

Conflict Update # 372

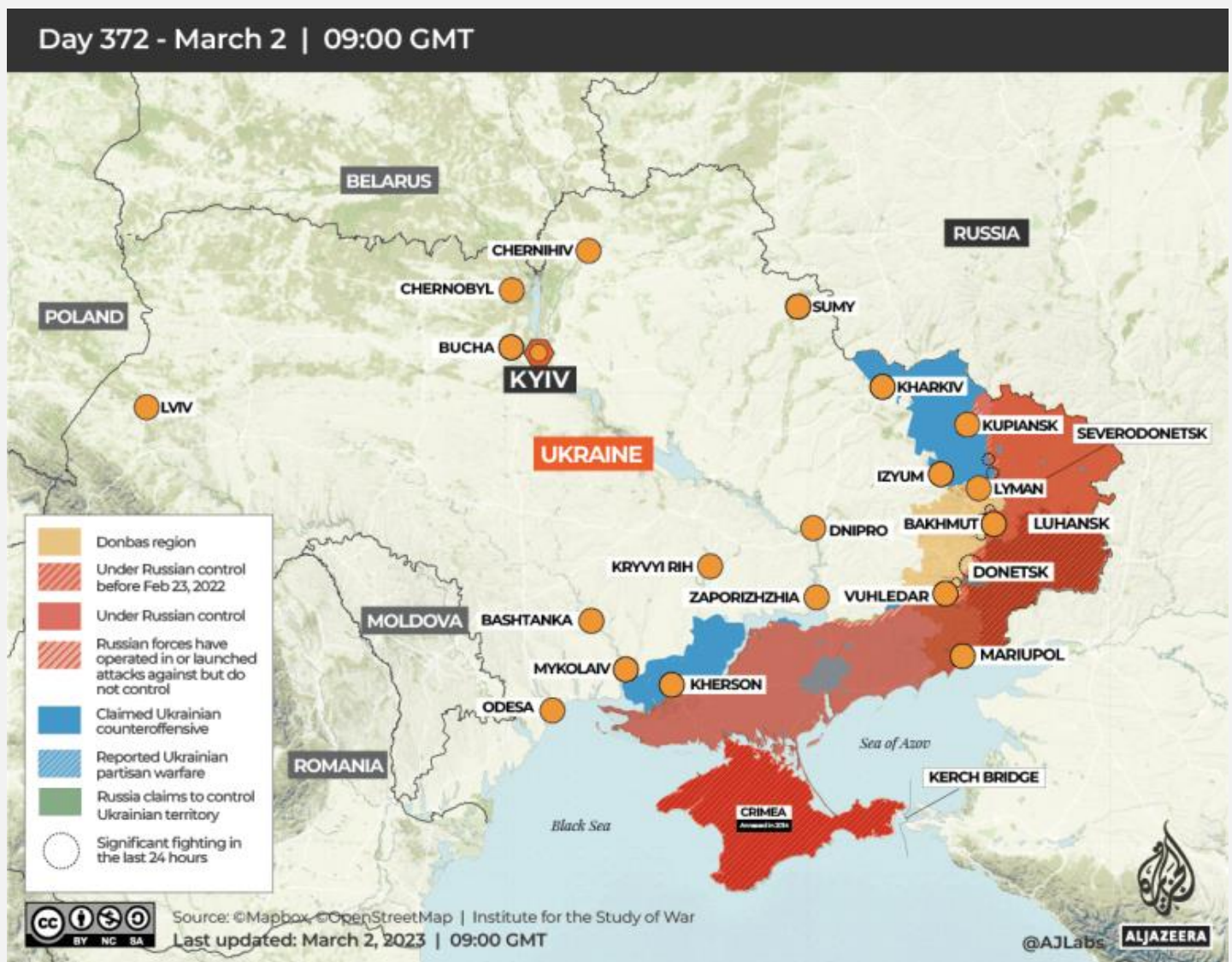
March 2nd, 2023

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 150,605 (715) soldiers killed, 3,397 (+2) enemy tanks, 6,658 (+20) armored combat vehicles, 2,398 (+5) artillery systems, 479 (+1) MLRS systems, 244 (+0) air defense systems, 300 (+0) warplanes, 288 (+0) helicopters, 2,058 (+3) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 873 (+0) cruise missiles, 18 (+0) warships/cutters, 5,264 (+7) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 239 fuel bowsers (+0) and 230 (+0) units of equipment.

Key Takeaways



Other developments? – It is being reported by the New York Times that Ukraine defeated a large Russian BTG in the Vuhledar region – again.

It is known that Moscow desperately wants to advance through the city as they believe it will provide them access to the interior of the oblast. Reports indicate a Kremlin loss of some 130 armored vehicles. This will continue to be monitored.

Heavy weapons – We Ukraine has deployed situations in order to positions and strongholds alongside is just such a field arrive on vehicles, are before being zeroed then stands back and weapon.

It is a very have on the walls down and certain whether explosive heads.



mentioned yesterday that 20mm heavy guns in battle literally obliterate enemy in urban settings. Pictured operation where these guns dismounted and assembled, in on to a target. The operator remotely fires the

destructive element to battlefield as it blows vehicles apart. It is not Ukraine is using

When encountering masses of troops, sometimes in the hundreds, there is hardly a better close-up weapon to deploy in your defense.

Ukraine clings on in Bakhmut despite relentless Russian attacks - Ukrainian forces were hanging onto their positions in the devastated eastern city of Bakhmut amid constant attacks as Russian troops pushed to claim their first significant victory for more than half a year.

Russia says seizing the salt-mining town of Bakhmut, now the site of the longest and bloodiest battle since Moscow invaded its neighbour just over a year ago, would put it on a path to securing full control of the rest of the strategic Donbas industrial region, one of its main objectives.

Ukraine says Bakhmut has limited strategic value but has nevertheless put up fierce resistance.

“Heavy battles are ongoing for our Bakhmut,” said Oleksiy Reva, the head of the city’s military administration.

Only 4,500 people remain in the city, which once had a population of about 70,000.

“I believe that sooner or later, we will probably have to leave Bakhmut. There is no sense in holding it at any cost...” Ukrainian member of parliament Serhiy Rakhmanin said on Ukrainian NV radio on Wednesday night.

“But for the moment, Bakhmut will be defended with several aims: firstly, to inflict as many Russian losses as possible and make Russia use its ammunition and resources.”

Comment – In the overall context of the southeastern front line, Bakhmut is not a game changer. But it is now the wet season with mud everywhere and, despite Russia throwing thousands of troops at Ukrainian defenses, they have not been able to break through – after nearly seven months of trying.

The very fact they have been pinned down in this area for so long and lost so many soldiers, estimated at more than 30,000 to 35,000 and still not able to achieve a pre-winter and muddy season objective, reflects highly on Kievan forces.

Should they have succeeded in their objective, Putin’s forces more than likely would have been closer to re-capturing the oblast as he intended ahead of the one-year anniversary of his illegal invasion.

‘Winter is over’ - Ukrainians and Russians traditionally mark March 1 as the start of spring. Already, frozen ground has melted at the front, ushering in the season of the sucking black mud – “bezdorizhzhia” in Ukrainian, “rasputitsa” in Russian – that has been notorious in military history for destroying attacking armies.

Zelenskyy praised Ukrainians for surviving a winter marked by systematic Russian attacks on energy facilities, which plunged millions into darkness and cold.

Spring brings muddy terrain in Ukraine that favors defenders - UK intel - Rising temperatures in Ukraine are creating muddy terrain that will limit movement and favor defenders, the UK defense ministry said in a Thursday morning intelligence update.

The soil in contested areas such as Bakhmut is freezing at night and thawing during the day, leading to the conditions. The mud will be at its worst by late March, said the ministry.

"This will add further friction to ground operations and hamper the off-road movement of heavier armored vehicles, especially over churned-up ground in the Bakhmut sector," said the UK defense ministry.

Moscow unnerved by Ukrainian drone attacks –

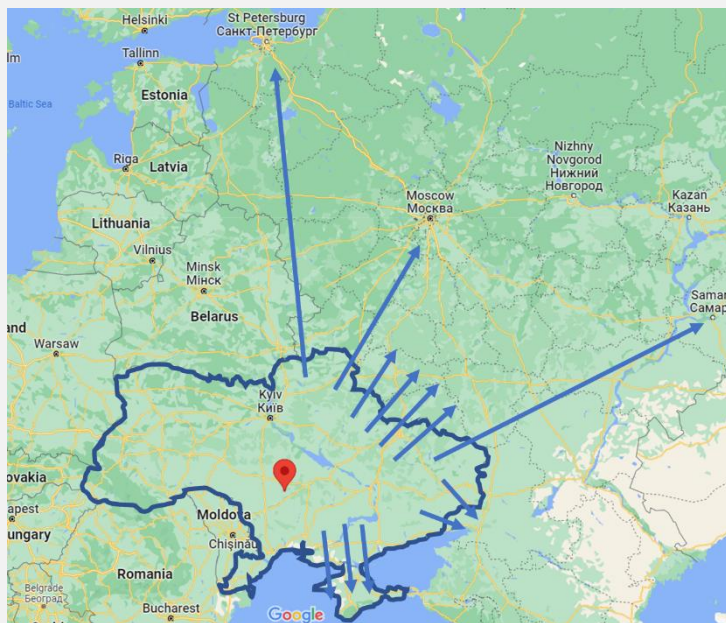
Moscow has grown increasingly unnerved by drone attacks within Russia it attributes to Ukraine.

Putin has waded in demanding that city defenses and border zones receive improved anti-drone weaponry.

There are numerous reports of drone attacks, fuel depots set ablaze, military airport runways damaged and overflights by drones being received in Moscow on an ongoing basis.

Kyiv last week stated they reserve the right to attack Russian war supply chains and fuel depots aimed at assisting invading military forces in the illegal invasion of its country.

As always though, Ukraine remains silent, at times denying responsibility for such incidents.



The map alongside reflects strikes over the past two days alone. It appears Ukraine is indeed ramping up strikes against strategic targets across western Russia. This leads one to surmise that they are taking out supply points and anything that can render assistance to Russian forces in Ukraine as well as that can provide resistance to Ukraine’s planned counter-offensive.

Russian soldiers can have as many guns as they want, but without bullets they are useless.

"Fear your partisans" - Ukrainian authorities responded to accusations of sending saboteurs to the Bryansk region of the Russian Federation. The region was struck multiple times earlier this morning seeing assaults against Russian military vehicles and posts.

Mikhail Podolyak , an adviser to the head of the Zelenskyy’s office, called reports of Ukrainian saboteurs in Russia a "deliberate provocation." "The Russian Federation wants to scare its own people in order to justify the attack on another country and the growing poverty after a year of war," he wrote on Twitter . Podolyak added that "the partisan movement in Russia is becoming stronger and more aggressive" and urged "to be afraid of your own partisans."

Commenting on the statements of Russian authorities and media, Andrei Yusov, Ukrainian MoD Intelligence representative, said there are now many "interethnic, interethnic, interreligious, socio-political and other conflicts" in Russia.

"Today there is a public statement from the RDK ["Russian Volunteer Corps"]. These are people who are fighting with weapons in their hands against the Putin regime and those who support it... Perhaps the Russians are starting to wake up, realize something and take some concrete measures," Yusov is quoted by Hromadske.

Putin calls incident in Bryansk a terrorist attack - TASS reported saboteurs who entered the Bryansk region had already left the territory of the Russian Federation. The "Russian Volunteer Corps" claimed responsibility for the attack in the Bryansk region, saying that the information about the taking of hostages (previously reported by the Russian media) is a lie, and all their actions were carried out in order to show compatriots that "there is hope that free Russian people with weapons in their hands can fight the regime."

The Important Stories channel published a comment by one of the fighters of the Russian Volunteer Corps, who, on condition of anonymity, told some details of what happened: "I've just come from there. There were 45 of us on this task. We went in, filmed, and ambushed two infantry fighting vehicles. I didn't see the children of the victims. But there was one injured border guard. No hostages were taken."

The Larks came early – In Ukrainian folklore the timing of the return of birds from the south is an indicator of the advent of Spring and its timbre.

"In the old days they said - if the lark returns to his homeland before his day, then spring will drag on, you will have to wait a long time for heat, more than one week. And if the lark arrives late, spring will come faster. In this case, spring will come suddenly and with noise. This year, they told me that they saw a lark before February 24 in several places at once," Ethnologist Libertas Klimka told LNK.

Behind the lines – Due to the sheer and vast numerical superiority of Russian equipment, although of lower quality and effectiveness than Ukrainian weapons, Kyiv nonetheless needs to protect its kit.

This they do by deploying American weaponry that allows them to launch missiles and rockets from afar – out of sight, mobile, and at times up to 190 kilometers away. They have HIMARS and other artillery and missile launchers where operators launch projectiles and then scoot away to safety before Russian counter fire traces them.

But they also have JDAM guided bombs where they approach Russian front lines, launch their bombs and then fly their fighter bombers straight up and away in the opposite direction, avoiding being tracked and retaliated against.

This is frustrating the Russians no end, with intercepted messages between their ground ops and HQ's speaking of utter exasperation at being struck and not knowing from whence the attacks originate, in order to retaliate.

Shadow boxing they call it.

Draftees from Russia's Irkutsk region, who previously complained about threats from 'DPR' commanders, sent to storm Avdiivka fortified district – Mobilised servicemen of the 1439 regiment from Russia's Irkutsk region, who had previously reported having been threatened by commanders of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk people's republic" ("DPR") several times, were sent to attack the Avdiivka fortified district on 1 March, media outlet Baikal People reports, citing the soldiers and their relatives.

"The first and second battalions have been deployed. We were waiting to be transferred [to the territorial defence], but we're not being transferred anywhere," they say.

On 26 February, the Irkutsk region governor Igor Kobzev promised that the soldiers would be “transferred to a new place of service” and made it known that he was monitoring the situation.

“There were no changes at all [in our situation], although we had high hopes,” Baikal People quotes the Irkutsk region draftees.

Mobilised servicemen from the Irkutsk region appealed to Putin thrice: they recorded two video messages asking for his help; the third time, wives filed an official inquiry with the online-reception of the Chief Military Prosecutor’s Office.

The men claimed that commanders from the “DPR” were using assault rifles against them for refusing to become an assault team. In the video, they say that the “DPR” evacuation groups only rescue their own soldiers and servicemen with light injuries from battlefields. According to the draftees, severely injured and killed Russian soldiers are not evacuated because the commanders are “scared of losing equipment.”

Russia’s Su-25 ‘flying tank’ destroyed in Ukraine - Cell phone footage emerged on social media this week, apparently showing the remains of a Russian Su-25 aircraft.

The video clip shows a Ukrainian soldier in full gear walking through a wooded area.

Large branches and trees are seen bent and snapped on the ground, indicating that the aircraft fell from the air.

Warped pieces of metal, including the wings of the plane, can also be seen scattered over the ground.

Also known as the “Frogfoot,” the Su-25 is a Soviet-era jet attack aircraft.

The Ukrainian military repelled over 170 Russian attacks in five areas over the past 24 hours in northeastern and eastern Ukraine, the General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces reported on March 2.

Russia has also launched 14 missile attacks targeting civilian infrastructure in Kharkiv, Poltava and Donetsk oblasts, 21 airstrikes and 58 attacks using multiple rocket launchers.

Over the same reporting period, Ukraine's Air Force launched 16 strikes on areas where Russian troops and equipment had been temporarily stationed. Ukraine's rocket and artillery forces hit two Russian ammunition depots and three other key sites.

‘My sister and I went through all the morgues’ - Thousands of Russian soldiers have been reported MIA in Ukraine. Russia’s Defence Ministry is not in a hurry to help relatives find the bodies.

Over the past year of war, thousands of Russian soldiers have gone missing in action. Most likely, they were killed on the frontline. But the loved ones of these soldiers still cannot bury them or receive compensation from the government. While the MoD stays quiet, relatives are searching for the soldiers on their own, calling up military units, hospitals, and morgues — taking months or even years.

Russian servicemen started going missing even before the invasion. Conscript Andrey Stepanov called his mother for the last time on 22 February 2022. He said that he was being sent to take part in military drills on the border, and then she lost contact with him. Contract soldier Konstantin Isaenko, from Horlivka, Donetsk region, went on leave on 16 February. On the same day, he called his wife for the last time.

On 24 February, at least ten more soldiers contacted their relatives for the last time.

In the last year, relatives of soldiers of the Russian army, as well as the armies of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk people’s republics (“DPR” and “LPR”, or “LDPR”), made at least 1,365 posts about missing soldiers on Russia’s

social network VK. While trying to locate them, their relatives have called the Defence Ministry, military units, hospitals, morgues; they have asked for help on social media after failing to receive any response from the state.

“My sister and I went through all the morgues and called all the hospitals. We sent inquiries anywhere we could. Everyone tells us, keep waiting, there is no information,” son of Vitaly Chekal, missing in action, writes. The last time he contacted his children was on 19 March, from Mariupol.

Last summer, 40 soldiers stopped contacting their relatives during the fighting for the cities of Popasna and Rubizhne, Luhansk region; contact was lost with another 20 during the offensive on the village of Pisky.

The biggest losses are suffered by the population of the occupied territories where mobilisation started even before the invasion. The relatives indicated what type of soldiers their loved ones were only in 350 cases; out of those, 90 soldiers turned out to be from the “LDPR”. This is the same number as that of Russian contract servicemen and military volunteers reported MIA — and twice as high as the number of Russian mobilised soldiers to have gone missing.

Comment – This last paragraph points to genocide as forcing captured people to fight is included in its definition.

Containment

Hundreds of US Stryker combat vehicles arrive in Ukraine – The first shipment of hundreds of US Stryker fighting vehicles arrived in Ukraine this week, as part of the \$2.85 billion military aid package announced earlier this year. More than 60 Bradleys left South Carolina last week en route to Poland – pictured to the right.



There are reports of multiple RoRo (Roll on – Roll off) vessels embarking for Poland and sea ports ferrying large quantities of

Ukraine-bound armored vehicles. This is in line with our earlier Update in this regard.

Farmyard mechanics – Captured and recovered Russian tanks and armored vehicles are also being sent to Ukrainian agricultural farm maintenance centers for repair, where farmyard mechanics work to repair manuals and bring the vehicles back to life – and then return them to the military as part of Ukraine’s army.

80 Fighting vehicles enter Ukraine – 80 New fighting vehicles from Germany and the US have entered Ukrainian territory over the past two days.

Comments, Updates, Developments and Reports

Hungarian PM's party backs ratification of Finland, Sweden NATO entry - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's Fidesz party will back the ratification of Finland and Sweden's bid to join NATO, the party's parliamentary group said on Wednesday, as lawmakers began the process after a months-long delay.

Comment – This is welcome news and sure to increase pressure on Erdogan of Turkey ahead of his looming election. Erdogan is now the sole holdup, but is seeking US fighter jets, so there may well be some form of compromise.

Blinken, Lavrov talk at G20 meeting as US-Russia tensions soar - Russia's foreign ministry confirmed they spoke 'on the move' at a G20 meeting in India but said they did not hold negotiations on Ukraine.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov have met briefly at a meeting of top diplomats from the Group of 20 nations in the first high-level meeting in months between the two countries.

US officials said Blinken and Lavrov chatted on Thursday for roughly 10 minutes on the sidelines of the G-20 conference in New Delhi. The short encounter comes as relations between Washington and Moscow have plummeted while tensions over Russia's war with Ukraine have soared.

A senior US official said Blinken used the discussion to make three points to Lavrov: that the United States would support Ukraine in the conflict for as long as it takes to bring the war to an end, that Russia should reverse its decision to suspend participation in the New START nuclear treaty and that Moscow should release detained American Paul Whelan.

The official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss the private conversation, said Blinken had "disabused" Lavrov of any idea they might have that US support for Ukraine is wavering.

The official declined to characterize Lavrov's response but said Blinken did not get the impression that there would be any change in Russia's behaviour in the near term.

Russia's foreign ministry confirmed that Lavrov and Blinken spoke as they were "on the move" at the G20 meeting but did not hold negotiations or a meeting, Russian news agencies reported.

Comment – All Russia has as a world "leader" is its nuclear arsenal. There is nothing much else there to offer.

Scholz Warns China Not to Supply Russia With Weapons - German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned China not to arm Russia in its war on Ukraine and expressed disappointment that the government in Beijing has dialed down its condemnation of the Kremlin's aggression.

In a speech to the lower house of parliament in Berlin on Thursday, Scholz said he's frustrated that at the recent Group of 20 meeting of finance ministers, China was no longer willing to join in "a clear condemnation of the Russian attack" agreed by the G-20 leaders in Bali last year.

"My message to Beijing is clear: Use your influence in Moscow to press for the withdrawal of Russian troops," Scholz said. "And" he added, "do not supply weapons to the aggressor Russia."

Why Beijing Needs Ukraine To Lose - Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has said he is ready to meet with Chinese President Xi Jinping in a bid to stop Beijing from supplying Moscow with weapons. But China has no interest in Ukraine winning the war. Why?

Xi is only thinking about the future world order being established on its terms, and the defeat of Ukraine and its allies, particularly the United States, would create an opportunity for Beijing to absorb Taiwan and increase its influence in the Pacific.

China is the main beneficiary of the full-scale war that Russia has unleashed against Ukraine, viewing the confrontation as a tool to weaken the West.

Like Putin, Chinese authorities were convinced that Russian troops could capture Kyiv in three days and take control of most of Ukraine within a month. This is probably what Putin and Xi agreed when they met during the Beijing Olympics in Feb. 2022: the Russian leader promised to destroy Ukraine, weakening Europe and eroding the trust other democratic states had in the US — and in exchange, the Chinese leader assured Putin that he would back Moscow.

Instead, what was hailed as "No. 2 army of the world" was forced to retreat. On Sept. 15, as Ukrainian forces were liberating the Kharkiv region, Putin met Xi in Uzbekistan, after which Putin announced a partial mobilization.

In Munich in February, Wang Yi, China's top diplomat, said China would propose a peace plan and asked Europe to distance itself from the US. At the same time, according to U.S. Secretary of State Blinken, China is considering supplying Russia with weapons.

Why is China doing this?

Because Putin's loss would mean defeat in Taiwan. If the war ends and the West wins, China's plans to occupy Taiwan will fail. This will mean that China will be unable to establish dominance in the South and East China Seas and control trade routes in the Pacific Ocean, which it hopes would weaken key competitors Japan and the U.S.

If Beijing fails to capture Taiwan, a center for the production of modern electronics, its dreams of global governance and the defeat of America remain dreams.

Chinese leadership is not satisfied with how Putin is waging war against Ukraine. Beijing believes he has made mistakes that allowed the West to unite and strengthen ties with important alliances of Asian states that oppose China. Over the past year, the U.S. has been able to weaken the Chinese economy, strike at China's communications and technology sector, strengthen Taiwan's military capabilities and weaken Beijing's position in Europe.

Putin's miscalculations regarding Ukraine has seen China — which planned to strengthen its military, including its nuclear capability, within the next few years — change its economic course and increase domestic production of high-tech products. It is now forced to alter its strategic plans and instead aim to resolve the so-called Taiwan issue much sooner than expected. China has no time. Moreover, Beijing now has to follow rules dictated by the U.S.

Comment – China is also beset with its demographic problem where none other than Peter Zeihan, renowned strategist, is predicting a manifest drop in the Chinese population count by 2050.

China is caught in a net: choose not to help Putin, and lose Taiwan. But choosing to provide weapons to Russia will result in Western sanctions that will slow the Chinese economy, weakening the country's global power. If China attacks Taiwan within the next year or two, it will not be able to militarily counteract the West, and will probably lose. (**Comment** – As mentioned in multiple previous Updates, China does not have the capability to invade Taiwan).

That's why Beijing is playing a trick — offering Ukraine a diplomatic framework, the so-called peace plan. It is essential to understand why Chinese authorities are offering this. First, China hopes to weaken the US and split the EU; second, to set a trap for Kyiv by achieving "peace" on Russia's terms. And third, China aims to become a mediator in the war, a part of the government's vision for a new international order according to its own rules. (**Comment** – Close to what we have previously commented on regarding the Chinese "peace plan.")

Behind China's words about ensuring security at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant, occupied by Russian forces since Feb. 2022, and the country's readiness to help rebuild Ukraine, lies a cunning goal: to lift sanctions against Russia and freeze the war. This would give Moscow a chance to prepare for a new stage of confrontation, and stop the supply of Western weapons to Ukraine. (**Comment** – Precisely – as per our earlier report).

If Ukraine buys into China's proposals, there is a high risk that the US and its allies will significantly reduce their support. The consequences of this are clear to everyone.

At the same time, it is essential to realize that the framework proposed by China will remain the same — Beijing will not become a guarantor of Ukraine's security. It certainly does not seek to thoughtfully contribute to implementing the Zelensky peace formula (as was evident in February when China abstained from a UN vote calling on Russia to leave Ukraine). According to Chinese authorities, China will not stop helping Russia.

China will do everything it can to escalate the war and significantly weaken Ukraine and, thus, the West.

Weapons for Russia

Will China provide weapons to Russia? Most likely, yes, but cautiously. Recently, Xi held closed-door talks with the Iranian president, during which the parties agreed to strengthen military cooperation. China decided to invest hundreds of billions of dollars to support the ayatollahs' regime, and Tehran agreed to supply missiles and drones to China.

The weapons will likely come to Russia with the help of Iran, and Belarus will also probably be involved in some way — Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko met Xi this week when he visited Beijing. Next, Putin and the Chinese leader will meet. All while Ukraine prepares for a spring counteroffensive.

We are now seeing Western, mainly European, leaders negotiating publicly and privately with China. All of this is reminiscent of how the U.S. and Russia negotiated before the full-scale invasion. Western leaders are now visiting or planning to visit China, and many capitals are discussing whether China will attack Taiwan. There is a sense of déjà vu as Washington tries to convince Beijing that it is unacceptable to help Russia and wage war against Taiwan.

China will do everything to weaken the U.S. position: it will provoke new military conflicts, particularly in the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The West's defeat, Ukraine's defeat — these would be crucial to China's goal of establishing a new world order, with Beijing as its center of gravity. China is the primary beneficiary of this global mess.

Comment – As we commented previously – China is jumping in because Russia is in danger of losing this war. Such a loss will severely hamper their mutual desire for a new bi-polar global world order – their 50-year plan and one which Beijing desperately wants in place by 2049 when it celebrates the 100th Anniversary of the Great March.

China and Russia both know this, Putin has surely advised him things are not going well. He is losing the war and sanctions are biting increasingly hard, particularly since further restrictions were introduced over the past two months.

China is stepping into the fray with the purpose of propping Russia up, albeit clandestinely via Iran and Belarus, and more than likely via other dodgy and under the radar screen movements. The Sino-Russo border is roughly 4,200 kilometers (2,600 miles) long and ideal for moving goods to and fro. However, that also presents a challenge in that it will take extensive time to successfully relocate from far eastern terrains to the Ukrainian front – time Putin just doesn't have.

A lightning quick “blitzkrieg” they assumed would catch the West asleep (it nearly did), allowing them time to settle issues and crack ahead with their global plan.

The signs are all there – Russia is teetering – especially since (i) it hasn't made any progress over the Ukrainian winter and (ii) ahead of the huge number of modern military equipment (already) arriving in Europe and destined for their front line. Moscow has its back to the wall.

All fall down?

It depends on how desperately Xi wants to achieve his 2049 plan of China the global leader.

They – Xi and Putin - hatched this overly-optimistic global strategy of quickly occupying Ukraine, stretching their mutual “strategic” border to the edge of the EU, absorbing its strategic food and raw minerals, China taking on Taiwan and gaining Pacific domination, bringing in the Middle East and South American countries and economies, introducing an alternative financial system and global currency.

And now, because of Putin's folly, in serious danger of setting Beijing back decades, all for nought?

No, he'll have to support Moscow, there is too much riding on it.

Sanctions

Russia's oil and gas revenue plunged 40% in January as western sanctions take a toll - Russia's oil and gas revenue plunged 40% in January, a sign that the nation's exports are feeling the squeeze of western sanctions, the International Energy Agency said.

According to IEA data, Russia's oil and gas exports pulled in \$18.5 billion in January – a 38% decline from January of last year, when the nation pulled in \$30 billion, Reuters reported.

It's a sign western sanctions are having their intended effect on Russia's economy, particularly the European Union ban and \$60 price cap on Russian crude that kicked in toward the end of 2022.

"Our expectation is that this oil and gas revenue decline will be steeper in the next months to come. And even more steep in the mid-term, as a result of the lack of access to technology and investment," IEA chief Fatih Birol told Reuters on Tuesday.

Swiss bankers face trial accused of helping Putin's friend transfer cash - Four bankers will stand trial in Zurich next week accused of helping a man known as "Vladimir Putin's wallet" deposit millions of Swiss francs in Switzerland. The four men, who worked at Gazprombank, will appear at Zurich District Court on March 8 accused of lacking diligence in financial transactions.

US Congress targets South Africa over deepening ties with Russia, China – One week ago, a new piece of legislation was introduced in the US Congress by Rep. John James, a Congressman from the state of Michigan, which, if passed, would make the US mandated to take a stand against South Africa.

The Bill – House Resolution 145 (referred to as HR145) — in the 118th Congress, denounces South Africa's naval Exercise Mosi II with China and Russia. The Bill is "Opposing the Republic of South Africa's hosting of military exercises with the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation and calling on the Biden administration to conduct a thorough review of the United States-South Africa relationship."

The progress this legislation has made, so far, in moving through the legislative process, is that it has been introduced and has now been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. It is sponsored by the Congressman, John James (R). It has five additional Republican lawmakers who are also backing the Bill; Representatives Christopher H Smith (NJ), Thomas H Kean (NJ), Cory Mills (FL), James R Baird (IN) and Young Kim (CA). No legislator from the Democratic Party has yet shown support for the Bill.

China, Russia, Ukraine, and the US all have a history with SA which dates back decades and have resulted in numerous land, sea and air exercises, but none has been as controversial as Mosi II, as it coincided with the first anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

That SA decided to go ahead with the exercise has caused a storm of controversy, especially as it has declined some US-led exercises. "Invitations to participate in exercises Obangame Express 23 and Cutlass Express 23 were extended to South Africa," Rear Admiral Chase Patrick, director of Maritime Headquarters at US Naval Forces Europe-Africa, at the US Sixth Fleet confirmed.

It is unlikely that Resolution HR145 will pass, especially being sponsored by junior representatives with little influence in the House. But, sources told Daily Maverick that the resolution shows the US believes South Africa is no longer non-aligned and has chosen Russia's side. A new bill is expected to come before Congress to designate Russia as a State Sponsor of Terrorism, which would have **profound implications** for Russia's partners like South Africa.

“The actions of the ANC are resulting in an increasingly tense relationship with the US. This is confirmed by the Resolution calling on the Biden Administration to ‘conduct a thorough review of the current and future status of the US-SA bilateral relationship’. The DA is concerned that this resolution may also place the benefits which SA receives from the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) at risk.

“AGOA provides duty and quota-free access to many products SA exports to the United States. In 2021, SA AGOA exports were valued at R2.7 billion. The agreement therefore serves as a significant boost to our local economy and a vital lifeline for many of our most vulnerable and developing industries. Worryingly, this resolution calls on the US Government to provide Congress with a detailed account of the economic benefits SA derives from its inclusion in AGOA. This suggests that the US Congress is considering the possible removal of the SA from the ambit of AGOA.”

Comment – South Africa’s export market has significant exposure in the EU, US and US-friendly countries, where some 47% of goods flowing out of SA are headed. In macroeconomic terms, SA’s total exported goods represent 14.4% of overall GDP for 2021, seeing the EU and US accounting for roughly 6.8% of South Africa’s GDP.

Putin & Russia

Russia may run out of money next year and needs foreign investors due to 'serious' pressure from sanctions, oligarch warns - Aluminum tycoon Oleg Deripaska warned today Russia may run out of money in 2024.

He told the Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum that funds were running low, Bloomberg reported.

Deripaska said Russia needs foreign investors due to "serious" pressure from western sanctions.

The aluminum oligarch told the Krasnoyarsk Economic Forum in Siberia that Russia "will need foreign investors" as its funds were running low and "there will be no money already next year," Bloomberg reported.

Deripaska, who founded Rusal, one of the world's biggest aluminum producers, said the gloomy economic outlook was due to "serious" pressure from western sanctions, per the report. The US has imposed more than 2,700 sanctions against Russia, more than any other country, according to the Atlantic Council's database.

Moscow mulls possible use of nuclear arms to fend off US attack - RIA - A Russian defence ministry journal says Moscow is developing a new type of military strategy using nuclear weapons to protect against possible U.S. aggression, RIA news agency reported on Thursday.

The article is the latest in a series of combative remarks by Russian politicians and commentators after the invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24 last year, suggesting Moscow would, if necessary, be prepared to deploy its vast nuclear arsenal.

RIA said the article, published in the Voennaya Mysl (Military Thought) magazine, concluded Washington was worried it might be losing dominance over the world and had therefore "apparently" prepared plans to strike Russia to neutralize it. In response, Russian specialists were "actively developing a promising form of the strategic use of the Russian armed forces - an operation of strategic deterrence forces", RIA said.

Putin has a problem: Russia can barely build any tanks to fight in Ukraine - Russian Tank Losses in Ukraine Exceed Production Capacity: In wartime, it is often impossible for any military to replenish its losses quickly enough.

Yet, during the Second World War, the Soviet Union was able to produce some 1,000 tanks monthly – with many rolling straight out of factories and into action.

In its war in Ukraine, Russia’s losses are outpacing production by a factor of 10. According to recent estimates from the Ukrainian MoD, Russia has already lost nearly 3,400 MBTs along with more than 6,600 armored combat vehicles.

A win against Russia – outside Ukraine - Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been clarifying for Europe about its values – democratic values that helped restrain the ethnic nationalism of its own past wars and now drives Moscow's aggression. The latest example is an agreement brokered by the European Union to normalize ties between Serbia and Kosovo, nearly a quarter century after a war between them left thousands killed.

The two states in the Balkans, both remnants of the former Yugoslavia, accepted an 11-point plan on Feb. 27 to improve ties, respect each other's borders, and deal with the ethnic Serb minority in Kosovo, a nation of mainly ethnic Albanians. If implemented, the plan would deal a blow to Russia's attempts to control states in Europe with Slavic or Orthodox Christian populations such as Serbia.

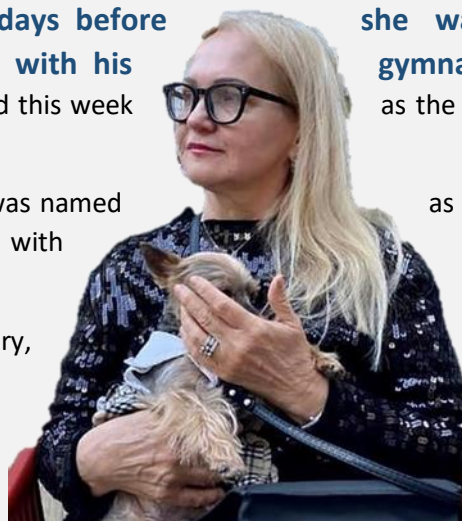
The invasion forced Serbia to take steps to partially distance itself from Moscow, such as seeking alternatives to Russian gas and oil. Serbia also voted for a United Nations resolution condemning the invasion and refusing to recognize Russia's annexations of eastern Ukraine.

Russian-born doctor 'died four days before delivered Putin's secret children with his children'.

Dr Natalia Kondratieva, 63, pictured, was named attended the birth of Putin's children with 39.

She died in Switzerland on 24 February, invasion of Ukraine.

The cause of death was not been in the care of cancer specialists. cremated the day after her death.



she was unveiled as the medic who gymnast lover' - A Russian-born Swiss doctor as the medic who helped deliver Putin's 'secret children'.

as the head of the medical team who reported 'gymnast lover' Alina Kabaeva,

the first anniversary of the Russian

announced but it is known she had A death notice indicated she was