



# Two Years of War in Ukraine. The impact on conducting military operations by Ukraine and Russia

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**New Strategy Center  
Bucharest  
2024**

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Cover: Ukrainian troops (Reuters), Himars (The Wall Street Journal), Drone (The Wall Street Journal), Fire (Official Twitter-page of The State Emergency Service of Ukraine )

## **Descrierea CIP a Bibliotecii Naționale a României**

**SAMUS, MYKHAILO**

**Two years of war in Ukraine : the impact on conducting military operations by Ukraine and Russia / Mykhailo Samus. - București : New Strategy Center, 2024**

ISBN 978-606-95859-1-7

## Two Years of War in Ukraine. The impact on conducting military operations by Ukraine and Russia

2024 could be a decisive year in the war for Ukraine's independence, given the turbulence in the US, EU and other regions of the world. The formation of the "Axis of Evil" led by Russia is triggering the processes of global destruction of the international system. Therefore, the victory of Ukraine, together with its partners and friends from NATO and the EU, is not only of national or regional importance. Ukraine's victory will allow the democratic world to hope for a reversal of the destructive trend and the restoration of the dominance of democracy and basic human values over authoritarian and inhumane paradigms.

In this regard, it is necessary to rethink the approaches and models of further implementation of Ukraine's defense tasks, based on the need for technological superiority on the battlefield and ensuring sufficient production capacity for a constant and long-term increase in the supply of advanced weapons and military equipment. The preparation of adequate reserves and the implementation of powerful operations of the Ukrainian Armed Forces should be supported by the sustainable and large-scale development of the defense industry base. In addition, national resilience and countering Russia's hybrid influences should remain a priority. The less successful the enemy is on the battlefield, the more it starts to act in a hybrid manner.



Situation at the front as of the end of 2023 (Source: Institute for the Study of War<sup>1</sup>)

<sup>1</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/36a7f6a6f5a9448496de641cf64bd375>

## *Asymmetric Approach and National Resilience*

### *Network Centric Warfare & Asymmetric Doctrine*

It is evident that since February 24, 2022, Russian full-scale aggression against Ukraine has evolved into the largest and most intense military conflict in Europe since the Second World War. The sheer size of Russia as the largest country globally and Ukraine as the largest country in Europe delineates the vast geographical scope of the conflict. Furthermore, both nations possess a substantial arsenal of weapons and military equipment inherited from the Soviet Union's collapse. Even three decades after the dissolution of the USSR, Russia and Ukraine still maintain a significant inventory of Soviet-made weaponry and adhere to Soviet-origin standards.

The primary Ukrainian strategy aimed at adopting an asymmetric approach in the face of the formidable Russian military, recognizing that the UAF couldn't realistically prevail in a symmetric battle against the Russian Armed Forces. Consequently, the UAF opted to construct a network-centric warfare model, building upon Soviet-era weaponry but incorporating new command and control systems across all levels. This involved extensive utilization of drones for reconnaissance, attacks, and kamikaze missions.

In essence, the new model sought to modernize the post-Soviet army by integrating UAVs and smart weapons with advanced Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Cyber-Defense, Combat Systems, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance capabilities. The objective was to create an asymmetric potential within the UAF, enabling effective combat against the numerically superior Russian Army.

Following Russia's full-scale strategic operation against Ukraine, utilizing a comprehensive array of Soviet and post-Soviet weaponry, including ballistic and cruise missiles, the initial outcomes of Ukraine's defense, grounded in the network-centric warfare approach, proved remarkably successful. The strategic use of drones for reconnaissance, target acquisition, and strikes, coupled with effective Command and Control, integration of Western smart weapons like Javelins, NLAW, and Stinger, and the deployment of key Soviet assets such as Air Defense, aviation, artillery, tanks, and armored vehicles, along with the newly established massive Territorial Defence, created a potent and unexpected mix. Additionally, the substantial military support from the West, aimed at replacing Soviet weapons, particularly in the artillery and long-range precision strike systems like HIMARS, provided the UAF with the capabilities to counterbalance the overwhelming Russian offensive. This strategic approach proved highly effective, resulting in the destruction of logistics, ammunition warehouses, command posts, air defense systems, critical infrastructure such as bridges, and ultimately disrupting the Russian army's capacity to concentrate massive offensive capabilities.





HIMARS of Ukrainian Armed Forces (Source: Getty Images)<sup>2</sup>

This doctrine became the basis for successful and rapid operations to liberate Kharkiv region (6.09-13.10.2022) and the right bank of Kherson region (29.08-11.11.2022). After conducting active shaping operations for several weeks, using high-precision weapons to destroy the main military infrastructure of the occupation forces and intensive information and psychological operations to mislead the enemy, Ukrainian forces conducted rapid ground offensives, during which they liberated 10,000 square kilometers during the Kharkiv operation and 3,500 square kilometers during the Kherson operation. These victories have created new strategic conditions for further planning operations for 2023 and building capabilities for the de-occupation of Ukraine's territory.

### *Drone-Centric Warfare*

The adoption of the network-centric warfare concept as the cornerstone of the modern doctrine of the UAF has received a significant boost through the extensive utilization of unmanned aerial systems, including autonomous, unmanned, and robotic systems for land and sea operations. Essentially, UAVs have evolved into a pivotal element of the UAF's operational doctrine, essentially embodying the concept of Drone-Centric Warfare. The Armed Forces of Ukraine leverage drones for a diverse array of tasks, spanning reconnaissance, targeting, coordination of units and individual combat components, to fulfilling strike functions. While these functions are commonplace in most advanced armed forces, what sets the UAF apart is the recent elevation of drones to a central role in operations. The deployment of thousands of drones across the battlefield transforms them into a component that seamlessly integrates

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<sup>2</sup> <https://tsn.ua/ato/himars-vzhe-zminyuyut-balans-sil-u-viyni-v-ukrayini-wsj-2101531.html>

information from the battlefield into a unified matrix with the means to destroy the enemy. This occurs in real-time, marking a transformative shift in modern warfare dynamics.

For the first time in the history of the armed forces, the UAF created special UAV strike companies as part of combat brigades and as separate combat groups, bringing their total number to 60 units. This allows for the use of various types of drones to destroy enemy targets under the Network Centric Warfare doctrine. The creation of UAV strike companies was the beginning of the modernization of the organizational and doctrinal principles of the UAF as part of its adaptation to new technological realities on the battlefield. Currently, according to various sources, as of November 2023, up to 50 thousand different types of drones are being manufactured in Ukraine<sup>3</sup>. The majority of them are First Person View (FPV) drones, which have really changed the nature of combat operations due to their low cost (500-700 USD) and efficiency. For 2024, there are ambitious plans to further increase the production of drones. The state budget of Ukraine for 2024 allocates Euro 1,1 billion for drones (both aviation and maritime systems)<sup>4</sup>.



FPV-drone “Wasp” of Ukrainian Armed Forces (Source: Defence Express)<sup>5</sup>

In the area of maritime drones, Ukraine has made a technological breakthrough that has created a rather unexpected situation for the Russian Black Sea Fleet. With Ukraine effectively losing its traditional navy, the Russian Black Sea Fleet had to move to the eastern part of the Black Sea and does not dare to approach the western areas because of the high threat of Ukraine's use of maritime drones. Ukraine has created several types of maritime drones, funded initially by volunteer funds, and later by the budgets of the Ministry of Defense and other

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<sup>3</sup> <https://forbes.ua/innovations/ukrainski-inzheneri-pratsuyut-u-boeing-ta-airbus-virobniki-droniv-strazhdayut-cherez-defitsit-kadriv-yak-rozvyazati-tsyu-problemu-20112023-17379>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.kmu.gov.ua/en/news/verkhovna-rada-ukrainy-pryniala-derzhbiudzheth-na-2024-rik>

<sup>5</sup> [https://defence-ua.com/weapon\\_and\\_tech/zamknene\\_kolo\\_problemy\\_ukrajinskih\\_droniv\\_chomu\\_jih\\_dosi\\_ne\\_zamovljajut-12897.html](https://defence-ua.com/weapon_and_tech/zamknene_kolo_problemy_ukrajinskih_droniv_chomu_jih_dosi_ne_zamovljajut-12897.html)



security agencies and intelligence services. At the moment, the Ukrainian defense forces are using several maritime drones, both surface and underwater<sup>6</sup>. The Ukrainian drones Magura<sup>7</sup>, Marichka<sup>8</sup>, and Sea Baby<sup>9</sup> are known to have been used against Russian forces in the Black Sea. Their characteristics are constantly being improved and their effectiveness is growing, causing damage to the Russian Black Sea Fleet, basing sites and infrastructure, such as the Kerch Bridge.



Ukrainian Sea Drone *Sea Baby* (Source: SBU)<sup>10</sup>

It's noteworthy that the latest trend in employing drones for military purposes involves the utilization of artificial intelligence technologies. AI can automatically detect and classify targets on the battlefield and issue ready-made decisions for the operator/commander to make about defeating the enemy. AI can become the next step in improving the concept of network-centric warfare by further reducing control cycles when finding enemy targets, determining their coordinates, transmitting information about the coordinates to the commander, making a decision to destroy the enemy and transmitting this decision to the means of destruction. In the context of modern warfare, these cycles should be reduced as much as possible. The use of AI in the use of drones can significantly speed up management cycles and ensure greater efficiency in the use of the armed forces as an integrated reconnaissance and strike complex.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.hisutton.com/Ukraine-Maritime-Drones.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/articles/clew6ee5nx8o>

<sup>8</sup> <https://itc.ua/ua/articles/ukrayinski-morski-drony-marichka-sea-baby-magura-v5-ta-inshi/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/ukrainian/news-66518479>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.unian.ua/weapons/v-sbu-rozkrili-osoblivist-morskogo-drona-sea-baby-12499146.html>

A few words about the programs that have become the driving force behind the UAF's drone activity. First of all, this is the Army of Drones project as part of the national crowdfunding campaign United 24<sup>11</sup>. Thousands of drones have been purchased and more than 10,000 drone operators have been trained as part of the Drone Army project<sup>12</sup>. Also, as part of the United 24 campaign, the process of creating maritime drones was launched, which later became a separate area of development of maritime platforms at the state level. The launch of the Robot Army project has also been announced, which will develop the latest robotic systems in the interests of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. In addition, the creation of the Army of Electronic Warfare Systems has begun to give impetus to the mass production of electronic warfare systems.

### *National Resistance & Resilience*

No doubts that in asymmetric war of attrition readiness to fight, endurance, cohesion of Ukrainian nation will play critical role. Law on the National Resistance adopted in 2021 has built architecture for maximum and comprehensive engagement of Ukrainian nation to defense. Additionally to network centric warfare model, Law on the National Resistance is creating strong framework for asymmetric approach for Ukraine to fight against Russian aggression. Asymmetric approach together with readiness of Ukrainian people to fight against Russian aggressors in the frame of the national resilience and resistance concept and network centric warfare paradigm based on modern weapon, sensors and C2 systems creates optimum model for UAF.

The practical process of forming a system of national resilience and resistance began in July 2021, when the Law on the Foundations of National Resistance" was adopted<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, approaches to creating a national resilience system have been actively developed since 2014, which, unfortunately, has not been immediately implemented at the state level. Importantly, the Law introduces the abolition of the Soviet-style conscription system. Instead, it introduces short basic military training for all Ukrainian citizens based on high motivational appeal and in line with NATO best practices.

It was the Territorial Defense Forces, with broad volunteer involvement of citizens, that played an important role in repelling large-scale Russian aggression in February 2022. Volunteers repelled Russian subversive groups that were breaking through to major cities such as Kyiv and Kharkiv. In addition, the Territorial Defense carried out a set of measures to stabilize the situation throughout Ukraine, including the border areas where Russian occupation forces could move.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://u24.gov.ua/>

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[https://biz.censor.net/resonance/3448681/armiya\\_droniv\\_yak\\_pryvatni\\_vyrobnyky\\_bezpilotnykiv\\_osvoyuyut\\_oboronny\\_yi\\_byudjet](https://biz.censor.net/resonance/3448681/armiya_droniv_yak_pryvatni_vyrobnyky_bezpilotnykiv_osvoyuyut_oboronny_yi_byudjet)

<sup>13</sup> <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1702-20#Text>



Ukrainian Territorial Defense Forces (Source: TDF)<sup>14</sup>

At present, under martial law and general mobilization, the conscription system (with its Soviet heritage) continues to be transformed into a system of general military training. On the basis of general military training, a personnel reserve for both the contract regular army and the volunteer territorial defense forces is being formed. The purpose of these processes is to create a comprehensive system of involving citizens in the defense of the state.

At the same time, these processes are not limited to the military sphere. Since 2014, Ukraine has continued to take steps to adapt the National Resilience theory to Ukrainian conditions and the realities of the military conflict with Russia. In general, the results of research projects (conducted by Ukrainian non-governmental organizations together with their Estonian, Lithuanian and Latvian colleagues) have identified the current understanding of the concept of national resilience<sup>15</sup>. National resilience defined as the ability of a nation to recover, adapt, function and positively develop while under intense negative influence or crisis. It is regarded as a multi-dimensional concept, mirroring the notion of comprehensive security: including political, informational, societal and cognitive aspects to economic, cyber and physical security and defense. It requires, among other things, coherence and synergy between its stakeholders, especially the state and civil society.

The understanding of the importance of creation the comprehensive national resilience system in Ukraine closely joined with researches of the hybrid war phenomena. Russia employs similar methods of hybrid warfare in various regions such as the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Syria, Ukraine, as well as within the EU, USA, and other countries. Despite outward differences, these approaches share a commonality in Russia's comprehensive attack on nations, organizations (especially when dealing with NATO or the EU), or regions. The focus

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<sup>14</sup> <https://sprotyv.in.ua/pro-tro>

<sup>15</sup> <https://icds.ee/en/a-route-to-national-resilience-building-whole-of-society-security-in-ukraine/>



is consistently on exploiting critical vulnerabilities specific to the targeted country, region, or organization. These vulnerabilities may manifest in cultural, economic, historical, military, political, information, energy, migration, or other aspects critical for the stability and development of the targeted state, organization, or region.

Identifying the critical vulnerabilities of a nation, organization, or region is crucial in countering Russian hybrid warfare. In fact, the process of identifying these vulnerabilities is a key element in establishing an effective national security system within the framework of the concept of national resilience.

This is why any nation can fall victim to hybrid warfare because vulnerabilities can exist in every nation. It doesn't matter if a country is wealthy, militarily strong, or economically developed; if there are political, informational, migration, or other vulnerabilities, it becomes susceptible to aggression through hybrid warfare. Instances like Russian interference in the US elections, the use of the "migration weapon" against Poland, Lithuania, and Finland, and "energy aggression" against Germany underscore that any country could be a target of Russian "active hybrid measures".

The next phase in the Russian strategy might involve intensifying the exploitation of vulnerabilities, or what we can refer to as a pathological system within the nation. This pathological system within the functional target-state consumes resources for its own development, drains the essential energy of the nation, rendering it weak and unable to defend itself. This process closely resembles the way cancer operates.

### *Ukraine's 2023 Counter-Offensive and the War of Attrition*

Successful operations in Kharkiv and Kherson regions in 2022, which demonstrated the effectiveness of asymmetry and network centrality, have shaped the readiness of the Armed Forces Command to take decisive steps to de-occupy the territory of Ukraine in 2023. As the UAF Commander-in-Chief, General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, wrote in his article at the end of 2022<sup>16</sup>, "...the only way to radically change the strategic situation is undoubtedly to launch several successive, and ideally simultaneous, counterattacks during the 2023 campaign." General Zaluzhnyi stressed that if we consider the 2023 campaign as a turning point, we need to return to the definition of the center of gravity for Russia in this war. After all, only an effective impact on the enemy's center of gravity can lead to changes in the course of the war. If this center of gravity is defined as control over the Crimean peninsula, it is logical to assume that an operation or series of operations to capture the peninsula is planned for 2023. Such planning should include, first of all, the availability of the necessary set of troops.

General Zaluzhnyi paid special attention to the supply of long-range missile systems and aviation. It was not only about certain types of missiles, such as ATACMS, but primarily about a comprehensive approach to re-equipping the artillery, missile forces, tactical aviation and naval forces of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and other components to increase combat

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-ato/3566162-ak-zabezpeciti-voennu-kampaniu-u-2023-roci-ukrainskij-poglad.html>

capabilities. The focus on capabilities, rather than the number of weapons, was key in planning new operations of the Armed Forces.

As a result, Western partners took active steps to support the plan of the UAF command and transferred significant amounts of weapons and military equipment, which became the basis for the creation of new brigades. The so-called "tank coalition", which was formed within the framework of the "Ramstein format", provided Ukraine with the first batches of Western tanks: about 60 Leopard 2A tanks, 14 Challenger 2 tanks, and 150 T-72 tanks. However, the process of transferring the tanks was later slowed down by the unwillingness to transfer more Leopard 2As. Also, the process of transferring 31 US M1A1 Abrams tanks, which were delivered to the Armed Forces only in autumn 2023 and could not be used in the offensive operations of the summer campaign of 2023, was delayed.



Leopard 2A of the 47<sup>th</sup> Mechanized Brigade of Ukrainian Armed Forces (Source: 47 Mechanized Brigade).

The decision to transfer modern multirole F-16 fighters to Ukraine was made only at the end of August 2023, and their transfer to the Ukrainian Air Force is expected to take place in early 2024. The lack of air dominance was one of the critical shortcomings of the AFU troops that conducted offensive operations in 2023. Similarly, the first transfer of ATACMS missiles to Ukraine took place only in October 2023. The missiles have demonstrated their exceptional effectiveness in targeting remote enemy airfields where army and tactical aircraft were based. However, it is clear that the full use of ATACMS on the battlefield will take place in the next operations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in 2024. As well as the promising GLSDB (Ground



Launch Small Diameter Bomb, produced by Boeing in collaboration with the Saab Group) missiles with a range of 150 km.



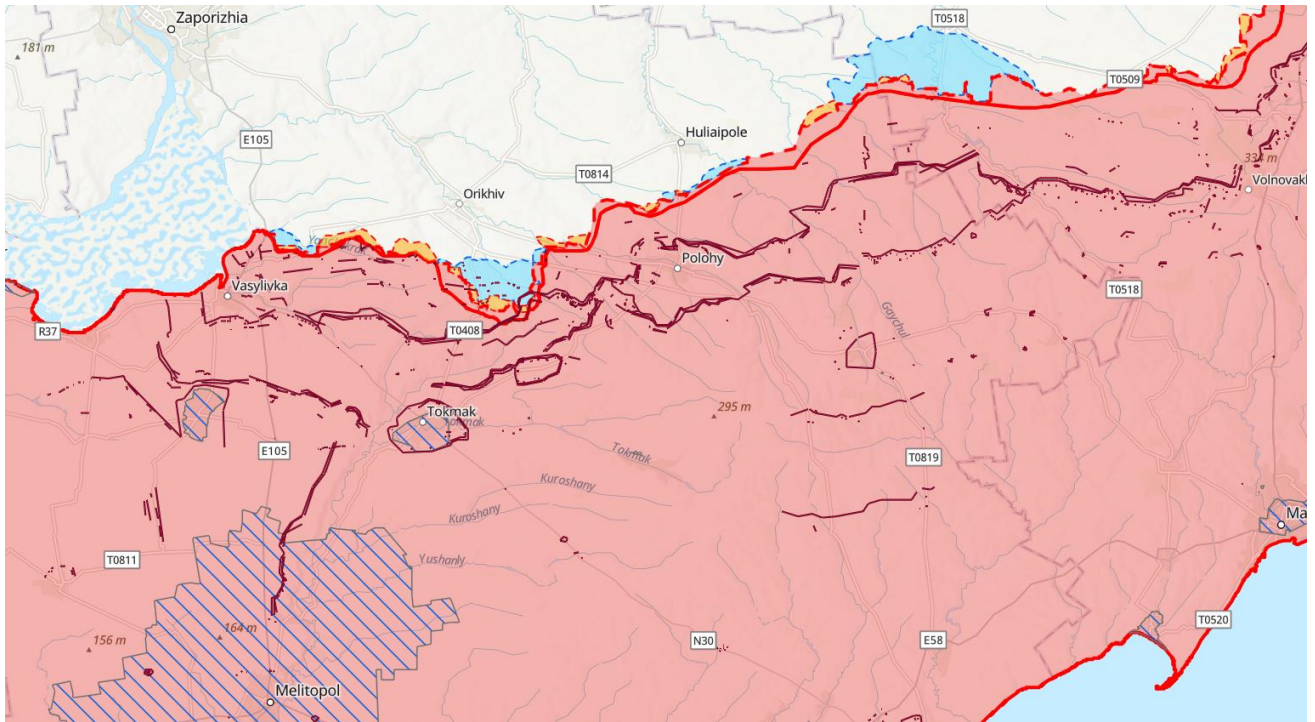
GLSDB (Source: SAAB)<sup>17</sup>

Based on the results of the summer and autumn campaign of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, it can be stated that the tasks set for 2023 were not achieved. That is, despite the powerful and intensive operations of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the southern direction, it was not possible to achieve a breakthrough of the front to cut the so-called "land corridor" from the territory of the Russian Federation to the occupied Crimea. It seems that the attempt to use the technological prowess of the Ukrainian Armed Forces against the massive Russian army, which has taken unprecedented measures to build powerful defensive lines in the occupied territories of Zaporizhzhia region, failed without air superiority and sufficient means to break through the echeloned extremely dense minefields and powerful Russian fortifications.

According to preliminary estimates by experts, the main reason for the slowdown in the southern offensive was the powerful minefields that prevented even Western equipment from moving forward. This created an environment where Russian drones were constantly receiving information about Ukrainian forces trying to slowly overcome minefields and fortifications.

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.saab.com/products/ground-launched-small-diameter-bomb-glsdb>



Russian massive defence lines at Zaporizhzhia oblast (Source: Institute for the Study of War<sup>18</sup>)

This information was used to launch air and artillery strikes against Ukrainian troops. Air strikes using KABs - guided aerial bombs that Russian aircraft could launch from a range of 50 kilometers from the frontline, beyond the reach of Ukrainian air defense forces - were particularly dangerous. Russia managed to ensure a sufficiently large-scale use of KABs against Ukrainian positions along the entire frontline - up to 1,200 KABs per month - which posed a great threat to the advancing Ukrainian forces.

Also, attack drones - both cheap FPV drones and the more sophisticated Lancets - have become a significant threat to Ukrainian forces. The use of Lancets has not become as widespread as that of FPV drones, but their longer range (there are versions with a range of up to 70 km) and greater explosive power make them a major threat to Ukrainian forces. The increase in the number of Lancets on the battlefield has further highlighted the need to develop electronic warfare systems and short-range air defense systems.

At the same time, the successful counter-battery fight of the UAF significantly reduced the effectiveness of Russian artillery, which suffered huge losses during the summer campaign of 2023.

In these circumstances, instead of rapid breakthroughs, Ukrainian forces resorted to slow operations with minimal use of armored vehicles and the use of small assault group tactics. This method proved to be effective, but the pace of the offensive was too slow to fulfil the main objective of the summer 2023 offensive - to cut the land corridor between Crimea and Russian territory and create conditions for the blockade of Crimea.

It is clear that Russia's strategic plan for 2024 is to achieve maximum military gains in Donbas (the optimal outcome is the occupation of the entire Donetsk region; the maximum outcome is the occupation of Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions and the creation of conditions

<sup>18</sup> <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/36a7f6a6f5a9448496de641cf64bd375>

for continuing a strategic offensive deep into Ukraine) and to prevent the Ukrainian Armed Forces from breaking through in the south with access to Crimea. If this scenario can be implemented before the US elections (November 2024), it will make it possible to offer the new US president a "peace plan" for the war with Ukraine. This plan could consist of "freezing the conflict" by cutting off Western aid to Ukraine and forcing Ukraine's leadership to negotiate with Russia. The Kremlin may propose that the United States press Kyiv to sign a "peace agreement" with Russia, which would provide for Ukraine's refusal to join NATO and the EU, as well as for Russia to retain all occupied Ukrainian territories at the time of negotiations. In addition, Russia is likely to insist that Ukraine refuse to pay reparations from Russia for the damage caused during the aggression against Ukraine and that any war crimes charges against the Russian leadership and other Russian citizens who participated in the aggression against Ukraine be dropped.

That is why Russia has radically increased its military spending to 30% of the total state budget for 2024 (in absolute terms, this is about 120-110 billion US dollars)<sup>19</sup>. Obviously, the Kremlin hopes to achieve a decisive result in the war against Ukraine by 2024, as spending a third of the state budget on war for several years is difficult even for authoritarian regimes like Russia.

At the same time, there should be no illusions about the Kremlin's readiness to operate in a "war economy" mode for as long as possible, trying to defeat Ukraine and the West in a war of attrition. Especially if oil and gas revenues allow it to do so. According to the Center for Research on Energy and Clean Air, since 24.02.2022, Russia has received about EUR 554 billion from oil and gas sales<sup>20</sup>. Such profits, despite the sanctions, allow the Kremlin to maintain the high costs of the war, including the purchase of microchips and high technology for weapons production, which are banned for Russia. It also allows Russia to buy ammunition from North Korea, long-range kamikaze drones from Iran, ammunition and all-terrain vehicles from China, etc. In addition, the financial resource allows the Kremlin to recruit a sufficient number of infantry, which has a low quality of training, but is quite satisfactory for Russian generals, who often use the Soviet tactics of "meat assaults" of the Second World War.

In this regard, Ukraine and the West should prepare for an extremely difficult 2024, but at the same time realise that if the plans to "freeze the conflict" and "negotiate a peace deal" on its own terms after the US presidential election fail, the Kremlin will be ready for a war of attrition. Russia will try to exhaust Ukraine and the West, use hybrid methods to destroy internal stability and solidarity in NATO and the EU, and offer "negotiations" again. In this regard, Ukraine and the West need to increase the production of arms and military equipment, mobilize economic opportunities and seek Russia's economic defeat through further sanctions aimed at limiting both Russia's technological and financial capabilities.

### ***Some Lessons from the Current Moment of the Russian-Ukrainian War***

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.dw.com/ru/v-budzete-rf-na-2024-god-zalozeny-rekordnye-voennye-rashody/a-67455374>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.russiafossiltracker.com/>

The experience of combat operations during the Russian-Ukrainian war shows that there are several main directions of development of modern armed forces to obtain the necessary combat capabilities to perform tasks on the battlefield.

In particular, we are talking about a network-centric model of armed forces development, which involves the integration of intelligence assets (in modern conditions, primarily drones), command posts and weapons into single networks. It is also critical to use an asymmetric approach, which is to prioritize quality over quantity. This is relevant not only for Ukraine, but also for all Western countries, which will always find it difficult to mobilize their economies and societies for the military compared to authoritarian regimes that can directly redirect budget funds to military items, dispose of production facilities regardless of ownership, and repressively send the maximum number of poorly trained and poorly equipped mobilized soldiers to the front.

Obviously, the requirements of asymmetry shape the expediency of changing priorities in the development and production of weapons and military equipment, with an emphasis on weapons systems that provide a technological, so-called "asymmetric" advantage of the armed forces on the battlefield (for example: UAVs, Sea Drones, Electronic Warfare, Long-Range Missiles etc).

In his article for The Economist published on 1.11.2023<sup>21</sup>, General Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, in fact, sums up the results of the current period of the war, talks about the lessons learned from the Ukrainian counter-offensive, and identifies areas that will help to escape the trap of positional warfare. According to him, however, due to many subjective and objective reasons, the war at the present stage is gradually moving to a positional form, a way out of which in the historical retrospect has always been difficult for both the Armed Forces and the state as a whole.

Zaluzhnyi notes that the lessons of the summer offensive of 2023 indicate the need to take into account a number of conditions for the successful completion of the tasks of the future offensive. At the same time, General Zaluzhnyi<sup>22</sup>, specifying the ways of obtaining these combat capabilities, he focused not on the traditional tools of warfare of the twentieth century, but on "asymmetric" new technologies, which, if combined, can provide a breakthrough on the battlefield and escape the trap of positional warfare in which Russia is trying to draw the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces believes that to succeed on the battlefield, troops must have air superiority, the ability to deeply penetrate minefields, effective counter-battery tools, and efficient electronic warfare and reconnaissance capabilities.

The transition of the war into a protracted phase requires further modernization of the mobilization system. Instead of the post-Soviet, mainly repressive system of mobilization, which does not take into account the peculiarities of the functioning of a modern democratic state and civil society. In this regard, the government of Ukraine, headed by the Ministry of

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<sup>21</sup> [https://infographics.economist.com/2023/ExternalContent/ZALUZHNYI\\_FULL\\_VERSION.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0Ls6yv1IsN-ppbnFuLGmccBWqt2Je3u5WCjGGTRIPiE1ixw8B\\_RMLCxeM](https://infographics.economist.com/2023/ExternalContent/ZALUZHNYI_FULL_VERSION.pdf?fbclid=IwAR0Ls6yv1IsN-ppbnFuLGmccBWqt2Je3u5WCjGGTRIPiE1ixw8B_RMLCxeM)

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.economist.com/by-invitation/2023/11/01/the-commander-in-chief-of-ukraines-armed-forces-on-how-to-win-the-war>



Defense, is taking steps to improve the mobilization system (creating a unified electronic database of the mobilization reserve; providing the system of basic military training for all Ukrainian; developing strong social package).

The development of the defense industrial base in both Ukraine and abroad is vital. Ukraine's defense-industrial cooperation with European countries should be primarily focused on achieving quick practical results in the shortest possible time to meet the urgent needs of the Armed Forces.

Projects within the framework of the European Defense Agency may be promising, including in the context of Ukraine's integration into the EU. However, this area requires efforts not only on the part of Ukraine, but also in terms of modernizing the functioning of the Agency itself. Taking into account the lessons of the Russian-Ukrainian war and focusing on a specific result in order to improve the efficiency of the EU's defense industry base could obviously become key principles of the EDA's modernization.

Against this backdrop, bilateral projects between individual Ukrainian and European companies to achieve concrete practical results in the shortest possible time may be the most optimal from the point of view of Ukraine's interests. The development of the Defense Industries Alliance format, which was launched during the first International Defense Industries Forum (DFNC1), both in global and regional versions (in particular, with EU and US, other regions), can become an effective mechanism for implementing defence industrial projects in the interests of the Ukrainian defense industry.





Rheinmetall's Panther KF51 main battle tank could be produced in Ukraine<sup>23</sup> (Source: Rheinmetall)<sup>24</sup>

In this regard, military-technical cooperation between Ukraine and Romania can become one of the drivers of the development of the EU's defense industrial base in the areas that are already being outlined against the background of the strategic rapprochement of the countries.

### ***Key takeaways***

After almost 2 years of Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine, the war is entering a decisive phase, characterized by the maximum strain on both the military and economic potentials of the opposing sides. The year 2024 could be critical for the further development of both Ukraine and Russia, as well as the global order. The success of either Ukraine or Russia in their strategic plans for 2024 could create conditions either for Ukraine to achieve its main goal of de-occupying its territory or for Russia to achieve its own goal of forcing Ukraine to sign a surrender.

Given this, Ukraine and its Western partners and friends should be prepared for an extremely difficult 2024, which will require maximum military and economic efforts. At the same time, it should be understood that if Russia's plans to "freeze the conflict" and "peace deal" (i.e., Ukraine's surrender on its own terms) fail after the US presidential election, the Kremlin will be able to continue the war of attrition. That is, if Russia does not succeed on the battlefield, it will try to exhaust Ukraine and the West, use hybrid methods to destroy internal stability and solidarity in NATO and the EU, and again offer "negotiations" (i.e., surrender).

Based on this reality, it is advisable for Ukraine and the West to take comprehensive steps to build the necessary capabilities, resources, technological, industrial and resource base, primarily to increase the production of weapons and military equipment, to mobilize economic opportunities and to seek Russia's economic defeat through further sanctions aimed at limiting both the technological and financial capabilities of the Russian Federation.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://mil.in.ua/en/news/rheinmetall-in-talks-with-ukraine-regarding-panther-tanks/>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.rheinmetall.com/en/products/tracked-vehicles/tracked-armoured-vehicles/panther-kf51-main-battle-tank>

**ISBN: 978-606-95859-1-7**



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