

The HOPE Future Project Articles

Facilitating the Groundwork for Spaces Where People Can Grow

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A Concern About the Continued Expenses from the War In Ukraine

Introduction

However unlikely or speculative, I have to address this aspect of the war in Ukraine—one that I do not see mentioned in the news. But before I go into my concerns about this issue, some background is needed. I acknowledge the complexity of this topic. Nevertheless, I think it is prudent to consider the outcome of a prolonged war in Ukraine. The reasons for the war are complex and often forgotten, shaped by geopolitical, historical, and economic factors. While perspectives vary depending on one's location and affiliations, my focus is not on justifying the war or the role of the EU and NATO, or any other contributor pro or against. I recognize that there are no easy solutions.

To understand the war, we must first consider its historical context. Ukraine has long been a challenged region, serving as a strategic buffer between Russia and Europe. Following its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country has struggled to define its national identity amid deep ties with Russia. The divide between western Ukraine, favoring European integration, and eastern Ukraine, maintaining stronger Russian connections, fueled internal tensions.

The expansion of NATO and the EU eastward has been a significant factor. Since the Soviet Union's collapse, NATO has incorporated former Eastern Bloc countries, a move perceived by Russia as a threat to its security. Ukraine's increasing Western alignment, particularly after the 2014 Maidan Uprising, was seen by Russia as a direct challenge to its influence. This led to the annexation of Crimea and ongoing conflict in the Donbas region.

Beyond the battlefield, economic and political stakes are immense. Ukraine has long been a key transit country for Russian gas, and energy politics have played a major role in the conflict. The war has also severely impacted global markets, particularly grain exports, exacerbating

food shortages and economic instability worldwide. Sanctions on Russia have altered trade dynamics, affecting energy supplies, commodity prices, and financial systems.

The conflict presents several potential outcomes. A prolonged stalemate could leave Ukraine in a state of unresolved warfare for years, much like other post-Soviet disputes. A negotiated settlement remains uncertain, as it would require significant concessions. There is also the risk of escalation beyond Ukraine, drawing in NATO more directly or destabilizing the broader European region. Regardless of military developments, the economic and geopolitical consequences will shape global alliances for decades to come.

In essence: there are no ideal solutions. This war is not just about Ukraine but about the shifting balance of power in the world. Its outcome will redefine global politics, security, and economics for generations, making it one of the most consequential conflicts of our time.

The Inconsistent War Strategy of Russia

Now, I am not a strategic war correspondent and have not followed every strategic move in this war. Regardless, certain decisions by Russia have puzzled me.

One of the most striking aspects has been the continued reliance on outdated military equipment.¹ Given Russia's vast resources and technological capabilities, why has it deployed aging tanks and Cold War-era weapons rather than more modern and sophisticated systems? This raises questions about logistical constraints, industrial limitations, or strategic deception.

Furthermore, the lack of diplomatic or innovative solutions to resolve the war stands out. In an era where economic and cyber warfare have become dominant tools of global power struggles, why has Russia continued with a largely conventional military approach?

The absence of 21st-century conflict resolution strategies suggests either a miscalculation or a deeper geopolitical intent that remains unclear.

These important and valid questions about Russia's military strategy in Ukraine must be explored.

¹ Russia has deployed outdated military equipment during the conflict in Ukraine. Notably, in February 2023, Russia reactivated and deployed BTR-50 armored personnel carriers, first introduced in the 1950s. By December 2024, visual confirmations indicated Russia had lost at least ten BTR-50s in combat. en.wikipedia.org

Russia has utilized Soviet-era T-54 and T-55 tanks, originally produced in 1945, and D-1 howitzer armaments from the 1940s, reflecting a reliance on older military hardware in the ongoing conflict. <https://www.ibtimes.com/russia-using-soviet-era-tanks-weapons-ukraine-older-soldiers-who-use-them-3692417>

Perhaps some of these key factors could explain these decisions:

- **Logistical and Industrial Constraints:**

Russia's reliance on outdated equipment suggests possible production limitations. Modern military hardware, such as T-90 tanks and next-generation missile systems, require advanced manufacturing capabilities that may have been affected by sanctions, resource shortages, or inefficiencies within Russia's defense industry. Reports indicate that Russia has struggled to replenish its stockpiles of precision-guided munitions, pushing it to rely more on older, less sophisticated systems.

- **Strategic Deception or Cost-Efficiency?**

Some analysts argue that Russia's deployment of older tanks and weapons is a deliberate strategy to conserve its most advanced systems for potential escalation. Using surplus Cold War-era equipment could be a way to sustain prolonged conflict without exhausting cutting-edge technology. Additionally, outdated equipment is cheaper to maintain and produce, allowing Russia to field large numbers of units without stretching its economic resources too thin.

- **Conventional Warfare in the 21st Century:**

Russia's choice to pursue a largely traditional military approach—relying on artillery bombardments, ground offensives, and territorial occupation—suggests an adherence to Soviet-era doctrine. This approach contrasts with the West's emphasis on network-centric warfare, drone operations, and hybrid tactics. However, Russia has employed cyber warfare, disinformation campaigns, and economic pressure in parallel with conventional tactics. The question is whether these efforts have been as effective as expected or if they indicate an overestimation of their impact.

- **Failure of Diplomatic or Innovative Solutions:**

The lack of serious diplomatic efforts from Russia may signal a belief that only military dominance can achieve its strategic goals. Alternatively, this could indicate a broader geopolitical play—perhaps aiming to reshape international power dynamics by testing the limits of Western intervention, rather than seeking a quick resolution.

Now, the logical analysis of this would be that Russia's reliance on outdated equipment and conventional warfare suggests a mix of industrial limitations, cost-effective strategy, and a deep-rooted military doctrine that prioritizes attritional warfare. The absence of modern diplomatic or innovative conflict-resolution methods may indicate either strategic miscalculations or a long-term geopolitical agenda that remains uncertain. If this approach

persists, it may define future conflicts as a return to drawn-out wars of endurance rather than rapid technological engagements.

Ukraine as a Dumping Ground?

And yet, there is more to this. We must not forget that the EU, and the countries that have donated to the war, similarly have donated older military equipment.²

What comes to mind is that Ukraine appears to have become a scrapyards or dumping ground for outdated military equipment. If this is the case, the immediate question is: why? And what follows next?

From a purely strategic perspective, supplying older military hardware makes sense. It allows donor countries to support Ukraine without significantly depleting their own modern arsenals. Many EU nations, as well as the United States, have taken the opportunity to phase out Cold War-era equipment that was already in the process of being retired or replaced. The war provides a justification for these transfers, as the weapons still hold some battlefield utility, even if they are no longer cutting-edge. Additionally, it allows Western nations to test the effectiveness of legacy systems in modern warfare conditions without directly engaging in combat themselves.

However, this also raises deeper concerns. If Ukraine is primarily being armed with outdated and increasingly vulnerable equipment, what does this mean for its long-term military viability? Older tanks, armored personnel carriers, and artillery systems are often no match for Russia's evolving strategies and more modernized weaponry.

² European Union (EU) member states have contributed older military equipment to Ukraine as part of their ongoing support, a strategy that allows them to aid Ukraine while balancing their own defense priorities.

Bulgaria announced in July 2024 that it would supply surplus military equipment and ammunition, with Defense Minister Atanas Zapryanov emphasizing that this would not compromise Bulgaria's defense capabilities.

Slovakia followed a similar approach, transferring 13 retired MiG-29 fighter jets in March 2023, along with Soviet-era S-300PMU air defense systems and Mil Mi-series helicopters. The Netherlands provided Ukraine with YPR-765 armored personnel carriers, which had been phased out of its own military service, with Ukrainian forces putting them into operation by May 2022.

Estonia also contributed significantly by donating its entire stock of FH70 155mm towed howitzers in January 2023, offering crucial artillery support.

Denmark has similarly supplied Ukraine with older military assets, including CAESAR self-propelled howitzers, Leopard 1A5 main battle tanks, and M113 armored personnel carriers. Additionally, Denmark pioneered the "Danish Model," a funding mechanism that directly supports Ukrainian defense manufacturers, enabling the procurement of self-propelled artillery systems and long-range drones. These donations illustrate how EU nations are repurposing decommissioned or surplus military hardware to sustain Ukraine's defense while maintaining their own strategic reserves.

Relying on outdated equipment may help Ukraine sustain the fight in the short term, but it could lead to a war of attrition that Ukraine is ill-equipped to endure. Moreover, there is the question of what happens when these stockpiles are exhausted—will Ukraine eventually receive truly modern systems in meaningful numbers, or will it be left with an overburdened and obsolete military infrastructure?

There is also a broader geopolitical dimension to consider. If Ukraine is being used as a proving ground for phasing out older Western military stockpiles, does this suggest a planned restructuring of NATO's own forces? Are these donations simply the prelude to a new arms race, where Western countries upgrade their own militaries under the guise of helping Ukraine? If so, is Ukraine benefiting from this arrangement, or is it merely a battlefield for larger global realignments?

Ultimately, the question is not just why Ukraine is receiving outdated equipment but what this pattern indicates about the future trajectory of the war. Is the West truly invested in Ukraine's long-term success, or is Ukraine being used as a temporary buffer, a place where older weapons go to be expended in a conflict with no clear endgame? If Ukraine survives this war, will it be left with a sustainable military force, or will it need to rebuild from the ground up? These are the questions that remain unanswered, but they will define the next phase of the conflict.

Prolonging to hollow out the financial environment in the EU and the US?

Again, these are my thoughts. As I see it, Russia is playing a whole other game. A game of prolonging to hollow out the European economy, if not the entire Western economy. If we consider the broader economic implications of a prolonged war, it becomes evident that Russia may be playing out a different strategy—one focused on draining the financial stability of the European Union and, by extension, the broader Western economic system.

Sustaining Ukraine's defense requires a continuous flow of financial aid, military support, and economic assistance, all of which place immense pressure on the EU and the US. As the war drags on, Western nations are not only depleting their military stockpiles but also diverting vast sums of money toward defense expenditures, subsidies, and energy restructuring.

Meanwhile, Russia, despite facing its own economic sanctions, has adapted by deepening its trade ties with China, India, and other non-Western partners, creating alternative economic channels that allow it to endure. If the conflict continues indefinitely, the West may find itself

financially overextended, with rising debt, economic stagnation, and public frustration over the costs of war.

In this scenario, Russia does not need to “win” in the traditional sense—it simply needs to hold out long enough for Western economic fatigue to set in, potentially leading to political divisions, social unrest, and a weakening of transatlantic unity. If this is indeed part of Russia’s long-term strategy, then the real battlefield may not be in Ukraine but in the financial and political stability of the Western world itself. Once the Western alliance reaches a financial and political breaking point, Russia may be strategically positioned to shift its approach.

Up until now, the war has largely been fought with a mix of outdated and modernized Soviet-era equipment, both on the Ukrainian and Russian sides. However, if the economic strain on Europe and the US escalates to a level where continued military and financial support for Ukraine becomes unsustainable, Russia could introduce its more advanced weaponry, shifting the balance of power on the battlefield. At that stage, Ukraine, having exhausted its Western-backed resources, would face a renewed offensive with superior firepower, leaving it in a significantly weakened position.

Alternatively, rather than launching a full-scale escalation, Russia could leverage the West’s exhaustion as a political opportunity. With European economies hollowed out by defense spending and rising costs, and with public discontent mounting over the prolonged conflict, Russia may find itself in a much stronger position at the negotiation table. Instead of needing a decisive military victory, Moscow could push for a settlement on its own terms, securing international recognition of annexed territories or even demanding Ukraine’s formal reintegration into Russia’s sphere of influence. At that point, Western leaders, eager to cut their losses and restore economic stability, might have little choice but to accept a deal they would have outright rejected in the earlier years of the war.

This raises the question: was Russia’s strategy all along to endure, outlast, and then strike from a position of strength once the West had exhausted itself? If so, then the real war has never been just about territory—it has been about economic endurance and geopolitical patience, a game in which time itself is a weapon.

To Sum Up

This article presents a new perspective on the broader geopolitical and economic dimensions of the conflict. While mainstream narratives often focus on the immediate battles, territorial

gains, and military tactics, the long-term economic endurance of the West versus Russia is an equally critical factor.

The notion that Russia is deliberately prolonging the war to hollow out the European and American economies aligns with classic asymmetric warfare strategies. While Russia has certainly suffered economic setbacks due to sanctions and war expenditures, its more centralized economy, state control over key industries, and alliances with non-Western powers (such as China, India, and Iran) may allow it to withstand prolonged economic pressure more effectively than Europe, which is more reliant on interconnected financial markets and sustained industrial output.

The EU, for instance, has had to navigate rising energy prices, inflation, and increased military expenditures, which have put significant strain on national budgets. Whether the US will continue to pour billions into Ukraine at a time when its own domestic economic challenges—rising debt, political polarization, and global de-dollarization efforts—is also up for debate.³

If Russia's strategy is indeed to endure long enough for the Western financial system to crack under the weight of sustained war spending, then the real battle is not just being fought in the trenches but in the halls of finance ministries and central banks. A prolonged war could weaken the Western bloc's ability to maintain global economic dominance, forcing painful trade-offs between continued military aid, domestic stability, and long-term economic security.

³ As of March 4, 2025, the United States has officially suspended its military aid to Ukraine. This decision, announced by President Donald Trump, has raised concerns among European allies and defense markets. In response to this suspension, European leaders have expressed apprehension about the potential implications for Ukraine's defense capabilities and regional stability. The sudden halt in aid, which includes critical supplies like Patriot air defense system munitions, was implemented without prior notification to NATO allies. European officials fear that this move could embolden Russian aggression and diminish prospects for peace in the region.

Financial markets have reacted to these developments with notable volatility. European defense companies, anticipating increased military spending by EU nations to compensate for the gap left by the U.S., have seen their share prices rise significantly. Conversely, U.S. defense stocks have experienced declines due to concerns over potential budget cuts and reduced foreign military sales.

This suspension marks a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy and has prompted discussions among NATO members regarding alternative support mechanisms for Ukraine. The European Union is considering measures to bolster its own defense capabilities and provide direct assistance to Ukraine to ensure the country's resilience against ongoing threats.

In summary, the cessation of U.S. military aid to Ukraine has introduced new challenges for Western allies, necessitating swift and coordinated responses to uphold regional security and support Ukraine's sovereignty.

Whether Russia will eventually introduce more advanced weaponry or shift to a full-scale offensive once the West is weakened is still uncertain. It's also possible that the goal is not outright victory but positioning itself as an unavoidable power in any post-war negotiation. If the West reaches a point where its economic or political cohesion falters, Russia could indeed leverage that moment to secure its territorial claims without needing a decisive military breakthrough.

Ultimately, if Russia's game is one of patience—betting that time, rather than brute force, will bring Ukraine and its allies to the negotiating table under terms more favorable to Moscow. The real question is: can the West sustain its current level of economic and military commitment long enough to outlast Russia, or will it reach a breaking point first.

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