

Conflict Update # 22

April 4th, 2022

Conflict Assessment

US will reportedly help Ukraine by sending Soviet-made tanks – The U.S. government is reportedly set to transfer Soviet-made tanks to support Ukrainian defense efforts against continued Russian attacks in the country's east.

Ukrainian forces continue to capture - or at least stumble across, examples of some of Russia's most sophisticated ground combat hardware as the conflict in the country rages on. Pictures have emerged showing a Russian radar-equipped air defense command post vehicle, part of a larger system known as Barnaul-T, that Ukrainian troops found during a counteroffensive in the northeastern Kharkiv region. The fact that this vehicle is intended to serve as a sensor, command and control, and communications node all rolled into one could make it a particularly invaluable source of intelligence for Ukrainian and foreign governments, as well as be a significant operational loss for Russian forces.



A Ukrainian unit reportedly found this vehicle relatively intact, also known as 9S932-1 and the acronym MRU-B, among other Russian vehicles and artillery pieces, in the town of Husarivka. The 9S932-1 is most readily identifiable by its 1L122 surveillance and target acquisition radar, which is mounted on the top rear portion of the hull and is folded down during transit. There was also a TZM-T dedicated reloading vehicle for the TOS-1A thermobaric artillery rocket launch system, another uncommon find.

Russian device reportedly captured in Ukraine – We reported on this capture last week. On the northern edge of the town of Makariv, roughly 30 miles from the center of Kyiv, Ukrainian forces in March reportedly captured a Krasukha-4 electronic warfare system brought by the invading Russian army. While it looks like a shipping container with irregular panels, it is actually a sophisticated signal jammer, designed to incapacitate the early warning sensors on airplanes. Photos of the captured system date to mid-March, though they appear to have not circulated online until March 22. The [London] Telegraph reported on March 23 that “the equipment will likely be transported by road to the US Air Force base in Ramstein, Germany, before it is flown to the U.S. for closer examination.”

Putin will never 'give up on Ukraine' - Even if Ukrainian and Russian negotiators are able to reach a deal that leads to a ceasefire in the Ukraine war, Russian President Vladimir Putin will not abandon his goal of dominating Kyiv, Angela Stent, a top Russia expert warns.

"This is something that's driven him for years, something he's obsessed with...He is determined to subordinate the Ukrainians," Stent, now a Georgetown professor and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, went on to say.

Damage to Russian armored equipment – When one sees the extreme damage inflicted upon Russian tanks and armored vehicles, it becomes increasingly obvious that tank warfare is rapidly becoming obsolete, except in certain tactical applications.

Hand-held anti-tank weaponry as is currently being deployed against Russian armor shows how effective it is. Projectiles are entering vehicles and detonating the shells and other armament inside the vehicle.

How else can one explain the utter destruction of 50-ton vehicles as we have been seeing? Turrets thrown wide of the vehicle body, bogies hundreds of feet away and canon barrels completely blown out of the turret, it all shows how modern warfare is changing in front of our eyes.

The new Russian tank – T95 – is huge and can be identified by its 7 bogies versus previous models with 6. It remains to be seen whether this is a viable mechanical option. This tank has yet to be deployed, still on the assembly line.

We should start seeing increased development of drones, unmanned attack platforms, long-range firing capabilities and AI-connected targeting mechanisms.

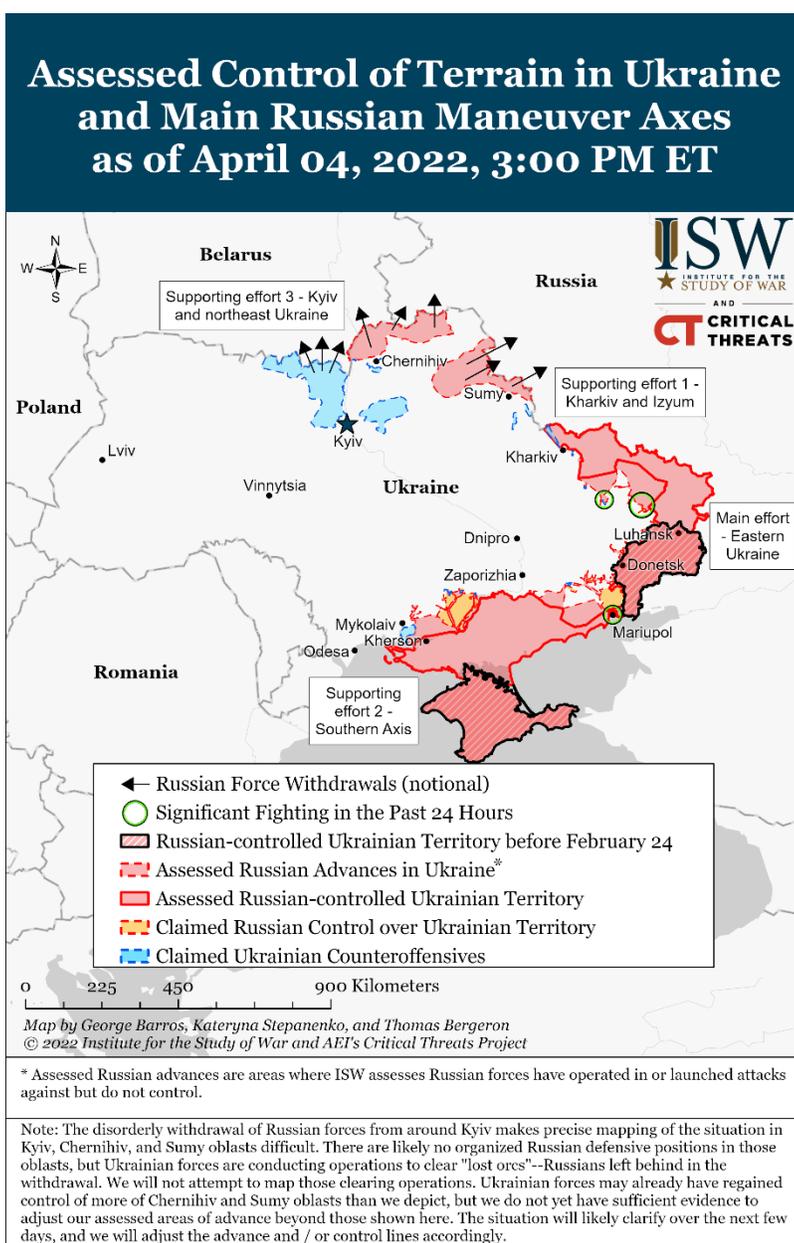
Russian forces continue to make little to no progress in frontal assaults to capture Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts, their current main effort of the war. Units in Donbas face growing morale and supply issues. Additionally, Ukrainian defenders of Mariupol have outperformed previous estimates and continue to hold the city. Russian efforts to generate replacements from reservists and feed damaged units from northeastern Ukraine into frontal assaults in eastern Ukraine are unlikely to increase their chances of success

Degraded Russian forces in northeastern Ukraine - continued to withdraw to Russia and are unlikely to be effective elsewhere, despite ongoing Russian efforts to redeploy them to eastern Ukraine.

Russian forces already deployed - to the Kremlin's main effort in eastern Ukraine are highly demoralized and do not have a cohesive command structure.

Russian efforts to generate reserves - and replace officer casualties continue to face serious challenges. The Ukrainian General Staff stated that the Russian military is deploying students and educators at higher military educational institutions directly to Ukraine to replace mounting officer casualties.

'General uprising' against Putin? – “I do believe that there is a growing instability within the Russian Federation itself because of very effective Ukrainian information operations. And I will assure you when the mothers [who] have all those young conscript soldiers [who] have been killed or taken captive by the Ukrainians begin to find out the reality of



what this man has done to their sons and in a few cases, their daughters - there will be a general uprising against Mr. Putin, but he'll push back" – Lt. Col. Maginnis (Ret).

Financial

Ruble's artificial recovery masks Russian economic devastation - Russia's economy is getting devastated by Western sanctions and the ruble's swift recovery has only been made possible by Moscow's efforts to prop the currency up, a senior Treasury official said.

Russia's war is pushing investors into private markets - as they look to boost returns and limit risks. Mohamed El-Erian believes geopolitical uncertainty arising from Russia's invasion of Ukraine is accelerating an investor shift from public markets into private markets.

Before the crisis, the Fed's massive injections of liquidity were coming to an end, the prospect of stagflation loomed large and US-China tensions continued to threaten globalization, El-Erian noted. At the same time, companies were being pushed to meet social and environmental responsibilities, he added.

The risks arising from the Ukraine war adds to the range of outcomes depending on the path taken, the Allianz advisor said.

This all points to a simple conclusion for the investment-management industry — a switch from public markets to areas like private equity, venture capital, and real assets, he wrote, noting that stocks still remain the asset of choice, despite the worsening outlook for the economy and corporates. But he said the essence of "risk-free" assets, like US Treasury bonds, has crumbled.

China Outlines Plan to Stabilize Economy in Crucial Year for Xi - China has called for heavy government spending and lending, as its leaders seek to project confidence in the face of global uncertainty over the pandemic and the war in Ukraine.

The implicit message appears to be that China could weather the turbulence in Europe and focus on trying to keep the Chinese population at home contented and employed before the all-important Communist Party meeting in the fall, when Mr. Xi is increasingly certain to extend his time in power.

By announcing a target for China's economy to expand "around 5.5 percent" this year, Mr. Li reinforced the government's emphasis on shoring up growth in the face of global uncertainty from the coronavirus pandemic and the war in Ukraine. That goal is slower than the 8.1 percent rebound in the economy that China reported last year, but higher than many economists believe the country can achieve without big government spending programs.

Still, leaders in Beijing also signaled — in numbers, rather than words — that they were preparing for an increasingly dangerous world. China's military budget will grow by 7.1 percent this year to about \$229 billion, according to the government's budget report, also released Saturday. Mr. Li indicated that there would be no slowing in China's efforts to modernize and overhaul its military, which includes expanding the navy and developing an array of advanced missiles.

Widening of Conflict

Thick plumes of smoke over Odesa - as Russian sea and air missiles strike Ukraine's most important port city. The strategic Black Sea port city that is the main base for Ukraine's navy is a key objective for Russian forces as, if captured, they could cut off Ukraine's access to the sea.

Airlines Report Russian GPS Jamming In Four Regions - According to a new report citing a French aviation official, Russia's military is jamming airline satellite navigation near the Black Sea, eastern Finland and Kaliningrad.

The satellite navigation disruption is being caused by Russian trucks with jamming equipment meant to defend Russian troops from GPS-guided munitions, Benoit Roturier, satellite navigation head of France's civil aviation authority DGAC, told Bloomberg.

Anonymous' next cyber target - The "hactivist" collective known as Anonymous said it has a new target in its "cyber war" against Russia — Western businesses that are still doing business there.

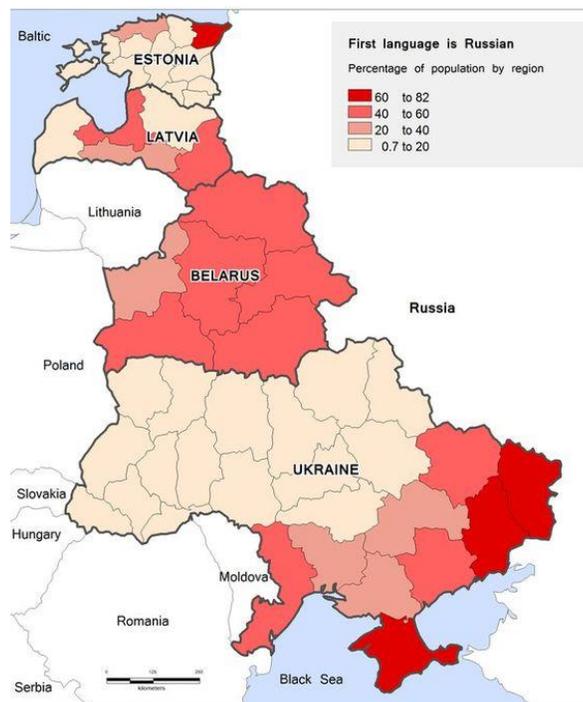
First language is Russian – As can be seen from the map to the right, Russian, as a first language.

Following Putin's rhetoric, which increasingly mirrors Adolf Hitler, these territories are ripe for advancement of a wider pre-1990 "Russia." He has continuously repeated his desire to see the old Soviet Union reincarnated. Russian-speaking areas in the amp alongside give notice of where his longer-term aspirations may lie.

Why NATO Should Worry About the Balkans - Moscow is creating a pretext for further meddling in Bosnia.

Across the Balkans, including in NATO and EU states such as Bulgaria and Hungary, Moscow has been buying up or winning control of strategic assets in key sectors such as media, security, communications and finance.

"They have this infamous doctrine of reflexive control for commanding the enemy's decision-making processes and we can expect Russia to trigger one thing in Ukraine, but it can explode somewhere else," said Ivana Stradner of the American Enterprise Institute, a think tank in Washington.



Russia views the Balkans as an important region with strong long-standing cultural and historical links. It has repeatedly accused the west of destabilizing and interfering in its politics, starting with Germany's quick recognition of Croatia's independence from Yugoslavia, which triggered the eventual dissolution of the nation.

Moscow has also been accused of inflaming ethnic tensions via inflammatory coverage in state-backed media and planting distorted news in affiliated outlets.

Moscow and Belgrade recently signed a pact to counter what they described as "colour revolutions" – popular uprisings against authoritarian rule that are regarded as western schemes by Russia and Serbia (see previous Conflict Updates). Sputnik, Russia's ubiquitous propaganda outlet, maintains a hub in Belgrade.

Bosnia-Herzegovina, potentially the most precarious hotspot in southeast Europe, has been a major focus of Russian interest and its local ally Serbia, the Kremlin's main proxy in the Balkans.

Russia has blocked United Nations resolutions seen as unfavorable to Bosnian Serbs and, along with China, opposed a key appointment to a body overseeing implementation of the Dayton accords, which ended Bosnia's 1990s civil war.

In **Kosovo**, Serbia has threatened war against the breakaway former Yugoslav republic, which declared independence over the objections of Belgrade and Moscow 15 years ago. At a meeting in Sochi last year, Putin assured Serbian

Premier Vucic of the Kremlin's support, with Russian media continuing to describe Kosovo as an "autonomous province" of Serbia.

In **North Macedonia**, NATO's newest member, Russia is said to continue to influence domestic politics and has threatened the country as a "legitimate target" in case of tensions between Moscow and the West.

Nervousness in South Caucasus as Russia Distracted in Ukraine - The war in Ukraine has shaken Russia's hold over the South Caucasus, a strategically important post-Soviet region where Moscow has traditionally played a key role, experts told The Moscow Times.

None of the region's three post-Soviet republics — Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia — backed Russia in a series of United Nations General Assembly votes to condemn the war. "Invading Ukraine is a very alarming precedent to set for all three countries."

Recent rumors that Russia was withdrawing at least part of its contingent for service in Ukraine contributed to an escalation of hostilities in Nagorno-Karabakh, where ceasefire violations are a common occurrence.

Azerbaijani troops occupied the village of Farrukh in Nagorno-Karabakh at the weekend amid an upsurge in fighting and accusations from either side. (See previous Conflict Updates).

Containment

Amid sea dispute with China - retired Philippines Supreme Court Senior Associate Justice Antonio Carpio sees a need to preposition US weapons to repulse 'invasion.' "If you don't prepare for an invasion then you will be invaded."

So Carpio said as he pointed out the need to preposition American weapons and military equipment in the country for defensive purposes amid Manila's continuing sea dispute with Beijing.

"That is a message to China that we are ready, if you invade the Philippines or any of the maritime zones of the Philippines, we are ready. That is a message. That is deterrence, what you need really is deterrence. If you don't have deterrence, then the other side will encroach on your territory," Carpio said in an ANC interview.

He cited the Philippines' **Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement** (EDCA) with the United States in 2014 which authorizes Washington to store defense equipment, supplies and prepositioned materiel at agreed locations, but no nuclear weapons.

"The war in Ukraine is an example. Ukraine is being attacked by Russia but Ukraine, there is no country that has put their defensive weapons to help Ukraine, so Ukraine has to ask now, to beg for arms. The EDCA...the purpose of that is to preposition U.S. weapons in our bases so that if there is an attack, the weapons are there already," Carpio said.

"You don't have to wait for the weapons to be shipped because in this kind of war, the war could be lost or won in just a few days after the outbreak of war, so you don't have time to send weapons from another country, from the U.S. mainland or from Guam or from Hawaii," he added.

Carpio's statement comes following a reported "close distance maneuvering" by a China Coast Guard vessel towards a Philippine Coast Guard ship patrolling off Scarborough Shoal in the West Philippines Sea early March.

China has claimed the shoal as its "inherent territory" and cautioned the Philippines against "interfering" with its patrols in the area and frequently enters Philippines territory to not only test their naval reaction timing and process, but also to reinforce its claims, all of which have been rejected by international law mandates.

Sanctions

Rebuilding Ukraine Will Be Costly. Here's How to Make Putin Pay - There is a plausible path to make Putin pay. Following its illegal invasion of Ukraine, the United States has worked with foreign partners to freeze sovereign assets of the Russian government, as well as the personal offshore wealth of Putin and his aides and oligarch enablers. This hoard of riches now includes Russian central bank reserves, private bank accounts, real estate and mega-yachts scattered around the world. Collectively, these frozen assets are valued at hundreds of billions of dollars — a substantial sum that could be used to assist Ukraine.

Impacts

How Ukraine can inform military modernization efforts - The numerous videos of Stinger missiles and man-portable air defense systems annihilating Russian helicopters — just as the Afghans did to the Russians in the 1980s — or the rows of destroyed tanks — just as the U.S. destroyed Iraqi tanks in the 1990s — should inform military modernization efforts.

The fact that more than 17,000 anti-tank weapons have been sent to Ukraine to counter tanks, begs the question of why Poland is set to spend \$6 billion for 250 tanks, or why any nation would bring tanks to the modern battlefield.

The math here is simple, straightforward and blindingly obvious:

- A \$10 million tank is defeated by a \$175,000 Javelin, a \$6,000 Carl Gustav rocket or a \$100 improvised explosive device.
- An \$18 million Russian Mi-28 attack helicopter is defeated by a \$120,000 Stinger missile. When you add in pilot training and proficiency costs (likely \$5 million to \$10 million each), almost \$30 million was destroyed by a cheaper, more mobile weapon system.

Anti-armor weapons, anti-tank weapons, and armed drones have simply made the tank and armor mostly obsolete.

The Achilles' heel of a \$35 million Apache helicopter is a \$120,000 MANPADS. And that will hold true for all future attack helicopter systems, so military planners need to find a way to accomplish missions with less expensive assets.

Europe could usher in natural gas opportunities for Africa - With the U.S., EU and U.K. looking to phase out Russian gas imports, Western leaders could look to liquified natural gas projects in sub-Saharan Africa to soften the landing.

Analysts Alexandre Raymakers, Maja Bovcon and Eric Humphery-Smith highlighted that Senegal, Mauritania, Nigeria and Angola are best placed to increase production, though the bulk of new supply will not arrive until the second half of the decade. Mozambique is also host to colossal offshore natural gas reserves, with several European energy giants establishing facilities in the country, but it is beset by a violent Islamist insurgency that has forced shutdowns at some of these facilities in recent years.

The Ukraine crisis will likely increase the attractiveness of the long-planned Nigeria LNG Train 7 that is expected to come online in 2026 and will provide an additional 1,200mmcf of gas supply from Nigerian gas projects.

Taiwan studying Ukraine war tactics, discussing with US - Taiwan's defense ministry has set up a working group to study the tactics of the war in Ukraine, including how the country has been able to hold out against Russia, and has been discussing this with the United States. Any invasion of Taiwan will require a massive water-borne assault, making it different from what has been learnt in Ukraine, but basic (learning) principles remain sound.

European countries take steps towards rationing - As a result of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the prices of everything from wheat to oil have soared, leading to multi-decade high inflation rates in places like Germany and Spain. The supply crunch in Europe is now so bad it's causing governments to begin laying the groundwork for rationing, with some stores already limiting supplies.

Nord Stream 2 cost \$11 billion to build - now, the Russia-Europe gas pipeline is unused and abandoned.

Ukraine's Black Sea gas reserves – Ukraine has proven gas reserves in the Black Sea between Odessa and Crimea.

It also has potential deep sea gas reserves further out to sea, south of Crimea, extending into the Sea of Azov.

Food for thought as to Russia's invasion and long-term energy pursuit as its primary revenue generator.

Future Geopolitical Alignment

'Tectonic shifts': How Putin's war will change the world

– Russia has now revealed itself as a terrorist state and Putin as a war criminal. One year from now, these facts will stick, assuming that Putin is still in the Kremlin.

Putin's underlings seem not to realize, or care, that they will never again be treated as legitimate by the international community. It is also likely that one year from now, when Ukraine is to be rebuilt, the logical way to finance reconstruction will involve Russian hard currency reserves. These are now out of his reach, for the most part, due to sanctions. There will be no reason for the rest of the world to pay for what Putin has broken, when we have effective control of his checkbook.

No available exit ramps look promising; about the only face-saver will be some weak deal that Putin and his propaganda machine can redefine as "mission accomplished."

If he gets bogged down in an insurgency while Russia continues to suffer from unprecedented sanctions and isolation, powerful forces in Russia — the military and the security services, coupled with anguished mothers of soldiers — will begin to question the wisdom of continued support for him. Public antipathy will only exacerbate things.

The consequences of the war are also potentially game-changing for the U.S. and its allies in Europe. In some ways, the game has already changed. One year from now, Europe's twin pillars of alliance — NATO and the European Union — will be institutions altered by Putin's war. They will have changed in precisely the ways Putin desperately sought to avoid.

Europe's renewed understanding of its vulnerability will change profoundly the priority its members give to defense. It is also highly likely that at least Finland and Sweden will favor a more overt relationship with NATO.

Arms control measures are badly in need of revision to take into account not just the implications of Putin's war, but also new technologies such as hypersonic weapons and the growing arsenal in China (which so far shows no interest in negotiating).

Putin's recklessness will have lasting effect on how China deals with the world. It has spent the early part of the war helping Russia magnify its propaganda and lies and, to some extent, it is still doing so. Chinese President Xi Jinping,



however, was probably as surprised as Putin by Russia's inability to score a quick win, its creation of a humanitarian disaster and Ukraine's effective counterattacks.

This probably explains Beijing's more recent efforts to find a middle ground — reaching out diplomatically to Europe, promising humanitarian aid to Ukraine and seemingly abiding by sanctions — while avoiding criticism of Russia, abstaining when it comes to U.N. condemnations and placing blame on NATO.

Allowing for all the uncertainties, it seems fair to say the coming year will be one in which power alignments shift dramatically — tectonically, one might say. Russia will have forfeited its opportunities to integrate productively into the world; the U.S., whatever stresses it experiences, will have gained access to new opportunities to lead and exert influence; NATO will be a revitalized alliance. And for China, it will be a year of decisions — not about the fundamentals of its system — but about how it wants to represent those fundamentals to the world, in its ongoing competition with the United States for global preeminence.

As a revisionist state, Russia is engaged in a dangerous gamble to rewrite the architecture of European security. A decisive Russian triumph could very well represent a catalyst that could hasten Russian regional hegemony in the post-Soviet space, favor its reassertion as a force to be reckoned with and give birth to a more multipolar world.

In turn, the West has joined forces in order to make sure that the combination of economic warfare and the exhaustion of Russian forces in Ukraine will diminish the strength of the Eurasian behemoth until it finally implodes as a great power, perhaps with the expectation that what is left can potentially be used as both a spearhead and cannon fodder against China.

Beijing is caught in a complicated position. It could take advantage of a weakened Russia as a junior partner under Chinese suzerainty or try to bolster Russia even if that entails the risk of challenging Washington and Brussels. After all, the Russian invasion of Ukraine deflects American attention away from the Indo-Pacific. China can also to play with ambiguity and try to buy more time in order to increase its overall national power and advance its ambitious projects designed to position itself as the axial cornerstone of a Eurasian geoeconomic and geopolitical corridor.

South China Sea - What remains a concern in the South China Sea for geopolitical and trade experts is that “a worst-case planning scenario entails all three straits (as well as other possible Southeast Asian SLOCs) being unavailable for commercial traffic, forcing vessels to sail around the southern coast of Australia.” This would result in weeks of delay in the global supply chain and through economic modeling, it was found that “Singapore's economy would fall by 22%, according to the baseline estimate. Hong Kong, Vietnam, the Philippines and Malaysia would suffer falls of between 10% and 15%...Australia a drop of between 1.9% and 3.1% and the economies of Japan and South Korea by between 2% and 3%.” In such a hypothetical scenario closure of maritime access due to longer port distances would result in changing global trade costs.

Realignments - Many American observers were surprised by the direct involvement of no fewer than four Middle Eastern countries in what appears to be African conflicts. In recent years, Turkey has established more than 40 consulates in Africa and a major military base in Somalia. Israel has announced a “return to Africa,” in part to find new alliances as it faces growing international pressure over its occupation of the West Bank.

Saudi Arabia has bought wide swaths of agricultural land in Ethiopia and Sudan in pursuit of food security, and the UAE has built naval bases across the Horn of Africa. Egypt has been embroiled in a conflict with Ethiopia over its plans for a dam at the head of the Nile River.

Nor are these entanglements limited to Africa. Oman has traditionally seen itself as an Indian Ocean nation and maintains strong economic ties with India, Iran, and Pakistan. Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries have long meddled deeply in the affairs of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Turkey has become increasingly involved in Central Asia, including

with a military intervention in Azerbaijan. Almost every Gulf state has recently upgraded its partnerships with China and other Asian countries.

Western diplomats court India over Ukraine but fail to find love - Delhi is a crowded place these days, but not from its crush of cars, auto-rickshaws and stray cows. Instead, India's capital is flooded with visiting diplomats and statesmen, all vying for India's love, or at least its attention. Recent top-level envoys have included, among others, the prime minister of Japan, the foreign ministers of China, Britain, Russia, Mexico, Greece, Oman and Austria, an American undersecretary of state and deputy national security adviser, and a senior adviser to the German chancellor.

Chinese/Russian/Pakistani Trio? Excerpts from an article by **Vir Sanghvi**, an Indian print and television journalist, author, columnist and talk show host. – He says, “There are three broad positions.”

“**First** is a response that is roughly similar to the West's attitudes: Vladimir Putin had no business invading Ukraine, that even if he did have a genuine grievance, disputes cannot be settled by force and that the citizens of Ukraine are brave to have (so far, at least) resisted the might of a nuclear power.”

“**Second** response - yes, all of the above may be true, but when India takes foreign policy stands, it must be guided by our own national interests and not only by some sense of right or wrong. (As Shekhar Gupta put it here so well, a few days ago, foreign policy is not about morality. It is about acting in the interests of the Indian people.)

And, when it comes to this conflict, our hands are tied. Russia is our major supplier of weapons. It isn't just the arms we have ordered from the Russians. It is also spares, ammunition, and maintenance for our existing equipment. To stand against Russia would be to debilitate our armed forces. We have no real choice but to avoid criticizing the Russians. There are subtle variations and nuances between these broad positions. As Shashi Tharoor has pointed out, we cannot define our national interests only in terms of arms shipments. If India fails to oppose the invasion of another country, then aren't we sacrificing our long term interests anyway? What happens if China invades Arunachal Pradesh and occupies it? Do we still have the right to expect the world to help us? Or have we now surrendered that right by refusing to criticize the invasion of Ukraine?”

“**Third** is the position that most clearly marks a break with the past and is loudly adopted by what might be broadly described as pro-BJP media. It is notable for its open anti-Americanism and its support for President Putin. It is not the official position of the government of India, but equally, it is hard to see how nearly all of the government's supporters in the media can take this stand without some official encouragement.”

“My sense is that India cannot afford an anti-American foreign policy. Just as it feels it cannot afford to alienate Russia as long as we need its arms, the Indian foreign ministry thinks it is best not to annoy Washington.”

“While we have been obsessed with headscarves and caste arithmetic, the world has rearranged itself. No matter what happens in Ukraine, Russia will come out of the war damaged. If it makes peace, then some of the sanctions imposed on it by the West may be moderated but it seems unlikely that Putin's Russia will become a full-fledged member of the global economy for a long time.”

“In that case, it (Russia) will have no choice but to move into the Chinese sphere of influence. One scenario sees Russia as a classic vassal state of the Chinese, supplying energy and raw materials to feed the Chinese military machine and its industrial complex. Pakistan and China are longstanding allies, so we will probably see the emergence of a Russia-China-Pakistan alliance.”

“India will then have two choices. Either we agree to accept China's suzerainty over the East. Or we look for other options.”

“Should we choose the second path (and I imagine we will have to), then there really is nowhere to go but the West. At present, the West understands how India is constrained by its dependence on Russian weaponry. But in the long run, it will expect a greater measure of alignment. Is that something we have considered? Or are we too blinded by the rhetoric about anti-Hindu America and hypocritical Washington?”

“Sooner, rather than later, we will have to rescue reality from the rhetoric.”

Note: India is beset with problems with Pakistan and China, never mind internal disputes with the Kashmir area and south-eastern flare-ups. It also is experiencing political differences with Sri Lanka to its south.

Its military supply line from Russia is thus vital to its sense and assurance of long-term stability.

Downing Street weighs up nationalization of Gazprom’s UK retail arm - The UK government is preparing to nationalize Gazprom’s British supply arm within days, amid a stand-off between the Kremlin-backed firm and a Wall Street banking giant.

Ministers are drawing up plans to place Gazprom Marketing & Trading Retail (GM&T) – the trading name of UK firm Gazprom Energy – in public hands if it fails to reassure financial counter-parties about an ownership change, according to Sky News.

The potential buyer remains undisclosed, with Gazprom announcing last week it had “ceased its participation” in its British division without providing details of any new owners.