

Conflict Update Day 376

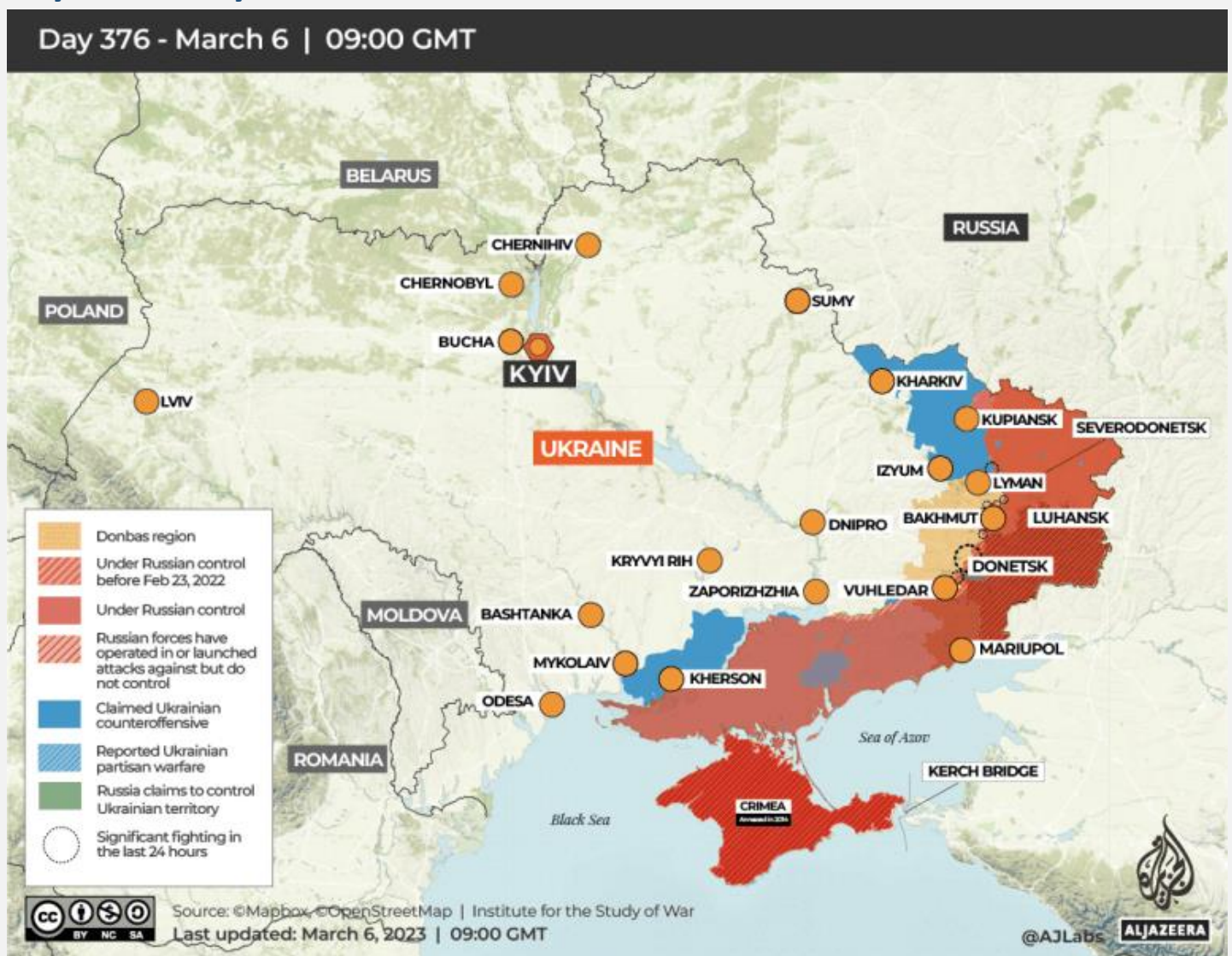
March 6th, 2023

Back issues at www.accgroupco.com

Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 153,770 (650) soldiers killed, 3,423 (+9) enemy tanks, 6,703 (+11) armored combat vehicles, 2,433 (+7) artillery systems, 488 (0) MLRS systems, 250 (+6) air defense systems, 302 (+0) warplanes, 289 (+0) helicopters, 2,086 (+15) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 873 (+0) cruise missiles, 18 (+0) warships/cutters, 5,307 (+8) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 239 fuel bowsers (+0) and 234 (+2) units of equipment.

Key Takeaways



Ukraine routs entire column of tanks, armored vehicles and infantry – Ukrainian Intelligence detected a Russian column attempting to break through in Avdiivka, just north of Vuhledar and south of Bakhmut, and assaulted it, wiping out the entire column together with troops accompanying the attack.

It is reported that some 6 tanks and 9 vehicles of sorts were destroyed

Ukraine destroys two arms depots in Donetsk – Ukrainian long-range artillery attacked and destroyed two Russian arms depots deep within Donetsk Oblast.

License to shell - Ukraine's army has been increasingly attacking Russian territories — some located hundreds of kilometres away from the front line. Novaya-Europe's research.

Since the start of the war, border regions of Russia, according to Novaya Gazeta Europe's calculations, have been shelled at least 350 times. A total of 168 civilians were killed or injured in these attacks, and over 1,000 residential buildings, schools, and infrastructure facilities were damaged. Since autumn, local governors have sometimes been reporting several attacks per day. And if before, shelling was only reported in small villages located near the border, now the Ukrainian army has begun "reaching" big cities and military facilities inside the country more frequently.

Last week it was reported that the US' new military aid package to Ukraine includes 150-km range missiles — twice the range compared to before. Furthermore, according to statements made by Ukraine's authorities, a new attack drone with a flight range of 1,000 km is almost ready — a range wide enough to strike upon Moscow where Pantsir air defence systems were recently installed on the roofs of administrative buildings.

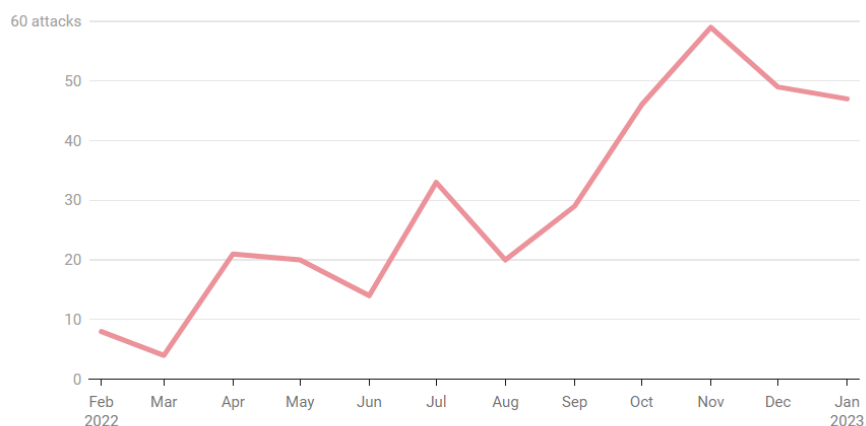
Still, Russian authorities are in no rush to evacuate residents under attack, while Russian air defence systems are only repelling 20% of air attacks. Novaya-Europe's data team has looked into how the war boomerangs on Russia's territory. **(Comment** – Does it not suit the Kremlin to let Ukrainian drone attacks continue from a propaganda perspective?)

Over the year of war, Ukraine's shelling of Russian territories has increased tenfold — while in March, a handful of shells made it to the territory of border villages, January saw Russian authorities report attacks 1.5 times per day on average.

The Belgorod region has the highest number of attacks on record. According to the local governor where over 50 villages and towns have been bombed.

Furthermore, while last spring, only two small border villages, Zhuravlevka and Nekhoteevka, were being shelled most of the time, now shells reach towns with populations of over 10,000.

Russian border regions now get shelled more frequently



Source: Russian governors' statements, open data

Shebekino, with a population of 40,000, and the town district have been shelled at least 27 times this winter. The Ukrainian border is six kilometres away. Seventeen local residents were injured and five were killed. Dozens of locals are now homeless: 66 private and 11 multi-storey buildings were destroyed in shelling, as well as a mall and a market.

On 10 September, Russian troops surrendered the city of Vovchansk in the Kharkiv region of Ukraine.

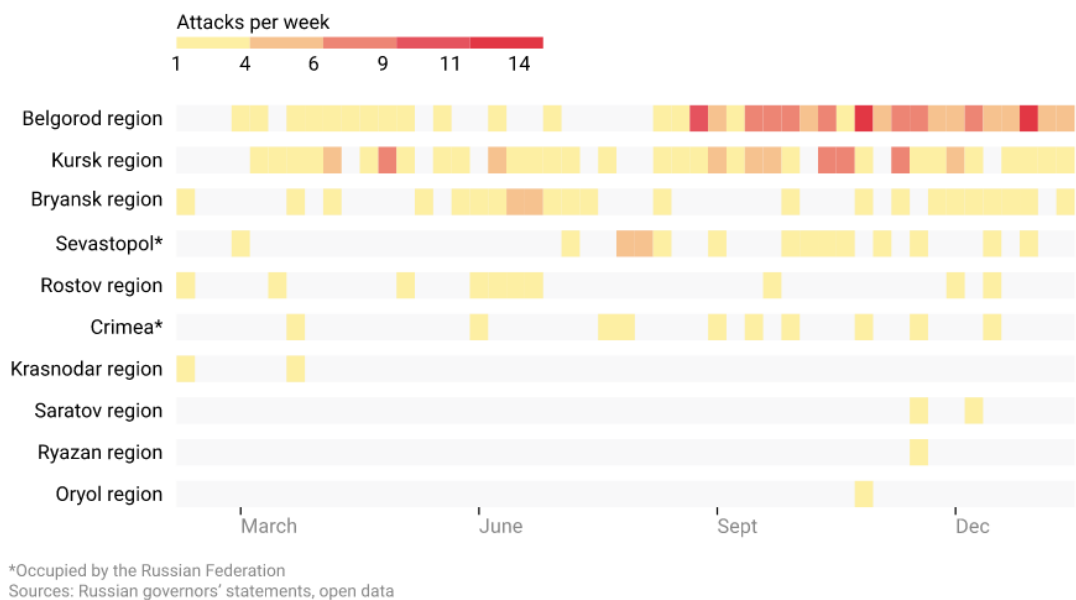
"Since then, there hasn't been a day without shelling," Shebekino resident Yulia says. "Our life is a game of Russian roulette. At first, I prayed to God before sleep so I would wake up alive. In the morning, I'd thank him for keeping us alive. We basically live day by day. We got used to shelling and shots fired — it doesn't wake us up at night anymore. It's weird when it gets quiet — it leads to anxiety that something horrible is about to happen. This is the burden of living near the border. But we continue on, we don't give way to despair. For now, we can stomach it."

The nearby town of Valuyki, according to local residents, also gets shelled daily. According to official data, three civilians were killed and six people were injured in shelling in the autumn and winter season.

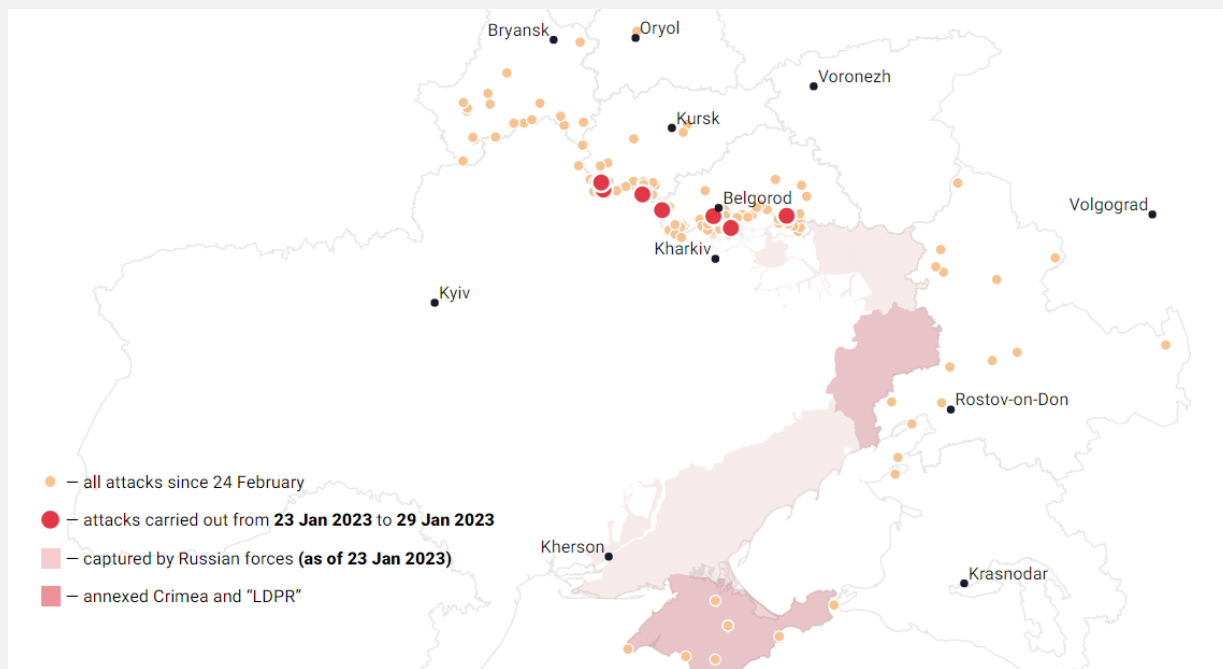
“Since the start of the special military operation, our lives have changed significantly. But even if we were to leave, where to and for how long? What will happen to our homes? I have two kids,

the oldest is 13, the youngest is three years old. They, of course, no longer go to neither kindergarten nor school — all of us are at home, they’re doing distance learning. This leads to some difficulties, but we believe that soon this nightmare will end,” Valuyki resident Tatiana Kulikova says.

How often the regions get shelled



Russian and Crimean territories shelled since start of the war



ies. [Privacy policy](#).

4 Apr 2022 — 29 Jan 2023

Sources: Russian governors' statements, open data
Map data: OpenStreetMap, Deep State

For its part, Ukraine does not usually claim responsibility for shelling Russian territories. After military airfields located in the cities of Ryazan and Engels had been shelled last December, adviser to the president of Ukraine Mykhailo Podolyak noted that “the Earth is round” and that “if you launch something in the airspace of other countries, sooner or later unidentified flying objects will return to the launch point.”

Russia has to deploy older Soviet-era tanks amid losses in Ukraine – U.K. - Russia is said to be relying more on six-decade-old tanks because of its heavy armored losses in the invasion of Ukraine.

The U.K. MOD said on Monday that Russia's military is turning to T-62 main battle tanks (MBTs) to shore up equipment deficits on the battlefield.

The defense officials described as a "realistic possibility" that even units of Russia's premier tank forces—the 1st Guards Tank Army (1 GTA)—will be re-equipped with the MBT, which first entered Soviet service in 1961.

The 1 GTA had been due to receive third-generation Armata T-14 tanks in 2021, but these have been beset with delays due to technical problems.

Over recent days, the even-older Russian BTR-50 armored personnel carriers, which were first fielded in 1954, have also been deployed in Ukraine for the first time, the MOD said.

In the 1980s, thousands of T-62s were modernized and given new defenses and more powerful engines. But defense publication The Drive reported in October 2022 that Russia's forces had been hit hard by high equipment losses and the impact of sanctions on its arms industry. It described the T-62s taken out of deep storage as "nearly antique" and of "debatable utility."

Comment – The Kremlin tactic is the same as used in sending thousands of soldiers to certain death in order to overwhelm Ukrainian defenses, they too will send as many tanks as they believe it will require to subdue Ukrainian armored ranks. This is their tactic of attrition and how they conduct war, regardless of cost or losses – for generations.

Ukraine shoots down 13 of 15 Russian drones - Ukrainian officials said Russia attacked Ukraine several times at night, with 13 of 15 drones shot down.

“The drones had taken off from the north,” Ukrainian Air Force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on television.

The eastern city of Kramatorsk, still under Ukrainian control, was particularly hit.

Russian ambassador likens invasion to a ‘civil war’ - Andrey Kelin, the Russian ambassador to the UK, spoke to Al Jazeera and said that the war in Ukraine could be understood as a “civil war” as he blamed the West for creating an “existential threat” for Russia.

Comment – By portraying the conflict as a “Civil War,” he is attempting to justify the invasion as an internal Russian exercise, in other words Ukraine is part and parcel of Russia.

‘Defence is holding’ in Bakhmut, says Ukrainian commander - The commander of Ukrainian troops in Bakhmut, Volodymyr Nazarenko, said there had been no order to retreat and “the defence is holding”.

“The situation in Bakhmut and around it is very much hell-like, as it is on the entire eastern front,” Nazarenko said in a video posted on Telegram.

Ukraine has moved further troops reinforcements into the area to ward off any Russian threat.

Ukraine’s military said its forces repelled 95 Russian attacks in the Bakhmut area over the previous day. “The situation in Bakhmut can be described as critical,” Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov said in a video commentary.

Russian forces are reportedly running out of ammunition and supplies, with Ukraine continually striking behind the scenes Kremlin supply lines and rail junctions.

Ukrainian elements began withdrawing from the nearly-encircled eastern city of Bakhmut late last week, destroying "several bridges" in the process, according to the British military and the UK's Telegraph, reporting Friday.

One of those bridges spans the Bakhmutivka River in northeastern Bakhmut, and another is located just west of Bakhmut, analysts at ISW wrote Friday evening. The idea behind dropping the bridges would seem to be "that even if Ukrainian troops begin to withdraw [from Bakhmut], Russian forces would not necessarily be able to rapidly take the entire city," ISW predicted. **(Comment** – This report precedes that of Ukrainian reserves arriving in Bakhmut.)

Prigozhin again assails the Kremlin regarding ammunition shortages - The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary force warned that Moscow's position around the eastern Ukrainian city of Bakhmut was in peril unless his troops receive ammunition, the latest sign of tension between the Kremlin and the private militia chief.

Wagner representative denied access to Russian army HQ, says Prigozhin - Wagner group head Yevgeny Prigozhin said that his representative had been denied access to the headquarters of Russia's army after Prigozhin complained about a lack of ammunition.

Prigozhin said via his press service's Telegram channel that he had written to the army's commander, saying his men urgently needed ammunition.

"On March 6, at 8 o'clock in the morning, my representative at the headquarters had his pass cancelled and was denied access to the group's headquarters," Prigozhin said.

"If Wagner retreats from Bakhmut now the whole front will collapse," Yevgeny Prigozhin said. "The situation will not be sweet for all military formations protecting Russian interests."

Russian 155th remnants refuse to obey orders to attack Vuhledar - Near Vuhledar, Ukraine said senior officers of Russia's 155th Brigade, which Kyiv says suffered heavy recent losses, refused to obey orders to attack.

"The leaders of the brigade and senior officers are refusing to proceed with a new senseless attack as demanded by their unskilled commanders – to storm well-defended Ukrainian positions with little protection or preparation."

Russians fighting with picks and shovels – Given the drastic shortage of ammunition, Russian commanders are ordering their troops to use picks and shovels when attacking Ukrainian positions.

Russian soldiers are with only "firearms and a shortage in to an intelligence update Ministry of Defense on



The update suggests question are also being used for and that this type of combat is becoming an increasing offense tactic for the Russian forces, due to ammunition shortages.

being forced to fight shovels" in Ukraine amid ammunition, according by the United Kingdom's Sunday.

that the shovels in entrenching tools that hand-to-hand combat

US Air Force is stripping most of the identifying information off of its biggest planes - US Air Mobility Command has ordered its refueling and cargo planes to obscure their identifying markings.

The command says the move is a response to security concerns related to its worldwide operations.

A government watchdog is worried by a move that limits information available to the public for little reason.

Air Mobility Command has directed its refueling and cargo planes to obscure the majority of identifying information painted on the aircraft, citing national security concerns — an unusual move that is alarming to government watchdogs.

James Stewart, a spokesman for Air Mobility Command, told Military.com in an emailed statement that airmen's missions take them around the globe and often involve sensitive movements of cargo — the main reason behind the change.

"Understandably, we have concerns about the operational security impacts to these missions in the modern era of on-demand, real-time information," Stewart said. "Subdued paint schemes that limit identifiable information is one way we are taking a hard look at how we operate to ensure our ability to continue to deliver for America and our allies and partners around the world."

Containment

US vessel transporting military equipment docks at Alexandroupolis - The US vessel "Liberty Pride" sailed into the port of Alexandroupolis, Greece, on Saturday, carrying military equipment destined for NATO forces deployed in southeastern Europe.

The gigantic ship (length 199.9 m, width 32.26 m, and draft 8.5 m) began unloading military supplies which will be dispatched to Bulgaria and Romania, where two major NATO exercises will be held.

Liberty Pride arrived in Alexandroupolis from the US port of Charleston, and will set sail in the middle of next week after unloading more supplies and equipment for NATO forces on the Black Sea coast. The US carrier is the front of a supply chain on behalf of Allied forces in Southeast Europe, a process expected to last until the end of August.



Sanctions

Russia's crude exports slide as lucrative pacific trade declines - Russia's seaborne crude exports fell back sharply from the previous weeks' highs, with Moscow unable to maintain record flows from the country's Pacific ports.

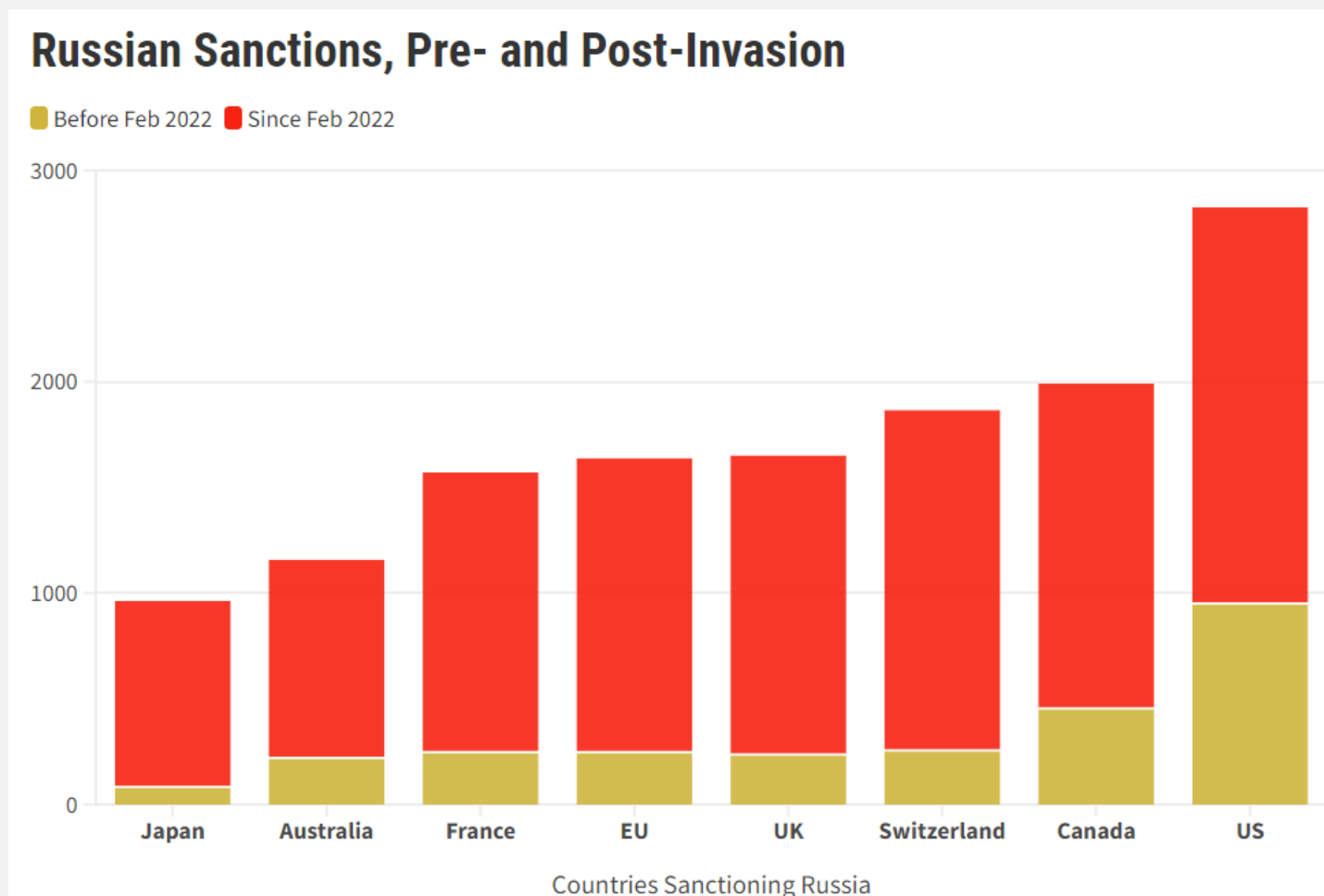
Overall seaborne shipments shrank to 3.11 million barrels a day in the seven days through Friday, a 14% week-on-week decline. The less-volatile four-week average also retreated.

Though of a similar size, the decline is unlikely to be related to a 500,000-barrel-a-day production cut for this month that the Kremlin announced in response to Western embargoes and price caps. Any imposed reduction in flows is most likely to be seen at the country's western ports, where cargoes are being sold at a 25% discount to those shipped from the Pacific. But flows from Baltic and Black Sea ports were unchanged from the previous week.

China emphasizes 'whole nation' stance on tech as US curbs bite - China pledged to pool together all of the nation's resources to achieve self-reliance in technology, underscoring the government's determination to secure key breakthroughs in areas such as semiconductors as tensions with the US escalate.

The Chinese government’s hefty investment in the chip industry has borne little fruit in recent years, with state champions from Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd. to Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp. struggling to advance their chip technologies following US blacklisting. Sanction-hit Yangtze Memory Technologies Co., the country’s best shot to make memory chips for smartphones and computers, is also having trouble expanding capacity despite receiving additional state capital.

Xi has ordered the ruling Communist Party to exercise more control over the country’s science and technology agenda, paving the way for the creation of an even more powerful overseer to steer strategically critical industries.



SA-US trade relationship under review - South Africa’s recent hosting of military exercises with the People’s Republic of China and the Russian Federation on the first anniversary of Russia’s unprovoked attack on Ukraine could come back to bite where it hurts most – in the trade and investment relationship that South Africa and the US has enjoyed since 1994.

The US House of Representatives has called on the Biden administration to conduct a thorough review of this relationship, outlining the issues at hand and the way forward.

South Africa is the United States’ largest trade partner in Africa, with \$21 000 000 000 of two-way goods trade in 2021, and in 2012, the countries signed a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement facilitating two-way trade.

In addition, the United States is the largest source of foreign direct investment in South Africa, valued at over \$7 500 000 000 in 2021, while approximately 600 American businesses operate in South Africa.

The House has however raised several red flags that have motivated its decision to call for a review – many of them related to South Africa’s somewhat cozy relationship with China.

Russian-Hungarian bank in serious financial trouble - The Budapest-based International Investment Bank (IIB), which is majority owned by the Russian state, is in serious financial trouble. This can also be a problematic issue for Hungary, which is the second-largest owner of the bank after Russia. According to hvg.hu, the bank’s financial problems started after Euroclear, which is one of the world’s largest securities transaction firms, blocked the Russian-Hungarian bank’s funds as part of the sanctions against Russia.

Comments, Updates, Developments and Reports

Ukraine war has made it easier for US to isolate China in the Pacific - A year after Russia invaded Ukraine, Xi Jinping’s backing of Putin has opened the door for the US and partners in the Pacific to shore up sometimes frayed relationships to the detriment of Beijing.

In the past few months alone, Japan has pledged to double defense spending and acquire long-range weapons from the US; South Korea has acknowledged that stability in the Taiwan Strait is essential to its security; the Philippines has announced new US base access rights and is talking about joint patrols of the South China Sea with Australia, Japan and the United States.

Those might be the biggest initiatives, but they are far from the only events that have left China increasingly isolated in its own backyard as it refuses to condemn the invasion of a sovereign country by its partner in Moscow while keeping military pressure on the self-ruled island of Taiwan.

Analysts say all these things would have likely happened without the war in Ukraine, but the war, and China’s backing of Russia, has helped grease the skids to get these projects done.

Take the situation of Japan, a country limited in its post-World War II constitution to “self-defense” forces. Now it’s going to buy long-range Tomahawk cruise missiles from the US, weapons that could strike well inside China.

“I myself have a strong sense of urgency that Ukraine today may be East Asia tomorrow,” Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida told a major defense conference in Singapore last summer.

In December, Kishida followed that up with a plan to double Tokyo’s defense spending while acquiring weapons with ranges well outside Japanese territory.

“The Japanese people have taken notice of the situation in Ukraine, and it has made them feel more vulnerable as a nation,” said John Bradford, senior fellow at the S. Rajaratman School of International Studies in Singapore.

The nation that Japan feels particularly vulnerable to is China.

The People’s Liberation Army has been growing and modernizing its forces for years. On Sunday, Beijing announced its military budget for 2023, which will increase 7.2%. It marked the first time in the past decade that the military’s budget growth rate has increased for three consecutive years.

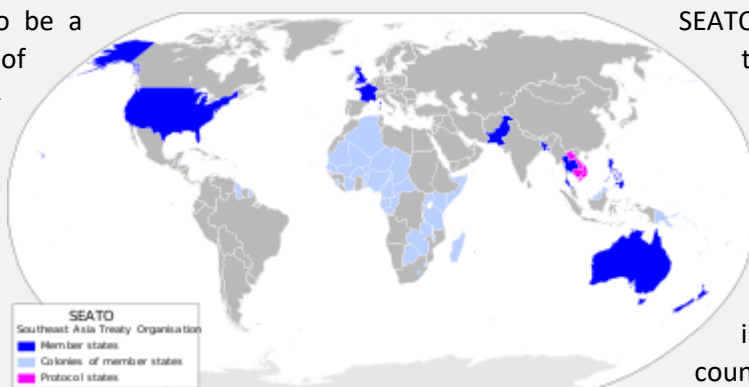
There’s worry that China may one day treat Taiwan as Russia has treated Ukraine.

Leaders in Tokyo have said peace across the Taiwan Strait is essential to Japan’s security. That’s really nothing new, but the urgency in Japan is.

“Japan has been strengthening its defense posture for years. The Ukraine situation made the key element of Kishida’s new National Security Strategy, the expected next steps in this strengthening, politically easier,” Bradford said.

Comment – There used to be a **Organization**) comprised of blue in the map alongside – Pakistan, Philippines Zealand.

SEATO, however, was We should not be resurrected at some stage time including further South Korea.



SEATO (**SouthEast Asia Treaty** the 8 countries outlined in US, Australia, UK, France, Thailand and New dissolved in 1977.

surprised to see it in the near future, but this countries such as Japan and

China's Xi Jinping is 'getting ready for war,' Russian analyst says - An analyst appearing on Russian state-run TV recently asserted that Chinese President Xi Jinping is preparing for a future war with the West.

The exchange appeared on a Russian news program and was shared across social media by Russian Media Monitor, a watchdog group dedicated to reporting on the country's state-controlled news apparatus, on Friday. According to the group's founder, Julia Davis, the discussion in the clip surrounded possible Chinese military aid to Russia amid the country's ongoing war with Ukraine, and how it might be affected by China's recent peace proposal for the conflict.

Late last month, the Chinese government put forward a 12-point plan for ending the conflict in Ukraine. Though the plan contains some provisions that would be advantageous to Ukraine, including a call for the sovereignty of all involved nations to be respected, it also contains some that might cause the plan to be dismissed entirely. Notably, the plan does not call for Russian forces to withdraw from Ukraine, and does not call for the Kremlin to relinquish Ukrainian land that it has attempted to annex amid the conflict.

"Meanwhile in Russia: experts discussed China's peace proposal and various ways in which China's military aid to Russia might be covertly provided," Davis tweeted Friday. "They asserted that Xi Jinping is preparing China for war against the West at some point in the future."

At the start of the clip, Nikolai Vavilov, an expert on China, is prompted to comment on China's intentions with its peace proposal. Eventually, the conversation moves to the ever-hostile relationship between Beijing and the United States, to which Vavilov claims that Xi has been preparing for war since taking office over a decade ago.

During the discussion, the expert also touched on ways in which China might be able to provide military aid to Russia, despite its peace proposal offer, as Ukraine has received military aid from many Western countries.

"China will most likely remain within the boundaries of international law and won't supply weapons to an active party of the conflict," he added. "However, as we know, the Chinese can very skillfully circumvent any constraints. Most likely, manufacturing facilities might be created in one of the nations, bordering the Russian Federation with whom there is an existing military cooperation. From the standpoint of international law, this manufacturing won't undermine the image of China as a peacekeeper and so on."

Comment – My Chinese colleague, closely aligned with folk in Beijing, has often said he expects China will be at war with the US within 5 years. He recently laid out the 4 stages of escalation which was included in a previous Update.

Hungarian minister shared details about Orbán's Kyiv visit - Peace in Ukraine would save lives, that is why the Hungarian government urges a ceasefire and immediate peace talks, the minister of foreign affairs and trade told Croatian news channel N1 on Sunday. Concerning Hungary's position, different from the rest of the European Union,

Péter Szijjártó referred to Ukraine's ethnic Hungarian community, whose members were fighting in the Ukrainian military. "German or Danish soldiers do not die in this war but Hungarians do," he said.

The minister insisted that "war rhetoric is now much stronger on this hemisphere than that of peace," but said he hoped the European and transatlantic communities would also adopt the Hungarian position. Hungary is "not part of the conflict" therefore "it is not up to the Hungarian government to say what should happen after a ceasefire," Szijjártó said, but added that "geographical integrity and sovereignty must be observed." "It is also clear who attacked whom, and Hungary condemns Russia for the war," he said.

Ukraine's grain exports down as war continues - Ukraine's grain exports are down 26.6 percent at 32.9 million tonnes in the 2022/23 season, hit by a smaller harvest caused by Russia's invasion, agriculture ministry data showed.

The volume so far in the July to June season included about 11.4 million tonnes of wheat, 19.1 million tonnes of corn and about 2.1 million tonnes of barley.

Exports during the same time in the previous season were almost 44.8 million tonnes.

The ministry said grain exports so far in March had reached 641,000 tonnes as of March 6, down from 1.33 million tonnes in the same period last year.

As a significant global grain grower and exporter, Ukraine's output is likely to have dropped to about 54 million tonnes in clean weight in the 2022 calendar year, down from 86 million tonnes in 2021.

Comment – No doubt a part of the Russian disinformation campaign around the world and particularly in the Global South (see following article). Kremlin FM Lavrov is actively campaigning around 3rd World countries portraying Moscow as the aggrieved party, forced into a western war, and would export far more grain, if not for the West. The longer Moscow can contain Ukrainian grain exports the longer they can misinform the world about the cause of looming food shortages – all of which are shortly to hit tables around wheat importing countries.

To punish Putin, the West must talk to the Global South as partners - As Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar put it last year, Europe needs to grow out of the mindset that its problems are the world's problems, but the world's problems aren't Europe's problems.

Thus far, there's unfortunately little to indicate that Europe, the United States or Ukraine have managed to accomplish this — which also explains why Russia's having limited yet tangible success in the non-Western world, India included.

Russia has been weaponizing global problems worldwide for years now, and to Moscow's great joy, there's no shortage of them. From the continuing ramifications of Western colonialism to the overt exploitation of cheap labor by global enterprises, there's always an issue for Russia to amplify, to exploit and to spread its self-serving narratives and propaganda — such as the mantra that Ukraine and other former Soviet possessions are "Western puppets."

Now, add to that the growing frustration in the Global South that its voice and preoccupations are ignored by the West are all too often. So, why should these countries be preoccupied with Ukraine, which — in their eyes — hasn't put much diplomatic effort into enhancing bilateral ties with the world beyond the West?

There's no reason to expect this sentiment will change just because we think there's an urgent need for it to do so. After all, it even took a good decade for the West to realize that the policy of appeasing Putin wasn't wise.

However, this doesn't mean that Ukraine and the West are incapable of changing minds.

Many of these countries — like China, for example — are pragmatic. China, despite allegedly planning to send lethal weapons to Russia and refusing to denounce Moscow's aggression, still seems unwilling to fully support Putin either. Russia may deem itself a serious geopolitical player, but Beijing's key trade partners are still the EU and the U.S.

Russia, for its part, has already made a big play in Africa with a diplomatic and commercial offensive, and it hasn't stopped since it invaded Ukraine. The country's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov still frequently travels to African nations in order to secure their support.

Meanwhile, in Latin America, where Russian propaganda is rife — partly due to the popularity of the Spanish-language Actualidad RT television network — the situation is similar.

Thus, to counter all this, the West and Ukraine need to enhance dialogue with these countries and talk with them like partners — not just treat them as listeners.

Ukraine Foreign Minister Kuleba's first ever African tour in 2022 — interrupted by the first large-scale Russian missile attack on Kyiv in October — already showed that this approach can bear fruit: Some of the African countries he visited later supported the U.N. General Assembly's condemnation of Russia's annexation of Ukrainian territories.

Article (as abbreviated) in Politico yesterday.

'Russia, an aggressor in Europe, manages to present itself in Africa as a defender of the victims of imperialism' - We are not at the center of the world, one of the great reminders of the war in Ukraine. Seen from elsewhere, Russian aggression is not perceived in the same way because economic or diplomatic interests are not identical, geography or dependence on foreign countries dictates choices or because historical experience diverges.

When, a year ago at the United Nations, almost half of the African countries refused to vote for a resolution calling on Moscow to stop its invasion the West was taken aback as if it had difficulty accepting African nation-states' ability to formulate opinions independently.

How can countries that lived for so long under colonizers, some of whom paid for their emancipation with bloodshed, and which have established the principle of respecting borders inherited from colonial divisions, show the slightest indulgence towards power with a long imperialist history?

How can they have this attitude toward Russia, which, from the Tsars to the Soviet Union, to Putin, has constantly colonized and subjugated its neighbors from Central Asia to the Baltic States and from the Caucasus to the European "popular democracies?" At a time when the world is fragmenting and the global South is asserting itself, the answer to these questions determines not only the West's (and particularly France's) relations with Africa but also the type of arguments to be used against the Putin narrative.

Distrust of the West and the history of Soviet support for independence struggles has secured Putin the support of many African states, according to Philippe Bernard.

Numerous African tours

The receptiveness of certain African countries to Moscow's "anti-imperialist" rhetoric is fed first of all by resentment accumulated during the colonial era. This was then amplified, after African countries gained independence, by regimes beholden to the West, and by the catastrophic financial policies of 1980-1990. The fact that Africans do not consider the West to be paragons of virtue in the area of international law is not surprising, especially for those who, in the Sahel and in West Africa, are still living with the serious consequences of the 2011 intervention in Libya. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 also illustrates a certain hypocrisy in the discourse on the defense of state sovereignty.

Exiled Belarusian opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya sentenced in absentia to 15 years in prison - Tsikhanouskaya, Belarusian opposition leader and former presidential candidate, has been sentenced to 15 years behind bars in her home country, TASS reports.

The verdict concluded the opposition Coordination Council case. Another defendant, ex-diplomat Pavel Latushko, was slapped with 18 years in high-security prison. Both Tsikhanouskaya and Latushko were tried in absentia.

The state prosecution demanded 19 years of imprisonment for Tsikhanouskaya and Latushko.

The ex-presidential race candidate was charged with 10 articles of the Belarusian criminal code. She was found guilty of “conspiring to seize state power in an unconstitutional way” as well as “public calls to seize state power and commit other actions aimed at compromising the national security of Belarus.”

Latushko was indicted on seven counts.

“It’s an enormous act of self-sabotage; South Africa needs all the help it can get”—a diplomatic drift - A POLICY OF ambiguity is swiftly shifting; the country is falling into a Sino-Russian orbit at just the time it needs the most help from Western allies.

Putin & Russia

Wagner chief Prigozhin outlines why Russia refuses to end invasion - Ukraine will keep renewing efforts to retake the land it controlled prior to 2014 if Russia does not continue fighting, according to the chief of the Wagner group of mercenary fighters, Yevgeny Prigozhin.

"I am absolutely sure that Ukraine, with the help of NATO, will break these 'red lines' and return those territories that belonged to it until 2014," Prigozhin said in a statement posted to Telegram via his company's page on Saturday.

"There is no doubt about it," he added, saying war would then "start again." Such a conflict may "turn out to be even more tragic and bloody than the first. Therefore, we need to fight for Russia here and now," the oligarch known as "Putin's chef" said.

Russian State TV host sounds battle cry against US - Russia's "historic mission" is to defeat the US, Europe and other members of "the collective West," according to a Russian state TV host.

TV anchor and propagandist Vladimir Solovyov, appearing on the state-run Russia-1, said Russia was "facing off against NATO" in a "big, difficult war."

"The sooner we realize it, the better."

Comment – In Russia, this is all they hear so there is no balanced view being expressed.

Putin won't live to see Ukraine victory, Russia State TV fears - Putin and other leading Kremlin figures may not "live long enough to see any successes" for Moscow in Ukraine, according to a Russian state television commentator.

Despite Russia making some progress in its invasion effort, one state media pundit questioned the timeline of the war, which could last "for decades."

Any hopes for a quick victory in Ukraine were quickly dashed for Putin after Russian troops poured into Ukraine on February 24, 2022. The war has now been described as "attritional," and may end up as a protracted conflict, not unlike the ten-year-long Soviet war in Afghanistan during the 1980s.

Speaking on the Russia-1 state television channel, commentator Sergey Mikheyev—described as a political scientist—suggested the Ukraine war could outlast the lifespan of many, including the Kremlin's top figures.

"If we keep proceeding in this manner and at this speed, you and I won't live long enough to see any successes," he told guests, including anchor Vladimir Solovyov, in a clip translated and posted by journalist Julia Davis.

"Let's be honest with ourselves," Mikheyev added. "Our leadership won't live long enough for that either."

Kremlin refuses to disclose military data to OSCE members - Russia has rejected the annual military data exchange mandated by the 2011 Vienna Document covering 57 members of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, RBC reports, citing Konstantin Gavrilov, Russia's envoy to the Vienna talks on military security.

Earlier, the US Arms Control Association reported Moscow notified the Vienna Document signatories on 16 January.

This move, according to Gavrilov's letter, was linked to Prague's decision to "suspend the implementation of its commitments under [the Vienna Document] towards Russia and due to Ukraine's interpretative statement about its refusal to participate in the 2023 [annual information exchange], as well as to send certain routine notifications provided by the Vienna Document".

"We proceed from the assumption that if the Russian Federation exchanges its national [data] report, it will for sure end up in the hands of the above-mentioned participating states," he added.

Moscow accused other signatories of violating various provisions of the Document. In particular, it is unhappy with the decisions made by Bulgaria, Poland, and France to not invite Russian inspectors to their military bases.

The Vienna Document on Confidence and Security-Building Measures was adopted by the OSCE in 2011. It provides for the exchange of information on military forces, defence planning, and military budgets, as well as notification about certain military activities and inspections.

Russia could run out of 'military tools' by spring after wasting a 'huge amounts' of soldiers and weapons - A top Ukraine military leader anticipated that Russia could be out of "military tools" if the country "fails in its aims" by spring.

"Russia has wasted huge amounts of human resources, armaments, and materials. Its economy and production cannot cover these losses," Maj. Gen. Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine's military intelligence chief, told USA Today.

As Russia's invasion of Ukraine entered its second year, Budanov speculated on when it might end.

He said the two nations would fight "a decisive battle this spring, and this battle will be the final one before this war ends." But he did not provide any specific details about this prediction.