truths that do not have to be true.

This leaves us in a sad and very parlous place.

Sad: Is there some state more pitiful than having no genuine connection to one's own thoughts, perceptions, experience-altogether to one's life? If Americans are not a profoundly sad people behind all the smiles we see in advertising, idiotic comedy shows, and on Facebook, then I must be missing something.

Parlous: Over the course of some decades - from the mid-Cold War years, I would say - Americans have been rendered highly vulnerable to the manipulations of those who control the images through which most people have come to live. Anyone who has read a history of the 20th century knows where



this can lead.

The five weeks that have passed since the Russian intervention on Feb. 24 have been shocking on both these counts. The derelictions of the press and broadcasters are without precedent in my lifetime, and with Vietnam, the Iraq War, and the covert operation in Syria among the wreckage in the rearview mirror, this is saying something.

I will let the American public's enthusiasm for the sinkhole that is Ukraine, the Azov Battalion, and the ridiculous posturing of President Volodymyr Zelensky, the comedian who is no longer funny, speak for itself.

### 'Questionable Veracity'

Ten days into the Russian intervention, the propaganda coming out of Kiev was already so preposterous The New York Times felt compelled to publish a piece headlined, "In Ukraine's Information War, a Blend of Fact and Fiction." This was a baldly rendered apologia for the many "stories of questionable veracity," as The Times put it, then in circulation. I do love The Times for its delicate phrasing when describing indelicate matters.

There was the "Ghost of Kiev" story, featuring an heroic fighter pilot who turned out to derive from a video game. There were the Snake Island heroes, 13 Ukrainian soldiers who held out to the death on some small speck in the Black Sea, except that it turned out they surrendered, though not before Zelensky awarded them posthumous medals of honor that were not posthumous.

After railing against disinformation for years, The Times wants us to know, disinformation is O.K. in Ukraine because the Ukrainians are our side and they are simply "boosting morale."

We cannot say we weren't warned. The Ghost of Kiev and Snake Island turn out now to be mere prelude, opening acts in the most extensive propaganda operation of the many I can recall.

There was the maternity ward the Russians supposedly bombed in Mariupol. And then the theater, and then the art school. All filled with huddling citizens the Russian air force cynically targeted because "this is genocide," as the ever-intemperate Zelensky does not hesitate to



Ukrainian authorities admitted that 'Ghost of Kyiv', who was believed to have shot down a number of Russian military aircraft, was a myth

**“We read no more of the maternity ward that turned out to be an improvised Azov base, or the theater, where citizens were herded, photographed in raggedy blankets, and sent away.”**

assert.

All of this has been reported as fact in the Times and other major dailies and, of course, by the major broadcasters. There have been pictures. There have been videos, all very persuasive to the eye.

And then, as evidence mounts that these incidents were staged as propaganda to frame the Russians and draw NATO forces directly into the war, a silence worthy of a Catholic chapel descends. We read no more of the maternity ward that turned out to be an improvised Azov base, or the theater, where citizens were herded, photographed in raggedy blankets, and sent away. Ditto the art school: Nothing

more on this since the initial reports began to collapse. No body counts, no mention of the fact that Russian jets did not fly over Mariupol on the days in question.

Before proceeding to Bucha, the outrage of the moment, I must reproduce a quotation from that propaganda-is-O.K. piece The Times published in its March 3 editions. It is from a Twitter user who was distressed that it became public that the Ghost of Kiev turned out to be a ghost and the Snake Island heroes didn't do much by way of holding the fort.

"Why can't we just let people believe some things?" this thoughtful man or woman wanted to know. What is wrong, in other words, if thinking and believing nice things that aren't true makes people feel better?

### America the beautiful, or something like that

Bucha is a suburb of 35,000 souls a few miles north of Kiev and one of the cities Russian forces began to evacuate on March 29 as peace talks in Istanbul progressed. Two days later the mayor, Anatoly Fedoruk, celebrated the city's liberation in a selfie-speech to his citizenry. He made no mention of anything untoward in Bucha's streets, backyards, or





Ukraine issued a postage stamp to honour 13 soldiers who defied Russian assault at Snake Island, but it later turned out that they had been captured

public spaces.

Four days later, April 2, a special unit of the Ukrainian national police deployed to Bucha. And suddenly the place turns out to be a hellhole: bodies in the streets - 410, according to the Prosecutor General's office in Kiev - evidence of atrocities galore, people bound and shot point blank. The whole nine, in short.

## Instant Outrage

The outrage from Washington, London and Paris - "worldwide outrage," this would be - was instant. No demand for an impartial inquiry, forensic inspections, or any such thing. No one asked why corpses left in the street for five days appeared to be fresh, or why the relatives of the dead left them there until Kiev's commando unit arrived.

António Guterres, the U.N. secretary-general, was level-headed enough to state, "It is essential that an independent investigation leads to effective accountability." This is the only sound position at this point. But we know from a long history how far SGs at the U.N. get with this sort of talk.

In my read this is yet another of the false flags the Kiev regime flies almost by the day now. Paying-attention people will not miss the striking similarity between these incidents and the numerous put-up jobs that featured in Washington's covert operation in Syria and the campaign of those famous "moderate rebels" who desperately wanted to draw the U.S. into

**“As a matter of principle we must await evidence of what happened in Bucha, even as we know we are likely to see as much about events there as we have in Mariupol. We also know that to most people neither evidence nor its absence matters.”**

the conflict.

As a matter of principle we must await evidence of what happened in Bucha, even as we know we are likely to see as much about events there as we have in Mariupol. We also know that to most people neither evidence nor its absence matters.

We have been told once again what to think and believe, and most of us will think and believe it.

We are to add this to various other "truths" now almost universally accepted: The Russian intervention had nothing to do with NATO expansion and was "unprovoked" - that favored term in the Biden regime. Ukrainian forces have pushed the Russians into retreat: not that the pressure on Kiev was a Russian

diversionary tactic to keep Ukrainian forces away from Donbass where the fighting is.

After the Pentagon Papers came out in 1971, Hannah Arendt published an essay in The New York Review of Books called "Lying in Politics." In it she wrote of America's slide into a sort of collective psychosis she termed "defactualization." Facts are fragile, Arendt wrote, in that they tell no story in themselves. They can be assembled to mean whatever one wants them to mean. This leaves them vulnerable to the manipulations of storytellers.

"The deliberate falsehood deals with contingent facts," Arendt explained in this remarkable piece of work, "that is, with matters which carry no inherent truth within themselves, no necessity to be as they are; factual truths are never compellingly true."

A dead body in a Ukrainian street, in other words, can be assigned a meaning that, once it is established, evidence to the contrary cannot be used to erase.

It is a half-century since Arendt published "Lying in Politics." And it is to that time, the 1960s and 1970s, that we must trace the formation of what now amounts to America's great bubble of pretend. The world as it is has mattered less and less since Arendt's time, the world as we have wished it to be has mattered more and more.

Nine years before Arendt published her NYRB piece, Daniel Boorstin brought out The Image: Or, What happened to the American Dream, an unjustly neglected work. "I describe the world of our making," he wrote, "how we have used our wealth, our literacy, our technology, and our progress to create the thicket of unreality which stands between us and the facts of life."

The press, as you can imagine, did not escape Boorstin's scrutiny. "The reporter's task," he wrote memorably, "is to find a way to weave these threads of unreality into a fabric the reader will not recognize as entirely unreal."

This is our condition. The Ukraine crisis is the mirror that reflects us as we are.

Now I will relate a peculiar

*Contd on page 138*





# Russia-Ukraine and Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Lt Gen Sanjiv Langer, PVSM, AVSM, (Retd)

**R**ussian President Putin's 11-minute Victory Day speech had little to celebrate. On the 75th day of the Russian offensive, he said the military action was a pre-emptive move to ward off aggression from the West. The challenge by Nazi-inspired nationalists in Ukraine was similar to that faced in 1941 by the Soviet Union, from Germany. Cryptically, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy, in his speech, stated in the backdrop of World War II: "We won then. We will win again."

World War-II ended with the dropping of atomic bombs. In the Ukraine war, Russia gave a warning of the use of N-weapons right at the outset. This was reinforced with an announcement that Russian nuclear forces had been placed on alert. Later, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, on April 26, stated that the West was risking WW-III. This is the first time that an N-threat has been issued at the beginning of an offensive by conventional forces. We will not be able to go back to 'business as usual', as was thought initially.

Arguably, Europe, over the centuries, has been at the centre of some of the worst scourges of humankind due to war. Unfortunately, the world wars are a horrific high-water mark in human carnage. World War I, with its human cost estimated at 40 million, and World War II at 70 million, are grim reminders. These estimates in no way reflect the millions more displaced and pushed into poverty.

Approximately 73,905 (WW-I) and 2,50,000 (WW-II) of these were Indians. These wars originated in Europe. What is worse is that in the pre-WW-I years and during the course of the war, politico-military bungling and incompetence were



Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse, an 1887 painting by Viktor Vasnetsov. Left to right - Death, Famine, War, and Conquest

directly responsible for aggravating the carnage.

The hope of humanity post 1947 became linked to the UN and its resultant world order. Despite being locked in a cold war, there was no Europe-centred war, though there were several regional, proxy and irregular wars that continued to ravage the world. The European continent was visited by war in March 1991, in Yugoslavia. This conflict extended till 2001, resulting in the break-up of the country's constituents into independent nations. A clutch of UN missions was deployed in the region; most significant was the UNPROFOR under Chapter VII of the UN charter which employed all instruments of war-fighting. NATO and Russia had functioned together as peacekeepers for nearly five years during the long and tortured course of this war. Both major powers were on the same side. Scars of war take generations to heal and at times never go away, but largely in

Europe, peace has held, since.

The Russian offensive on Ukraine has changed it all. Being a true war of the 21st Century, there is acute polarisation in the world and a profusion of unreliable facts. Given the fluidity of events and an occlusion of reality, any operational assessment is inadvisable. Certain conclusions, however, are evident.

There seems to have been a clear underestimation by Russia of the Ukrainian fighting resolve, coupled with a flawed understanding of its own capability. The change in Russian generalship – from Valery Gerasimov to Aleksander Dvornikov – and the adoption of a unified command in the field so late in the offensive are indicative of a far deeper malaise in the politico-military command structure.

It is evident that the high point of Russian centrality earned in the Syrian war has been eclipsed. In Syria, it was the Russian special forces, aircraft and



Russia has deployed its new RS-28 Sarmat ICBM, a hundred-ton, twelve-warhead behemoth

advisers who ran the show, the fighting was done by the Syrian army and a collection of militias and non-state actors. All major powers had got together to eliminate Daish.

In Ukraine, it was evident well before the offensive that support to Ukraine would coalesce. The only hope for Russia was the rapid attainment of its militico-political objectives, in which it failed.

History reminds us that WW-II ended with the dropping of atomic bombs. In the Ukraine war, Russia gave a warning of the use of nuclear weapons right at the initiation of the offensive. This was reinforced with an announcement that Russian nuclear forces had been placed on alert. The clearest enunciation came later when Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, on April 26, detailed the threat and stated that the West was risking WW-III. This is the first time that an unambiguous nuclear threat has been articulated right at the commencement of an offensive by conventional forces.

The world must now come to terms with the four horsemen of the Apocalypse that have been set to ride:

- The UNHQs and, specifically, the Security Council, has been targeted commencing from Somalia 1990, and has now been brought to a level that it is unable fulfil its mandate. This has been recently prominently seen in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan and, now, Ukraine. Given the global schisms, it is unlikely that

**“Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, on April 26, detailed the threat and stated that the West was risking WW-III. This is the first time that an unambiguous nuclear threat has been articulated right at the commencement of an offensive by conventional forces.”**

it will be able to do so in future. We look at a world order where it is everyone for themselves, with no hope of collective security.

- Nuclear weapons are now the "bitcoins" and "ethereum" of military power. The Russian example will only serve to encourage the incipient N-nations to weaponise. A rash of N-capable states, with distinct socio-cultural identities is unlikely to be amenable to any collective security restrictions, especially in view of the failed Great Power efforts. N-use and N-war is no longer the ultimate domain.

- Sanctions and restrictions that had shaky origins in the 1990s have now become precisely targeted, with an ability to cause pain and emasculate. This

newfound power will be enhanced and in future enable remote enfeeblement of countries and individuals. An inexorable shift in power to the financially dominant has occurred. They are free to use this power based on their logic and sensibilities.

- The greatest assault is on the human ability to reason, consider and reach logical conclusions. This is the intellectual force of humankind. A convergence of media, cyberspace and IT, fired by profit and riding on AI, has made the determination of reality and exercise of reason a daunting proposition. This trend will accelerate and continue to mislead thought and misdirect free will.

In a wider view, we cannot escape the fact that the only nation with great power capability is the US. Its present economic and international posture cannot take away from the fact that it has exceptional expeditionary capabilities in the conventional domain as well as a well-rounded and highly focussed ability for war in other domains under its Special Operations Command. Its nuclear competence needs no elaboration. The US capabilities as well as capacities are all in place, intentions and will to execute or deploy are linked to its strategic priorities.

On the other side of the globe, China is likely to gain great advantages and centrality from this conflict. Its assertive statements on the South China Sea as well as Taiwan are ascendant. The shrill targeting of Quad is clearly indicative of its discomfiture. It is unlikely to get any soft options along the Himalayas. It will definitely use this moment to reposition its ambitions.

The Russian offensive and the resultant war have changed the paradigm for the world. We will not be able to go back to 'business as usual', as was thought initially. Volatility has been injected, with far-reaching consequences for security, commerce, finance and economies. This will result in a desultory impact on the creation of prosperity and reduction of poverty globally.

*Lt Gen Sanjiv Langer is a former Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (Intelligence), HQ Integrated Defence Staff*

Courtesy: The Tribune

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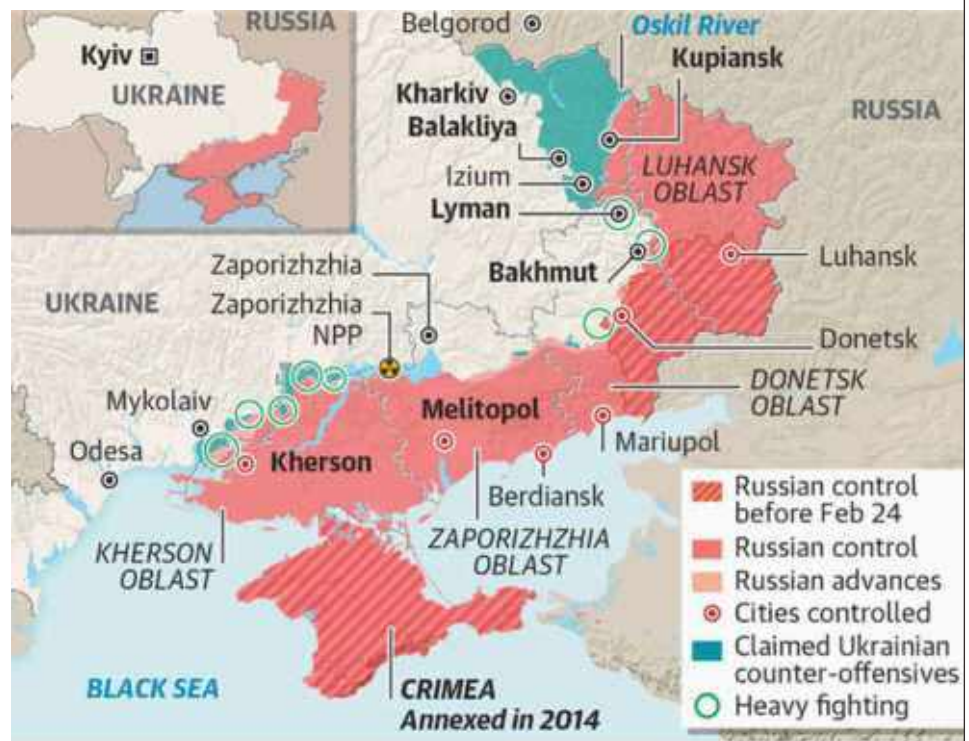
# Scenarios in Which the Ukraine War Could End

Ajay Singh

One scenario is that the war becomes an interminable frozen conflict, with neither side being able to change the status quo.

Almost a year of war with no clear signs of how it could end. A war which no one really believed would take place; and when it did break out, expected to be done and dusted in a week, still rages on inconclusively. From the initial heady days of the invasion on 24 February 2022, to the determined resistance by the Ukrainians which halted each of the Russian thrust lines, to the slow occupation of the Donbas, and then the Ukrainian counter-offensive in the northeast and the south, which has recovered vast swathes of occupied territory, the war has seen many twists and turns. The offensive pushed Russia on the back foot, more so since it has claimed the provinces of Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk as "Russian territory" after the "referendum" held there. The war entered another phase and where could it go from here?

After months of war, both armies are exhausted and depleted. The continual attrition has taken a toll on men and equipment, even though Ukraine has received aid and trained reservists to make up their losses and Russia's partial military mobilization would make another 200,000 or so conscripts available to fill their tired and ragged lines. With winter setting in and then the melting snow and slushy ground of spring – the dreaded Rasputina – there would be a pause around November or so till around March. Both sides will make maximum gains and perhaps even bring the war to a conclusion before that. But it seems difficult. It will be a long war, akin to the



titanic struggle between Germany and the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945, that moved from one extreme to the other. It is difficult to predict the timelines or even the manner in which the war could end. But let us explore some of the likely scenarios.

## SCENARIO 1

Russians launch a renewed offensive to attain their military aims.

After months of sustained action, the Russians have taken over most of the Donbas and the southern regions including most of Luhansk and Donetsk and virtually the entire coastline along the Sea of Azov. The Ukrainian counter-attacks have pushed them back from some of the occupied territories, but

they still hold 15% of Ukrainian soil, which they consider as their own. The Russian war machine is weakened but still a formidable force. The Russians could consolidate and launch a fresh offensive with fresh troops or the infusion of around 200,000 recently mobilized conscripts (which will be available later). They could try to regain the lost areas of the Donbas, perhaps go back again towards Kharkiv in the northeast. They could even push ahead in the south towards Odessa, the one vital port on the Black Sea which the Ukrainians still hold. The capture of this port would block all Ukrainian access to the sea and also give the Russians the launchpad to develop operations further west towards Moldova. Here they could





OBJECTIVE	DIMENSION	DECLARED?
Ukraine not to be part of a hostile powerful coalition like NATO	Strategic & Core	Declared
"Demilitarization" of Ukraine, degradation of capabilities (like CSISR, invasive platforms air & missile forces, logistics etc.)	Military	Declared
Acceptance by Ukraine of accession of Crimea to Russia	Strategic & Political	Declared
"Independence" for Luhansk/Donetsk (Donbas) regions	Political	Declared
"Denazification" & Russian as 2nd official language	Political	Declared
Securing a land corridor connecting Russia to Crimea	Strategic & Military	Implied
Control over the coast from Mariupol to Odessa	Strategic & Military	Implied

## Russia's Objectives, Declared or Implied

take over the Russian speaking areas of Transnistria in much the same way they took over the Donbas. Should they achieve this, they would attain their original aim of gaining control of a swath of land over 200 kilometers deep from Kharkiv to Odessa, block Ukraine completely from the sea, and make it land-locked and dependent on Russia for all future trade.

The Russians could also launch a fresh thrust towards Kyiv from Belarus, along the same axis that they had used in the initial days of the war and strike the nerve center of Ukrainian resistance and political leadership. After all Belarus is still a staunch Russian ally, and troops are still positioned on its soil. A thrust towards Kyiv, even if not fully successful, will divert Ukrainians from their own offensive in the east and south, and enable Russia to hold on to their gains there, consolidate the hold on the occupied areas, and push the Ukrainians back on the defensive.

**LIKELIHOOD:** This is the end state Putin would have desired when he set out on the war. The gains they made in the east and in the south have come over months and at huge cost. While Russia has had reverses in both the northeast and the south, they can hold on. The generals are under pressure to show some results, and perhaps with the infusion of additional troops-maybe additional divisions on the Siberian border (which were used by the Soviet Union in December 1941 to drive the Germans back from Moscow) they do have the capability to launch a fresh offensive. Perhaps even Kyiv could be a

likely target, and the recent pounding of the city shows a renewed focus there. The likelihood of a renewed Russian offensive is high, though one cannot predict the gains it could make, or in what time frame

## SCENARIO 2

A successful Ukrainian counter offensive pushes the Russians back into their own territory.

The Ukrainian offensive has made sizeable gains both in the east and in the south. Buoyed by their success, and replenished with western arms and freshly trained reservists, the Ukrainians could continue their offensive to recapture the lost cities of Kherson, Melitopol, Zaporizhzhia and the crown jewel, Mariupol, in the south. This would push the Russians back into the Crimea, but evicting them from there would be virtually impossible. Concurrently, they could continue operations to retake the lost areas of the Donbas, by launching a pincer movement from the south from Mariupol and in the north from Kharkiv.

Should the Ukrainians attain decisive gains in the south and east, they could even reach the Russian frontier. That would put them within reach to strike Russian bases at Smolensk and Belgorod, hampering resupply to all Russian troops inside Ukrainian territory. The Ukrainian aim of getting the Russians back to the pre-2014 boundaries (less in Crimea) would thus be attained. It would of course, provoke a massive retaliation from Russia, in the form of air and missile attacks across Ukraine, but in spite of increased nuclear threats, hopefully

more balanced minds within the Kremlin will ensure that it stops short of using nuclear weapons. This military defeat could increase the unrest within the population, especially as news from the front percolates through increased casualties.

This could lead to a negotiated solution in which Russia moves all its troops back across the border, but is permitted to hold on to Crimea. Ukraine renounces its aim to join NATO, and defers its intention to join the European Union, thus providing a face-saving exit to Russia and a negotiated end to the war.

The flip side to that, of course, is that Russia will resort to nuclear weapons in case of severe military reverses. That would change the entire complexion of the war.

**LIKELIHOOD:** Although this is the most desirable end state, the ability of the Ukrainian forces to retake all the lost areas is a little "iffy". In spite of the flow of weaponry which the West helpfully provides to keep the war going, they too have been severely weakened after months of war. The Russians have developed strong defensive lines and fortifications along the depth areas which they have occupied which will be very difficult to overcome. Also, there is a fear that the Ukrainian counter offensive could get over-extended and thus vulnerable to a counter stroke. A complete Ukrainian victory, in the near term, at least, could be difficult.

## SCENARIO 3

The war becomes an interminable frozen conflict, with neither side being able to change the status quo. Both sides dig in along the positions they hold which becomes the Line of Contact.

In spite of being pushed back by successful counter-offensives, the Russians have been able to hold on along the line of the Seversky Donetsk River in the east and the Dnipro and Dnieper rivers in the south. They have good defensible positions which are well fortified, and can hold on indefinitely. On the western bank of the rivers, the Ukrainians too have done the same to prevent further Russian advances in the east or in the south. There could be a stalemate along the line held by



Russian and Ukrainian troops along which low intensity fighting could continue interminably.

The same situation exists in the Donbas since 2014. Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces have occupied defensive positions opposite each other along a line which is called the Line of Contact. Low level fighting, artillery duels and raids have continued for over eight years, but the line remained largely static. A similar Line of Contact could come up along the line of the territories that Russia has annexed, and now calls its own. Since Ukraine will never accept it, the fighting would continue but with neither side really able to change the status quo. This LOC would become the dividing line not only between Russia and Ukraine, but between Russia and the rest of Europe as well.

**LIKELIHOOD:** This seems to be the most likely scenario. Both sides already seem to be preparing for it by occupying defences along geographical lines in both the south and east. Although Putin will not fully attain his war aims, the occupation of Donbas and the south will give him a measure of military victory. Ukraine will never accept it, but would be unable to change the overall picture. It would be akin to the LOC in Kashmir between India and Pakistan which came up in 1948, and after a while, gradually became the status quo.

#### SCENARIO 4

##### A NATO-Russia war.

The NATO is actually the caucus belli of this war. It was Ukraine's desire to join it, and the fact that this would have brought the alliance right at Russia's doorstep, that led to the war. Even as the war continues it seems unlikely that Ukraine would be able to join the alliance in the near future. If Ukraine gets membership, NATO would be sucked directly into conflict under Article 5 of the NATO charter, that states that any attack on any member state is considered as an attack on all. NATO will continue to prop up Ukraine with infusions of arms and aid, which will keep the conflict going. After all, this state suits them where they can continue to weaken Russia "to the last Ukrainian" without being directly involved. Neither does Russia want a



**NATO's entry would escalate the situation and push Russia to use the nuclear option**

direct confrontation with NATO—one in which they would lose. But while neither side wants it, they could still slip into a NATO-Russia conflict that sets off a European, or even a global war.

The crossing of a "Red Line" could draw NATO into the conflict. It could be the use of a chemical, biological or a nuclear weapon, or maybe even a particularly devastating attack on a civilian target. Should NATO enter the war, Putin has warned that he would use his nuclear weapons. NATO too has warned that any use of nuclear weapons would not go unchallenged even if it brings the world to "Armageddon". The use of any nuclear weapon, even a tactical low-yield one, would draw NATO into the war, and send it spiraling towards WW III.

Even an inadvertent strike by Russia into a NATO member's territory could provide the trigger. Should a Russian missile strike on Lviv – where western aid is stockpiled and is just 20 kilometers from the Poland border – fall into Poland's territory, it would constitute an attack on a NATO member and draw in all members. With Sweden and Finland having joined NATO, an inadvertent air or naval confrontation around the Baltic Sea could again provide the trigger. In the turbo-charged environment of the day, a minor incident could rapidly go out of control.

But how would NATO respond? The crossing of a "Red Line" could lead to a

limited NATO involvement initially—perhaps the imposition of a "no-fly-zone" or moving of additional forces close to Russian frontiers. But NATO's entry would escalate the situation dangerously, perhaps to the point of no return. It would push Russia, and Putin personally, against the wall, and he could lash out indiscriminately, maybe even using the nuclear option, "against an existentialist threat to Russia". Putin is aware of the power of his threat and this knowledge stays a direct NATO involvement, so far, at least.

**LIKELIHOOD:** It seems unlikely that NATO will get directly involved and thus escalate the situation. But should a situation spiral out of control and lead to NATO involvement, it would mean certain defeat of Russia against their combined might. That could also suck in Russian allies like Belarus, Iran and Syria, and even China, which can set the stage for World War III. A NATO involvement would trigger off the "Armageddon Response" – a nuclear exchange in a scenario so horrific that it will encompass the rest of the world. This worst-case scenario will be examined in detail in the subsequent issue.

*Ajay Singh is an award-winning author. This article has been excerpted from his forthcoming book "The War in Ukraine".*

Courtesy: The Sunday Guardian  
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# The Thin Red Line

## NATO Cannot Afford to Lose Kabul and Kiev

Pepe Escobar

Let's start with Pipelineistan. Nearly seven years ago, I showed how Syria was the ultimate Pipelineistan war.

Damascus had rejected the American plan for a Qatar-Turkey gas pipeline, to the benefit of Iran-Iraq-Syria (for which a memorandum of understanding was signed).

What followed was a vicious, concerted "Assad must go" campaign: proxy war as the road to regime change. The toxic dial went exponentially up with the instrumentalization of ISIS – yet another chapter of the war of terror (*italics mine*). Russia blocked ISIS, thus preventing regime change in Damascus. The Empire of Chaos-favored pipeline bit the dust.

Now the Empire finally exacted payback, blowing up existing pipelines – Nord Stream (NS) and Nord Stream 2 (NS2) – carrying or about to carry Russian gas to a key imperial economic competitor: the European Union.

We all know by now that Line B of NS2 has not been bombed, or even punctured, and it's ready to go. Repairing the other three punctured lines would not be a problem: a matter of two months, according to naval engineers. Steel on the Nord Streams is thicker than on modern ships. Gazprom has offered to repair them – as long as Europeans behave like grown-ups and accept strict security conditions.

We all know that's not going to happen. None of the above is discussed across NATOsan media. That means that Plan A by the usual suspects remains in place: creating a contrived natural gas shortage, leading to the de-industrialization of Europe, all part of the Great Reset, rebranded "The Great Narrative".



Russia hurled a barrage of missiles against Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, early on 10 Oct 2022.

Meanwhile, the EU Muppet Show is discussing the ninth sanction package against Russia. Sweden refuses to share with Russia the results of the dodgy intra-NATO "investigation" of itself on who blew up the Nord Streams.

At Russian Energy Week, President Putin summarized the stark facts.

Europe blames Russia for the reliability of its energy supplies even though it was receiving the entire volume it bought under fixed contracts.

The "orchestrators of the Nord Stream terrorist attacks are those who profit from them".

Repairing Nord Stream strings "would only make sense in the event of continued operation and security".

Buying gas on the spot market will cause a €300 billion loss for Europe.

The rise in energy prices is not due to the Special Military Operation (SMO), but to the West's own policies.

Yet the Dead Can Dance show must go on. As the EU forbids itself to buy Russian energy, the Brussels Eurocracy skyrockets their debt to the financial casino. The imperial masters laugh all the way to the bank with this form of collectivism – as they continue to profit from using financial markets to pillage and plunder whole nations.

Which bring us to the clincher: the Straussian/neo-con psychos controlling Washington's foreign policy eventually might – and the operative word is "might" – stop weaponizing Kiev and start negotiations with Moscow only after their main industrial competitors in Europe go bankrupt.

### Judo in Kharkov

There are absolutely no indicators whatsoever pointing to a Russian defeat anywhere along the over 1,000 km-long frontline. The spun-to-death withdrawal





from Kharkov may have been a masterstroke: the first stage of a judo move that, cloaked in legality, fully developed after the terrorist bombing of Krymskiy Most—the Crimea Bridge.

Let's look at the retreat from Kharkov as a trap – as in Moscow graphically demonstrating "weakness". That led the Kiev forces – actually their NATO handlers – to gloat about Russia "fleeing", abandon all caution, and go for broke, even embarking on a terror spiral, from the assassination of Darya Dugina to the attempted destruction of Krymskiy Most.

In terms of Global South public opinion, it's already established that General Armageddon's Daily Morning Missile Show is a legal (*italics mine*) response to a terrorist state. Putin may have sacrificed, for a while, a piece on the chessboard – Kharkov: after all, the SMO mandate is not to hold terrain, but to demilitarize Ukraine.

Moscow even won post-Kharkov: all the Ukrainian military equipment accumulated in the area was thrown into offensives, just for the Russian Army to merrily engage in non-stop target practice.

And then there's the real clincher: Kharkov set in motion a series of moves that allowed Putin to eventually go for checkmate, via the missile-heavy "soft" CTO, reducing the collective West to a bunch of headless chickens.

In parallel, the usual suspects continue to relentlessly spin their new nuclear "narrative". Foreign Minister Lavrov has been forced to repeat ad nauseam that according to Russian nuclear doctrine, a strike may only happen in response to an attack "which endangers the entire existence of the Russian Federation."

The aim of the D.C. psycho killers – in their wild wet dreams – is to provoke Moscow into using tactical nuclear weapons in the battlefield. That was another vector in rushing the timing of the Crimea Bridge terror attack: after all British intel plans had been swirling for months. That all came to nought.

The hysterical Straussian/neocon propaganda machine is frantically, preemptively, blaming Putin: he's "cornered", he's "losing", he's "getting desperate" so he'll launch a nuclear strike.

It's no wonder the Doomsday Clock set up by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in 1947 is now placed at only 100 seconds from midnight. Right on "Doom's doorstep".

This is where a bunch of American psychos is leading us.

### Life at Doom's doorstep

As the Empire of Chaos, Lies and Plunder is petrified by the startling Double Fail of a massive economic/military attack, Moscow is systematically preparing for the next military offensive. As it stands, it's clear that the Anglo-American axis will not negotiate. It has not even tried for the past eight years, and it's not about to change course.

Instead, Putin has summoned eons of Taoist patience to avoid military solutions. Terror on the Crimea Bridge may have been a game-changer. Even in his latest landmark speech, which contained a savage indictment of the West, Putin made clear he's always open for negotiations.

Yet by now, Putin and the Security Council know why the Americans simply can't negotiate. Ukraine may be just a pawn in their game, but it's still one of Eurasia's key geopolitical nodes: whoever controls it, enjoys extra strategic depth.

The Russians are very much aware that the usual suspects are obsessed with blowing up the complex process of Eurasia integration – starting with China's BRI. No wonder important instances of power in Beijing are "uneasy" with the war. Because that's very bad for business between China and Europe via several trans-Eurasian corridors.

Putin and the Russian Security Council also know that NATO abandoned Afghanistan – an absolutely miserable failure – to place all their chips on Ukraine. So losing both Kabul and Kiev will be the ultimate mortal blow: that means

### Nord Stream pipelines from Russia

Leaks detected on both pipelines near Bornholm



abandoning the 21st Eurasian Century to the Russia-China-Iran strategic partnership.

Sabotage – from the Nord Streams to Krymskiy Most – gives away the desperation game. NATO's arsenals are virtually empty. What's left is a war of terror: the Syrianization, actually ISIS-ization of the battlefield. Managed by braindead NATO, acted on the terrain by a cannon fodder horde sprinkled with mercenaries from at least 34 nations.

So Moscow may be forced to go all the way – as the Totally Unplugged Dmitry Medvedev revealed: now this is about eliminating a terrorist regime, totally dismantle its politico-security apparatus and then facilitate the emergence of a different entity. And if NATO still blocks it, direct clash will be inevitable.

NATO's thin red line is they can't afford to lose both Kabul and Kiev. Yet it took two acts of terror – on Pipelineistan and on Crimea – to imprint a much starker, burning red line: Russia will not allow the Empire to control Ukraine, whatever it takes. That's intrinsically linked to the future of the Greater Eurasia Partnership. Welcome to life at Doom's doorstep.

Courtesy: The Saker  
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# The Kherson Ruse: Ukraine and the Art of Military Deception

Huw Dylan, David V. Gioe and Joe Littell

In ancient China, the general Sun Tzu counseled that "all warfare is based on deception." Could that still be the case millennia later—after an industrial and then a digital revolution have left contemporary battlefields awash with intelligence sensors and digital technology that can offer commanders unprecedented levels of situational awareness? Advancement in thermal imaging can highlight targets concealed to the naked eye, while near constant real-time observation from constellations of satellites and seemingly ubiquitous unmanned vehicles can inhibit maneuver, deliver precision strikes, and provide timely indications and warning. Voluminous twitter threads and uploads of data, metadata, and even curated datasets provide a surprisingly granular understanding of the battlespace, and internet platforms like Google Maps can indicate traffic congestion along main motorways caused by an invasion. This may lead some to consider the fog of war practically dispelled, and, as a consequence, military deception a tool of a bygone, less transparent, and less sensor-laden era. But analyzing recent Ukrainian victories would correct this erroneous point of view. In early September the Ukrainian military accomplished the most major feat of arms in the Russo-Ukrainian war (thus far) with deception at its foundation. Some principles are timeless.

In early September, Ukrainian armed forces launched a surprise



A banner on a Kherson street, the only regional capital captured by the Russians, reads 'Russia is here forever!'

**“Catching out a Russian army in the particular way Ukrainian forces did is a bitter taste of Russia's own medicine-maskirovka.”**

counteroffensive in Kharkiv that broke through Russian lines. Local breakthroughs morphed from salient to encirclements. Many Russian troops reportedly fled—on foot, by bicycle, and with some wearing civilian clothes pilfered from raided wardrobes.

Abandoned military equipment emblazoned with "Z" quickly came to litter the streets and countryside. On September 10, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy declared that nearly two thousand square kilometers of territory had been retaken. This included the key logistical hub of Izium, dealing the already harassed Russian logistical chain another major blow. As long as the war continues, it is premature to declare any battlefield achievement to be decisive, but for now, Vladimir Putin's army has been routed in substantial sections of northeast Ukraine.

Catching out a Russian army in the particular way Ukrainian forces did is a





bitter taste of Russia's own medicine—maskirovka, which literally means "disguise," is codified in Russian (and Ukrainian) military doctrine, and Russian forces have a long history of effective deception operations dating from at least Soviet times. So, how did Ukrainian forces achieve this? They took heed of Sun Tzu's timeless advice: first, "if his forces are united, separate them"; second, "when we are near, we must make the enemy believe we are far away; when far away, we must make him believe we are near." They had to appear weak where they were strong. Ukraine's northern breakthrough came after much noisy talk about a much-anticipated counteroffensive in Kherson in the south, talk that seemed to signal Ukraine's real target. Some Western media entities bought into the ruse. It was confidently repeated many times that the most likely objective would be Kherson. So convincing was this deception that Russian forces were redeployed from the Kharkiv region to defend against it.

For deception to be effective, schemes need to be plausible to the opposition's way of thinking, which requires understanding an adversary's mindset. The Russians have been concerned about their ever-more tenuous hold on Kherson. Following months of grinding attrition, punctuated by the odd spectacular attack like the raids on Russian facilities in Crimea, it made sense for the Ukrainians to make much ado about retaking Kherson as their first large-scale conventional counterattack. That oblast is farther from Russian supply lines and has already been the locus of guerrilla warfare and resistance to the Russian occupation. Kyiv has an economic imperative to liberate Ukraine's agricultural areas and to regain Ukraine's access to the Black Sea. The Russians, reading the situation and anticipating the assault, had every reason to transport forces south, away from Kharkiv, to reinforce Kherson – a target that made sense to them. That Ukrainian forces spearheaded their counteroffensive with a small number of tanks was to suggest that the action in Kharkiv was a feint. They then ruthlessly exploited gaps in Russia's lines, exacerbated of course by the panic that spread across positions occupied by



Opening of the War\_in\_Ukraine\_(24 Feb 2022) wiki

unmotivated Russian troops. This was a textbook example of the value of deception: a ruse denied the opponent the luxury of concentrating manpower and forced hard decisions on already underperforming Russian commanders about where to place their mass.

Like earlier players in the deception game – those who masterminded the great deceptions of World War II and paved the way for the successful D-Day landings in Normandy, or those who cannily pinned Saddam Hussein's forces in southern Kuwait before deploying the 1st Armored Division on the now famous "left hook" in 1991 – Ukraine's forces will have depended on a combination of careful planning, good intelligence, operational security, brilliant execution, and a good dollop of fortune. The Kharkiv/Kherson operation serves as a reminder that low-tech ruses have a place on the twenty-first-century battlefield. Fake units planning operational maneuvers joined with wooden decoys, inflatable tanks, and fake anti-aircraft systems have littered battlefields and drawn enemy fire for over a century. Ukrainian forces' deployment of such systems would have struck a familiar chord with the key deception planners of World War II – like British Army officer and deception pioneer Dudley Clarke, who as commander of A-Force plied his

deceptions to support British forces against the German Wehrmacht in North Africa and Europe. Similar to Operation Bodyguard's positioning General George S. Patton on Pas de Calais to draw Wehrmacht forces away from the true location of the Allied invasion of mainland Europe, Ukraine positioned its forces toward the south, along the most likely path to Kherson. The Ukrainians furthered the deception when they took a page out of Gulf War US General Norman Schwarzkopf's playbook by broadcasting their plans to any media entity that would listen.

If deception is a key ingredient in martial success, then intelligence is a prerequisite for deception. Intelligence provides insight into the mind of the enemy and helps craft the right deception aimed at the right target to support the broader military effort. Just as Royal Navy intelligence officer Ewen Montagu and his colleagues in wartime London exploited Hitler's fear of an Allied attack on Greece in 1943 with Operation Mincemeat, Kyiv needed to give Moscow something to focus on, to worry about-something that made sense to Russian commanders, who themselves are susceptible to deception operations owing to the Russian military's rigidly hierarchical top-down force structure. In this case, the Kherson front







**Jubilant crowds celebrate after 'Russia's retreat from Kherson**

was dangled as the intended target and Russian commanders took the bait-and questioning one's commander isn't conducive to a long career in the Russian military. With intelligence help from the United States and others, Ukrainian forces could identify the locations and movement of Russian units, identify where Russian forces were being reinforced and where they were thinning, with intelligence again providing feedback to assess the effects of the deception. That the deception was well integrated into a broader battle plan allowed motivated and newly well-equipped Ukrainian forces to exploit vulnerabilities with maximal impact when the conditions were right.

A successful deception operation doesn't itself win wars, but the Kharkiv offensive serves as a salutary reminder that, alongside Western arms and sturdy Ukrainian morale, classic deception based on solid intelligence is proving a significant asset to Ukraine. Nor is this the only example of effective Ukrainian deception in the war. Since the invasion began, Ukrainian forces have employed dummies and inflatables to attract and deplete Russian weapon stocks. Some of the most valuable weapons systems provided by the United States, notably the HIMARS, which are wreaking havoc on Russian supply lines and arms dumps, have their own bodyguard of lies in the form of wooden decoys tempting the Russians to waste their limited remaining supply of precision-guided munitions to

take them out. But the Kharkiv/Kherson deception is especially instructive. Deploying an audacious deception, and keeping it a secret, is a testament to developing Ukrainian martial capability. Being on the receiving end will sting Russian intelligence officers, not to mention further demoralizing the rank and file. Falling victim to deception induces doubt and paranoia (which Russian forces already do not lack). Ukraine and its allies will hope to both capitalize on this breakthrough and take valuable lessons for future operations. They have clearly applied ancient wisdom: "Let your plans be dark and impenetrable as night, and when you move, fall like a thunderbolt." Sun Tzu would esteem the Kharkiv offensive's planners as talented practitioners of the art of war.

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Courtesy: Modern War Institute at Westpoint

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## The US Bubble of Pretend

*Contd from page 128*

coincidence, pertinent to our case.

I watched Marcel Ophuls' *The Sorrow and the Pity*, all four hours of it. This is the famously explosive documentary that forced the French to come to terms with the extent to which they had collaborated with the Nazis during the three years and some they occupied France.

This film has a special meaning for me. It came out in 1969, just as I arrived in Paris for university studies. France was in an uproar over Ophuls' film. It was banned from broadcast on French television until 1981. I did not understand much of this at the time.

*The Sorrow and the Pity* shredded to pieces, relentlessly, unblinkingly, the national myth that the French had all been heroes of the resistance, or had aided it, or had in some way stood against the collaborationist Vichy regime of Marshal Pétain, hero of Verdun in World War I, capitulationist in World War II. This was nothing like the case.

Now I understand what the young student long ago could not quite grasp. The French simply could not face Ophuls' unyielding exposure of who they had been. Ophuls had punctured the enduring bubble of pretend within which they had lived for 25 years after the 1945 victory in Europe.

People can live in these bubbles a very long time. The unreality within them can be very persuasive. The French finally emerged from their bubble. It was painful, a passage full of angst, but they were fortunate to have escaped.

Will we have our interim of sorrow, of pity, and emerge from our bubble the better for it? May we someday be so blest.

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Courtesy: Consortium News

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# LESSONS LEARNT

## How Western Experts Got the Ukraine War So Wrong

Taras Kuzio

A bizarre factor in Russia's invasion of Ukraine is that most Western experts on the Russian military agreed with the Kremlin that Russia had a powerful army which would defeat Ukraine within two or three days. While there has been much analysis, including by this author, of how Russian imperial nationalist stereotypes of Ukrainians made them miscalculate, there has been no investigation of why Western experts exaggerated the strength of the Russian army and underplayed Ukraine militarily and as a resilient society.

This article launches an overdue discussion on the latter question, regarding the exaggeration of Russian military power and under-playing of Ukrainian capabilities. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy recalled that when the invasion began, 'most people who called me - well, almost everyone - did not have faith that Ukraine can stand up to this and persevere.' National Security and Defence Council Secretary Olexiy Danilov remembered the West believed Ukraine had, 'almost zero chances to succeed.'

The views of experts shaped Western policymakers in two ways.

For one, since the 2014 crisis, most experts opposed the West sending arms to Ukraine. In a February 2015 survey by Foreign Affairs which asked, 'Should the United States Arm Ukraine,' 18 experts disagreed and only nine agreed with sending arms. Prominent among those who disagreed were scholars of Russia and Eurasia, such as Angela Stent, Anatol Lieven, Robert Legvold, Ian Bremmer, Robert Jervis, Jack Snyder, William C. Wohlforth, Mary S. Sarotte, Keith Darden, and Valerie Bunce.

Darden, writing in New York Times,



A charred Russian tank and captured ones in the Sumy region of Ukraine, March 2022

Charles A. Kupchan in Washington Post, and Stephen M. Walt in Foreign Policy all strongly opposed sending weapons to Ukraine, believing it would be a major mistake. Walt claimed sending weapons to Ukraine would be a 'a really, really bad idea.' Michael Kofman declared in New York Times that 'for the U.S., arming Ukraine could be a deadly mistake.'

Realists such as Rajan Menon, Eugene Rumer, John J. Mearsheimer, and Samuel Charap were even more adamantly opposed to supplying weapons to Ukraine. Charap wrote in Foreign Policy that sending arms would not make any difference anyway, as Ukraine would be defeated by Russia. Charap went on to call for Western restraint (which Ukrainians and others viewed as appeasement)

toward Russia, and for Ukraine to agree to territorial compromises by forgoing its territorial integrity.

Realists made exaggerated assessments of Russia's military power and belittled Ukraine's chances in discourse that at times was orientalist in nature. Writing in Financial Times, realist Eugene Rumer claimed arming Ukraine risked another 'Black Hawk Down' incident, and anyway Ukraine 'should be told it cannot win.' Realists Rajan Menon and Kimberly Marten writing in Foreign Affairs repeated the same arguments. Meanwhile, Menon and Rumer wrote in Foreign Affairs that sending weapons to Ukraine 'would backfire.'

The second way that expert views shaped policymaker action was by stoking





Drone imagery grab of Ukrainian ambush on a column of Russian tanks near Kyiv, Ukraine on 10 March 2022.

fears of a repeat of the rout of the Afghan army following the US withdrawal of Afghanistan. Convinced that Ukraine would be quickly defeated, expert advice influenced Western governments and NATO to only consider sending military equipment suitable for partisan warfare against an occupying force.

Western experts believed Russian claims they had reformed their army since it had performed so badly during the 2008 invasion of Georgia. They also counted the number of pieces of Russian military equipment and simplistically assumed they would overwhelm the smaller Ukrainian army.

Russian policymakers and Western experts were both convinced Russia would quickly take control over the sky above Ukraine. Kofman and Jeffrey Edmonds and Jack Watling and Nick Reynolds discounted Ukraine's air defenses as capable of preventing Russian combat aircraft from dominating the skies. Western experts believed the claim that Russia had one-million-strong powerful security forces, which would quickly defeat a weaker and less experienced Ukraine.

As we have seen in the first eight months of the war, the Russian army has been shown to be far weaker than imagined. Writing about 'rampant' misconceptions of Russian military power, Orysia Lutsevych, head of Chatham House's Ukraine Forum, asked: 'Why do experts keep overestimating Russian strength and underestimating Ukraine's military capabilities, and how can they avoid doing so again?' Ian Matveev questioned whether Russian forces in Ukraine can even be described as an

'army' rather than, 'a kind of military grouping in which the army is not in command everywhere, and not always.'

During the first six months of the war, Russian forces in Ukraine showed no evidence of a unified command, never achieved air superiority, and they have yet to launch combined arms operations. Moreover, the Russian army has no encrypted communications systems, making it easier for Ukrainians to locate and attack their positions. Looting, war crimes, poor organization, and lack of discipline have been shown to be endemic features of the Russian army.

More recently, Western experts have talked back military reforms, stating that they have been less successful than previously claimed. As the war in Ukraine has shown, reforms have had limited if any influence on Russian military's operational effectiveness. In many ways, the Russian army still resembles the former Soviet army in its mentality, hierarchical structure, poor quality officers, poor levels of training, ill-discipline, poor logistics, and corruption.

The war in Ukraine pits a vertically structured Russia with a subject population against a horizontally structured Ukraine composed of citizens. During Vladimir Putin's 22 years ruling Russia as president and prime minister he has re-Sovietized the country, fanned militarism, promoted a quasi-religious cult of the Great Patriotic War and Joseph Stalin, and destroyed civil society and volunteer groups. In Ukraine the opposite has taken place in each of these areas. Ukraine has undergone de-Sovietization since the late 1980s and decommunization since the 2013-2014

Euromaidan Revolution, has denigrated Stalin as a tyrant, switched from military celebration of the Great Patriotic War to commemoration of World War II, and built a dynamic civil society and volunteer movement. Ukrainians have organized three popular revolutions since 1990 to demand their rights; Russia's last revolution was over a hundred years ago.

But perhaps the biggest mistake was to ignore the impact of corruption on Russia's military effectiveness. Russia was first described as a 'mafia state' as long ago as in 2010 by a Spanish judge investigating ties between the Russian state and Russian organized crime. Russia has stagnated in every meaningful manner since then, especially in corruption, and in the elites' disdain for and cynicism toward the Russian population.

Kofman was convinced Russia would invade and Ukraine would be defeated. Writing three days before the invasion in Foreign Affairs, Kofman and Edmonds predicted 'Russia's Shock and Awe: Why Moscow Would Use Overwhelming Force Against Ukraine.' Such articles showed the degree to which Western experts believed in the mythology of Russian military power, ignoring the corrosive impact of three decades of stagnation and corruption on the operational effectiveness of the Russian military.

The factors discussed above influenced pessimistic predictions of a Ukrainian defeat espoused by the Pentagon, US intelligence, German and Western European politicians, and think tanks like the Rand Corporation, Carnegie Endowment, and RUSI (Royal United Services Institute).

Watling and Reynolds writing 'The Plot to Destroy Ukraine' for RUSI, published nine days before the invasion, outlined a large list of victories Russia would score in the event of an invasion - none of which have actually come about. They described Ukraine as corrupt, badly divided, with 'widespread penetration' of Ukrainian politics and government by Russian intelligence agents. In the opening phase of the war, they wrote that Russia would destroy Ukraine's defense, command-and-control, and other military installations. Ukraine's best armed forces







Ukrainian soldiers near a front line in the Kherson region of southern Ukraine.

were in the Donbas and because of Russia's advantage in artillery, armor, and aircraft, Watling and Reynolds claimed the invasion would 'likely lead to the rapid overrunning of Ukrainian conventional units' with Kyiv 'enveloped within days.'

Why then did Western experts not factor into their analyses the impact of the Russian mafia state and deep-seated stagnation and corruption on Russian security forces, which would inevitably influence their overall operational effectiveness. For anybody who has been following the war closely, the evidence of this corruption is both vast and mind boggling, from the use of outdated food rations, supply of Soviet medical kits, issuing of weapons dating from the 1980s war in Afghanistan, inadequate logistical supplies for troops in the field, theft of the best food rations, and tanks and other military equipment supplied to front line troops that were stripped of anything valuable. The extent of Russia's dog-eat-dog world could be seen in the estimated two thirds of loot stolen in Ukraine being stolen by Russian postal workers when it was sent from Belarus back home to Russia.

Corruption has plagued Russia's so-called security services making it doubtful we can still describe them as intelligence services. Funds allocated for intelligence operations in Ukraine were stolen by the FSB and their Ukrainian interlocutors. Added to this, the FSB's Ukrainian interlocutors told them what they wanted to hear about 'Little Russians' eager to welcome the Russian army as liberators.

As observers of Russia's army in Ukraine have pointed out, field military and intelligence reports become increasingly exaggerated as they are sent up the security hierarchy until they eventually arrive on Putin's desk. Nobody after all, wants to deliver bad news to a dictator. Added to this is the fact that barely no one among Moscow's policymakers, journalists, think tanks, or academics understand Ukraine because they all tend to view Ukrainians through outdated imperial nationalist stereotypes. This clearly explains why Russia's invasion force was only 175,000 strong yet tasked with occupying a large country with security forces at that time which were more than twice as large.

While corruption in Russia was ignored, corruption in Ukraine was exaggerated and presented as a factor in making Ukraine into a weak state. Corruption in Ukraine had no bearing on the stability and national unity of the state or Zelenskyy's patriotic commitment to defending it. Meanwhile, Americans pointing their fingers at corruption in Ukraine and elsewhere might want to order on Amazon the great book by Casey Michel entitled *American Kleptocracy: How the U.S. Created the World's Greatest Money Laundering Scheme in History*.

Another important factor has been the widespread view of the Ukrainian state as weak and badly divided between a 'pro-Russian' eastern and 'pro-Western' western Ukraine. In the last three decades the greatest number of articles published

in the media and by think tanks and academics on Ukraine has been on regional divisions and the country split between a pro-Russian east and nationalist, pro-Western west. In Moscow and among Western experts, Ukraine's Russian speakers were deemed to be inherently unreliable and likely to swing to supporting Russia if Moscow invaded the country.

A shock-and-awe style Russian invasion of Ukraine would exert tremendous pressure on Ukraine's regional divisions, leading to the state's fragmentation and the collapse of the Ukrainian army (as in Afghanistan). This did not take place and the reason why it did not was because Ukraine was never a regionally fractured country; its Russian speakers were Ukrainian patriots, and there was never any possibility the Ukrainian army was going to disintegrate in the same manner as the Afghan army.

Watling and Reynolds believed Russia would be able to promote political instability forcing Ukraine to bow to Russian pressure. Russian military power and economic pressure would 'break the cohesion of the Ukrainian state,' Watling and Reynolds wrote. They made the unverified claim Russia had two companies of spetsnaz in Kyiv prior to the invasion who would act as agents provocateurs disguised as protestors and police and undertake sabotage operations and cyber warfare attacks. No such protests took place, and Russia has failed to launch successful, major cyber-attacks against Ukraine since the invasion began. Watling and Reynolds were confident enough to claim 'Russia has a bureaucracy in waiting' after the plan was implemented to decapitate the government. Following a quick Russian military victory, the West would pressure Ukraine to accept territorial losses in return for peace. None of this transpired.

Western exaggerations of Ukraine's regional divisions were in effect a lighter version of harder Russian views of an artificial Ukraine. Ukraine was de facto viewed as a kind of appendage of Russia and Russians and Ukrainians could not be separated. Western historians in particular viewed Crimea as always having been Russian territory, which could only

be the case by ignoring its history prior to the Tsarist Empire's conquest in 1783. Applying how Western historians of Russia view Crimea, the beginning of American, Canadian, and Australian histories begin with the founding of Jamestown and Quebec, and the arrival of Captain Cook.

Ukraine was not viewed as a fully functioning real country; it was brittle, and easily fractured by internal divisions over languages, history, and identities. Lutsevych wrote: 'By focusing on military hardware, experts often miss the "software" of war: the quality of leadership, morale, and motivation, decision-making and governance and the engagement of society. Lutsevych continued: 'War is an expression of political culture on the battlefield. And there are stark differences between Ukrainian and Russian culture. Many in the West mistakenly thought Ukraine was just like Russia, but weaker, more corrupt, and chaotic. In fact, while Ukraine is by no means perfect, it is more agile and decentralized, compared to the autocratic and rigid Russian state.'

Western experts got the Russian military and Ukrainian resilience wrong because of the way post-communist studies is structured in universities and think tanks. Western experts continue to believe they are experts on both Russia and the remainder of the USSR. In no other region of the world is this the case. An expert on Argentina, for example, is not an expert on Latin America and an expert on Japan is not an expert on East Asia. Experts on Russia believe they are also possessing expertise about Ukraine and other non-Russian republics of the former USSR. This is especially true since 2014 when the number of Ukraine experts expanded many fold.

Russian experts and scholars have therefore tended to look at Ukraine through the eyes of Moscow. Western media outlets and companies were nearly always headquartered in Moscow – as in the USSR – and their journalists and employees rarely traveled to Ukraine. Lusevych writes that this led to: 'At best, Ukraine was viewed as being, well, like Russia; but maybe worse. It was seen as unstable, prone to uprisings and at the mercy of its oligarchs – more corrupt, more



Russia's Oligarch Billionaires

divided, more troubled than the behemoth next door. And because it was viewed as a weak state it was assumed that Ukraine was doomed to collapse in the face of a Russian invasion.' Western experts on Russia have always been reluctant to use sources of information from Ukraine and Ukrainian opinion polls, which I described as academic orientalism in my 2020 book entitled Crisis in Russian Studies?

Western experts exaggerated Russian military power, downplayed Ukrainian military power, ignored corruption in the Russian military, believed fairy tales about Russian military reforms, exaggerated regional divisions and under-estimated national cohesion in Ukraine. Western military reforms in Ukraine since 2014 were ignored. Meanwhile, changes in

identity since 2014, the factors behind the failure of Putin's New Russia project in 2014 and the loyalty of Ukraine's Russian speakers were not considered.

This article has launched a discussion of why and how Western experts exaggerated the effectiveness of the Russian military and downplayed the cohesion of the Ukrainian state and its military. The ongoing war has shed light on how they were wrong on the outcome of Russia's invasion and how Ukraine would respond.

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Courtesy: Geopolitical Monitor  
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# 'Graveyard' of Russian Tanks in Ukraine Upending Armour Doctrines Worldwide and For India

**Snehesh Alex Philip**

**W**hat's the decimation of the feared Russian tanks in Ukraine telling us? Is the tank, along with other armoured fighting vehicles as we've known them, headed the same way as the medieval war elephant?

Lately, besides the numerous pictures and videos of burning, exploding or wrecked Russian tanks, we've also been witnessing some contrasting sights. Consider these two:

The Tank X drove down a pleasant country lane outside Tallinn, Estonia, this summer, its engine humming like a well-tuned sports car. Soon, its sensors, controlled by artificial intelligence systems, detected a threat and the tank alerted a remote human operator. When the tank got permission to open fire, it trained its Bushmaster 30 mm cannon on the 'threat' - a car - and tore it apart. Had a tank crew been on board, they might have felt some satisfaction at the accurate targeting.

Contrast this with a scene from last year. As Indian and Chinese troops facing off on the southern shores of Pangong Tso in Ladakh disengaged, columns of tanks and armoured personnel carriers belched great clouds of smoke into the freezing February air. This, in fact, has been the face of modern war from when Nazi Germany's armoured columns cut into the Ardennes in 1940.

The decimation of Russian armour in Ukraine - including T-72s and T-90s, which make up more than nine-tenths of the Indian Army's fleet - has shown that scenes like the one from Pangong Tso might be better suited to a history textbook than the battlefield.



**A Ukrainian soldier stands on top of a destroyed Russian tank on the outskirts of Kyiv on March 31, 2022.**

Lightweight, shoulder-fired American-manufactured Javelins, and the Swedish and British-made New Generation Light Anti-Tank Weapon (NLAW), together with drones, have relentlessly hunted down the king of the battlefield. Over 1,400 Russian tanks are confirmed by independent photographic evidence to have been destroyed, abandoned, or captured - and that's not counting armoured personnel carriers, infantry combat vehicles, and tracked artillery.

It's the greatest tank disaster since Israel's army destroyed the combined forces of Egypt, Syria and Jordan in the Six-Day War of 1967, despite their superior armoured strength.

So, is it the outcome of problems with

Russian technology and tactics? Or have tanks themselves become an expensive liability? And what lessons must India draw from new classes of technology as it prepares to fight future wars?

## **Why Russia's tanks failed**

Experts are divided on why tanks have, well, tanked in the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

To some, like military analyst Rob Lee, the problem isn't so much tanks themselves, as mistakes in employment and planning, and the lack of proper infantry support. The contest between tanks and anti-tank systems, he argues, has been constant. For example, the Soviet Union's Sagger 9M14 Malyutka wire-guided anti-tank missiles blunted Israeli







Ukrainian servicemen mastering the NLAW anti-tank weapon system, May 2022.

tank supremacy in the 1973 Yom Kippur war.

Learning from the experience, Israel began producing the heavily armoured Merkava -and insurgents in southern Lebanon learned, in turn, to adapt booby-trapped artillery shells to knock out the tank.

Even though Kyiv is knocking out large masses of Russian armour, it's still seeking more tanks of its own from the West - knowing they'll be protected by superior artillery like the United States-made HIMARS and other precision munitions, as well as armour that can defeat Moscow's existing anti-tank missiles.

For radical strategic thinkers, though, the Ukraine war underlines a fundamental shift in warfare driven by technology. The heavy, expensive military platforms that formed the foundations of militaries in the industrial age, Phillips Payson O'Brien argues, are giving way to nimbler, smarter systems. Together with the fighter jet and the warship, he writes, tanks "are being pushed into obsolescence".

Like many big arguments about warfighting, there's no simple answer to this debate. Little doubt exists that the commanders in charge of Russia's T-72, T-80, and T-90 tanks made serious mistakes. Tank columns choked highways, enabling Ukrainian forces to pick them off. Having destroyed the first and last tank in a column, Ukrainian soldiers could pick off

the rest at leisure - almost, as it were, with a drink in hand.

The armoured operation was also unleashed in the pre-winter wet season, known as the *rasputitsa*, when mud makes armoured movement tough. The Russians should have known this, since the Nazi offensive on Moscow in 1941 stalled for just this reason: "General Mud" and "General Winter", Red Army soldiers used to joke, were their most reliable commanders.

A third of the over 1,400 Russian tanks independently estimated to have been lost were captured or abandoned - a sign that poor logistics left crews without fuel or spares.

To make things worse, the bulk of tanks Russia has deployed in Ukraine were produced in the 1970s and 1980s. Even though they have been modernised with explosive reactive armour, designed to mitigate threats from shoulder-fired missiles, the tanks remain vulnerable to systems with tandem warheads, like the Javelins and NLAWs. Russian tanks are especially vulnerable to missiles which target their turrets from above, because of design flaws in the ways in which their ammunition-loading systems are configured.

Western tanks, like the United States' Abrams main battle tank, are already being equipped with active protection systems to defeat incoming missiles and fight off

drones. Israel's latest tank, the Merkava 5, includes protection systems capable of fighting off the country's own state-of-the-art Spike anti-tank missile.

While acknowledging that tanks indeed face an existential threat, serving Indian Army officers and experts in India believe it's too early to write them off.

Former mechanised infantry officer Maj. Gen. Yash Mor (Retd) argues that while Western technology has exposed vulnerabilities of Russian-designed tanks, tactical innovation can help. "You will have to have electronic eyes and ears ahead of your forces to detect threats," Mor says.

Lt Gen. Vinod Bhatia (Retd) concurs. "Armour tactics will obviously have to change," he says, "but the psychological impact of a tank can't be wished away."

To some, though, the problem isn't the tactics or the weapons Russia used: It is the tank itself.

## Reimagining the tank

The AI-powered Type-X Robotic Combat Vehicle (RCV) - dubbed Tank X - developed by Estonia-based Milrem Robotics, is just one of many projects worldwide that are bringing artificial intelligence and unmanned technologies to fighting vehicles.

Tanks without crews don't need heavy armour protection, allowing for gains in mobility and speed. The United States military says it doesn't know, for certain, what the next generation of its Abrams main battle tank will look like - but there are many experiments underway, involving multiple kinds of sensors, protective systems, and integration with drones.

In tests carried out in California earlier this summer, the United States Defense Advanced Research Project Agency established that unmanned off-road vehicles were approaching the capabilities of trained drivers. Testing is also underway of robots that can autonomously protect landing zones, engage enemies ahead of human troops, and sabotage forward airfields.

A technologist involved in the experiments described the new generation of combat technologies as "lightning in a bottle": "This thing was light, it was agile, and it was lethal."

Future tanks could also become hubs at





FGM-148 Javelin in action

the centre of multiple kinds of robotic vehicles, missiles, and airborne platforms. Israel's Elbit Systems in June this year unveiled one such vehicle that will go into testing next year. An unarmed version of Tank X served with French forces fighting jihadists in Mali, back in 2019.

For some military thinkers, however, endlessly upgrading tanks to cope with new threats seems a pointless enterprise. The tank was designed to defeat a very specific military challenge that emerged at the dawn of the industrial era - the machine gun. Post-industrial technology offers new means to do what the tank does, but cheaper and better.

The United States Marine Corps is simply dumping its tanks, replacing them with lightweight high-technology equipment, such as more drones and precision-guided missiles, even though the US Army still believes in tanks. That radical approach, though, is a step too far for most forces in the West – leave alone India.

### The future of India's tanks

Led by Gen. Krishnaswami Sundarji, the Indian Army began planning in the mid-1980s for wars where fast-moving armoured formations would cut deep into Pakistan. Gen. Sundarji's war planning was the result of painful lessons learned in past wars.

But even though the great India-Pakistan tank battles of 1965 are celebrated, their outcomes were less than decisive, Amarinder Singh and Tajinder Shergill have shown.

Singh and Shergill are sharply critical of some Indian commanders who, they claim, operated without focus, like "a fire brigade that heard of imaginary fires here, there and everywhere". Former Pakistani military officer Agha Amin's history of India-Pakistan armoured engagements also has also shown that they yielded stalemates, not breakthroughs.

The vulnerabilities of its largely Russian fleet now shown up in stark relief, should India invest in more or better? Or explore the possibilities offered by new technologies?

In the short term, the Army is seeking to address its most pressing gap - unmanned aerial vehicles. Two sets of swarm drones were acquired by the Armoured Corps and the Mechanised Infantry in August this year. The AI-based recognition systems in these drones enable them to autonomously recognise targets like tanks, guns, vehicles, and humans. The information is relayed back to a control station, where human operators can order appropriate responses.

Like other militaries, however, the Indian Army is also rethinking what the armoured warfare of the future might look like. It is committed to acquiring 1,700 Future-Ready Combat Vehicles (FRCVs) – a new platform that will be able to engage with the large tank fleets of both China and Pakistan. Among other things, FRCV planners are considering a turret-less tank that is integrated with its own drone swarms and anti-drone electronics.

The Army has also launched Project

Zorawar to develop a light tank weighing 25 tonnes or less that can operate in the Himalayas. The Zorawar, like the FRCV, will be empowered with artificial intelligence systems, as well as integrated with drones.

FRCVs are scheduled for induction in 2030 - an ambitious target, given that the Army is yet to even finalise exactly what it wants. Even if the Army makes a conceptual decision tomorrow, seven years is a short time to design, test, and manufacture the FRCV.

The prototype of the Arjun main battle tank - which even today remains controversial, because of its weight and a slew of other technology issues - was first revealed in 1985. The production version Arjun 1A, though, was only cleared for induction into the Army in 2018.

Even more fundamental question is the kinds of wars India might fight.

"A single anti-tank guided missile can hold back an entire regiment of tanks in a narrow Himalayan pass," notes Lt Gen. D.S. Hooda (Retd), former commander of the Army's Northern Command.

In the decades since the India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, the plains where tank battles were fought have become densely built up, with villages growing into towns and cities. That means there will be limited room for armoured manoeuvre - and that large-scale artillery bombardments could have unacceptable human costs for both countries.

"From the Chenab River down to Ganganagar, the urban build has become incredibly thick," says Lt Gen. Rakesh Sharma (Retd), former Corps Commander of the Leh-based 14 Corps. "One would have to flatten entire cities with artillery barrages to allow tank formations to move forward. The human geography of the battlefield is not what it was 30 years ago."

Each age creates its own weapons. The tank was designed as a response to specific challenges that emerged in the late 19th century. The machine gun had mired troops in trench warfare, and the tank was created to make wars of manoeuvre possible again. Together with the battleship and the bomber, the tank might face its final defeat at the hands of post-industrial technology.

Courtesy: The Print

First published on 30 October 2022





# Employment of Tanks in Future Battlespace

Lt Gen AB Shivane, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, Retd

**T**he first casualty in war is always truth. This is increasingly relevant in the war of narratives which dominates the contemporary social media battlespace<sup>1</sup>. One such aspect that is far from the truth is the obituary of the tank being signed. Such leading statements show a deficit in understanding of tank and tank warfare.

It may be premature to draw lessons from an ongoing war, yet a few facts that have been distorted need to be put in the right perspective less the larger picture gets painted with illusions and false messaging. Given the open-source narratives, it seems that the Russians fought a 21st Century War with 19th Century tank tactics. The Ukrainian conflict has certainly brought forth shortcomings in the Russian doctrinal construct, training, and tactical employment of tanks. Yet the fact is their success could never have been achieved in the absence of tanks.

## The Eleven Big Tank Lessons

**Conventional Wars are here to Stay and Tanks will play a Critical Role in Future Wars.** The myth that war is not an option often professed by politicians and some defence analysts stands shattered. Hard power counts and this requires time-critical investment in terms of matching budgetary support and optimisation of indigenous capabilities. Further, the aim of war is to impose one's will on the adversary and the art of war is to achieve victory at the least cost and in minimum time. It is this important factor in which tanks as mobile protected firepower enjoy a unique and indomitable position on the battlefield.

**Boots and Tracks on Ground Matter.**



A destroyed Russian tank in Ukraine

As long as nations have inimical adversaries and turbulent borders, boots and tracks on the ground will matter. They are the symbol of hard power and the signature of offensive intent. Their employment must increasingly be seen from the physical denial and domination perspective of deterrence and warfighting. The impasse in Ladakh Sector against the Chinese has once again proven the role of boots and tracks on the ground.

**Distance Punishment Versus Adaptive Manoeuvre.** The modern battlespace demands the military to cope with increasing information overload, battlespace transparency, precision munition lethality, terrain restrictions, and logistical vulnerabilities. In such a battlespace it has been proven that distance punishment unexploited by the physical domination of the ground is a wasted effect. The need is to complement 2D terrain mechanised manoeuvre with

3D air enabled manoeuvre from fixed-wing and attack helicopters.

**Tank is a Symbol of Military Power in the Information Wars of the 21st Century.** The war of narratives scripts the notion of victory in the cognitive domain. The question of identifying victor and vanquished in these contemporary wars is complex and ambiguous. There will no more be absolute victory or absolute defeat. In this script tanks, ships and aircraft make impactful visuals and their employment adds to the plausibility of the narrative. Nations will need to invest in this dimension of perception management of information warfare. Thus, tanks will dominate the time, space, force, and cognitive domain of warfare.

**Tank is as Good as the Tankman.** In a 21st-Century war, traditional tank versus tank battles are increasingly exceptional, yet tanks as mobile protected firepower platforms will find a predominant place







A Russian tank destroyed in battles on a main road near Brovary, outside Kyiv, March 2022

across the entire spectrum of conflict including in the nuclear environment. Their optimisation will be a factor in understanding their deployability, employability, and capability. It is here that we require a mix of medium and light tanks<sup>6</sup>. Tanks are as good as the tankman and the tankman is as good as the operational doctrine, technology enablement, and tactical skills. Adhoc and insufficient skills through conscripts have their limits and the proposed concept of "Tour on Duty" needs greater deliberation in the light of the Russian tankman's poor performance. Additionally, unit training cycles and field exercises must not be curtailed. Further, high technology combat simulation systems and simulators must add to the training continuum.

#### **New Generation Anti-Tank Platforms are a Potent Threat, Yet Surmountable.**

Anti-tank platforms will continue to evolve and hunt the tank. Tanks will continue to prevail with counter technologies and adaptive tactics. Balanced survivability is a concept that entails technologies and tactics entailing not to be seen, if seen not to be hit and if hit not to be destroyed. Tank dominates as an offensive platform. Anti-tank as the name suggests is a defensive reaction to stop this onslaught. Thus, the pendulum of tank versus anti-tank technology will continue to sway making neither obsolete. Modern technology, innovative tactics, superior training, and bold leadership will prevail

over such challenges as in the past, present, and future. The question is not whether tanks will survive in the future but how they will they continue to adapt to meet future challenges. The question is not whether armies should have tanks in the future but what should they look like and adapt to future threats.

#### **Tank Design Needs to Evolve in Keeping with Contemporary Threats.**

Tank design has evolved from firepower, mobility, and protection to lethality, agility, survivability, reliability, and adaptability. The agility of a tank differentiates it from a static pill box and should never be compromised as it adds to its survivability. The lethality of guns aided by state-of-the-art technology and superior situational awareness further destroys threats. The threat spectrum too has expanded from the traditional 180 degrees frontal arc to 360 degrees all around. Smart technologies like active protection systems both soft and hard kill means, signature management, and electronic countermeasures are adding to its survivability. Balanced Survivability is an all-encompassing multi-layered and multi-tiered concept that needs holistic understanding and greater investment. The pressing need is for greater investment in R&D in these areas to have technology ownership. Greater 'atmanirbharta' investment in a complex system of systems like tanks through the Make or Strategic Partnership model needs focus.

#### **Combined Arms Team Concept in a Joint Operational Environment is a Critical Enabler.**

The Russian tank columns lined up ceremonially on roads were an eyesore irrespective of the known slushy countryside. There was no semblance of a combined arms team in a joint operational environment. The very operational manoeuvre groups the Russians professed and the Chinese learned were missing. Tanks must be employed as part of a combined arms manoeuvre. It's an inclusive team warfare concept wherein each arm complements and addresses the limitations and vulnerabilities of the other. This requires integration and synergized application as part of the surface to space continuum. Integrated Battle Groups (IBG) is the way forward and needs a thorough doctrinal understanding and integrated bold employment. They need to be empowered by dominant battlespace awareness by responsive C5ISR architecture for knowledge-based decision-oriented combined arms manoeuvres.

#### **Larger Dimension of Understanding Mechanised Forces.**

Mechanised Forces must be conceptually viewed not only as armour and mechanized infantry but also as SP Arty, SP AD, attack helicopters, combat engineers, and matching mobile combat support and logistics. Increasingly infantry too needs matching mobility when operating in a combined arms team and thus should be APC/ Wheeled Armoured Platform (WHAP) borne. The larger cultural issue is that we must grow beyond an exclusive arm-centric mindset to an inclusive force centric one, in an essentially joint force operating environment.

#### **Urban Warfare Dynamics and Collateral Damage Sensitivity.**

The urbanisation of terrain and hybrid warfare certainly pose a challenge to tank employment in terms of restricted mobility, lack of high angle firing capability, and vulnerability to close-range handheld anti-tank ambushes. Ukraine highlighted this challenge. Additionally, irrespective of the gory of war, nations will be sensitive to the collateral damage that draws

*Contd on page 149*



# Lessons From Seven Months of the War

**Raja Menon**

**A**fter the 1971 war, when a tri-service discussion analysed the war, Sam Manekshaw, then a general, weighed in with a twinkle in his eye to say, "My dears, you can win as many battles as you like at sea, or in the air, or even lose them, but eventually it is the Army that will prove to be decisive".

Manekshaw was stating the conventional wisdom – that the political objectives are invariably won on land - and also invariably, by the capture of territory. So it has been, since time immemorial, although great maritime thinkers like Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan emphasised that any great land victory would never be lasting or decisive if the sea played a part in the conflict, in which case victory at sea was an essential precondition. What the Ukraine conflict has done is throw serious doubt on Manekshaw's prediction that it was the victory in land and the subsequent peace treaty that would further the state's objective in going to war. No one is a greater authority on this question than Claus Von Clausewitz and his famous dictum was, "War is politics by other means".

Other military thinkers have commented on and amplified this over the ages, as mentioned earlier – Admiral Mahan, who emphasised the role of the sea in the successful conclusion of the war. Ukraine was a case of war with a preponderantly land component, between a former superpower and an insignificant land power. Initial predictions on the duration of the war stretched from four days to a week. Yet, the outcome of the war seems entirely uncertain in its seventh month. War has changed; for how long is the question. During the Second World War, the Germans overran France, Belgium and the British army in less than 40 days,



**A Ukrainian soldier with a MANPADS system**

ending with the British evacuation from Dunkirk. In the same theatre, in the First World War, the Germans and the allies fought an inconclusive land war for four years. The issue was finally settled by economic and civic upheavals in German society caused by four years of the British economic blockade that totally isolated Germany into privacy, starvation and civic disorder. Yet, the peace treaty – the Armistice – was signed as a mark of defeat in a land war, although great damage had been done at sea.

The Ukraine war, it was predicted would be fought like the Second World War, with one side overrunning the other in a blitzkrieg of four to five days. But war has gone backwards to the days of the First World War, with no conclusive result in four years of fighting. Does this mean that the role of the tank or the armoured fighting vehicle is over, temporarily or permanently, to be replaced by a high-tech battlefield? Or will the tank make a

comeback and reassure the cavalry generals? India, where the preponderant capital military costs have been invested in the 4,000 or so tanks we possess, has produced no literature to enlighten the layman, there being a deathly silence from the premier Indian army think tank, the ARTRAC (Army Training Command).

As Clausewitz stated, war is just another form of state-to-state intercourse, as is trade and diplomacy. In India, the conventional wisdom is that one of the primary roles of the Army is to punish a large-scale Pakistani terror strike. Such has been the scenario in four or five repetitive war games played between Indian and Pakistani retired professionals under US supervision. The Pakistani side has always played its game to reinforce the view that only a defeat in a land war in the Punjab would be considered serious enough to threaten nuclear retaliation. But, after Ukraine, the whole question of the validity of the use of the army as a







An Indian Army soldier stands vigil on the icy heights in Ladakh

punitive instrument is open to question. Will not an Indian land offensive degenerate into messy trench warfare of interminable length? Reputed English language journals worldwide have sought answers to this question from military professionals but none seem to have sought answers from ARTRAC or TRADOC (the US army training and doctrine command).

It is clear that now there is such an entity as a hi-tech battlefield. At the same time, not all battlefields are hi-tech. The hi-tech battlefield reduces the salience of overwhelming manpower, but without

getting into the domain of military experts, it can be summarised that the tendency to hold war in abeyance is going to increase with a simultaneous rise in the importance of economics and diplomacy. As Kissinger famously put it, "Diplomacy is a restraint on power". This increases the importance of the study of Clausewitz's Grand Strategy, being a mix of economics, diplomacy and force. An example often quoted in international studies is the efficacy of China's Belt and Road Initiative, which is primarily geo-economic but is imbued with military power overtones, and advances

dynamic diplomacy. This has been referred to as civil-military fusion. Some countries are probably unaffected by the lessons of the Ukraine war, but inter-state relations have undergone a massive change, as the threat held out by large states (such as India) is taken more lightly by smaller neighbours, provided they have access to technology.

*Raja Menon is a former rear admiral in the Indian Navy.*

Courtesy: The Indian Express  
First published on October 7, 2022

## Employment of Tanks

*Contd from page 147*

international flake. These limitations will have to be overcome by both technology enablement and innovative tactics wherein infantry screens deployed ahead clear such pockets of threat along with close fire support as part of a combined arms team. Suitable doctrines and drills will need to be evolved to overcome such challenges.

**Force Sustainance and Operational Logistics.** Operational logistics and force sustainment to include combat support for repair and recovery must find equal

focus and be synergised with operational planning. The mention of Russian tank columns presumably devoid of matching combat support and logistics in Ukraine did not auger well for operational planning. Focused logistics must be based on a push model which is anticipatory, agile, responsive, modular, flexible, and readily deployable in support of operations. Thus, adequate redundancy, surge capability, and logistic contingencies must be dovetailed in the plans.

### Conclusion

War has an enduring nature and an evolving character. So also, the tank is enduring and tank warfare evolving with changes in terrain, technology, threats, tactics, and training. Lessons from wars must be viewed with a balanced and holistic perspective and related to the present and future operational environment specific to a nation.

Courtesy: Centre for Land Warfare Studies  
First published on April 29, 2022



## Propaganda, Misinformation and Deception

# Maskirovka – Falling Short

Maj Gen Harvijay Singh, SM, Retd

**M**askirovka was a key player in annexation of Crimea in 2014. The 'Little Green Men' that occupied Crimea and helped pro-Russian forces in Eastern Ukraine were Russian Special Forces wearing masks starting a war never officially declared. Intoxicated by the success in Crimea, Russian backed separatists in Eastern Ukraine (the Donbas region) declared Donetsk and Luhansk regions Independent Republics; Maskirovka inclined Russia smartly turned the conflict into a narrative of victimhood in the hands of Ukrainian nationalists justifying their support to the separatists.

Maskirovka, a centuries-old overarching Soviet/Russian military doctrine, includes – Syurpriz (surprise), kamufliazh (camouflage), demonstrativenye manevry (manoeuvres intended to deceive), skrytie (concealment), imitatsia (the use of decoys and military dummies) and dezinformatsia (disinformation). Aims to influence the adversary into making decisions favourable to Russia. Targeting the adversary all times but strives to remain under a threshold to avoid conventional military conflict; success at minimal costs while preventing the adversaries' ability to effectively respond.

Traditional methods of Maskirovka were espionage, disinformation, purchase of political influence etc. In modern times, cyberspace gives the ability to communicate instantly anywhere on the Globe, and reach societies directly. This could give Maskirovka more reach and bite. Synonymous strategy by others is 'Grey Zone Warfare', similar but less obsessive.

Since the annexation of Crimea, Ukrainians turned away from Moscow and toward the West. There was also popular support for joining Western alliances such as NATO and the European Union. Russia tried to influence decisions but failed to



Russian military intelligence (GRU) headquarters, Moscow. Wikimedia

defeat the Ukrainian resolve. In 1921 Russia amassed its forces on the Ukraine borders. In Moscow, it was announced that Putin would oversee a drill of nuclear-capable ballistic and cruise missiles. Europe was tense, fearing that provocation and disinformation might turn into escalation. Acting to a plan, Russia later made a trumpeted spectacle of withdrawing its forces. Nothing however seemed to work in Russia's favour. Ukraine was not relenting and Russia willy-nilly got sucked into a conventional war much against the principals of Maskirovka. Likely reasons:

- Ukraine, a former Soviet state knew the threads of Maskirovka well and played along without being overwhelmed. Also they as a country had a strong will to not succumb to Russian manipulation and threats.
- Russia was itself under severe 'Grey Zone War' in the form of economic sanctions and was perhaps somewhat restrained in their own Maskirovka punch.
- The cyber domain, would have been the perfect environment for conducting Maskirovka. Noticeably however, leading

up to the war, Russia mostly used 'cyber aggression' in the form of DDoS attacks, website defacement, and malware infection via spear phishing, etc.

### Lessons

- Whereas Maskirovka has traditionally borne attractive results for Russia in lieu of war, war becomes more likely in a brinkmanship contest; both were not willing to back down, the reason was ego, even though strategically, it was the best option for both.
- Once the war did break out, Russia hoped it to be a short and a limited face saving operation. This limiting factor does not always work and the risk of a bigger long drawn conflict leading to cataclysms looms large.
- Maskirovka has not worked for Russia this time; the Ukrainians did not allow them to occupy a firm base in the space between their ears.

*Maj Gen Harvijay Singh is Associate Editor South Asia Strategic and Defence Review*

First published on LinkedIn on 14 Aug 2022





# MILITARY LITERATURE FESTIVAL ASSOCIATION



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# Military Literature Festival

Punjab has borne the brunt of ruthless invaders since times immemorial. History has it that the people of this land were subjected to untold horrors and deprivations over the ages. Repeated wars gave birth to a hardy population that brought forth some of the finest warriors who walked the earth. With war came sacrifices that spurred great tales of heroism and valor. The great Mahabharata, the world's longest poem, is set in this very region.

To honour and commemorate the legendary bravery and sacrifices of our ancestors from this great land, we bring to you India's Military Literature Festival.



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