

Conflict Update # 166

August 29th, 2022

Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 47,100 (+350) soldiers killed and 141,300 injured, 1,947 (+5) enemy tanks, 4,269 (+12) armored combat vehicles, 1,060 (+10) artillery systems, 279 (+5) MLRS systems, 149 (+1) air defense systems, 234 (+0) warplanes, 203 (+1) helicopters, 844 (+6) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 196 (+0) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 3,188 (+17) trucks and tankers, 76 fuel bowsers and 99 (+0) units of specialized equipment.

Key takeaways

Ukraine says its counteroffensive has begun - Kyiv is attempting to retake southern territory that was taken by Russia early in its invasion, Reuters reported Monday. Ukrainian military officials say forces have "breached the occupiers' first line of defense near Kherson"—but not all are convinced. The Moscow-installed governor of Crimea called the news "Ukrainian propaganda."

Ukrainian forces have begun a counterattack to retake the southern city of Kherson currently occupied by Russian troops, a local government official says today.

"Today there was a powerful artillery attack on enemy positions in... the entire territory of the occupied Kherson region," Deputy of Kherson Regional Council Sergey Khlan tells Ukraine's Pryamyi TV channel.

"This is the announcement of what we have been waiting for since the spring — it is the beginning of the de-occupation of Kherson region."

Winter is coming. Some U.S. experts said last week that the recent Ukrainian attacks are less about retaking territory and more about stalling Russian forces and cutting off their supply lines before a long winter.

Ukraine breaches first line of defence in Russia-occupied Kherson region - Natalya Gumenyuk, head of the United Coordination Press Centre of the Southern Defence Forces of Ukraine, has stated that the 109th regiment of the self-proclaimed Donetsk "people's republic" ("DPR") retreated from their positions in the Kherson region.



Representatives of the Kakhovka operational group of troops published a video allegedly showing a Ukrainian serviceman saying that the Armed Forces of Ukraine had “breached the first line of defence” earlier today.

The Kakhovka group also stated that HIMARS systems had destroyed practically all large bridges in the area: the Antonivka Road Bridge, the Antonivka Railway Bridge and the Nova Kakhovka Bridge. “The Russian army has been cut off from weapon and personnel transports from the territory of Crimea,” the representatives said.

Russian air defense systems activated in Crimea - In recent days, Russian air defence systems have been active in Sevastopol, Kerch, Dzhankoi and other far-flung parts of the Crimean peninsula. Reports of UAVs being shot down are constantly appearing in the media, as Ukrainian drones fly over Crimea on a daily basis, breaching Russia’s air defence. All the defence echelons the Russian Federation has — including electronic warfare systems — are being probed.

According to a Russian military expert, the “impenetrable air defence shield” over Russia is a myth. “Ever since the Cold War, Soviet and Russian air defences have been built to counter the large-scale use of typical US and NATO aircraft,” the expert explains. “This primarily refers to bomber aircraft. We have a solid radar field only from a height of a few kilometres — there are big ‘holes’ below that. [Russia] doesn’t have interceptors on permanent combat duty — all we have is several long-range radar detection aircraft.

If we’re talking UAVs, air defence is almost powerless here. The Russian army’s involvement in Syria has shown that several homemade drones made of pine laths and paper — something you would see in a high school aircraft modelling club — were shot down by TOR and Pantsir missiles costing tens of thousands of dollars each. Detection radars often can’t tell them apart from birds.”

Russia's efforts to replenish its depleted armed forces may not matter much in Ukraine - Putin signed a decree last week expanding the size of Russia's armed forces by about 137,000 active-duty members, bringing the total force to 1.15 million, as soon as January — but that move "is unlikely to significantly alter the country's fortunes in its war in Ukraine," The New York Times reports, citing American and British officials and independent military analysts.

Whether Russia tries to meet these targets through recruiting "contract" volunteers or conscription, Putin's decree "is unlikely to make substantive progress towards increasing Russia's combat power in Ukraine," Britain's Ministry of Defense assessed Sunday. "This is because Russia has lost tens of thousands of troops; very few new contract servicemen are being recruited; and conscripts are technically not obliged to serve outside of Russian territory."

Among Russia's huge numbers of casualties are military trainers and officers, meaning even if they can attract many recruits, it could struggle to prepare them for combat.

Drones are sniffing out landmines in Ukraine - The landmines that plague Ukraine following six months of drawn-out fighting have a new enemy as minesweeping teams get a boost from high-tech drones.

The big picture: As much as 62,000 square miles of Ukrainian land could be "contaminated" by mines, per Kyiv's most recent estimate. Removing all those explosives-in-waiting will take years, if not decades.

Why it matters: Landmines are indiscriminate, killing both soldiers and civilians, and pose a threat even well after a conflict ends.

- Mines killed or injured at least 7,073 people around the world in 2020, per the Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor. Civilians made up 80% of those casualties, and among that group, at least half were children.

- Drones, robots and similar tech can help reduce the inherent danger of locating buried mines.

Driving the news: Canadian drone-maker Draganfly is supplying demining groups in Ukraine with a handful of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) decked out with a suite of sensors designed to map areas with suspected mines.

- Those sensors can include magnetometers, several different kinds of cameras, radar and more, says Draganfly CEO Cameron Chell.
- Draganfly expects to have nearly two dozen mine-spotting drones flying in Ukraine by year's end.



Ukrainian anti-aircraft troops take out Russian drones in Donetsk with pinpoint accuracy – Pictured below a missile flies from a man-portable air-defense system (MANPAD) in a field area in Donetsk region, Ukraine in an undated photo. Anti-aircraft fighters of the 58th separate motorized infantry brigade named after hetman Ivan Vyhovskyi destroyed Russian enemy targets with accurate shots.

This footage shows Ukrainian anti-aircraft troops taking out Russian drones in the Donetsk region with pinpoint accuracy using anti-tank guided missiles.

The Ukrainian Ministry of Defense said on Thursday, August 25: “Ukrainian anti-aircraft soldiers ‘land’ enemy targets with accurate shots.

“The results of combat work in Donetsk region were demonstrated by soldiers of the 58th separate motorized infantry brigade named after hetman Ivan Vyhovskyi.



Guerrilla warfare - According to a source in Kyiv close to the Ukrainian Defence Intelligence (HUR), there are over 10 sabotage and reconnaissance groups operating in the Crimea today under centralized command. Crimeans who left the region after Russia’s annexation make up part of the units, which were dispatched to Zaporizhzhia, Kherson and further across the Perekop Isthmus and the city of Armiansk back in spring this year.

They then contacted sleeper agents on site and began preparing for active operations. Saboteurs are professionally trained with excellent knowledge of the area, and, most importantly, are backed by a fairly significant part of the local population. This sabotage network has been in place since March and April and includes 120 to 150 active fighters, as well as several commanders and coordinators.

It is highly likely that the attacks in Dzhankoi and Hvardiiske were also carried out using manually planted explosive devices. According to a Kyiv source, the guerrilla war that has begun is a preparation for a Ukrainian offensive against Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and Crimea. If a full-scale operation is launched, the saboteurs must destabilize the situation on the peninsula, disrupt military airfields, and cut supply lines and railway traffic.

United Russia officials and tourists are already starting to flee Crimea. According to reports from Sevastopol, part of the Black Sea Fleet headquarters has been moved to Novorossiysk.

“After Russia attacked Kherson, Zaporizhzhia and other regions, Crimea effectively became a frontline region,” explains BBC special correspondent Ilya Barabanov. “In this, [Crimea] is no different from the Russian regions that have been under attack by the Ukrainian side since the start of the conflict. What is extremely surprising are the people who, after six months of war, decide to go on holiday to the peninsula and are confident in their safety. Some even take small children. Their mighty intellect then can’t grasp why a military airfield explodes next to the beach!”

According to a Russian security official, “refugees” from Ukraine’s State Security Service (the SBU) are quietly wandering around the frontline regions, and there are plenty of people from western Ukraine in Crimea. The soil for sabotage-related recruitment is very fertile, he claims. Our source fears that sabotage may start affecting previously calm Russian regions — major metropolitan areas may become a target.

More explosions heard in Russian-occupied city, army base hit - Explosions have rung out in a Russian-occupied city and army base, according to a Ukrainian official.

The mayor of Melitopol Ivan Fedorov claimed there had been overnight strikes that hit the city as well as the nearby village of Myrne.

In a Sunday, August 28, Telegram post, translated from Ukrainian to English via Google, Fedorov said: "Another explosive night in Melitopol and Myrne village of Melitopol district. At 1 o'clock residents of all districts heard loud explosions.

Both Melitopol and Myrne are located in the occupied Zaporizhzhya region which is part of the land corridor that connects the separatist regions of Luhansk and Donetsk to the Crimean Peninsula.

New hotspots - In Russia’s Bryansk, Kursk and Belgorod regions, shelling by various types of Ukrainian weapons has been systematically recorded. Numerous Ukrainian guerrilla units are also operational, often finding sympathizers among local youth — some cooperate for ideological reasons, others for monetary gain, but there is no shortage of support on the ground. “Each group has formed a list of targets and has conducted reconnaissance,” explains our source close to Ukraine’s HRU. “A rapid increase in the number of attacks can be predicted in the event of a surge in hostilities on the fronts. It is likely that many targets earmarked for destruction will blow up almost simultaneously.”

Despite the best efforts of the FSB and other special services, Russia cannot identify and apprehend Ukraine’s saboteurs, or even slow down the wave of explosions — neither in the border regions, nor in Crimea. Russia has military and FSB counterintelligence, as well as a separate counterintelligence unit in the FSB’s Border Service. According to information, cooperation between these units is rare, as they often compete for the right to profit from smuggling routes and other nefarious activities.

While the Belgorod region is almost directly in the warzone, the Bryansk and Kursk regions also have a relatively long border with Ukraine, which runs through forested and rugged terrain. Russia’s Border Guard Service has virtually no technical means and personnel to completely control the country’s border. The critically small number of drones that are available are often not used due to the danger of losing the expensive equipment or running out of capacity. Novaya Gazeta. Europe can confirm that the Russian military has held drone operator courses without using the actual UAVs themselves.

Another factor is that locations of all major military units in Russia’s border regions can easily be googled. In Crimea, Russian military units are now stationed where their Ukrainian counterparts were in 2014. Ukraine gets information about the new facilities from satellite imagery as well as from the local population.

“Ukrainian military attacks on Russian territory began almost immediately,” the Volya Telegram channel quoted an anonymous Russian expert as saying. “Remember the bombing of the bridge near Kursk? And the drone strike on the

refinery in Novoshakhtinsk? Russian air defences breached by helicopters, followed by strikes on oil depots? Today we are witnessing an increase in the impact of the Ukrainian army on Russian military and strategic facilities.

Ukraine's strikes are targeted, well-planned actions against headquarters, ammunition and armament depots, airfields and fuel infrastructure. Accordingly, military objectives are being pursued first, followed by political ones. Ukraine is showing the whole world its will to resist, along with its determination to crush the enemy — not only on its soil, but also on Russian territory. All this has a propaganda angle designed to have a two-way effect: it encourages Ukrainian citizens and servicemen while sowing panic in the minds of the Russian military and politicians."

Officially, Kyiv does not admit responsibility for the sabotage and shelling of Crimea. Only anonymous high-ranking sources talk about elite units operating behind enemy lines, and government officials joke about the harm of smoking at ammunition and oil depots.

Could these attacks have a key impact on the Russian army's combat capabilities and possibly turn the tide of war? "On a tactical level, they can do some damage," says Israeli military expert David Gendelman. "In order to seriously undermine Russian army combat strength, sabotage would have to become much wider and more extensive. Judging by the increase in sabotage in recent weeks, efforts are being made to do just that, so we can expect it to grow and expand even further. The most likely scenario for the next couple of months is a continuation of the slow push. Any sudden advances in offensives and counteroffensives are less likely, in my opinion. Sabotage and shelling can affect [Russian military capability and morale] depending on specific facilities: for example, HIMARS strikes on ammunition depots disrupt the pace of the Russian offensive because it is based on superior firepower, and they cannot expend ammunition as much and as fast as they would like as a result of such strikes. The continued destruction of ammunition, fuel and lubricant depots and so on by these or other means could slow down the offensive."

Russia moves to reinforce its stalled assault on Ukraine - A series of volunteer battalions formed in recent weeks across Russia is preparing to deploy to Ukraine, officials and military analysts say, including a major new ground-forces formation called the 3rd Army Corps intended to shore up a new offensive in eastern Ukraine and reinforce troops holding off a Ukrainian counteroffensive in the south.

This is not however expected to change the balance in the conflict.

Russia-installed 'government official' Alexey Kovalev killed in Ukraine's Kherson region - Alexey Kovalev, former Ukrainian MP who used to represent Volodymyr Zelensky's Servant of the People party and who took Russia's side during the war, was found dead in the Kherson region. Kovalev was appointed deputy chief for agriculture of the occupation "government" of the Kherson region in July. His death was reported by Serhii Khlan, an advisor to the Kherson regional governor.

Putin

Putin has 'failed' on all fronts - Former U.S. Ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul said Putin has "failed on all" fronts, as the Ukraine war stretches longer than the Russian president had expected.

What Happened: McFaul, while counting Putin's failure in the Ukraine war in an interview with NBC News, said, "I don't see him recovering." "Remember, six months ago, he said he was going to unite Ukrainians and Russians because Ukrainians are just Russians with accents. He failed at that. He failed at denazification. He failed at demilitarization. He failed to take the capital of Kyiv. And now he's just fighting in Donetsk and in Kherson," McFaul said.

Putin is trapped and desperate. Will his friends in the west rescue him? - The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." So wrote American author Henry David Thoreau in 1854. It's a fate that is rapidly overtaking Vladimir Putin as he struggles to escape the disastrous trap he set for himself in Ukraine.

Russia's president keeps understandably silent about his "special military operation." But indefinite stalemate is not what he expected. He didn't expect car bombs in Moscow and humiliating attacks on fortress Crimea, either.

Least of all did Putin anticipate thousands of Russian soldiers dead or wounded. Dying with them is his Peter the Great pipe dream of a "greater Russia." Extinct already is his reputation as anything other than a killer and a crook.

An endless military quagmire is not a scenario Putin can afford as slow-burn western sanctions corrode his economy and his military's manpower and matériel are steadily depleted. So what are his options?

He could declare a specious victory, claim the NATO "threat" is neutralized and propose a settlement recognizing Russia's annexation of occupied areas. But he surely knows Kyiv will never willingly accept such terms. He could gamble on a huge battlefield escalation, for example, using Belarus to open a second front north of Kyiv – the region he failed to overrun in February. But it's uncertain his generals have the capability or the stomach.

He certainly dare not retreat. So as pressure on him grows to produce a breakthrough, Putin may well decide his best option is to raise the cost of the war to Ukraine's backers – and undermine Kyiv's resistance that way.

In fact, he has already begun. It's telling that British, French and German leaders all proclaimed long-term support for Ukraine last week. They know Putin is betting they will buckle.

The context is rising anxiety over Europe's energy and cost of living crises, largely caused by the invasion and Kremlin cuts to gas supplies. The winter fallout from this coldest of cold wars could prove paralyzing.

Yet Putin may just be getting started. He has many means by which to undermine western unity and staying power.

Europe is littered with easily exploited potential flashpoints and geopolitical fault lines bequeathed from Soviet times. Likewise, Russia has surprising numbers of allies and sympathizers scattered across a politically fractured European landscape.

So will Putin's friends in the west help rescue the beast from the east? Belarus's Alexander Lukashenko is already in Putin's pocket. Moscow ensured the dictator survived after his theft of the 2020 presidential election provoked nationwide protests. Lukashenko will do as he's told.

Inside the EU, Viktor Orbán, Hungary's prime minister, is seen as Putin's Trojan horse. Like many on Europe's far right, Orbán admires his intolerant nationalist ideology and shares his racist, homophobic outlook. He has repeatedly obstructed EU sanctions. Last month he cut a unilateral gas deal with the Kremlin. Orbán plainly cannot be trusted.

The collapse in June of Bulgaria's reformist government and subsequent talk of repairing relations with Moscow fuels concern that Putin is gaining leverage to divide the EU.

Italy has plenty of Putin fans, too. Leaders of two far-right parties that are expected to join a ruling coalition after next month's elections have enjoyed close ties with Moscow over the years. Matteo Salvini's League formed an alliance with Putin's United Russia in 2017. Silvio Berlusconi of Forza Italia is a personal friend. Italy's ousted prime minister Mario Draghi took a tough line on Ukraine. That may change.

Other European far-right (and far-left) insurgent and populist parties identify to varying degrees with Putinist ideology and conservative social values. They echo his hostility to the EU. A definitive European Council on Foreign Relations study in 2016 listed Germany's Alternative for Germany, France's Front National (now National Rally), Austria's Freedom party and Belgium's Vlaams Belang as "pro-Russian". Ukip made the cut, too.

“The parties ... help legitimize the Kremlin’s policies and amplify Russian disinformation. At times they can shift Europe’s domestic debates in Russia’s favour,” the study said. In Putinworld, such channels of influence are potent weapons.

Putin can also rely on mainstream non-EU politicians such as Aleksandar Vučić, Serbia’s president, for a sympathetic hearing. Vučić has been dubbed “little Putin” by opponents. Serbia has profound historical, Slavic and religious ties to Russia, plus a shared distrust of Nato. The alliance’s 1999 bombing of Belgrade is not forgotten.

The EU and UK fear the volatile western Balkans are a critical pressure point Putin could use to stir up old conflicts and distract attention from Ukraine.

Kosovo, where ethnic Serb agitation is building again, is a case in point. Vučić last week threatened international peacekeepers with intervention. “We will save our people from persecution and pogroms if NATO doesn’t want to do it,” he said. Bosnian Serb leaders tied to Moscow also threaten new ruptures in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Bosnia has echoed Serbia’s rejection of “hysterical” western sanctions. In March, pro-Putin Bosnian Serb “Night Wolves” bikers cheered the invasion.

Partitioned Moldova and Georgia, with divided populations and Russian troops on their soil, are also potential flashpoints. Another is Kaliningrad, where Putin deployed hypersonic missiles this month to intimidate the NATO neighbors. Estonia, in particular, with its ethnic Russian minority, appears a target.

Putin’s efforts to spread fear and instability, disruption and economic pain – making countries think twice about opposing Russia – extend beyond Europe. His vetoes have left the UN security council frozen in time. Now he and China’s Xi Jinping look set to turn November’s important post-pandemic G20 summit in Bali into a crude west-versus-the-rest showdown over Ukraine. No matter that Russia’s whole argument is based on a lie.

Putin’s reckless brinkmanship at Ukraine’s occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant suggests he’ll risk almost anything to win. Quietly desperate, he grows more dangerous by the day.

Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu sidelined by Putin, ridiculed: U.K. - Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu is regularly ridiculed and sidelined by Putin, as the war against Ukraine has stalled, British intelligence said Monday. Russian officers and soldiers with first-hand war experience have likely routinely mocked Shoigu for his "ineffectual and out-of-touch leadership" as Russian progress has slowed, the U.K.'s defense ministry said in an intelligence update on Twitter.

Shoigu, originally from Russia’s remote Tuva region, became the Kremlin’s minister of emergency situations around the time of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

"Shoigu has likely long struggled to overcome his reputation as lacking substantive military experience, as he spent most of his career in the construction sector and the Ministry of Emergency Situations," the intelligence update said.

The ministry, citing recent independent Russian media reports, suggested Shoigu is now being sidelined within the Russian leadership, with operational commanders briefing Putin directly on the course of the war.

'Not Just Putin's War:' Former US diplomat says many Russians now support 'national extermination of Ukraine' - As Putin's war in Ukraine enters its seventh month now, a former U.S. diplomat said that more and more Russians support Moscow's acts and want to eradicate its war-torn neighbor.

What Happened: Daniel Fried, distinguished fellow at the Atlantic Council and former Ambassador to Poland, in a tweet on Sunday, said, "It's not just Putin's war. Many Russians now support the Kremlin's campaign of national extermination of Ukraine."

"Some Russians now, and I hope more in the future, will look upon this descent into evil with horror and shame," he added.

Fried said this while quoting a tweet from Sergej Sumlenny, a Berlin-based Eastern Europe expert who had posted a video of the Oscar-winning director Nikita Mikhalkov – who heads the Russian Filmmakers' Union and is a staunch supporter of Putin.

In the video, Mikhalkov said, "the Ukrainian language has become the image of Russophobia" and must be exterminated in Ukraine.

Meanwhile, the Putin-led government has been cracking down on Russians criticizing its invasion of Ukraine.

According to the OVD-Info human rights group, More than 224 Russians are facing jail time for calling the conflict a "war" or "invasion." And nearly 16,500 people have been detained across Russia for protesting against it since the beginning of the invasion.

The mystery man vowing Putin's friends will get blown up soon - Almost a decade after he was exiled, a former Russian statesman has emerged from the shadows this week as a new thorn in the side of the Kremlin.

In a shocking televised address from Kyiv last week, 47-year-old ex-politician Ilya Ponomarev debuted as a self-described messenger for what he says is an underground resistance movement operating in Russia, the National Republican Army. Ponomarev read the group's so-called manifesto on a Kyiv-based TV channel he founded seven months ago, called February Morning, in which they claimed responsibility for the car bomb that killed Darya Dugina, the daughter of Russian nationalist and staunch Putin ally Alexander Dugin.

"The activists chose a sacred figure of Russian fascism and that's not up to me to criticize the target of their deed," Ponomarev said in an interview with The Daily Beast, claiming that he's been in contact with the "resistance fighters" since April. Besides passing their messages along, Ponomarev said his "job is to provide commercial support" to the group as needed.

Roman Popkov, the exiled former leader of Russia's far-left National Bolshevik party, told The Daily Beast he's convinced that the partisan group indeed exists. "I personally know maybe 10 people in the partisan movement in Russia... they are 20- to 25-year-old activists of both left and right political views," he told The Daily Beast. "The war has changed Ponomarev a lot. He was reading the manifesto with a stony face—we are all different now, after seeing horrific violence and atrocities during this war."

China

China's response to US warships in Taiwan Strait surprised analysts - The US Navy yesterday sent two guided-missile cruisers through the Taiwan strait, which China now claims as its "internal waters." The US and others maintain the strait is international waters under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It was the first time in at least four years the US Navy had sent two cruisers through the strait, said Collin Koh, research fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore, who has been keeping a database on the transits.

"Having two instead of the usual one vessel to do this mission is certainly a 'bigger' signal of protest against not only Beijing's recent military exercises around Taiwan following the Pelosi visit, but also in response to Beijing's attempt to subvert the legal status of the waterway and the longstanding freedom of navigation rights through the area," Koh said.

That the US warships made the transit Sunday was no surprise. They have made dozens of such voyages in recent years, and US officials had said transits would continue.

What was surprising to analysts was the muted response from Beijing.

The Chinese military's Eastern Theater Command said it monitored the two ships, maintained a high alert and was "ready to thwart any provocation."

Even the state-run Global Times tabloid, known for its often jingoistic and staunchly nationalist editorials, said the presence of the two cruisers brought "no actual threat to China's security."

Past transits have elicited a stronger response. After the destroyer USS Benfold went through the strait in July, Col. Shi Yi, spokesman for the PLA's Eastern Theater Command, described the US as the "destroyer of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait."

Koh, the analyst, noted Beijing's comparatively tame statements Sunday.

"Why didn't the Chinese go beyond that given their earlier strong opposition to Washington's professed intent to continue such transits?" he said, offering three possible factors.

- Firstly, Beijing may be wary of "international blowback," as any attempt to curtail US Navy navigation through the strait could be seen as threatening the rights of vessels from other nations to go through the waterway.
- Secondly, after the Pelosi visit to Taiwan, Beijing suspended key military communications channels with Washington, raising the risk of misunderstandings during any PLA Navy-US Navy interaction.
- Thirdly, there are other areas where Washington and Beijing do cooperate, and China may not want to strain those, Koh said.

Taiwan

“Eye of the storm” - Taiwan is caught in a great game over microchips - “Taiwan’s biggest trading partners — which include China, the United States, Europe and Japan — have different ideas about the self-ruled island’s political future, yet all share common ground in one desire, to expand their piece of its cutting-edge semiconductor industry.”

Beginning with US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi’s visit early this month, a succession of American delegations have visited top Taiwan chip executives. There’s much to gain. In recent years, Taiwan’s biggest chipmaker, Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company, or TSMC, has pledged to open new factories in the United States and Japan. The Taiwan chip design firm MediaTek recently partnered with Purdue University to open a chip design centre.

The calculation begins from a basic, and unsettling, reality of the global economy. Taiwan is the biggest producer of the world’s most advanced chips. It is also rapidly becoming one of the world’s most dangerous geopolitical flashpoints. The fear is that in the event of a conflict, firms won’t get the microchips they need to make phones and drones, set up supercomputers and cellular networks, and even build new weapons.

Tech companies on both sides of the Pacific now rely heavily on TSMC to craft the high-performance chips that render graphics in video games and give smartphones their smarts, but that also guide missiles and analyze oceans of military data. That has turned TSMC, whose name is obscure to most consumers, into a vital strategic asset for both Washington and Beijing.

During the geopolitical drama of the past month, the power of TSMC and the rest of the island’s chip supply chain has been clear. On Pelosi’s trip to Taiwan, she met with TSMC CEO Mark Liu and its storied founder, 91-year-old Morris

Chang. A separate delegation led by US Senator Edward Markey met with the company to discuss investments and improving semiconductor supply chains.

Taiwan's president, Ms Tsai Ing-wen, told one group that she saw the island's tech prowess as a means of shoring up support for its democracy. Calling economic security a "pillar" of national security, she said Taiwan was willing to work with partners to build sustainable supply chains for what she called "democracy chips."

In the event of a military conflagration, Taiwan's importance to global chip supplies also means the damage to all sides — and to the wider world's digital infrastructure — is hugely amplified. Not for nothing do people in Taiwan call TSMC their "sacred mountain, protector of the nation."

China's new bellicosity, which peaked this month with a week of missile tests and fighter incursions, has steadily pushed the island's sympathies away from China.

"Right now, they're moving very much toward the US," Dr Dieter Ernst, a senior fellow at the Center for International Governance Innovation who studies the semiconductor industry, said of Taiwan's leaders.

"But from the perspective of the Taiwanese economy and most Taiwanese companies, they need to retain a link — and hopefully as close as possible a link — with China."

Some top semiconductor leaders have spoken out against China after the military drills. Mr Robert Tsao, founder of Taiwan's second-largest chip manufacturer, United Microelectronics, said he would donate US\$100 million to Taiwan's military after the exercises. Long seen as friendly to China, Mr Tsao said in an interview that things had changed.

Impact

When it comes to weapons, age isn't just a number - In its war in Ukraine, Russia is drawing from the old Soviet arsenal, using highly destructive weapons that endanger even the attackers themselves.

According to the Global Firepower ranking, the Russian army has the second-most powerful military in the world.

However, soon after the invasion of Ukraine, it started to display a surprising lack of modern weapons. Instead of high-precision weaponry, Russia has been forced to deploy obsolete Soviet equipment, which poses a danger both to the locals and the soldiers themselves.

We have researched the weapons that were in Russia's arsenal before the invasion and compared this data to over 4,000 units of destroyed Russian equipment to find out why instead of using "fifth-generation weaponry", the Russian army is using 1960s tanks and striking shopping centres with anti-ship missiles.

Nearly six months after the war began, the Moscow region hosted the annual International Military-Technical Forum Army-2022. According to the Russian president, who was in attendance, the Russian military equipment units presented at the forum "are years, and maybe even dozens of years, ahead of their foreign analogues, and they even surpass them when it comes to tactical and technical features."

Actually, practically all the weapons Russia has used in real combat were inherited from the Soviet Union. And both parties to the conflict — not just Ukraine — feel the consequences of that.

In late April, experts with the Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies reported that Russia had depleted its reserve of high-precision weaponry. Due to the lack of Kalibers and Iskanders, the most modern guided missiles in Russia's arsenal, the army has had to bomb Ukrainian cities with Soviet equipment. The outdated navigation system on this equipment regularly causes civilian deaths.

On 9 May, Russia attacked Ukraine with Soviet Kh-22 missiles for the first time. Several missiles hit a shopping centre in Odesa, causing a fire that spread over an area of 1,000 square metres. Six weeks later, Kh-22s struck another shopping centre in Kremenchuk, killing at least 20 civilians and injuring 56. The Russian Defence Ministry did not confirm the attack, claiming that the fire actually started at a nearby ammunition plant that Russia was shelling.

The Kh-22 missile, designed in the 1960s, is aimed to destroy US aircraft carriers. According to military analyst Pavel Luzin, using these missiles in urban settings makes it much more difficult to home in on the target; the margin of error can sometimes reach hundreds of metres. “The Kh-22 is incredibly old. Besides, it cannot be intercepted; it’s a high-speed air-launched missile that targets ships. Hitting shopping centres with these missiles is pure terrorism,” Luzin said.

According to an anonymous US intelligence officer, the accuracy of Russian missiles is just below 40%: two to three out of every ten will either fail to launch or explode mid-flight, two more will have technical issues, and another two or three will fail to reach their targets even if they do complete the flight successfully.

Ukrainian cities also come under daily artillery attacks. At the height of the war, Russia fired as many as 60,000 shots a day. (During the Chechen wars, this number did not surpass 30,000.)

Luzin said that since the start of the war, Russia has been using “the Soviet ‘wall of fire’ tactic to force the opposing army to retreat. The enemy has to retreat because they have nothing to defend anymore: cities are becoming ruins, all fortifications and shelters are demolished.”

But Luzin pointed out that it is unclear “what to do with this wasteland next. All other countries have now abandoned the ‘wall of fire’ tactic, remembering the horrifying consequences of WWII. But Russia doesn’t know another way: it doesn’t have any other equipment or high-precision weaponry.”

The Soviet footprint

According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies’ Military Balance Report, Russia had over 80,000 military equipment units in its arsenal in early 2022. The army keeps 65% of its equipment in storage: experts told Novaya Gazeta. Europe that many of the units kept in storage are unfit for use.

“The Russian army is powerful only on paper,” Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT) analyst Kirill Mikhailov said. “There’s a war going on, and they won’t take BMP-2s and T-72s out of storage. Why?” (BMP-2s are amphibious infantry-fighting vehicles introduced in the 1980s; T-72s are battle tanks.) “The only rational explanation is they were cannibalized — that is, dismantled for spare parts — or stolen.”

The Military Balance Report —and the estimations of Novaya Gazeta. Europe — suggest that 87% of Russian weapons are Soviet-made. Artillery is one of the oldest types of weaponry used by the Russian army. The bulk of howitzers and multiple rocket launchers were designed in the 1950s and 60s. According to Luzin, these weapons are “non-ergonomic and imprecise, with a smaller range than their Western analogues.”

“If an army has enough high-precision weapons, they can target just the one building where an enemy is located,” explained Leonid Nersisyan, military analyst at APRI Armenia. “However, if an army is conducting shelling from cannon artillery, naturally, there will be large-scale destruction.”

Data on Russian equipment losses compiled by Oryx suggests that 45% of destroyed Russian equipment was made in the USSR. Oryx has published photographs of the damaged equipment, which is how these claims can be verified even though, according to CIT expert Kirill Mikhailov, the Oryx database is only about 70% complete. There are a total of 4,214 equipment units on record.

In addition to its obsolete artillery, Russia also uses poorly-modernized armored vehicles, which also have taken a hit during the war in Ukraine. Data from Oryx and the Military Balance suggest that the Russian army may have lost more

than 15% of its modern tanks in just five months of fighting. Because of its equipment shortages, Russia has started to use T-62 tanks, which the USSR stopped producing back in the mid-1970s.

Out of 13,500 tanks used by the Russian army, only 2,500 were produced after the fall of the Soviet Union. However, even the newer tanks cannot be considered modern, experts say. "Even if you modernize a Soviet tank, it will still remain a tank from the 80s," Luzin said. "Even if you put in a new French infra-red sight and a communications system, there won't be a massive increase in quality. No one can make a truly modern tank, there is nowhere to make one, so the only thing that's left is to modernize Soviet models," Pavel Luzin says.

All newer models of Russian tanks are modernized and produced from the model of the T-72 tank, which has a design flaw that can be fatal for the crew: an unprotected cockpit. That is, when a tank is hit, its ammunition explodes, cleaving the turret off the body and killing everyone inside it.

"The T-72 was designed with quantity in mind, so it has a minimal number of crew members," Luzin said. "The tank itself is small, light and primitive. They produced a thousand of them each year for a mass advance. If only a third of them reach the target, that's okay."

Since the 1990s, Russia has been trying to remedy this flaw with the development of a new tank, the Armata. It was first presented at the 2015 Victory Day parade, but only test units are available so far. Armata tanks are not deployed in Ukraine.

'By 2030, there will be nothing left of the military-industrial sector'

According to various estimates, Russia spends from \$200 Mln to \$20 bln every day on the war in Ukraine. The sunken Moskva cruiser alone cost Russia \$750 Mln, Forbes Ukraine reported.

The lion's share of Russia's military spending is devoted to high-precision missiles. By mid-July, Russia had launched 3,000 missiles on Ukrainian cities, Ukrainian President Zelensky said. According to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, 190 of those were cruise missiles. Launching one Kalibr missile costs Russia about \$750,000-\$900,000. Using the more modern Kh-101 costs several times more.

Ukrainian intelligence suggests that Russia had already used about 55-60% of the high-precision weaponry it had before the start of the full-scale invasion. "In the first month, Russia launched dozens of missiles every day. Now, there are one-off strikes once a week," Luzin said. "Ukraine sounds air-raid alerts every day, but only in areas within reach of cannon and rocket artillery. Russia has used up all the cruise missiles it produced over the past 15 years. It only makes 225 new missiles a year."

Mikhailov echoed Luzin's sentiment. "No one knows what will happen first: either they run out of munitions, or their barrels get worn out, but sooner or later, the army will face these issues. Russia is unable to recover its losses. In 2021, 300 tanks were produced at [Russian] factories, while in the first six months of the war, it lost 964 tanks according to Oryx. So Russia produces four times fewer tanks a year that it has lost in six months."

Russia suffered major losses both at the start of the invasion and at the beginning of the second stage of the war, the advance in eastern Ukraine. According to the Ukrainian Armed Forces, 25% of all equipment lost by Russia was destroyed in March, when the Ukrainian military wrecked 100 units of enemy equipment a day on average.

Kazakhs confront Russian tourists over 'Z' stickers on cars - Russian tourists in Kazakhstan have faced anger from locals and even fines from police for sporting pro-war Z stickers on their cars.

Kazakhs have been stopping Russian tourists to their country and demanding that they remove the "Z" stickers from their cars or depart back to Russia.

Germany says gas stocks rising quicker than expected - Germany is replenishing its gas stocks more quickly than expected despite drastic Russian supply cuts and should meet an October target early, the government said Sunday (28 August).

Europe's largest economy is heavily dependent on Russian gas and has raced to bolster its reserves before winter after deliveries from Russia plummeted following the outbreak of war in Ukraine.

Last week, Germany's energy regulator the Federal Network Agency said the country was unlikely to meet its goals.

But the government said energy-saving measures in recent weeks and massive purchases of gas from other suppliers saw "significant progress" made.

"Despite the difficult circumstances... the reserves are filling up more quickly than expected," Economy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck said in a statement.

A target to achieve 85% of gas storage capacity by October "should be reached by the start of September", with current levels at 82%, his ministry added.

Danes, Germans back Baltic wind hub to offset Russian gas - Denmark will increase its planned offshore wind capacity in the Baltic Sea to 3 gigawatts and hook it up to the German grid, a step toward weaning Europe off its reliance on Russian gas. When established in 2030, it should be able to supply electricity to up 4.5 million European homes.

A 470-kilometer (292-mile) undersea cable will run via the Danish Baltic Sea island of Bornholm to northern Germany, enabling the power to be sent directly to the German electricity grid and on to the rest of Europe.

At present, Denmark and Germany have respective offshore wind energy capacities of 1.5 gigawatts and 1 gigawatt.

German Economy and Climate Minister Robert Habeck called it "a flagship project" and added that "with such projects among European partners, we achieve two key goals at the same time: European energy security and climate neutrality." The deal was announced Monday in Copenhagen.

UN agency to inspect Ukraine nuclear plant in urgent mission - A U.N. nuclear watchdog team set off on an urgent mission Monday to safeguard the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia atomic power plant at the heart of fighting in Ukraine, a long-awaited trip the world hopes will help avoid a radioactive catastrophe.

The stakes couldn't be higher for the International Atomic Energy Agency experts who will visit the plant in a country where the 1986 Chernobyl disaster spewed radiation throughout the region, shocking the world and intensifying a global push away from nuclear energy.

Containment

Sweden to boost military aid to Ukraine - Swedish Prime Minister Andersson promised a new aid package to Kyiv during a press conference with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba in Stockholm on Monday.

The package includes military aid worth 500 million crowns (\$46.8 million), as well as the same amount for reconstruction of Ukraine. "Sweden will continue to be a close friend and support Ukraine," Andersson said.

Swedish Foreign Minister Ann Linde, who was also present at the press conference, added: "We do not know how long Russia's war will last, but Sweden is ready to provide long-term support to Ukraine."

Hollow shield - The West continues to supply Ukraine with more and more modern high-precision artillery systems and multiple rocket launchers (MRLs) capable of launching projectiles up to 70-80 km. German self-propelled artillery vehicles carrying long-range guided missiles have joined the famous US-made HIMARS. There have been reports about plans to export high-precision American Excalibur projectiles to Ukraine. The weapons supply programme initiated by the West is designed to last for several years. Given Russia's shell deficit, caused by recent sabotage and depot shelling, accuracy of fire will become increasingly important as the war goes on.

There are reports that Russia is already running out of 122 mm ammunition — the basic caliber used by Russian artillery. If this is indeed the case, battlefield superiority is likely to pass to the Ukrainian side.

It is important to note that technical progress accelerates considerably during a war, and it is hard to evaluate what kinds of weapons Ukrainian developers are currently working on. Before the war, Ukraine was trying to upgrade ammunition for the Soviet Smerch MLR, which had a range of 130 km. According to public knowledge, only 120 such projectiles were ever produced — there is no information as to whether all of them have been used so far.

The wreckage of an anti-radar HARM missile was recently found near Donetsk. If HIMARS and M270 MLR systems are indeed being supplied with 300 km-range missiles, the only thing that can protect Belgorod, Rostov and other Russian cities is a ban from the US on using the supplied heavy weapons to bombard Russian territory.

Sanctions

Russia's defense industry is in serious trouble due to sanctions - The Russian defense industry has some struggles ahead. Despite claims of self-sufficiency, it turns out that Russian industry needs Western components and Western support. One of the most autarkic industries in one of the world's most autarkic economies is suffering from supply shortages because of sanctions. Does this mean that autarky in the defense sphere becomes impossible? If so, what does that mean for the pursuit of security for modern states?

Theoretically, states should carefully guard the chains that supply their defense industrial bases with goods, as a loss of access to global markets (or even to specific suppliers) could prove catastrophic in times of war. Most variants of realism suggest that a state will, if it can, reduce vulnerability by internalizing as much of its defense industry as possible. Of course this is not possible for every state; some must rely in part or in whole on the defense industry that it can borrow or buy. But great powers especially should try to be as autonomous as possible in defense.

During its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has run straight into the problem of incomplete defense autarky.

The difficult truth is that the Russian defense industrial base has become intimately tied to the West. The apparent dependence of Russian industry on Western components appears to have surprised even the Russians, who have engaged in elaborate efforts to find enough chips to keep advanced weapons on the menu. Could Russia's example indicate the vulnerability of defense supply chains, encouraging countries to onshore requirements critical to their DIB?

The short answer to Russia's dilemma appears to be that autarky in the defense sphere, at least as far as advanced components are concerned, is simply not possible for a state seeking a first tier military capability. It is likely that some countries will try and that few (if any) will succeed. The hard truth is that a modern defense industrial base requires advanced components that are only available with a world class technology industry (possessed by very few countries) or open access to markets in high tech.

This leaves a world in which the components necessary for advanced, high-tech weapons are available in the West and available to Western partners but are considerably less available to anyone outside of that technological ecosystem.

This technological future looks ugly for both Russia and China, but especially for the former. Reconstituting the technological blocs that existed during the Cold War but expanding the Western one at the expense of the Russian will not benefit Moscow, and it may end up driving a wedge between Moscow and Beijing. China, deeply engaged in the civilian tech economy, will face difficult choices about how much to support Russia. Moreover, Russia and China are increasingly in direct conflict over their shares of the international defense market.

Ericsson to exit Russia, cut staff – Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson will finalize its Russia exit and cut staff this year, signaling further problems for Russian network coverage upkeep, the Kommersant business daily reported Monday.

Ericsson's headquarters in Stockholm had informed its Russian unit last week that it will shut down and employees will be fired by the end of 2022, Kommersant reported, citing unnamed telecom industry sources.

Ericsson employs 565 people in Russia, according to corporate data.

EU foreign ministers expected to suspend Russian tourist visa facilitation - Move comes as EU official says it is 'inappropriate for Russian tourists to stroll in our cities.'

The EU's foreign ministers are expected to approve suspending the bloc's visa facilitation agreement with Moscow next week, as Russian rocket and artillery strikes hit areas across the Dnieper River from the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant.

The EU move, aimed at reducing the number of visas issued to Russian nationals after pressure from eastern member states, falls short of an outright ban but would make getting travel documents significantly more complicated and expensive.

GeoPolitics

'Poland won't let Russia occupy any strip of its land' - The Polish defence minister has vowed that Poland won't allow Russia to occupy any strip of its territory, adding: "we want, and we can defend our homeland."

Mariusz Błaszczak made the declaration at a ceremony to mark 102 years since the Battle of Komarów, one of the key episodes of the Polish-Soviet War, Polish state news agency PAP reported.

Błaszczak told the audience: "Although the Bolshevik forces were bigger and sowed terror, our ancestors stopped Bolshevik Russia and saved Europe from the Bolshevik onslaught."

Referring to Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine, he stated: "I visited Irpin near Kyiv and I saw the impact of the Russian army, I saw the consequences of a Russian invasion."

Scholz pitches major EU enlargement — with reform - The EU should significantly expand but must first undergo fundamental reforms to ensure an enlarged bloc can still function, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said today.

During an hour-long speech at Charles University in Prague, Scholz outlined his vision for an EU of the future — one that has absorbed up to nine new members on its eastern edge, extended its visa-free travel zone and overhauled the way it makes basic decisions on everything from foreign policy to taxation.

Scholz's pitch, which mostly included ideas he has previously promoted, comes at a pivotal moment for the EU. Russia's war in Ukraine has just dragged past the six-month mark and an energy and inflation crisis looms, leaving many worried about EU fissures.

Specifically, Scholz supported EU membership for Western Balkan countries, as well as war-torn Ukraine, neighboring Moldova and nearby Georgia. He also argued that EU members Croatia, Romania and Bulgaria have met the criteria for admission to Europe's Schengen area, which allows for easy, visa-free travel between countries.

"But a Union with 30 or even 36 member states will look different from our current Union — Europe's center moves eastward," the chancellor conceded. "Ukraine isn't Luxembourg."

Such an expansion would potentially add tens of millions of people — and fraught political dynamics — to the already byzantine and consensus-based EU decision-making process.

India crucial for US to counter China — United States Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday has said that India will be a crucial partner for America in the future, playing a key role in countering China.

"The Indian Ocean battlespace is becoming increasingly more important for us. The fact that India and China currently have a bit of a skirmish along their border ... it's strategically important." said Admiral Gilday.

This remark comes as the idea that the border clashes between India and China in the Himalayas pose a two-front problem for Beijing has been gaining traction among US strategists, the Japanese newspaper Nikkei Asia reported.

'New Delhi a strategic partner for US in future'

During an in-person seminar in Washington, America's highest-ranking Navy officer on Thursday said that he has spent more time on a trip to India than with any other country as he considers New Delhi to be a strategic partner for the US in the future.

Referring to his five-day visit to India last year, Admiral Gilday said,

"The Indian Ocean battlespace is becoming increasingly more important for us. The fact that India and China currently have a bit of a skirmish along their border ... it's strategically important."

"They now force China to not only look east, toward the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, but they now have to be looking over their shoulder at India," Admiral Gilday said during the event hosted by the Heritage Foundation.

'India should draw Chinese attention to Himalayan border'

Back in June, when the leaders of the Quad were meeting in Japan, former Pentagon official Colby told Nikkei Asia that while India would not directly contribute in a local battle over Taiwan, it could draw China's attention to the Himalayan border.

"What the United States and Japan need India to do is to be as strong as possible in South Asia and effectively draw Chinese attention so that they have a major second-front problem," said Colby.

India, in the meantime, draws the same benefit from China's difficulties in facing a strong US-Japan alliance around Taiwan, he said.

Indo-US exercise near LAC

Against this backdrop, a planned joint mountaintop exercise between the US and India in October is seen as underscoring the potential second front for China, according to Nikkei Asia. The annual joint exercise Yudh Abhyas, which translates to "War Practice," will be held in the Indian state of Uttarakhand from October 18 to 31.

U.S. Ambassador vows West 'won't leave Bosnia to Russia' - The U.S. ambassador to Bosnia-Herzegovina says Washington's commitment to that Balkan state is "enduring" and it is committed along with its European allies to Bosnia's "territorial integrity, sovereignty and security, and multiethnic character."

In a recent interview with RFE/RL's Balkan Service, Ambassador Michael Murphy accused Russia of seeking instability in the region but said a recent reinforcement of EU peacekeepers amid that challenge was indicative of transatlantic resolve.

"I think you did see from the United States and the Europeans a response, and it should signal that we are not going to leave [Bosnia-Herzegovina] to Russia," Murphy said. "That is not going to be the outcome here."

GeoDemographics

China has a big problem: Its population will be slashed in half by 2100 - The Chinese Communist Party is thought of by many as on the rise with an economy that many says can rival the U.S. and a military that seems poised for superpower status. And yet, China has a serious problem to contend with: its population is getting old fast and will drop dramatically.

China is currently seen as the greatest threat to the United States. It is working to develop advanced weapons, seeks to build a global trading empire, and it developed a world-class navy in very short order.

The Covid-19 pandemic, which originated in the city of Wuhan, has slowed the Chinese Communist Party's ambition to become the dominant superpower in the 21st century. But in fact, the clock has been working against China for quite some time.

Simply put, China as a nation has made some abysmal choices that have kept it from reaching the status of a true global power. Beijing now probably cannot do very much to fix these past mistakes.

The Missed Opportunity

In the early 15th century, some 90 years before Christopher Columbus attempted to reach the Far East by traveling west, Chinese admiral Zheng He led seven ocean expeditions under the aegis of the Ming emperor. He reached the Middle East on his fourth voyage, at the head of hundreds of ships much larger than anything in Europe at the time.

Instead of opening up trade routes and establishing control over the Indian Ocean, the voyages ended, and the fleet burned. China went into a period of isolation and remained that way, while Europeans explored the world and created empires.

By the 19th century, China was seen as a potential "sleeping dragon" that could present opportunities for the other world powers. Europe sought to open China – along with Japan – to foreign trade. After disastrous defeat in a war with Japan, China was left as barely a second-rate regional power – one that was dominated by outsiders.

China's Leap of Bad Faith

In the second half of the 20th century, after Mao Zedong and the Communists took power, China began to modernize in fits and starts. But in the end, Mao's Great Leap Forward also brought about one of the greatest famines in all of human history.

Nevertheless, between 1949 and 1979 China's population doubled, from 540 million to 969 million, and kept rising, by 2015 the population reached nearly 1.4 billion. This sizable population is what allowed China to become a global economic powerhouse. However, the government viewed the growth as being too rapid, and in 1980 Beijing instituted a one-child policy. As with many other of China's historical decisions, it was a bad one.

In fact, China's efforts to rein in its population have resulted in an equally serious problem.

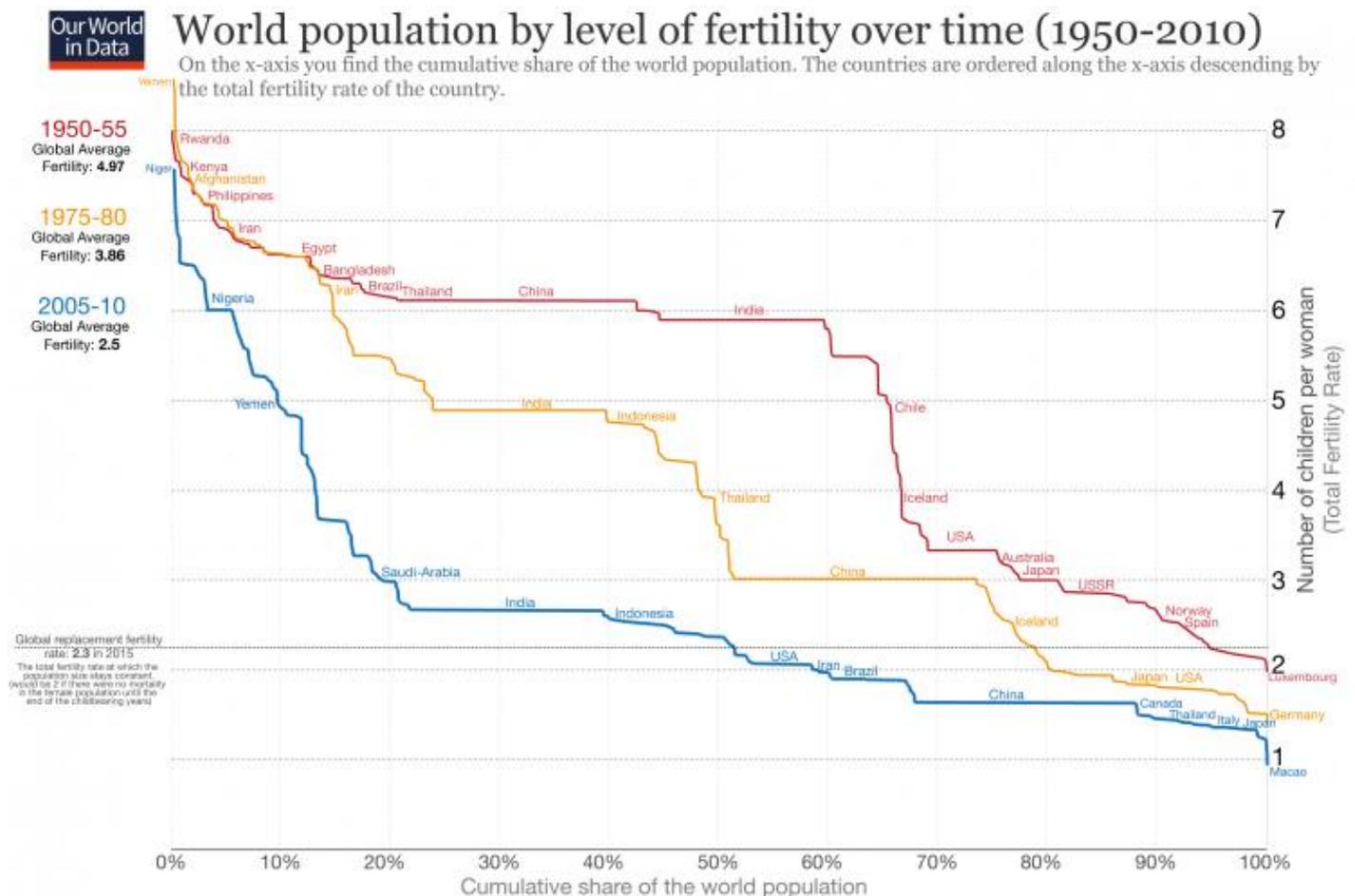
The working-age population in China has been shrinking since 2012, and by 2050 it will contract by another 22%. According to UN projections, by the middle of the century, there will be 217 million fewer people – roughly the population of Nigeria – working in China's factories, farms, and offices.

"The Chinese understand that they are at the tip of the military-economic power," Harry Kazianis, president of the Rogue States Group, told Fox Business Channel's Neil Cavuto last month. "By 2100, the Chinese population is going to drop from 1.4 billion people to 570 million. That is a two-thirds decline." By contrast, the U.S. population could be a little higher.

According to data from the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, China will see an annual decline of 1.1%, pushing its population down significantly in 2100 to less than half of what it is today.

Part of the issue is that there are far more men in China than women, while Beijing's efforts to abandon its one-child policy in 2016 in favor of a three-child policy have fallen flat. Chinese women remain reluctant to have children, even with state incentives. The rising cost of living is one factor, while small families are now the cultural norm in China. Covid-19 has also played a role, as few were willing to have children during the strict lockdowns. The ratio of 106 boys for every 100 girls is now the highest in the world – and in some provinces, it is as great as 130-for-100. This is simply unlikely to improve in the coming years.

Looking at the UN chart below, it can be seen how the global Fertility Rate has and continues to drop.



Data source: United Nations Population Division (2012 revision).

The interactive data visualization is available at OurWorldinData.org. There you find the raw data and more visualizations on this topic.

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