



# The Texas Citizen



Since February 15, 1989

Volume 178 – 2024

# The Drums of War: Beat Russia

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Whereas we speak of the Russian threat, the Chinese are on the industrial war footing. The United States Joint Chiefs recognize the industrial power base of the Chinese is fully engaged in making the Peoples Liberation Army ready for war.

War warnings are constant in the current environment. Defence chiefs, NATO heads warn of Russian ambitions to go beyond the Ukraine. Predictions of the Chinese are ready for war speak of perhaps a decade to get ready for war. This raises the question if the Chinese are made ready in a decade, what are the actions of the western allies? The ghost of Clausewitz hangs over our head. Beware of the power of miscalculation of Dr. Mearsheimer and others desk strategists. Taken the rhetoric of Project Cassandra by Dr. Jürgen Wertheimer as a guideline the Chinese are bellicose, the Americans are less present. According to common thinking we have a decade time, or do we?

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## To Save Ukraine, Defeat Russia and Deter China

Since the beginning of Russian President Vladimir Putin's war against an innocent neighbor, Chinese President Xi Jinping and his diplomats have said many of the right things, warning against escalation in Ukraine, including the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons, and reaffirming the principle of state sovereignty in international affairs. But China has also, of course, tried

## Russian offensive unexpectedly slowed by fierce Ukrainian resistance

"We do assess that there is greater resistance by the Ukrainians than the Russians expected," a senior U.S. defense official said. "They are fighting for their country."

Two days in, the Russian offensive appeared to be stymied by stiffer-than-expected resistance from highly motivated Ukrainian armed forces.

Despite an overwhelming advantage in manpower and



## Russia announces troop pullback from Ukraine's Kharkiv

**KYIV, Ukraine (September 11, 2022).** Russia's Defense Ministry announced Saturday that it was pulling back troops from two areas in Ukraine's eastern Kharkiv region where a Ukrainian counteroffensive has made significant advances in the past week.

The news came after days of apparent advances by Ukraine south of Kharkiv, the country's second-largest city, in what could become the biggest battlefield success for Ukrainian forces since they thwarted a Russian attempt to seize the capital, Kyiv, at the start of the nearly seven-month war.

"The Russian army in these days is demonstrating the best that it can do — showing its back," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said in a video released by his office Saturday night. "And, of course, it's a good decision for them to run."

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov said troops would be

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Whereas we speak of the Russian threat, the Chinese are on the industrial war footing. The United States Joint Chiefs<sup>1</sup> recognize the industrial power base of the Chinese is fully engaged in making the Peoples Liberation Army ready for war. But despite the warning experts suggest we still have time. The question is how much time, and is a consensus on recognizing the Chinese threat achievable or even desired?

War warnings are constant in the current environment. Defence chiefs, NATO heads warn of Russian ambitions to go beyond the Ukraine. Predictions of the Chinese are ready for war speak of perhaps a decade to get ready for war. This raises the question if the Chinese are made ready in a decade, what are the actions of the western allies?

The ghost of Clausewitz hangs over our head. Beware of the power of miscalculation of Dr. Mearsheimer and others desk strategists. Various academics and so-called experts speak of impending doom of the Ukraine. Taken the rhetoric of Project Cassandra by Dr. Jürgen Wertheimer<sup>2</sup> as a guideline the Chinese are bellicose, the Americans are less present and do not want to get dragged into the Ukraine. According to common thinking we have a decade time, or do we?

Several European leaders have warned that Russia could attack NATO allies within three<sup>3</sup>, four, five, or eight years<sup>4</sup>. Your guess is as good as mine and cold hardened analysis must make place to the emotional judgments on Russian intentions. So far, the Russian armed forces have under-performed and the naked truth comes to the forefront. The Russians are not ready, but neither are we.

Thus, this explains the reversal to old tactics, old equipment and not enough manpower bleeding into Ukrainian soil. The once feared Red Army needs to reinvent itself to make urban progress. Maneuver warfare is not a thing the Red Army does well. Disinformation, deception and small unit urban attacks, the Red Army drives but

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SIIUpMHsiOg>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/jun/26/project-cassandra-plan-to-use-novels-to-predict-next-war>; 26 June 2021; last accessed on 2 August 2024

<sup>3</sup> <https://kyivindependent.com/polands-national-security-chief-russia-could-attack-nato-within-3-years/>; written in 5 December 2023 the warning would expire on 3 December 2026;

<sup>4</sup> [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-06/240611\\_Monaghan\\_Ready\\_War\\_0.pdf?VersionId=UO.QCdGxKL2h\\_hyLPiZN8qalWtWAJ\\_YD](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-06/240611_Monaghan_Ready_War_0.pdf?VersionId=UO.QCdGxKL2h_hyLPiZN8qalWtWAJ_YD); page 2

not mobility warfare. After first debacles of the army got stuck in front of Kiev with long supply line problems, a botched airborne assault and atrocities in Bucha, the redefinition of its strategic goals became clearer.

The statement of Putin that he did not want to occupy Kiev should be taken with a grain of salt. He tried and failed. Hence, Putin swung the army in a massive circle around, railroaded the assault forces and concentrated with the left over on the capturing of the two and now four Oblasts in the south. And so, the bloodletting began.

Trench warfare on both sides, artillery and sniper duels are the daily fight for survival. Outbreaks of cholera and typhus are reported, frostbite in the winter, heat strokes in the summer, water shortages<sup>5</sup> and rotten food for the Russian army. The dead and seriously injured are left behind or unceremoniously dumped by the Russians. The first aid network of the Russians was never great and in war the shortcomings are becoming obvious. Ukrainians perceive the Russian once more as an occupier. Not as a liberator but as brutal force of occupation which make disappear and turn up killed.

The Ukrainian side had to fight deeply entrenched corruption. In Kiev road building contractors are dragged into court. The prosecution accuses contractors, and government officials of stealing money from the government. After a withdrawal of a local Defense unit leaving a hole in the front which was promptly exploited by the Russians the commanding officer of one of famed Azov battalions accused the Ukrainian commanding officer costing more Ukrainian lives than a Russian attack. The court case is ongoing at the time of this writing.

The Russians are apt. It denies the Ukrainian the mobilization capability of its reserves and building a modern citizen army. Manpower shortages are everywhere. The much-awaited F-16 does not have sufficient ground crews, an experience shared by a European army 30 years ago. The Ukrainians now mobilize contractors, ground crew and pilots for the highly sophisticated F-16. The network dependency is obvious. Whereas the versatile Swedish Gripen fits the Ukrainian forces the network trap has been set. The Ukrainians are part of the costly NATO network of integrating to the air defense system and air controllers. The invisible hand extends the reach of the Ukrainian air space to create air dominance.

Polish and Czech citizens are mobilized to fill the ranks of newly formed units. Brigade sized units are planned but details remain sketchy. On the Russian side new advertising released early August 2024 appeals to the Islamic and other minorities. The meatgrinder has equally taken its toll on the Russian side. The Russian army is rebuilding. Some of the items apparently not provided by the army include footwear, body armor, bandages and tourniquets<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://english.nv.ua/nation/russian-soldiers-were-shown-drinking-black-water-collected-from-puddles-video-50414391.html>; 30 April 2024; accessed on 2 August 2024

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2022/05/20/we-have-to-buy-everything-ourselves-how-russian-soldiers-go-off-to-fight-a77751>; 20 May 2024; accessed on 28 July 2024

The Russian version of the German *Bild* even goes as far as suggesting Russia will attempt an attack against Europe this coming winter while the “U.S. is leaderless”. The article is likely a disinformation piece<sup>7</sup> taken the Russian ‘hysteria’ over Ukrainian successes into account<sup>8</sup>.

But between 2024 and 2026 will be the War years. We should be under no illusion that peace, sustainable peace will return to the region. Everyone is rearming the national army and the commitments to NATO, the EU and national defense.

Recognizing war requires organization, administration, funding and leadership and strategic direction. Three (2027), four (2028), five (2029)<sup>9</sup>, or eight (2032) years are tangible datapoints. We need to recognize the converging of a multitude of war driven issues<sup>10</sup>.

One of the Estonian military intelligence’s largest successes was picking up early that Russia was going to annex Crimea in 2014. Not many Western intelligence agencies exist that shared an in-depth interest in Russia and an understanding of the “Russian way” before the war. Besides the Baltic military intelligence services, it was perhaps only Finland and Poland. And of course, the Ukraine<sup>11</sup>. Since Putin 2021 New Years address war was not an option but a foregone conclusions for the Russians. But let us look at the strategic considerations.

First, the axis of resistance undermines the position of the United States and the European Union. The political leadership of the United States, Hungary and Serbia actively undermine the political unity of the European Union. The internal challenges will distract the EU leadership. The deliverance by Serbia attempts to play a dual role in bilateral negotiations and the Hungarian brinkmanship will distract the European Union. In the United States the Ukraine war faces an ideological debate between support for the Ukraine and absolutely zero interest in the conflict. It is essentially a European problem.

It is certain the Ukraine has become the dead end for the Republicans. Shy of the ‘ever war’ narrative the isolationist Trump argues cost cutting measures. It hopes cutting the aid to the war will provide peace, very little evidence is present. Russians will see this correctly as a weak hand and the diplomatic shuffle will be by-passed by the Russians.

Facing off with the Russian Federation, China, Iran, and other likeminded regimes are lining up in the Axis of Resistance (AoR) and the United States. The Axis of Resistance is coordinating efforts in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia. The U.S. has only

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<sup>7</sup> [https://t.me/BILD\\_Russian/13712](https://t.me/BILD_Russian/13712); accessed on 30 July 2024

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.businessinsider.com/kremlin-tries-stifle-bloggers-hysteria-ukraine-dnipro-attacks-analysts-2023-11>; accessed on 30 July 2024

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/russia-could-attack-nato-within-five-years-german-defence-minister-warns-13051620>; written on 19 January 2024 the warning expires 2029;

<sup>10</sup> <https://vsquare.org/how-estonias-military-intelligence-secretly-helped-ukraine/>; 15 September 2023

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

in the Philippines successfully applied a pro-active program to counter Chinese disinformation. Fear the assassination of the HAMAS leader will lead to widespread war in the middle east contributes to the Angst in U.S. conservative quarters.

Second, the current asymmetrical activities by the far-left, pro-Russian, extreme leftist sympathizers who carry out on behest of the Russian master's sabotage and disruptive actions across Europe. The botched assassinations of Rheinmetall chief are one example, the sabotage of the French trainlines by members of the ultra-left wing are another<sup>12</sup>. Earlier a RAF faction fugitive on the run for 30 years was arrested in Berlin, Germany<sup>13</sup>. Russian sabotage teams roaming the countryside and part of a Moscow wide disruption strategy. Mobilizing the far left in Spain are simple but cost-effective activities by pro-Moscow cells<sup>14</sup>.

The activities are aimed to undermine the internal stability of the European Union and the western order. They serve the overall war aims of the Russian state. The current Hamas and university demonstrations in the United States are coordinated efforts create a sense of chaos. The same actors will resurface if Donald J. Trump is re-elected by the end of November. Authorities are not prepared with the actions that are seen as a domestic issue and not viewed in the global context of the conflict.

The industrial defense base is working in China, Russia, and North Korea. Not so in Europe. Applied in a sluggish manner the Europeans are still driven by the Green deal, social programs and other geopolitical issues. Defense remains a half-cup measure. Germany plans to cut aid to the Ukraine into half, and support the newly formed Airforce, and aid from the United States remains lukewarm at best of times. Germany has forgotten how to fight wars. Return to national service is being discussed.

Washington is expected to change, again, direction on defense for Ukraine in a post-election environment. The Ukraine strategy has shifted from beating the Russians to bled them out, a strategy, morally questionable and already tried. It failed in the First World War that had brought no peace. It gave rise to a right-wing ultra-radical movement that caused millions of dead.

To counter the sluggish response, Von der Leyen plans to appoint a Commissioner for Defense<sup>15</sup><sup>16</sup>. And the Europeans must catch up, we are in the third year of the war

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<sup>12</sup><https://www.cbsnews.com/news/paris-olympics-trains-sabotage-arrest-far-left-activist-phone-lines-telecommunications/>; "attacks were intentional, very precise, extremely well targeted", adding that this was "the traditional mode of operation of the ultra-left." French services have "identified a certain number of profiles that could have committed" the sabotage acts. Police detained 44 people in central Paris on suspicion of planning acts of sabotage. Darmanin said they were all members of [Extinction Rebellion](#), an environmental group known for radical, often large-scale protests, including occupying contested or sensitive sites, which suggested they were planning disruptive action along with 150 other individuals. Police stated about 1,000 individuals were detained working for hostile nation intelligence services.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/feb/27/red-army-faction-militant-arrested-decades-run-germany-daniela-klette>; 27 February 2024; last accessed on 1 August 2024

<sup>14</sup> <https://english.nv.ua/nation/spanish-police-detain-pro-russian-hackers-for-attacking-ukraine-s-partners-critical-infrastructure-50436274.html>; 20 July 2024; last accessed on 1 August 2024

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2024/08/01/what-will-the-eus-defence-industry-commissioner-do>; 1 August 2024

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/von-der-leyen-plans-new-defense-commissioner-post/>; 17 February 2024;

with the Russian Federation. And little has been achieved by the bureaucratic former German defense minister. Her tenure in Germany was mired in downsizing the armed forces she is now heading the largest arming exercise of Europe.

Russia defense spending increased 300%, and China 600% (!). Poland which is spending more than 4 percent of its GDP on defense this year is the highest spender on defense in the European Union but nowhere near the Russian Federation<sup>17</sup> with Von der Leyen, a professional bureaucrat, has little to show for.

Germany is grossly under equipped up to the level of not being able to make the divisional commitment for NATO in 2024. Not to mentioning the staffing of its armed forces.

The industrial output by the Axis of Resistance versus NATO states is a 4:1 ratio. The naval capacity, production of armor, artillery and missiles are out of balance. On the U.S. side in the 2024 Land Warfare strategy noted the ammunition output is about 100,000 rounds monthly in late 2024, the European Union partners will unlikely reach promised ammunition production level in 2025. German tank production just released 14 tanks in July 2024 bringing the Leopard supplement to fifty-eight. A far cry from the 300 tanks needed by the Ukrainians.

In contrast the Russian firm Rostec, in 2023 increased the overall production of tanks 7 times, light armored vehicles 4.5 times, and artillery and multiple launch rocket systems 2.5 times. The company ramped up manufacturing of certain types of ammunition by as much as sixtyfold<sup>18</sup>. Russian defense spending is estimated at 6 percent of GDP (2023 estimates). Whereas in 2024 the estimates were adjusted upwards to 9 percent GDP<sup>19</sup> the European Union is way behind. European politicians just simply cannot get their head around defense fast enough. German (in-)efficiency is tightly wrapped around the bureaucratic red tape.

Even in simplistic service contracts to supplement the counter FIMI<sup>20</sup> approached the Teutonic ‘Yes minister’ culture. In the meantime, the Russian disinformation does not have budgetary restraints. Flush in cash Russian operatives are surfacing in Paris, Madrid and were detained in Germany.

The figures for land and air forces remain changing. In 2014 the NATO Response was planned for around 40,000. In 2016 the Enhanced Forward Presence developed a battalion (about 500-800 men) sized force to Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. In 2018 the NATO Readiness Initiative planned for a 30 battalion (about 15,000 men), 30 naval combat vessels and 30 air squadron to be in war posture. The current plans are summarized under the Deterrence and Defense Area (DDA) strategy. How much this is reality is hard to judge.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/vladimir-putin-russia-germany-boris-pistorius-nato/>; 19 January 2024; last time accessed on 2 August 2024

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.politico.eu/article/von-der-leyen-plans-new-defense-commissioner-post/>; 17 February 2024; <https://www.politico.eu/article/von-der-leyen-plans-new-defense-commissioner-post/>; 17 February 2024;

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQriZWE3lfU&t=4559s>; 11 July 2024; last time accessed on 31 July 2024

<sup>20</sup> Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (FIMI)

In response the Russian side the Moscow military district was re-established with focus on Belarus, Ukraine, and Kalingrad<sup>21</sup> with the aim to muddle, to distract and to undermine.

The debate is dividing the analytical community as much as the warfighting itself. One side of the debate is linked to the reasoning why Russia invaded in the first place. One view is that Moscow trying to conceal the weak economic situation in Russia. The other argument is the Russians are ten-feet tall and unbeatable. The recent successes seem to give the tactical gains the upper hand. The Russians drive towards Kharkiv, the Ukraine play for the long game. Tactically the Russians winning. Strategically, it is unclear if the U.S. strategy underwrites victory in the great peer competitions or is just another failed strategy for the history books.

### How will this end?

A public NATO study provides some bright spots. A NATO report titled *Back in Stock states*, “The report said the war would stress Russia’s military industrial base, already stretched thin by sanctions and high battlefield losses during the first 12 months of the invasion.”<sup>22</sup>

The report shows Chinese support for the Russian’s war. It stresses that in the moment China does not provide weapons directly but enabled the industrial base. It also highlights the weakness of the Russian military economy. The rise of the GDP can be associated with military spending increases. Vladimir Putin substitutes the lack of domestic growth with military expenditure. The peace dividend is replaced with a weaponized economy. It works in the United States, why shouldn’t it work in Russians favor.

Moscow has benefacted from the six months delay of mainly U.S. weapons deliveries to the Ukraine to revamp its own manufacturing translating into battle-field victories. The near defeat of the Ukrainian forces can be put squarely at the feet of the United States and its allies<sup>23</sup>. The Russian Federation is attempting a decisive victory in the frontlines. This will be capturing Kharkiv, the second largest city in the Ukraine, disrupting of the landlines and disrupting the supply lines from the eastern Ukraine to the front.

Options on the table are total surrender by Ukrainian forces and negotiated surrender of territory, an options unacceptable to the Ukrainians.

Option number two is the U.S. steps in and negotiates as a proxy actor. Russian negotiators rely on the pre-election attitudes of possessing manpower, ammunitions

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cQriZWE3lfU&t=4559s>; 11 July 2024; last time accessed on 31 July 2024

<sup>22</sup> [https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-04/240419\\_Snegovaya\\_Backin\\_Stock.pdf?VersionId=rwHuy82sf7y5TEoD8sRjLGF3lYmeGAnL](https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/2024-04/240419_Snegovaya_Backin_Stock.pdf?VersionId=rwHuy82sf7y5TEoD8sRjLGF3lYmeGAnL); last time accessed on 31 July 2024

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

and the absence of push back through the civil society. Dissent is forming but will take years to impact.

*Overall, the dynamic of Russia's war in Ukraine will determine how much of a challenge Russia represents to the West and the international liberal order going forward. The large-scale forward movement of Russian forces in Ukraine would bring the Russian threat directly to Europe's door, making containing Russia more urgent and difficult.*

Whereas the Russian juggernaut is a formidable enemy, the Russian Federation is misjudging the European and United States commitment. First, the Russian count on the indecisiveness of the western powers. This gives the regime in Russia time to strategically deploy of nuclear submarines to the black Sea is a strategic question. The objective here is to maintain the momentum for the Russian navy and deny actionable space for the Ukrainians.

Second, mass mobilization. The western allies need to recognize the Russian army is mass mobilizing. Estimates speak of additional 300,000 men. However, this is a speculative number as the exact number is secret. Also, it addresses Russian sensitivities towards mobilization. Improved recruitment quotas, higher sign-up bonuses bring the Russian armed forces on par with its western opponents.

Thirdly, negotiations undertaken by the Ukrainians in November will result in a pseudo peace agreement. This opens the membership for the European Union and eventually NATO. The Russians understand this position. Interference by Hungarian will provide a strategic interruption of these efforts.

The Russians are suffering from mobility warfare. Their battle doctrine has reversed to Soviet tactics. It is a static, overwhelming force. It relies heavily on artillery preparation, mass infantry deployment and overwhelming force to squeeze the adversaries out of their position. Destruction of private property attempts to encircle are part of this strategy. Regardless of the human costs associated. Russian tactic does not take private property or loss of life as a consideration. The death toll reflects this culture of war fighting. If isolated or defeated suicide is an option. With the war progressing mass casualties with self-inflicted wounds should not come as a surprise.

The static nature of Russian warfare is costly and fixes forces to a location. This is not logical nor effective. Losses on the Russian side are seldom reported in Russian media. Prisoners are seldom taken, and abuse is commonplace. The brutality of the battlefield is visible by the daily onslaught of videos by the Ukrainians. The surrender tactic by the Ukrainians pays off. Although exact numbers are hard to come by media reporting suggests 3,000 Russians switched sides.

With time the nature of War will increase in brutality and excesses. No longer is winning the war the only motivation. The destruction of the other human being becomes a dominant feature in the conduct of the war. So is the delineation between what is a legit military target and what is civilian.



The destruction of civilian infrastructure to wage war becomes a dominant objective of military actions. To break the will to fight is the objective of the Russians. Attacks against civilian targets, accidental or deliberate, to bomb children's hospitals, supply depots, troop concentrations are justifiable in the eyes of Russian military planners. To wipe out the civilian settlement is the norm. To steal, rob, rape is routine for the Russian army. To lower the human to a "thing" and destroy<sup>24</sup> the other beyond recognition is the path of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

To bomb Kiev back to the stone age is the aim of Moscow. The question is how strong the will is to resist the Russian war of aggression before the war gets out of hands.

*DAFz is an independent think-tank. It specializes in blue wave research. Contrarian it addresses complex diplomatic, military and civilian issues. For comment, please write to [www.dafz.org](http://www.dafz.org)*

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<sup>24</sup> <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0968344520914345>;