



CENJOWS

WEB ARTICLE
WA/49/25
RUSSIA

Kyiv

UKRAINE WAR - HEADED TO NOWHERE EXCEPT FOR MORE CATASTROPHIC DISASTER

UKRAINE

LT GEN (DR) VK SAXENA, PVSM, AVSM, VSM

CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



CENJOWS

**UKRAINE WAR – HEADED TO
NOWHERE EXCEPT FOR MORE
CATASTROPHIC DISASTER**



**Lt Gen (Dr) VK Saxena, PVSM, AVSM,
VSM** is the former Director General Air
Defence, Indian Army.

Introduction

While the new dwarfed deadline of President Trump to President Putin from 50 days to 10-12 days to make peace or face crippling sanctions is making most of the headline's media today¹, this work analyses how the 'military future' of the war is heading nowhere except for a greater catastrophic disaster.



Figure 1
Changing Profile in Three years and Beyond

Russo-Ukraine war has shown so many hues, twists and turns in its currency of three years and counting that it is difficult to keep a count. Just to set the perspective for the analysis, here is a brief re-count: -

- The ominous beginning was made by a 'not fully successful' pre-emptive strike on 24 Feb 2022, marking the commencement of the so-called Special Military Operations by Russia.²
- The above pre-emptive strike with all the fire and fury not only failed to take out a majority of Ukrainian air assets on ground, but also, was not successful in killing the Ukrainian air defences by blinding their sensors and debilitating the air defence control nodes.³ No wonder therefore, that even with 1260 days and counting, the Ukrainian air space is still contested. A sharp contrast to Israeli strikes on Iran on 13 Jun 2025, declaring air superiority in 36-48 hours⁴.
- Following up on the above pre-emptive strike was a 'blitzkrieg' of sorts featuring hundreds of tanks, armoured personal carriers, Infantry fighting vehicles, multi-barrel rocket launchers, stretched out as long winding convoys headed to Kiev/Kharkiev.

- Owing to the volley of tactical mistakes, the said blitzkrieg took disproportionate casualties at the hands of a trio of Ukrainian weapons – drones, anti-tank missiles and laser guided rockets. ⁵
- Overwhelmed by the quantum of casualties to tanks and armoured vehicles in the headlong contact battle, Russia changed gear by bringing in heavy artillery that pulverized the targets before troops moved in to mop up the gains. ⁶
- Realising a chink in the Russian armour (lack of specific counter-drone weaponry in early days of war) Ukraine turned on the heat with increasing drone strikes; something that will become its 'Brahmastra' in taking the war inside Russia and sinking/damaging a whopping 26 Russian vessels in the black sea. ⁷
- After submerging most of Ukraine in cold and dark winter with many strikes on its energy grid 2023, Russian forces took up a multi-layered defensive line across the line Kupiansk, Kreminna, Bakhmut, Robotyne (see map below). The defences were so effective that these blunted and petered out the Ukrainian counteroffensive that aimed to do a blitzkrieg type of operation piercing through multiple axes and attempting to reach Sea of Azov and capture Mariupol. ⁸
- The times that followed saw bloody battles to on the eastern front – Bakhmut, Pokrovsk. Avdiivka. Odessa, Kharkiv to name a few. The Kursk incursion happened in Aug 2024⁹.
- A point of inflection came in May 2024 when US Germany and France on allowed Ukraine to use their long-range weapons in striking inside Russian territory.¹⁰ The momentum, intensity and ferocity of strikes on both sides increased manifold.

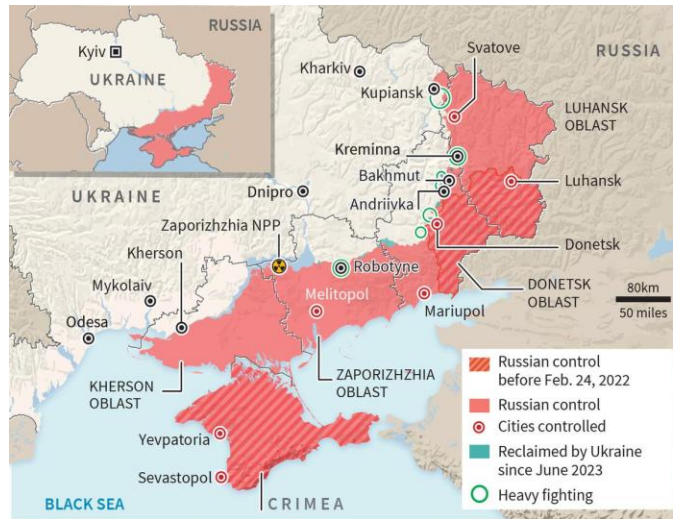


Figure 2: Battlefield Profile

Emerging Profile

From here on, it is possible to cut to the present day. Following points are stated:

- Russia is holding a very strong and dominant position on the Eastern front in Ukraine. Its troops continue to make gains every day. As this is being written, The Russians are getting close to capturing the cities of Pokrovosk and Kostyantynivka.
- Russians are continuing their waves of strikes using hundreds of drones and missiles as President Trumps deadline of 10-12 days wears thin.¹¹
- Regarding aid, with 65.9 Bn \$ provided in military assistance to Ukraine by US from Feb 2022 to Jan 2025,¹² there was a pause as the new President threated to halt all aid to Ukraine. In a dramatic turn of events President Trump making a U turn, announced on 14 Jul 2025 a \$652 military aid. This was tied in a strange arrangement wherein NATO will supply weapons to Ukraine from their stockpiles under this package and will later buy replacements from US.



Figure 3

- This package of \$652 Nm adds up to \$310 Mn promised in May 2025, generally online of a total support of \$30 Bn over three years as promised by the previous President.¹³
- UK and EU have also stood solidly behind Ukraine. UK has pledged £12.8 billion (USD 16.9 bn) since Feb 2022 while the EU has committed €11.1 Bn (USD 12.7 BN). NATO in Jul 2024 agreed for a baseline funding of a minimum of €40 Bn within 2024-25.¹⁴The aid flow continues.
- Facing the onslaught of relentless Russian air strikes the most severe deficiencies being felt by Ukraine are of air defence weapons. The latest weapon supplies of ATACMs, HIMARS, Patriots and Storm Shadow missiles in the period Apr-Jul 2025 from US and western sources missiles have given a much-needed breather to Ukraine.
- Strikes by drones, missiles and rockets are continuing from both sides but Russia is in far stronger position which as on Feb 2025 is having about 18% of all Ukrainian territories under its occupation.¹⁵

- While Russians have taken back almost all (1100 sq km) of Kursk area which Ukraine had captured in a sudden move, Ukrainians are still present in the area.

16

Mirage of Meeting Ground

Just sample the sweeping demands of President Putin for a cease fire negotiation to begin: -¹⁷

- Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson be recognized as Russian territories. It is interesting to note that while Russia has annexed major portion of the above territories, it is NOT in complete control of any. That notwithstanding, it is demanding even un-captured territories to be turned over to Russia. Strange indeed!
- Guarantees that Ukraine will never join NATO.
- Lifting of sanctions against Russia.

Earlier there was even a demand for regime change as President Zelenskyy as a leader to negotiate with was not acceptable.

Now sample the demands of President Zelenskyy

- Full withdrawal of Russian troops.
- Return of prisoners as well as kidnapped Ukrainian children.
- Prosecution of Russian leaders for war crimes.
- Security guarantees that will ensure prevention of further attacks by Russia.

While the above positions were as stated in Jun 2024, these have been put through many a round of negotiations with the US hierarchy starting from the President downwards to diplomats and special envoys (details not covered)

That said, nothing much has actually changed as regards the core-demands of Russia which actually present a NO GO situation. While that happens, the war ravages with Russia inching forward on the bloody trail of death and destruction.

On sanctions/and deadlines

As 10-12 days ultimatum by President Trump runs out on 08 Aug it is slated to open the door to greater sanctions, and worse, the secondary sanctions to be slapped on countries that purchase Russian energy! How this imbroglio will militarily affect the ongoing conflict? Here are some relevant points: -

- Russian spokesperson Dmitry Peskov has stated on record that Russia which is already operating under huge US sanctions has built a sort of immunity against them (implying thereby that more sanctions will do little).¹⁸
- Russia has already played down the nuclear rhetoric that got into traction as President Trump (reacting to the remarks of a former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev) stated that he has ordered two nuclear submarines closer to Russia.
- Mr. Peskov clearly stated that there is a need to be 'very cautious' while pedaling nuclear rhetoric.¹⁹ It is the sense of the author that nothing much is likely to come out from such irresponsible sabre rattling as regards the future of the military conflict.
- Also, no earthshaking impact is expected in the military dimension of war during the forthcoming visit Mr. Steve Witkoff to Kremlin on 08 Aug 2025.

Some final reflections

Following points are made: -

- Militarily the war ravages relentlessly with both sides launching attacks on each other with drones and missiles.
- Russia is in a hugely superior position with almost 18% of all the Ukrainian land under its occupation. Besides it continues to make gains on a daily basis.
- Resumption of military aid by US to Ukraine will only prolong the misery by giving sustainability to Ukraine to continue the fight in which Russia currently has huge advantage which is unlikely to be tipped over.
- The combined might of EU and US aid even at their peak proved to be insufficient in delivering a decisive victory for Ukraine. The failed counter offensive in Jun 2023 is a case in point. The same is likely to be the status in the foreseeable future.

- The blood-soaked ground under the Ukrainian soldiers is slipping out excruciatingly, inch-by-inch leaving in its aftermath an ever-mounting toll of death destruction and untold human disaster.
- The reciprocal demands for ushering peace by the warring nations are so catastrophically locked in a TOTAL COLLISION that there is very little chance to make peace any time in the foreseeable future.
- Unguarded nuclear rhetoric of President Trump notwithstanding, no western country has till date crossed the red line of threatening Russia with a nuclear muscle. On the flip side, the world is quite used to President Putin playing the nuclear card off and on.
- No number of extra sanctions on Russia is likely to dampen its military might and the pace of the ongoing operations. President Trump is on record to say that financial penalties on Russia may or may not work.²⁰
- Analysts have opined that at the current level of sanctions and battlefield intensity; Russia will be capable to maintain the momentum of war at the same pace for the next three years.²¹
- The much-touted secondary sanctions on other countries like India China, Brazil for buying Russian oil are actually a lose-lose proposition.²²
- The big question is- can the world really manage without Russian oil export? The current short answer to this poser is No.²³
- In any case even if this naïve and ill-fated route of punishing entire countries with sanctions is slapped, by the time its impact is felt in the military pace of the campaign, it will be years down the line, by which time the canvas would have changed
- India's official reply calling the US threat unjustified and unreasonable actually drives some sense into the hollow threat and gives a glimmer of things to come.
- India has stated that its imports of Russian oil are driven by economic necessity after the markets got disrupted due to Ukraine conflict. It quotes that it was US that actually encouraged India to buy Russian oil to usher market stability. The reply also reminds that both US and EU maintain significant trade with Russia.²⁴

The bottom line is that the current imbroglio of tariffs, more sanctions and secondary sanctions are unlikely to impact the pace and intensity of the Russian military operations in the battlefield.

The caption – Headed to nowhere except catastrophic destruction thus finds its relevance.

DISCLAIMER

The paper is author's individual scholastic articulation and does not necessarily reflect the views of CENJOWS. The author certifies that the article is original in content, unpublished and it has not been submitted for publication/ web upload elsewhere and that the facts and figures quoted are duly referenced, as needed and are believed to be correct.

References

¹ "Donald Trump Urges Russia-Ukraine Peace, Gives Putin 10–12 Days." *The Hindu*. Accessed July 31, 2025. <https://www.thehindu.com>

² Feb 24, 2022, the Day Russia Invaded Ukraine." *France 24*. Accessed July 31, 2025. <https://www.france24.com>.

³ "Comparative Analysis of Israel Air Campaign." *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Accessed July 31, 2025. <https://www.vifindia.org>

⁴ "Iranian Air Defences: Second Fall in a Row." *Centre for Land Warfare Studies*. Accessed August 1, 2025. <https://www.claws.in>

⁵ *ibid*

⁶ "Changing Shades of Russian Weapon Deployment in Ukraine War." *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Accessed August 1, 2025. <https://www.vifindia.org>.

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ "2023 Ukrainian Counteroffensive." *Wikipedia*. Accessed August 1, 2025. <https://en.m.wikipedia.org>.

⁹ The Kursk Incursion – An Analysis." *Vivekananda International Foundation*. Accessed August 2, 2025. <https://www.vifindia.org>.

-
- ¹⁰ "Germany Allows Ukraine to Strike Targets Inside Russia with German Weapons." *Politico*. Accessed August 3, 2025. <https://www.politico.eu>.
- ¹¹ "Ukraine War – Latest News and Updates." *BBC News*. Accessed August 3, 2025. <https://www.bbc.com>.
- ¹² "Military Assistance to Ukraine." *UK Parliament Commons Library*. Accessed August 3, 2025. <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk>.
- ¹³ "The Trump Administration Boosts Immediate Military Aid." *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. Accessed August 3, 2025. <https://www.csis.org>.
- ¹⁴ 12 *ibid*
- ¹⁵ "Russian Occupied Territories of Ukraine." *Wikipedia*. Accessed August 3, 2025. <https://en.wikipedia.org>.
- ¹⁶ "What are Putin's conditions for a ceasefire in Ukraine?" at www.aljazeera.com. Accessed on 03 Aug 2025.
- ¹⁷ "Peace negotiations in the Russian invasion of Ukraine," at www.en.m.wikipedia.org. Accessed on 04 Aug 2025.
- ¹⁸ Ukraine war briefing, Kremlin says it has immunity to US sanctions," at www.theguardian.com. Accessed on 04 Aug 2025
- ¹⁹ "Kremlin plays down Trump's nuclear rhetoric," at www-bbc-com-ampproject.org. Accessed on 04 Aug 2025
- ²⁰ Trump Admits Financial Penalties on Russia May or May Not Work." *The New York Times*. Accessed August 5, 2025. <https://www.nytimes.com>.
- ²¹ What the Next Round of Sanctions Against Russia Will Look Like." *Foreign Policy*. Accessed August 5, 2025. <https://www.foreignpolicy.com>.
- ²² Trump's Secondary Sanctions on Russian Oil Is a Lose-Lose Proposition." *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. Accessed August 5, 2025. <https://www.carnegieendowment.org>.
- ²³ *ibid*
- ²⁴ "Read full text of India's statement calling out US, EU over trade with Russia," at www.indiatoday.in. . Accessed on 05 Aug 2025.