

Conflict Update # 24

October 30th, 2022

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Conflict Assessment

Russian losses – 71,200 (950) soldiers killed, 2,672 (+13) enemy tanks, 5,453 (+52) armored combat vehicles, 1,724 (+16) artillery systems, 383 (+3) MLRS systems, 197 (+2) air defense systems, 274 (+1) warplanes, 252 (+0) helicopters, 1,412 (+6) UAVs of the operational-tactical level, 352 (+1) cruise missiles, 15 (+0) warships/cutters, 4,120 (+13) trucks and tankers, 4 Iskander Missile Launchers (+0), 76 fuel bowsers (+0) and 155 (+2) units of specialized equipment.

Key Takeaways

By the numbers – Russia suffered one of the highest tolls in soldiers lost in battle since the invasion commenced with 950 soldiers falling, primarily in the Donetsk and Lyman directions.



Russia loses 19 tanks, two SU-25 jets and a helicopter in a day - Ukrainian armed forces have destroyed 19 Russian tanks, two Su-25 attack jets and one Mi-8 helicopter over the last 24 hours, according to the latest updates from the country's military.

On Friday, Ukraine's air forces carried out 24 strikes on Russian targets where Moscow troops had gathered weapons and military equipment, including its air defense systems, the Ukrainian armed forces said.

"Over the past day, units of the Defense Forces repelled the attacks of the occupiers in the areas of Vodyane, Kamiianka and Nevelske settlements of the Donetsk oblast," it wrote on Facebook on Saturday, before adding that "our air defense units shot down two Su-25 attack aircraft and one Mi-8 helicopter."

Comment – These Russian losses are not included in the headline article numbers above.

Intel suggests Putin's mobilization may send 110,000 more troops to Ukraine - Putin's recent mobilization of troops may soon result in about 110,000 more Russian soldiers arriving for combat in Ukraine, finalizing his push for 150,000 new fighters.

Russian Defense Minister Shoigu said on Friday that the process of drafting 300,000 reservists had been completed.

Putin has stated that there will be an even split between combat roles and support roles for those drafted, meaning that a total of 150,000 new conscripts will likely be in combat by November, according to a new report from ISW.

Since more than 40,000 new troops have already arrived in Ukraine for combat and have been ineffective due to poor training, the arrival of the remaining soldiers is unlikely to significantly boost the Russian war effort, according to ISW.

"Russia's deployment of 41,000 poorly trained combat personnel to Ukraine may have temporarily stiffened Russian defensive lines, although these reservists have not yet faced the full weight of a major and prepared Ukrainian counteroffensive thrust," the ISW report states.

"The deployment has not significantly increased Russian combat power," it continues. "The deployment of an additional 110,000 or so mobilized men to combat units therefore remains unlikely to change the trajectory of the war."

How 'graveyard' of Russian tanks in Ukraine is upending armour doctrines worldwide & for India - Decimation of Russian tanks suggests heavy armour is no longer enough to dominate the battlefield. The 2nd of a 3-part series on lessons for India's military from the Ukraine war.

India is asking "What's the decimation of the feared Russian tanks in Ukraine telling us? Is the tank, along with other armored fighting vehicles as we've known them, headed the same way as the medieval war elephant?"

Investigation: Oct. 29 drone attack likely hit Russian frigate Admiral Makarov in Sevastopol - GeoConfirmed, a group of volunteers that maps Russia's war against Ukraine, published videos showing Unmanned Surface Vehicles (USVs), or ship drones, attacking ships of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol, a port city in Russian-occupied Crimea, on Oct. 29.

One of the published videos shows an attack on a Russian Admiral Grigorovich-class frigate, and "only the Admiral Makarov matches this class for the Black Sea Fleet," the investigation says. "The footage stops when the USV seems to impact on the vessel, it likely exploded," the investigation says.

Another video shows an attack on a Russian "Naty-class minesweeper." According to GeoConfirmed, 6-8 ship drones were used to attack the fleet.

Earlier on Oct. 29, Russia's Defense Ministry blamed Ukraine for sending nine drones to Sevastopol. The ministry claimed that its minesweeper and a dam suffered minor damages as a result of the strike and that its forces had downed all of the drones.

Ukraine's government hasn't commented on the alleged attack.

The strike comes two months after Russian naval headquarters in Sevastopol were targeted multiple times by drone attacks, which caused damage to the buildings on July 31 and Aug. 20.

Russia's defence ministry claimed it had recovered and analyzed the wreckage of drones used to attack ships from Russia's Black Sea fleet in Crimea on Saturday. It claims that the drones were equipped with Canadian-made navigation.

Russia's pro-war community 'fracturing' as Putin's invasion falters - Russia's pro-war community is "fracturing" as its military has faced losses amid the invasion of Ukraine, a Friday report from ISW has found.

The report from the U.S.-based think tank noted Russia's growing "siloviki faction," which it described as people with meaningful power bases within Putin's inner circle who are fielding combat forces in Ukraine. Notably, this group is "led" by Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian billionaire and the financier of the Wagner Group, an elite paramilitary force linked to Putin, and sent mercenaries to fight in Ukraine.

The report noted recent criticism leveled by Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov against Russian military commander Colonel General Alexander Lapin in a "likely" response to a Ukrainian "strike on Chechen units in northeastern Kherson Oblast." The Chechen leader said the strike killed 23 military members and wounded another 58.

Thousands of Russian Collaborators in Ukraine Have Made One Hell of a F--- -- - Russians fled quickly from Cherneshchyna, abandoning their positions in a panic and disappearing into the night to escape the Ukrainian advance. "On the morning of Oct. 2, they were just gone," says Oleksiy, a resident of this small village on the eastern edge of the Kharkiv region, where a sudden Ukrainian counter-offensive made Russian soldiers flee without a fight, leaving behind ammunition boxes, propaganda newspapers, and empty vodka bottles in their trenches and foxholes.

But in Cherneshchyna—as in many other towns and villages across the region—it wasn't just the Russians who fled as Ukrainian forces secured bridgeheads on the west bank of the Oskil river and liberated a string of settlements in a lightning-fast advance. Dozens of villagers—who had either sympathized or openly collaborated with the invaders—joined the flight too.

Three weeks on, the fighting is not yet over in the area. Artillery fire still booms out as Ukrainian troops push on into the neighboring Luhansk oblast. But whatever happens on the battlefield, life here, and in other liberated towns and villages in eastern and southern Ukraine, will never return to normal until there has been a reckoning—between those who collaborated with the Russians and those who resisted.

According to Oleksiy, a former mechanic who had fled the fighting in Izyum, as many as one-third of the 700 residents of Cherneshchyna were either collaborators or Russian sympathizers. The priest officiating at the local St. Nicholas Church—affiliated with the Moscow patriarchate—was reportedly among those who fled the advancing Ukrainian troops. "He scampered to Russia, and stole some of the icons from the church," laughs 35-year-old Olena, Oleksiy's wife.

Ukraine's military destroys Russian equipment on southern front line. Ukraine's Operational Command "South" reported its army killed 57 Russian soldiers on the southern front line and destroyed one anti-aircraft Tunguska system, one Pantsir missile system, Nona self-propelled mortar, a number of self-propelled howitzers, one tank and seven armored vehicles.

Russian troops blow up bridge over Krasna River in Luhansk Oblast. According to Luhansk Oblast Governor Serhii Haidai, the Russian forces are "afraid" that Ukrainian forces "are very close," as Ukraine's counteroffensive in the region continues.

Russian forces remove prisoners from Kherson city colony. The General Staff of Ukraine's Armed Forces reported on Oct. 30 that Russia forcibly relocated prisoners from Kherson prison and is using the institution to house its military personnel and equipment. The Ukrainian army also recorded that close to a hundred representatives of the Russian National Guard from the city of Grozny, the capital of Chechnya, have arrived in Kherson Oblast's Kalanchak.

Russia regularly hits Dnipropetrovsk Oblast from nuclear plant territory in Enerhodar. Russian forces have been regularly attacking Nikopol from the territory of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant in occupied Enerhodar, according to Mykola Lukashuk, head of the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast Council. "Russian soldiers are monsters. They know (Ukraine) won't strike back," Lukashuk said. "But I have no doubts that our army will liberate Enerhodar."

Russia plants more mines around Sievierodonetsk, brings mobilized troops. The number of Russian troops has increased in the strategic city of Sievierodonetsk in Luhansk Oblast, according to the head of this city's military administration, Oleksandr Striuk. He said Russians "mine everything around" and "build fortifications." Russian forces have also set up a training camp for some of the recently mobilized soldiers in Sievierodonetsk, Striuk said.

Russia to withdraw heavy artillery from Kherson. Russian forces plan to remove artillery from the Dnipro River's right bank in Kherson Oblast, which includes the city of Kherson, the General Staff reported earlier today. The units that were stationed there could be transferred to other front-line areas, it wrote.

M777: The big artillery gun some call a giant sniper rifle - The war in Ukraine has proven the worth of the M777. And in American hands, some have even called this artillery piece a giant sniper rifle.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February of 2022, the US has provided the embattled nation with 126 lightweight M777 Howitzers, along with more than 226,000 rounds of ammunition.

These weapon systems may look an awful lot like artillery found throughout history and all over the world, including the big guns leveraged by Russia's invading forces. The truth, however, is that the M777, or "Triple 7," has as much in common with technological marvels like the Mach 3+ SR-71 Blackbird as it does with 93,000-pound behemoths like Russia's 2S7 Pion self-propelled cannons.

Artillery warfare isn't just about putting rounds on target. To do it effectively, teams must be able to quickly reposition after firing to avoid being located and engaged by counter-artillery batteries. And as any warfighter will tell you, weight dictates a great deal of mobility.

And that's why the M777, which weighs in at a tenth of the weight of the 2S7 at just 9,300 pounds, may be the best pound-for-pound artillery system on the planet. To put this gun in 1990's movie terms, it's the Noisy Cricket from "Men in Black."

Ukraine's King of Battle

Throughout both World Wars, artillery proved so devastating to enemy troops that it earned the moniker, the "King of Battle," and the past seven months of fighting in Ukraine have proven the high-caliber monarch's reign is far from over. Russia, long aware that its military would struggle to gain or maintain air superiority against a NATO-level opponent, has built its warfighting doctrine around the concept of overwhelming fire from artillery and heavy armor. In fact, one could argue that Russia even sees its Air Force as little more than airborne artillery.

For its part, Ukraine has done an incredible job of not only staving off the Russian offensive in the face of overwhelming numbers, technology, and firepower, but early reports indicate its ongoing counter-offensive in the nation's south is making rapid progress. The heroism of Ukrainian troops, volunteers, and foreign fighters can't be discounted, but their ability to stand and swing with Russian forces has been significantly bolstered by large shipments of weapons and munitions from friendly nations like the US and its European allies.

Among the earliest and most effective weapons delivered to Ukraine by America's military were artillery systems like the 155mm M777 Howitzer. Almost immediately after their arrival in Ukraine in May, reports of M777 systems destroying Russian targets began emerging on social media.

As effective as the M198 was, however, Army and Marine Corps leadership were concerned about the battlefield mobility of the heavyweight cannon almost immediately. By the 1990s, the U.S. was once again shopping for a new artillery platform — one that could offer the heavy-hitting power of the M198 in a lighter, and more mobile, package.

The answer came in the form of an artillery system that had been in development in the UK since the 1980s, initially under the banner of Vickers Shipbuilding and Engineering (later purchased by BAE systems). At 35 feet long, with a 16.7-foot barrel, this new artillery platform was just slightly shorter than the M198 and fired the same 155mm rounds... But thanks to the widespread use of titanium and aluminum alloys in its construction, weighed 40% less than the M198, at just 9,300 pounds.

The new M777 was so light, in fact, that it could be slung beneath helicopters or delivered via all sorts of cargo aircraft. While it would take two C-130s to deliver an M198 artillery system to the battlefield, the entire M777 setup could arrive in just one.

The M777 packs a 16,000-pound gun into a 40 percent smaller package

In 1979, the M198 155mm medium-towed howitzer entered service for the US. At just over 36 feet long and weighing in at approximately 16,000 pounds, the M198 could rain high-explosive hell down on targets from 14 miles out, cycling and firing 95-pound M107 shells with a 9 or 10-person crew.

The M777 floats like a butterfly, but stings like 14 pounds of TNT

But the M777's lightweight construction isn't just valuable for air transport. In combat, where artillery crews regularly "shoot and scoot" (fire off a number of rounds and then relocate before you can be targeted), the M777's light weight makes it easier to quickly break down and move. In fact, well-trained crews can break the M777 down for transport in just about three minutes and set it back up again in about the same. While traveling, its light weight means M777s can be towed through muddy roads and across wet fields that would hinder the progress (or completely stop) heavier weapon systems.



The M777 also received improved high explosive shells — the 103-pound M795, which carries 24 pounds of TNT and offers a kill radius of a whopping 70 meters. Each M795 carries the destructive firepower of a Hellfire missile but delivered at just a fraction of the cost.

Crews can fire five of these massive rounds per minute, reaching targets 19 miles away. Newer (and more expensive) GPS-guided rounds with deployable stabilizing fins known as the M982 Excalibur can reach even further — as far as 25 miles out.

The M777 may have been made out of some of the same materials as the SR-71, but Uncle Sam continued to trick its new howitzer out even after it entered service in 2005. Throughout the 2010s, America's M777s all received full-bore chrome-plated barrel tubes said to extend their service lifespans by as much as 300%.

In 2017, the efficacy of this upgrade was proven in battle, when a single Marine M777 battery fired more than 35,000 rounds at ISIS targets in Syria over just five months. That's more than all of the 155mm artillery rounds fired by the entire U.S. military in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. But despite this incredible volume of fire, the Marines only burned through two of these new chrome-plated barrels in the process.

Other upgrades include the addition of precision-guided fuse kits in 2016 that reduced the margin for error in targeting high-explosive rounds by a whopping 85%, bringing accuracy from a 200-meter margin to under 30 meters. With a 70-meter blast radius, that jump in accuracy effectively ensures a direct hit when M777 crews have good targeting data.

In American hands, the M777 turns from a blunt instrument into a 155mm scalpel. America's M777 crews now use a digital fire-control system operated via a tablet computer that allows them to rapidly identify targets and engage them without having to do any of the math. This not only speeds up the firing process, but also eliminates user error caused by battlefield stress or exhaustion.

For situations that call for even greater accuracy, however, the M777 can rely on target data relayed to it by the Army's Joint Effects Targeting System, or JETS. These one-person-portable targeting systems are carried into the field by forward observers and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers who identify targets at ranges as far from the user as 2.5 kilometers. Using target data from the JETS system, the M777 becomes so accurate that Lt. Col. Michael Frank, product manager for Soldier Precision Targeting Devices, referred to it as a "giant sniper rifle."

Peace Talks

Russia says it's ready for negotiations with the West - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said earlier today that Russia is ready for negotiations if the West "fully takes into account the interests" of Russia and its security, as well as "offers some serious approaches that will contribute to defusing tensions," as reported by Russian state-controlled RIA Novosti.

Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov also said today that Putin and US President Biden could "discuss Russia's security guarantees," but such talks would require the U.S. willingness to return to "the state of December-January."

Peskov said that such negotiations would mean discussing the agreements that the Kremlin drafted in December and sent to NATO and the U.S. In the documents, Moscow demanded that NATO would not expand further, including to Ukraine and other countries, as well as abandon any military activity on the territory of Ukraine, other states of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Back then, NATO and the US rejected

The statements by Russian officials come ahead of the G-20 summit of the world's largest economies in November on the Indonesian island of Bali, which both Biden and Putin will attend.

Earlier yesterday, Politico reported, citing unnamed Biden administration officials, that the US officials were working to make sure that the two leaders do not cross paths.

Polish MFA: Russia has no intention of honoring international agreements. "Russia's decision to suspend its participation in the grain initiative is further evidence that Russia has no intention of honoring any international agreements," the Polish Foreign Ministry said. Poland is ready to continue working to help Ukraine and those in need to transport essential goods, the ministry added.

Comment – Russia has broken countless “agreements” with Ukraine since 1991, including nuclear usage when Ukraine surrendered its nuclear arsenal and in 2014 regarding security guarantees. Any agreement now with regard to Ukraine and peace negotiations will need to include western-backed security guarantees, including a potential membership of NATO.

Containment

Sunak appointed Britain’s Prime Minister, vows support for Ukraine will be ‘as strong as ever’ - Newly appointed British PM Rishi Sunak has vowed to support Ukraine to the “conclusion” of its battle to repel invading Russian troops as the Kremlin said it sees “no grounds” for a positive shift in relations with the United Kingdom.

Turkish drone company Baykar to develop air-to-air missiles to counter kamikaze drone attacks in Ukraine. The new munitions, based on the existing Sungur air defense missiles, will be deployed on Bayraktar combat drones, including the TB2, which is currently serving in Ukraine.

Italy sends over 20 self-propelled howitzers to Ukraine. According to the Italian newspaper, from 20 to 30 US-made M109 155 mm self-propelled howitzers are to be sent to Ukraine. These M109 howitzers are part of the latest military aid package agreed upon by now-former Prime Minister Mario Draghi, La Repubblica reported.

Inside a US military cyber team’s defence of Ukraine - Russia failed to take down Ukrainian computer systems with a massive cyber-attack when it invaded this year, despite many analysts' predictions. The work of a little-known arm of the US military which hunts for adversaries online may be one reason. The BBC was given exclusive access to the cyber-operators involved in these global missions.

In early December last year, a small US military team led by a young major arrived in Ukraine on a reconnaissance trip ahead of a larger deployment. But the major quickly reported that she needed to stay.

"Within a week we had the whole team there ready to go hunting," one of the team recalls. They had come to detect Russians online and their Ukrainian partners made it clear they needed to start work straight away.

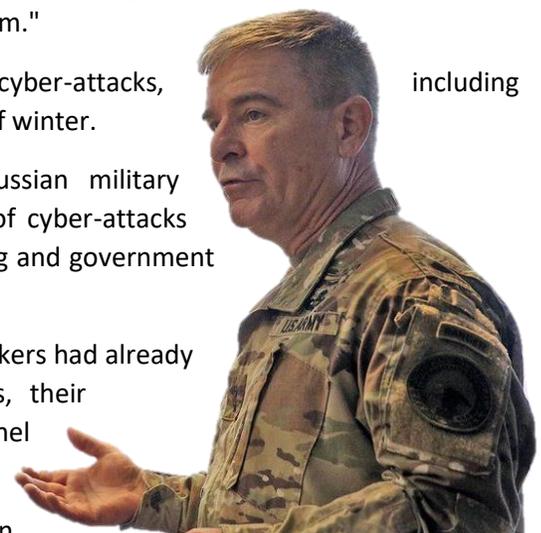
"She looked at the situation and told me the team wouldn't leave," Maj Gen William J Hartman, pictured below, who heads the US Cyber National Mission Force, told the BBC. "We almost immediately got the feedback that 'it's different in Ukraine right now'. We didn't redeploy the team, we reinforced the team."

Since 2014, Ukraine has witnessed some of the world's most significant cyber-attacks, including the first in which a power station was switched off remotely in the dead of winter.

By late last year, Western intelligence officials were watching Russian military preparations and growing increasingly concerned that a new blizzard of cyber-attacks would accompany an invasion, crippling communications, power, banking and government services, to pave the way for the seizure of power.

The US military Cyber Command wanted to discover whether Russian hackers had already infiltrated Ukrainian systems, hiding deep inside. Within two weeks, their mission became one of its largest deployments with around 40 personnel from across US armed services.

In January they had a front-row seat as Russia began paving the way in cyberspace for a coming invasion in which Ukraine's cyber-defences would be put to an unprecedented test.



The infiltration of computer networks had for many years been primarily about espionage - stealing secrets - but recently has been increasingly militarized and linked to more destructive activities like sabotage or preparation for war.

This means a new role for the US military, whose teams are engaged in "Hunt Forward" missions, scouring the computer networks of partner countries for signs of penetration.

"They are hunters, and they know the behaviour of their 'prey'," explains the operator who leads defensive work against Russia. The US military asked for some operators to remain anonymous and others to be identified only by their first names due to security concerns.

Since 2018, US military operators have been deployed to 20 countries, usually close allies, in Europe, the Middle East and the Indo-Pacific region. - although not countries like the UK, Germany or France, which have their own expertise and are less likely to need or want outside help.

Most of their work has been battling state-hackers from China and North Korea but Russia has been their most persistent adversary. Some countries have seen multiple deployments, including Ukraine, where for the first time cyber-attacks were combined with a full-scale war.

Inviting the US military into your country can be sensitive and even controversial domestically, so many partners ask that the US presence remains secret - the teams rarely wear uniform. But increasingly, governments are choosing to make missions public.

Russian Mobilization

Russia: Any new mobilization will be both more difficult and riskier than the first - Even as some in Moscow are pushing for new mobilizations and an expansion of the Russian army so as to overwhelm Ukraine, Abbas Gallyamov is outlining the reasons why each new mobilization and expansion in the size of the military will be more difficult to carry out and pose more threats to the Kremlin itself.

The Russian commentator who earlier worked as a Putin speechwriter says that "each new wave of mobilization will be a little more difficult than the previous one. The most uncomplaining have already been taken away. Now, the regime must take those who had the courage to evade mobilization before" and who believe they can do so again.

"The same logic applies to protests," Gallyamov says. Up to now, they haven't been that large, primarily because "those who went to the front were mainly those incapable of demonstrating their unhappiness with that prospect ... During future waves, when authorities come for less loyal and more independent-minded ones, chances of protest will grow."

And that in turn is likely because "by that time, everyone will know what is happening to those who were taken and are now serving at the front."

Of course, the authorities could learn from their mistakes and correct them so that the mobilization process will improve. But that prospect is almost certainly "hypothetical" given that the powers that be have shown no ability to learn from their mistakes and instead believe that they will succeed if they just continue doing what they have been.

Unfortunately for them, they face a problem: Those Russians most supportive of Putin's policies are the ones who are dying because they are the most willing to "believe in fairy tales about Ukrainian Nazis and didn't resist mobilization." But because that is so, "the regime is [unwittingly] destroying its own social base."

Gallyamov's observations come as others in Moscow are pressing for more mobilizations and the creation of a mass army on the Soviet model. Such a force, analysts like Aleksandr Khamchikhin say, would overwhelm Ukraine as most Russians want and intimidate the West whose leaders are committed to small professional forces.

If Russia mobilizes a mass army, it will only frighten the West still more, Khamchikhin argues; but if it tries to do so, Gallyamov suggests, it will lose more than it will gain and may even become its own gravedigger.

Wagner Group now prioritizes 'numbers over experience or quality' when recruiting troops. According to the U.K. Defense Ministry, the Wagner Group is recruiting Russian convicts suffering from severe diseases, including HIV and hepatitis.

A Moscow draft board chief is mobilizing marksmen under the accelerated programme — it takes him several minutes to turn a man into a marksman - Several men mobilised in Moscow have complained about unlawful actions taken by the chief of the Tsaritsyno district draft office, Viktor Kuznetsov. They reported that the military chief changed their military specialties, putting them on the marksmen list. Allegedly, that was done so the draftees could be accepted into the Strategic Rocket Forces military unit, which currently only lacks new marksmen. The chief's signature made people that have never held a weapon in their hands into marksmen.

Conscripts held in basements and a dilapidated jail after refusing to return to the front - Publication Astra reported on October 22 that around 20 mobilized Russians were imprisoned in the annexed Luhansk region for refusing to return to the front lines. Astra cites close contacts of several of the conscripts.

According to the publication, the group includes residents of Bryansk and other regions of Russia. At least two of them did not sign their summonses, which is a violation of draft rules. The men received minimal training, after which they were sent to the Belgorod region.

The sister of one of the mobilized men said, "On the morning of October 1, he had already arrived at a military unit in Belgorod, and by evening of the same day he was sent to the front lines on Ukrainian territory. From October 1 to October 2 he and his fellow service members were under mortar fire, after which they returned to the unit and discovered that absolutely all of their personal belongings were missing."

A friend of the same conscript said, "They were ordered back to the front, but they realized they were being sent there without a clearly defined task, and without any of the things they needed to complete incomprehensible assignments, so they refused."

Astra published two videos, filmed by the conscripts, of the premises where they were held. In one of them, the man filming says the date – October 2. Astra reports that they had been ordered back to the front under threat of 10 years in prison.

The men were held first in a basement in Kreminna, then in a basement in Rubizhne, and according the latest information, they are currently on territory that has been partially destroyed by shelling, in a non-functioning prison in the Perevalsk region of formally annexed Luhansk. On October 28, Astra contacted the Red Cross, which has a branch in the area. The Red Cross said they currently do not have access to "such establishments."

Sanctions

KFC is about to disappear in Russia as its new owners rebrand all 1,000 stores as 'Rostic's' - The KFC brand is about to vanish in Russia as more than 1,000 stores rebrand as a local fast-food chain, The Moscow Times reported.

Yum! Brands is selling some of its KFC restaurants and franchises to Konstantin Kotov and Andrei Oskolkov's Smart Service, the US company said in a statement on Monday.

It said the buyers, who are already KFC franchisees, would be "responsible" for keeping the company's Russian employees and for rebranding the stores. The deal is subject to regulatory approval.

"Following the completion of the transaction, Yum! Brands will have ceased its corporate presence in Russia," the company said.

In March, Yum! Brands announced plans to end operations in Russia following Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine.

Putin

Analysis: Putin may soon find out what causes armies to lose the will to fight - There are moments throughout history where entire armies suddenly stop fighting, though they are evenly matched or even numerically superior to their enemy.

What causes armies to lose the will to fight? And how might that play out with the Russian army in Ukraine?

While history is full of embattled armies like the Imperial Japanese Army in World War II, which fought with ferocious intensity even though they knew they would not win, it also records other armies that "quiet quit" — stopped attacking the enemy or did the bare minimum to stay alive.

Russia's troops may be approaching that precipice, says Jeff McCausland, a combat veteran of the Gulf War and a visiting professor of international security studies at Dickinson College in Pennsylvania.

He says it's become clear that the Russian army is poorly trained and supplied, and that its soldiers in many cases have lost their will to fight.

The sources for both fear and panic are varied. But McCausland and other historians say that throughout the history of warfare, there are at least three reasons why armies lose the will to fight: They lose faith in their cause, they lose faith in their leader, or they lose the backing of their country.

Putin 'uses three body doubles who've had plastic surgery & real one may not exist' - Ukraine's head of military intelligence has claimed Putin is using three body doubles, who have had plastic surgery to resemble him.

Major General Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine's head of military intelligence, claimed the body doubles are used to hide Putin's loss of control in the Kremlin.

This suggestion comes amid growing claims Putin is suffering a number of illnesses including Parkinson's and cancer.

In an interview with the Mail on Sunday, Budanov claimed Ukrainian secret services had detected Putin body doubles standing in for him on a number of "special occasions" in the past, but this had become "usual practice" now.

"We know specifically about three people that keep appearing, but how many there are, we don't know," Budanov said. "They all had plastic surgery to look alike."

He continued: "The one thing that gives them away is their height. It's visible in videos and pictures. Also gesturing, body language and earlobes, since they are unique for every person."

Budanov asked: "The big question is whether the real Putin still exists?"

The Ukrainian head of military intelligence did not discuss whether he believed Putin had disappeared - because of ill health or after a coup within the Kremlin.

This comes as Budanov claimed Russia is running out of guided missiles, saying that a retake of the southern city of Kherson by the Ukrainian army could have dramatic consequences for Putin and his cronies.

"Change is inevitable" in Moscow, he said.

What can Putin present as a victory? Hope, perplexity, and dogged determination mingle in the Kremlin, as he gears up for the 2024 presidential (re-)election.

Preliminary consultations have begun inside the Russian President's Office and its innermost political block, anticipating the 2024 presidential election campaign, attended by the Kremlin's top officials and leading political consultants. Two sources close to the Russian President's Administration spoke with Meduza's special correspondent, Andrey Pertsev, about strategic preparations to reelect Vladimir Putin for a new term as Russia's president.

So far, the discussion in the Kremlin touches only the most general "outlines" of the forthcoming campaign. What's already clear, though, is that this campaign will be "tailor-made for Putin." "There's no talk of other candidates at all," says one of our sources. Instead of alternative candidates, Putin can expect to face what Kremlin insiders call "sparring partners" — dummy candidates recruited from Russian parliamentary parties.

"There will be no liberal candidates," our source explains, "not even just for show." In contrast, there had been liberal candidates in 2018, when the leader of Yabloko, Grigory Yavlinsky, gathered a minuscule 1.05 percent of the votes, and TV host Ksenia Sobchak got 1.68 percent.

Another source close to the President's Office explains that, typically, the Kremlin begins getting ready for presidential elections about 18 months leading up to the election date — that being traditionally the second Sunday in March. The process follows predictable stages. First, the overall "contours" of the campaign are decided. Next, political consultants are appointed to "ensure" the vote in the regions. Several months in advance of the vote, the regions line up their "mobilization networks." What this means is that people in all kinds of state-funded jobs, and other reliable pro-regime voters, are "mobilized" for organized turnout. During the same time frame, the campaign's ideological strategy is refined, and finalized.

For the time being, the ideological contents of the 2024 campaign are as yet unknown. The two Kremlin insiders Meduza spoke to were able to clarify that one thing is clear at the moment: namely, that Putin's campaign will build on anti-Western narratives.

There's hope in the Kremlin that the war in Ukraine will end in time for the election. Yet no one knows exactly how it's going to end, and how to frame its ending. "What will be presented as a victory?" wonders one of our sources. "You come to an election bringing your achievements with you. For instance, you can bring a set of annexed territories. But it's not clear which territories those might be."

Regardless, the Kremlin is determined to get Putin an unprecedented majority in the next election cycle. Although the presidential press secretary, Dmitry Peskov, didn't answer our queries, Meduza's source close to the President's Administration explains that, following the extraordinary unanimity of the "referendum" vote in the Ukrainian Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia regions, "anything significantly lower than that is a no-no." "There should be total support — also for the sake of demonstrating the president's popularity to the West itself."

Impacts

How can Russia be among G20 if it is deliberately working for hunger on several continents – address of President of Ukraine - A strong international response is needed now. Both at the UN level and at other levels. In particular, at the level of the G20. How can Russia be among the G20 if it is deliberately working for starvation on several continents? This is nonsense. Russia has no place in the G20.

Grain blockade – address by President Zelenskyy - From September to today, 176 vessels have already accumulated in the grain corridor, which cannot follow their route. Some grain carriers have been waiting for more

than three weeks. This is an absolutely deliberate blockade by Russia. This is an absolutely transparent intention of Russia to return the threat of large-scale famine to Africa and Asia.

Literally today, more than 2 million tonnes of food are in the sea. This means that access to food has actually worsened for more than 7 million consumers.

Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Bangladesh, Vietnam, others countries – very different countries, from different parts of the world... But they can all be equally destabilized by this Russian decision to block exports.

I emphasize: this decision was made by Russia apparently in September. Only this queue of ships with food at sea can testify to this.

It is also important that Russia attacked our Naval Forces at least twice during the grain initiative. Precisely by those forces that guarantee the safety of the grain corridor.

Grain market braces for price leap as Black Sea corridor halted - Wheat futures are expected to leap on Monday as Russia's withdrawal from a Black Sea corridor agreement puts Ukrainian exports at risk, analysts said.

Moscow suspended its participation in the Black Sea deal on Saturday, in response to what it called a major Ukrainian drone attack on its fleet in Russian-annexed Crimea.

Kyiv said Russia was making an excuse for a prepared exit from the accord while Washington accused Moscow of weaponizing food.

Wheat markets have been very sensitive to developments in Moscow's eight month-old invasion of Ukraine, as both countries are among the world's largest wheat exporters.

Ukraine is also a major corn supplier.

The establishment of the corridor, which allowed over 9 million tonnes of grain and oilseed commodities to be shipped from Ukrainian ports, helped to steady grain markets and curb global prices after they hit record levels.

That relative calm is likely to end when Chicago and Paris wheat, the world's two most-active wheat futures contracts, start their trading week on Monday.

"Russia's announcement is certainly bullish for prices and the start of the week is very likely to see prices climb, simply because less grain is going to come out of Ukraine," Arthur Portier of consultancy Agritel said.

Purchasing of grain for Black Sea ports in Ukraine has stopped following Russia's decision, a Ukrainian broker said.

Drought in Argentina and torrential rain in eastern Australia have added to the supply concerns as they raise doubts over upcoming harvests in the southern hemisphere wheat exporters.

At the same time, brisk early-season shipments from the European Union mean the surplus there has dwindled.

"The problem is that among other major exporting countries, wheat supply is waning," Portier said.

The corridor suspension could trigger a buying rush in Chicago, where investment funds have a net short position.

Comment – Watch the weaponization of grain supply unfold as they yesterday, and after blocking Ukrainian exports, have offered to supply 500,000 tons of wheat to poor countries. Russia is trying to portray itself as the food savior and Ukraine and the West as the food ogres.

More than 200 ships blocked by Russia's decision to back out of grain deal - The movement of more than 200 ships participating in United Nations-brokered grain export deal with Ukraine is blocked, Ukraine's Ministry of Infrastructure said Sunday in its latest update.

It comes a day after Russia said it had decided to suspend its participation from the deal with Ukraine, following its claims that Kyiv ordered drone attacks on the Crimean city of Sevastopol.

"Due to the fact that as of October 30, the Ukrainian side does not have permission from the Joint Coordination Centre to pass through the safe corridor and conduct inspections, 218 vessels are actually blocked in their current positions," the ministry said on its verified Facebook page.

Russia in talks over possible resumption of Ukrainian grain exports as 218 ships stuck (updated). Turkey has begun negotiating with Moscow concerning resuming grain shipments from Ukrainian ports, according to the country's defense ministry. Bloomberg reported earlier that there were "still grounds for optimism" that progress towards a resumption of the shipments could be made.

Lithuanian foreign minister calls on allies to secure Ukraine's grain exports with military escorts. Following Russia's announcement that it suspends the U.N.-brokered grain deal that allowed Ukrainian grain to be exported through the Black Sea ports, Lithuanian Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis said that "negotiating with Russia doesn't work." Landsbergis added that if Putin continues to jeopardize Ukraine's grain exports, "the free world must unite to safeguard shipping with military escorts."

Poland said that together with its European Union partners it is ready to provide Ukraine with further help in the transportation of essential goods after Russia pulled out of the grain deal.

Trouble at the CSTO: Ukraine should not be Putin's only concern - While the Ukraine war is diverting Moscow's attention, Putin's control over its neighbors in Central Asia and the Caucasus is lessening.

The deployment of troops in Kazakhstan in January put the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) on the map of actively engaged regional military alliances. While setting a precedent, the recent casualties at the borders of Armenia and Kyrgyzstan demonstrate CSTO's inefficiency in maintaining order.

The regional organization remains ruled by Russia, focused on preserving its geopolitical interests – pushing some of its members to reconsider their participation and reliance on the CSTO. This could result in a shift of alliances, leaving space for new allegiance opportunities.

If Russia gets defeated in Ukraine it will discredit its authoritative and paternalistic position towards 'smaller' states in the region explains expert Ben Dubow. Belarus is the only member that backed Russia's invasion, as the rest are trying to distance themselves, rebranding as neutral, fearing that the West or Putin might come after them. Sanctions are already making Russia more reliant on its neighbors to bypass trade and investment restrictions. As a result, the whole region is taking advantage of the weakened position of Russia to equilibrate its relationships with Moscow.

The Russian-initiated Collective Security Organisation was created in 1992. It later became in 2002 the CSTO made of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. It pledged to defend all members in exchange for an exclusive military alliance.

After the deployment in Kazakhstan, Armenian leadership hoped that Russia through the CSTO would be willing to take on a more active role in maintaining and protecting the security of its members. In the past, during the 2020 '44 days war' between Baku and Yerevan, Armenian calls for the dispatch of troops were ignored. As ceasefires and breaches are multiplying, the country's security now increasingly relies on the presence of Russian peacekeepers at the border.

Kyrgyzstan also decided to abruptly cancel the military drill “Indestructible Brotherhood” following heavy shelling on its border with Tajikistan on September 18. President Sadyr Zhaparov expressed his discontent with the CSTO at the Summit on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures held in Astana on October 13. He stated that “existing authoritative regional organisations are not effectively using all their tools at their disposal to prevent conflicts from destabilizing in the region.”

Other former soviet states are growingly repositioning their foreign policy, such as Kazakhstan which grew diplomatically closer to Beijing, defending China’s internal policies at the UN. Previous Russian statements on the ‘fictitious’ creation of Kazakhstan resonated with the invasion of Ukraine to the point that China warned against an incursion in its ally’s territory.

Yerevan has been trying to find alternative supporters knowing that close economic relations with Baku, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine, are limiting Russia’s willingness to act. The European Commission stepped in as a fellow mediator in the negotiations between the belligerents and sent a fact-finding mission on October 13. Moreover, Nancy Pelosi’s visit to Yerevan on September 17 demonstrates the Armenian efforts to voice out what they need.

The CSTO is perceived by Russia as a way to exert and maintain dominance on its neighborhood while keeping foreign powers such as the United States and China away explains analyst Ecaterina Locoman. Russia’s positioning as a fellow victim of Western domination, justifying the need to regroup against foreign powers, will not convince other members that Moscow is their best defence – rather it might push them further East. Tajikistan’s PM Emomali Rahmonh at the Astana conference expressed the growing irritation of Central Asian countries with Moscow’s imperial attitude.

Even if the secretary of Armenia’s security council, Armen Grigoryan, bluntly declared that “there is no more hope for the CSTO,” it is too soon to announce its demise. Due to the members’ high military, financial and political reliance on Moscow, it is very unlikely that they break away from the CSTO. Armenian ex-President Kocharyan recalled that the organization continues to limit the scope of Baku’s aggression. Yerevan will not leave Moscow’s security umbrella without “a real alternative for balancing out the negative consequences of that decision” declares expert Leonid Nersisyan.

Russia’s growing isolation forces Putin to revise its geopolitical priorities in the Caucasus and Central Asia. His minimum engagement to maintain good relations with all members of the CSTO will push frustrated states to eventually revise their allegiance. The current conflicts will continue obstructing political stability and stir popular discontent. Russia should clear its position and act as a real resolution broker on both border conflicts, making the costs of rejecting peace settlements too high. World geopolitics are shifting East and will continue attracting more foreign interests. New alliances palliating the lack of regional alternatives and offering material gains could arise. If China and the European Union strongly engage and support Russian neighbours, it will ultimately loosen Putin’s grip on the post-soviet region.

We have reported on this trend in previous Updates. Russia is withdrawing “peacekeeping” troops from nearly all territories in transferring them to Ukrainian fronts to bolster devastating military losses.

It is now estimated that Russia has suffered over 100,000 “irrecoverable” losses – soldiers killed, MIA or so severely injured they are permanently disabled.

This figure is set to rise dramatically in the next few months as increasing numbers of ill-trained and unprepared mobilized infantry units are deployed in direct battle zones against seasoned Ukrainian forces armed with far superior weaponry.

Ukraine is also set to start receiving artillery pieces capable of reaching further behind Russian front lines.

All of this does not go unnoticed by CSTO members, some of whom harbor long-standing grievances and unsettled border scores that Russia is now unable to neither contain nor control.

Russia – then and now

Shown below are two maps, the first showing the Soviet Union as it existed in 1990 and the second showing the Russian Federation as it is today.

Maps of pre-and-post-Soviet Union

UKRAINE-RUSSIA CRISIS

USSR republics

Russia and Ukraine were part of the **15 Soviet republics that made up the USSR.**



Independence

- **March 1990**
(1) Lithuania
- **May 1990**
(2) Latvia
(3) Estonia
- **April 1991**
(4) Georgia
- **August 1991**
(5) Ukraine, (6) Moldova,
(7) Azerbaijan, (8) Uzbekistan,
(9) Kyrgyzstan
- **September 1991**
(10) Tajikistan, (11) Armenia,
- **October 1991**
(12) Turkmenistan
- **December 1991**
(13) Belarus
(14) Russia
(15) Kazakhstan



Source: Al Jazeera



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Political leadership – Ukraine and Russian Federation

Over the past 30 years, Ukraine has been led by seven presidents. The country has had a rocky path towards democracy with two revolutions, first in 2005 and then in 2014. Both times, protesters rejected Russia's supremacy and sought a path to join the European Union and NATO.

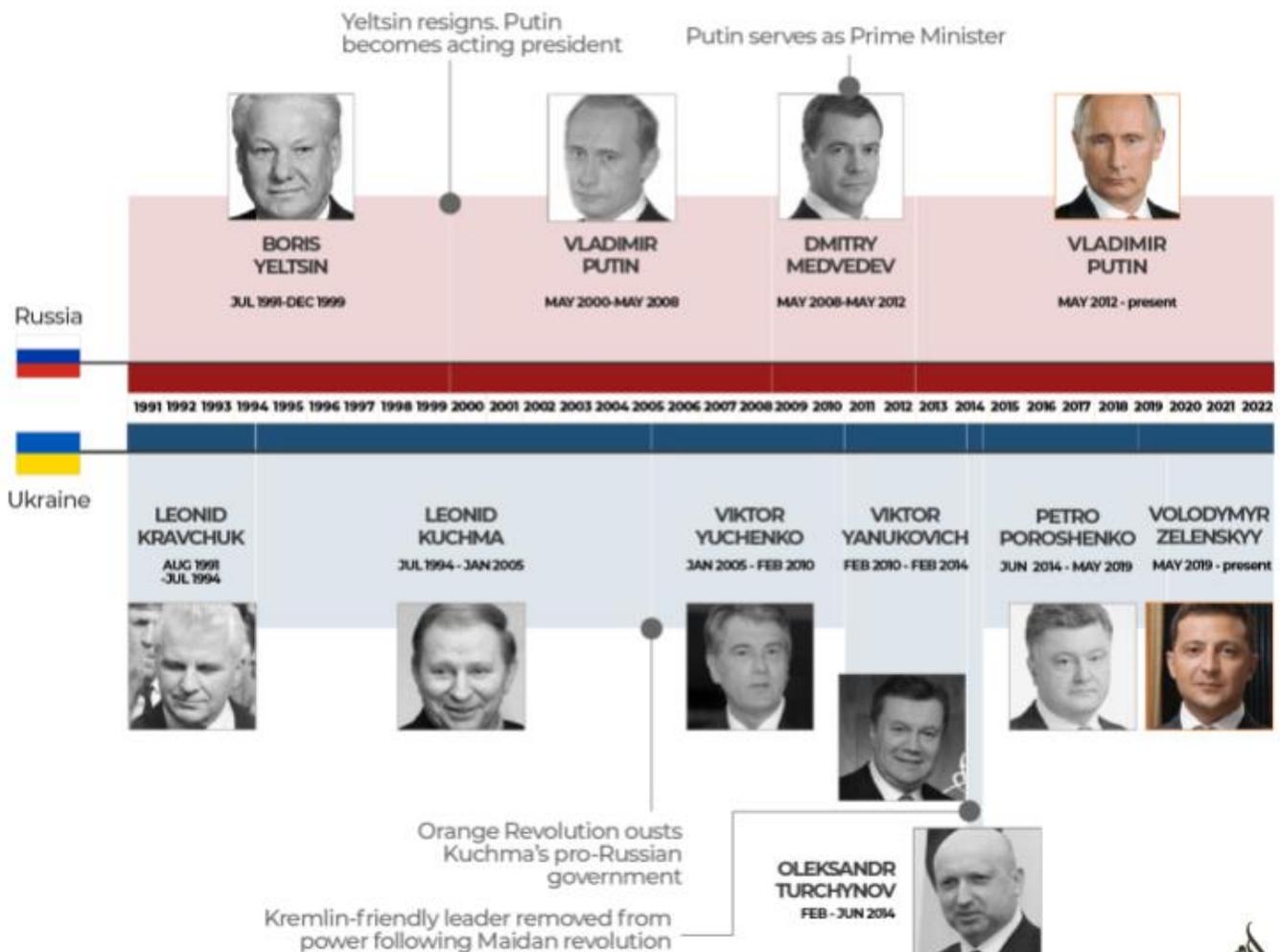
By comparison, Russia has been led by three presidents, with Putin having been in office for 17 years. In 2021, Putin, the former agent of the Soviet Union's KGB security services, signed a law that essentially enables him to stay in power until 2036.

Putin has repeatedly claimed that Russians and Ukrainians belong to "one people" and are part of the historical "Russian civilization" that also includes neighboring Belarus. Ukrainians reject his claims.

UKRAINE-RUSSIA CRISIS

Political leadership

Following the **collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991**, Ukraine has moved to shed its Russian imperial legacy and **forge increasingly close ties with the West**.



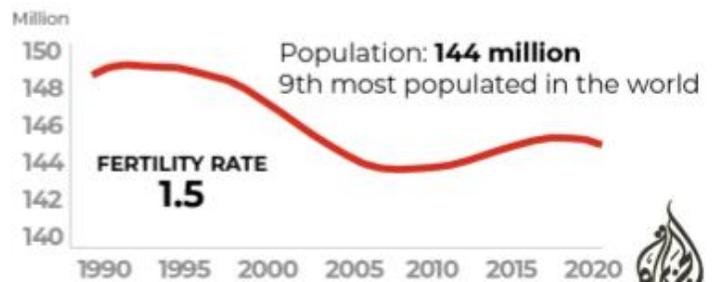
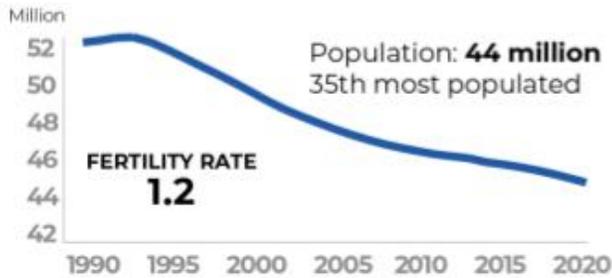
Source: Al Jazeera | January 27, 2022



Fertility rates

Both countries are experiencing a negative fertility rate, essential to the future of any country. For a country to maintain its population, women, on average, should have 2.1 children. Those children should survive to at least the age of fifteen. The figure of 2.1 children assumes that there is no emigration or immigration.

Both **countries' populations have declined** since the 1990s with fertility rates among the **lowest in the world**.



Source: World Bank | 2020

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Now one can see why Russia is forcibly relocating Ukrainians, particularly children, to the furthest regions of Russia – for two primary reasons, namely (i) to bolster their future fertility rate and (ii) to introduce Slav bloodlines into non-Slav regions of Russia.

NATO

NATO was **founded in 1949** by 12 nations. It has since **grown to 30 members**. **Russia opposes Ukraine ever joining the alliance** and has accused it of undermining security in the region with its waves of expansion.



The US and Canada are also members of NATO
Source: NATO

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