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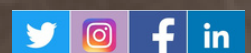
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RUSSO-UKRAINE WAR: SOME INFERENCES ON AIR AND AIR DEFENCE ASPECTS

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**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS
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ASPECTS
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ORGANISED BY CENJOWS ON 22 AUGUST 2024

Air and air defence battles have shaped the battlefield status for most wars. To understand this role of the air and air defence war, the speaker uses the Russo-Ukraine war as an example which has been continuing for more than 909 days. Russia launched their special military operations against Ukraine on 24 Feb 2022 with an understanding that it will get over in a few weeks. This operation was launched with strike aircrafts, attack helicopters, and long range SSMs that were later augmented with Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers (MBRL), guns and howitzers. The goal of this strike was to kill maximum assets on the ground and to demobilise the adversaries air defence systems that include sensors (eye and ears of the AD), control centres (used to select target and weapon to be used), and communication media (on which attack instructions ride). However, this effort fell short because the Ukrainian air assets, specially the control centres, were under concrete as a result of lessons learnt in 2014 from a similar attack by Russia. To add, precise targeting information of these control centres was lacking and neither was there any air space control. This disallowed air assets to be used effectively.

This provides a lesson to India. The first is that whenever a pre-emptive offensive strike is planned, it needs to be sudden, needs to maintain its surprise and ensure that the enemy does not get the-know of it. The second lesson is that target matching is essential in advance to ensure that the enemy assets are destroyed. The third lesson is that air space control needs to be defined so that maximum users can use the air space simultaneously without any hindrance. The second round of strike comprised of long unwieldy convoys to be protected by Russian Air Force even though the air defence of Ukraine was alive as the pre-emptive strikes of Russia were unsuccessful. What were the mistakes in this? The biggest was that the air defence was alive and the convoys were very long that disallowed effective communication between the front and the rear. The next was that air defence firing was being undertaken on the move rather than leap frogging which is the conventional practice. To add, counter drone weapons were missing. This resulted in the mauling of the convoys by three main weapons of Ukraine, viz drones, anti-tank

guided missile (ATGMs) and man portable weapon systems. These weapons caused extensive damage to the Russian Air Force.

This too provides a lesson to India. If the skies are contested, whatever be your strength, your mechanised forces on ground will face a serious threat from the enemy wherein your forces will be attacked by weapon of the choice of the enemy. On the offensive side, India needs to procure substantial No of manpads as they are a potent weapon. The success of armed drones by Houthis in Syria in 2018 for an offensive showed Ukraine that drones could be used as Russians lacked anti-drone weapons. The excessive use of drones has allowed Ukraine to establish a dedicated branch of their Army that operates drones which has caused serious damage to the Russian military assets. As a result of this lesson, India is placing thrust on acquiring and building anti-drone weapons.

Once Russia realised that their initial strikes were ineffective, they called in the Artillery and Rocket forces before the contact battle began. The lesson for India from this is that if things go wrong the way they did for Russia, the Artillery and the Rockets will need to be deployed. Similarly, if your defences are strong and multi-layered, one can take on the enemy whatever the strength of the enemy be. In addition, EW weapons are potent weapons in the present day warfare especially to address the threat from the drones.