

Introduction to Special Issue of Security Challenges: The Multi- Dimensional Aspects of the Russo-Ukraine War

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Introduction to Special Issue of *Security Challenges*: The Multi-Dimensional Aspects of the Russo-Ukraine War

On 24 February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine in a massive conventional escalation of the War which began in 2014 as a low to medium-level war that lasted until 2016 with the defeat of Ukrainian forces and the loss of the Crimea peninsula and some lands along the border between the two states. By way of contrast, the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 and the resulting hi-intensity conventional war, which is the biggest and deadliest war in Europe since World War II, has killed tens of thousands on both sides and resulted in immense destruction of property and infrastructure. It has shaken Europe, whose leaders and populace had become accustomed to a pacific continent during the Cold War despite the massive build-up of conventional forces by both NATO and the Warsaw Pact along the famed ‘Fulda Gap,’ and whose people enjoyed a ‘peace dividend’ in the post-Cold War era. This ‘peace dividend’ resulted in a decline of defence budgets and deterioration in military readiness in many European countries. The war in Ukraine has re-focused attention on rebuilding military capabilities and increasing readiness. Contrary to popular belief, the Russo-Ukraine War was not the first large conventional war in Europe since World War II. There was the bloodletting associated with the unravelling of Yugoslavia – a nation-state of three disparate religious but ethnically related groups coexisting uneasily alongside one another until they could no longer do so. However, while the Yugoslav war shocked European sensibilities because of the brutality displayed by all sides, there was a supercilious sentiment that after all, this was the Balkans where such things happened; moreover, the Yugoslav conflict was an internal war of a state that had failed. Efforts were geared to trying to contain the implications and spill-over and to shape the contours of the emerging post-Yugoslavia states.

The Russo-Ukraine War was something of a different magnitude altogether. It went from a relatively low and medium-level war between 2014-2016 to a deadly and costly high-intensity war of attrition, widespread destruction, and atrocities from 2022 to the present. The military analyses that have appeared since February 24, 2022, refer to it as ‘high intensity war’ or in French – as it seems the French have written the most detailed and extensive analyses of this concept – *la guerre de haute intensite*. It is a term that co-exists uneasily with the term conventional war. Until the outbreak of the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2022 between Armenia and Azerbaijan and the Russo-Ukraine War, conventional war as a phenomenon seemed to have been written off as part of our future by many luminaries ranging from General Sir Rupert Smith of the British Army to military historians and peace conflict academics such as Dutch-Israeli Martin Van Creveld and Briton Mary Kaldor respectively.

However, conventional war is back.¹ It accompanies unconventional war in which non-state actors, militias, and proxies play their respective roles in war. What we have seen in recent conventional wars is high and rapid attrition of personnel, material, and munitions. This has been on a scale which has called into question such

¹ See Ahmed S. Hashim, “Conventional War is Dead! Long Live Conventional War?” *Australian Journal of Defence and Strategic Studies*, Vol.5, No.2 (November 2023), 219-245.

critical things as supplies, sustainability of forces, will to fight, and national resilience. The war's domestic impact in Ukraine and Russia has been substantial. Russian forces have been responsible for mass civilian casualties and for torturing captured Ukrainian soldiers. By June 2022, about 8 million Ukrainians had been internally displaced. More than 8.2 million had fled the country by May 2023, becoming Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. Its environmental impact has been on full display. Extensive environmental damage, widely described as ecocide, contributed to food crises worldwide. Its international impact and consequences have been significant in grand strategic and military terms, not least of all in the Indo-Pacific region.

This is a special issue of *Security Challenges*, and the products will be published online. It is constructed on a 'rolling basis' in which papers by individual authors are uploaded as they are completed. This special issue: "Multi-Dimensional Aspects of the Russo-Ukraine War, 2022-Present," is divided into distinct parts.

Part I will address the origins and causes of the Russo-Ukraine War.

Origins and Causes

The two neighbours have a lot of history; the causes can be divided into the underlying and the proximate causes of the war. Beginning with the Greek historian Thucydides over thousand years ago, historians have traditionally divided causes of specific wars into those underlying political, ideological, cultural, social and historical factors that promote conflict between societies and states and constitute a pathway towards war and those factors – proximate – that constitute more recent drivers of a war. Traditionally, there has been a tendency to downplay the importance of the proximate causes of a war relative to the underlying ones. After all, the arms races between European powers prior to World War I was more important than the assassination of the Archduke Ferdinand of Austria in Sarajevo in the drive towards an all-out war.

However, the proximate causes of the Russo-Ukraine Wars – 2014-2016 and 2022-Present – are important factors in driving Russia to wage war on its neighbour. In a sense, the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 was brought about by the decision of the Ukraine Soviet Socialist Republic, the second largest republic in the USSR after Russia. The Ukrainian referendum to become independent was a shock to Soviet ruler, Mikhail Gorbachev, the rest of the Russian elite and the Russian population. In this context, the proximate causes of the war may have originated from within the context of the 'testy' relationship between Moscow and Kyiv following Ukraine's independence after the unravelling of the Soviet Union, from the geopolitical dynamics of Ukraine's relationship with Russia and its European neighbours, and from within the pathology of Russia's leader, Vladimir Putin.²

² Some political scientists and historians may argue with some justification that Ukraine's independence and the internal dynamics of Ukrainian politics after independence and particularly as it affected its bilateral relationship with Russia, constitute underlying causes. In this context, Russia's efforts to overturn the 'Euro-Maidan Revolution,' which resulted in pulling Ukraine away from the Russian orbit and toward the European one, which is seen as a key element in Russia's eventual response occurred exactly a decade ago. Nonetheless, the causes of the Russo-Ukraine War, both underlying and proximate have been dealt with by a huge literature that continues to expand as fast the literature on the trajectory and lessons of the actual war itself. The literature on the causes ranges in quality, but see in particular, the incomparable analysis of Serhii Plokhi, *The Russo-Ukrainian War*, London: Allen Lane (2023), particularly Chapters 1-4.

The eminent American political scientist, John Mearsheimer, gave a speech after the war had broken out in which he blamed his country and the west for the outbreak of the war. This is what he stated:

First, the United States is principally responsible for causing the Ukraine crisis. This is not to deny that Putin started the war and that he is responsible for Russia's conduct of the war. Nor is it to deny that America's allies bear some responsibility, but they largely follow Washington's lead on Ukraine. My central claim is that the United States has pushed forward policies toward Ukraine that Putin and other Russian leaders see as an existential threat, a point they have made repeatedly for many years. Specifically, I am talking about America's obsession with bringing Ukraine into NATO and making it a Western bulwark on Russia's border. The Biden administration was unwilling to eliminate that threat through diplomacy and indeed in 2021 recommitted the United States to bringing Ukraine into NATO. Putin responded by invading Ukraine on Feb. 24 of this year.³

It was a controversial stance, and it generated a fierce response on the part of some observers, both western and Ukrainian who found it offensive; nonetheless, it contributed to further academic analyses of the causes/origins of the war. Despite Mearsheimer's effort to extol the virtues of strategic empathy concerning the security fears of a seemingly powerful nuclear-armed state, virtually nobody in the west was interested in understating Russia's fears or giving much credence to them. As for the United States and the European states, they 'doubled down' and contributed to the prolongation of the war by active material and moral support to Ukraine, which was suddenly fully incorporated into the western orbit. Russia's assault on Ukraine has helped reinforce ages old European 'Russophobia,' that goes back several centuries.⁴

Another equally eminent American scholar, Joseph Nye, a leading IR thinker, 'muddied the waters' by suggesting the causes of war can be divided into the underlying, intermediate, and immediate; he proceeded to apply this to the Russo-Ukraine War in an interesting piece in late 2022.⁵ Whatever, the merits or lack thereof of Mearsheimer's point or Nye's approach, given that it was Russia which initiated war with Ukraine, the papers here will deal primarily with why Russia has been historically obsessed with its smaller neighbour for much of modern and contemporary history. Putin's case for war, however unsympathetically we may view it, was developed over the course of the contentious bilateral relationship between Russia and post-independent Ukraine and ultimately laid it out in stark terms in days before and during the Russian invasion.⁶ The role of a national leader and national elite in pushing for war for whatever political or ideological reasons cannot be discounted in discussions of the causes/origins of war, both in general and specific terms.⁷ In this context, journalist Philip Short's monumental biography of Vladimir Putin provides the most complete explanation of Putin's state of mind vis-à-vis Ukraine.

³ John J. Mearsheimer, "The Causes and Consequences of the Ukraine War," *Russia Matters*, (June 23, 2022); <https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/causes-and-consequences-ukraine-war>

⁴ On the emergence of Russophobia in European history, see Michael Peck, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41887071>; for a good piece that deconstructs Russophobia, see Catherine Brown, <https://catherinebrown.org/deconstructing-russophobia/>

⁵ Joseph Nye, "What Caused the Ukraine War?" *Project Syndicate* (October 04, 2023); <https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/what-caused-russia-ukraine-war-by-joseph-s-nye-2022-10>

⁶ See Max Fisher, "Putin's Case for war, Annotated," *The New York Times*, (February 24, 2022); <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/24/world/Europe/putin-ukraine-speech.html>

⁷ See Nigel Gould-Davies, "Putin's Strategic Failure," *Survival*, Vol.64, No.2 (2022); 7-16; Anna Reid, "Putin's War on History: The Thousand Year Struggle over Ukraine," *Foreign Affairs*, 101, no.3 (May/June 2022), 54-63.

Part II addresses the character of the war. This is a very important issue to address for a wide-range of reasons.

The Character of the War

First, was the world surprised that Russia would launch a massive invasion of its neighbour? There was every indication and warning from intelligence sources that Russia was readying forces to go into Ukraine throughout 2021.⁸ So why was there considerable reluctance to believe that they would do it? Second, Russia went to war in February 2022 expecting a short and victorious war. The “fallacy of the short war” or optimism bias is not unique to the Russians. It has occurred too often throughout history to many countries.⁹ Indeed, one of the most infamous cases involved Russia itself when Russian leader Joseph Stalin and his political cronies thought that an invasion of tiny neighbour Finland – some of whose land the Soviet Union coveted – would be a ‘walk in the park.’ This, despite the reservations of a handful of senior officers who indicated that the Soviet army was not ready for full-scale war. They were, however, none too eager to express their reservations as that could have been detrimental to their careers or their lives.

Specifically, why did Putin and his generals believe that they would be able to ‘walk over’ the Ukrainians? Indeed, why did external powers and their elites and analysts believe the same? Third, the character of this war has generated considerable interest and extensive analyses. Too often academics (and military officers) confuse the two distinct concepts known as the *nature* and *character* of war.¹⁰ The nature of war pertains to its *essence* as an activity in which chaos, uncertainty, friction, destruction, death, and fear reign supreme. And such is the case in the Russo-Ukraine War as in all other wars. In recent years, some academics and practitioners – senior officers – have put forward the viewpoint that Emerging Disruptive Technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, and Quantum Computing – will actually change the *nature* of war. While this is an issue that has become worthy of debate as we address the relationship between humans and machines in war, it is an incontrovertible fact that the Russo-Ukraine War was not one of EDTs. To be sure, they have made their presence known in this war, but the highlights of this war lie in other arenas.

This brings us to addressing its dominant *characteristics*. The character of war pertains to how and why each side fights the way it does, what technologies are used and how, and what changes and what remains the same. On one level, the war that erupted in 2014 and lasted until 2016 (First Russo-Ukraine War) was a low to medium-level war that witnessed a mix of conventional and unconventional forces operating alongside each other. The war that erupted in 2022 with the Russian

⁸ <https://www.politico.com/news/magazine/2023/02/24/russia-ukraine-war-oral-history-00083757>

⁹ See Ryan Easterday, “The Fallacy of the Short, Sharp War: Optimism Bias and the Abuse of History,” *The Strategy Bridge*, (March 16, 2023);

¹⁰ For recent interesting discussions of this debate, see Christopher Mewett, “Understand War’s Enduring Nature Alongside Its Changing Character,” *War on the Rocks*, (January 21, 2014); [https://warontherocks.com/2014/01/understanding-wars-enduring-nature-alongside-its-changing-character/#:~:text=War's%20nature%20is%20violent%2C%20interactive,manifests%20in%20the%20real%20world](https://warontherocks.com/2014/01/understanding-wars-enduring-nature-alongside-its-changing-character/#:~:text=War's%20nature%20is%20violent%2C%20interactive,manifests%20in%20the%20real%20world;); Antulio Echevarria, “War’s Changing Character and Varying Nature: A Closer Look at Clausewitz’s Trinity,” *Infinity Journal*, Volume 5, Issue 4, Summer 2017, pages 15-20; <https://www.militarystrategymagazine.com/article/wars-changing-character-and-varying-nature-a-closer-look-at-clausewitzs-trinity/>; Frederik Munch Wrist, “Fighting over War: Change and Continuity in the Nature and Character of War,” <https://www.e-ir.info/2021/05/15/fighting-over-war-change-and-continuity-in-the-nature-and-character-of-war/>

invasion rapidly evolved into a high-intensity conventional war between the armed forces of the two countries. The two sides are 'burning' through equipment and weaponry at staggering rates. However, to argue that unconventional operations did not play a significant role in this latter war would be wrong.¹¹ One could argue that the first Russo-Ukraine War of 2014-2016 was largely a low to mid-level war with instances of high-intensity exchanges; by way of contrast, what dominates in the second Russo-Ukraine War of 2022-Present is high-intensity conventional war supported by low and mid-level types of warfare.

Fourth, what can we say about the character of the military establishment of each specific belligerent in the war? Both the Russian and Ukrainian armies emerged out of the collapse of the Cold War Soviet Army, which in parallel with the Soviet Empire literally came apart at the seams.¹² In 1998, Alexei Arbatov, the deputy chairman of the committee on defense of the Russian *Duma* (Parliament) wrote with dramatic flair: "not since June 1941 has the Russian military stood as perilously close to ruin as it does now."¹³ While reform and modernization efforts floundered and foundered, the poor performance of the Russian military against a vastly inferior foe in the Russo-Georgian war of 2006 prompted the Russian government to become serious about reform.¹⁴ As *New York Times* reporter Neil MacFarquhar wrote that on the eve of the war with Georgia, the Russian army was characterised by the following state of affairs: "army vehicles were so decrepit that repair crews were stationed roughly every 15 miles. Some officers were so out of shape that the military budgeted \$1.5 million to resize standard uniforms."¹⁵ Furthermore, the less than sterling performance against a small state was embarrassing. The result was the Serdyukov reforms of 2008. They seemed to be working as evidenced from Russian performance in Syria in support of President Asad's regime in the civil war and in the Russo-Ukraine War of 2014-2016.¹⁶ Indeed, the prestigious *Economist* magazine wrote a laudatory piece on Putin's military reforms.¹⁷ In 2020, the same source reinforced its assessment with the following uncritical observation: "Russian military forces dazzle after a decade of reform."¹⁸

The post-independent Ukrainian military was also in dire straits: rampant corruption, few resources, and low operational levels were characteristics of that newly

¹¹ See Jack Watling, Oleksandr V. Danyluk and Nick Reynolds, *Preliminary Lessons from Russia's Unconventional Operations During the Russo-Ukraine War, February 2022-February 2023*, Royal United Services Institute Special Report (March 29, 2023).

¹² See Rick Atkinson and Gary Lee, "The Red Army in Retreat: Soviet Army Coming Apart at the Seams; Poverty, Ethnic Schisms, Desertion Beset Once Proud Military," *The Washington Post*, (November 18, 1990); <https://www.proquest.com/newspapers/soviet-army-coming-apart-at-seams-poverty-ethnic/docview/307328165/se-2?>

¹³ Alexei Arbatov, "Military Reform in Russia: Dilemmas, Obstacles and Prospects," *International Security*, Vol.22, No.4 (Spring 1998), 83.

¹⁴ Roger N. McDermott, "Russia's Conventional Armed Forces and the Georgian War," *Parameters: The U.S. Army War College Quarterly*, Vol.39, No.1 (Spring 2009), 65-80; Carolina Vendil Pallin and Fredrik Westerlund, "Russia's war in Georgia: lessons and consequences," *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol.20, No.2 (2009), 400-424.

¹⁵ Neil MacFarquhar, "Russia planned major military reforms. Ukraine shows the result," *The New York Times*, (May 20, 2022);

¹⁶ See Dmitri Trenin, "The Revival of the Russian Military: How Moscow Reloaded," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.95, No.3 (May/June 2016), 23-29.

¹⁷ "Putin's new model army," *The Economist* (May 24, 2014); <https://www.economist.com/europe/2014/05/24/putins-new-model-army>

¹⁸ "Russian military forces dazzle after a decade of reform: Putin's new model army," *The Economist* (November 02, 2020); <https://www.economist.com/europe/2020/11/02/russian-military-forces-dazzle-after-a-decade-of-reform>

established military as well as of the Russian one next door. Its first defence minister, General --- Morozov faced an almost insurmountable task in creating a new military force. Ukraine's faltering progress towards reform, recapitalization of weapons systems, and across the board modernization was reflected in its relatively poor performance in the first Russo-Ukraine War of 2014-2016. Ukraine began learning from defeat, however and undertook serious efforts in discarding the old ways and initiating new ways; nonetheless, the persistence of the Ukrainian army of yore – the first two and half decades – was evident in the ongoing war.

The rosy assessments of the post-Georgia Russian military were dashed against the shoals of reality following Russia's dismal performance from the opening of the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Indeed, a number of analysts were not taken in by the rosy picture of the success of Russian military reforms even before the Russian invasion in 2022.¹⁹ Similarly, Ukraine also faced enormous defence problems in the aftermath of independence. In its early years, Ukraine spent considerable efforts constructing national armed forces from the disparate parts of the Soviet defence structure that remained on Ukrainian territory. Ukrainian armed forces were formed in 1992-1993 from units and staff of the Soviet Kiev Military District. Ukraine inherited a Soviet-built force designed for combined-arms offensive operations against NATO. Its deployment patterns did not match Ukraine's defense requirements and there was no integrated command and control center.²⁰

The high intensity conventional war that erupted in February 2022 has generated considerable analyses on the character of the war and the preliminary or initial lessons learned from it. It was a war of multiple surprises for all involved, whether directly or indirectly. These surprises span the spectrum from the strategic/policy to the operational and tactical levels. Numerous analysts have written extensively on the land warfare aspects of the war, the domain in which both sides have exerted considerable effort. While the other domains such as air, naval, and cyber have not been as extensively analysed as ground operations, there is an emerging literature on the operations in these domains as the war completes its second year in February 2024.

Part III addresses the ominous political and military utility of nuclear weapons in the war and the issue of war termination.

The Shadow of Nuclear Weapons

Firstly, many decades ago, the renowned American strategic thinker, Bernard Brodie, uttered a famous statement concerning the impact of nuclear weapons in war: "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose."²¹ From the perspective of the 21st century, his 'prediction' can be considered obsolete. Nuclear weapons have political utility; to be sure, Russia's huge arsenal of nuclear weapons have not deterred Ukraine from fighting to defend itself. But the utility of

¹⁹ Dave Majumdar, "Not So Scary: This is why Russia's military is a Paper Tiger," *The National Interest*, (October 20, 2015); <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/not-so-scary-why-russias-military-paper-tiger-14136>

²⁰ Lieutenant-Colonel Oleksandr Kolisnichenko, "Military Reform in Ukraine," *United States Army War College Strategy Research Project*, (March 14, 2004); <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA424058.pdf>

²¹ Bernard Brodie (ed.), *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company (1946), 75.

nuclear weapons in contemporary wars cannot be discounted anymore. Nuclear weapons have played a role in the war.

The Kremlin has given the war in Ukraine an explicit nuclear dimension through various actions and statements. Russia conducted a manoeuvre with its nuclear forces in mid-February, shortly before the invasion. While it had been known for a few months that the exercise would take place in early 2022, the choice of timing seemed linked to the Ukraine crisis. After all, this annual exercise of Russia's nuclear forces normally takes place in the fall, and Russian news coverage deliberately drew attention to the event. On February 24, the day Russia invaded Ukraine, Putin then warned in a speech that there would be unprecedented consequences should third states attempt to "obstruct" Russia. Such wording is traditionally considered to imply a threat to use nuclear weapons. The Russian president went further on February 27, announcing that Russia's deterrent forces, which include nuclear weapons, would be placed on a "special regime of alert".

Putin's announcements during the war against Ukraine, however, strongly shows that for Russia's leadership, the function of its nuclear arsenal goes beyond the narrow defensive role set out in the official doctrine. Rather, the Kremlin seems to be using nuclear weapons to pursue expansive political goals. Putin was shielding his conventional war under a nuclear umbrella. Through his threats, he seeks to deter outside actors from interfering in what he considers as a matter of concern to Russia only. In this way, nuclear weapons have increasingly become a tool of intimidation and of escalation management. We are bound to see more of this in future wars, and the role of nuclear weapons in this war has serious implications for potential 'flash points' in the Indo-Pacific region.

What lies behind the scenes role have nuclear weapons played in this war and what lessons can we draw from this role for future wars? Though, neither the U.S. nor NATO are direct belligerents, they have supported Ukraine with finance, intelligence, imposition of severe sanctions on Russia, military training, and sophisticated hardware. But in spite of the widespread sympathy for the Ukrainian cause and of calls for increasing support, they have restrained from taking a direct role in the conflict due to the logic of nuclear deterrence. The risk of a direct involvement is simply too great. Consequently, western forces are not going to enter actively on the side of Ukraine in the war. The mere presence of nuclear weapons lurking in the shadows presents a break on both vertical and horizontal escalation. It has been argued that the absence of nuclear weapons would have resulted in the escalation of the war into a wider European conflagration with the U.S. and NATO involved in an all-out war with Russia. Indeed, this is why some analyses argue that nuclear weapons constitute the most important weapon in the war despite their non-use.

"Tell Us How This Ends?"

The Russo-Ukraine wars began with a minimal-force invasion of Crimea, a Ukrainian region that Russia annexed in March 2014, followed by lethal proxy operations in parts of the Donbas, another Ukrainian region. It became a geographically confined war, with more than 14,000 fatalities, including hundreds of Russian soldiers. Ukraine was worsted in this first war; but it devoted time and resources to uncovering what happened and to revitalising its armed forces for what it believed would be the next round. On 24 February 2022, Russia undertook a full-scale attempt to seize the capital of Ukraine and to invade and occupy the country as a whole. Similar in conception to the largely bloodless Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the lethal

and initially effective takeover of Kabul on 27 December 1979, this so-called 'special military operation' failed in its political objective of replacing the incumbent Ukrainian government, which the Kremlin expected to fall within four days. It did succeed in rapidly infiltrating a swathe of northern Ukraine up to Kharkiv and a broad expanse of southern Ukraine. At the peak of the invasion in March–April 2022, the Russians occupied close to 140,000 square kilometres, more than one-fifth of the territory of Ukraine.

As the year 2023 ends and despite being overshadowed by the violent confrontation between Hamas and Israel in the Middle East, much to the chagrin of Ukrainian leader, Volodymyr Zelensky, it has already been long and lethal. Tens of thousands of soldiers had been killed in battle on both sides and by late 2023, this war of attrition seemed to have reached a stalemate. While it may be erroneous to declare the war being one of the inept versus the incompetent since both sides have shown some initiative and ability to adapt on the battlespace, there seems to be no dramatic exploitation by either side. Furthermore, there is growing doubt expressed in the west about the chances of an outright Ukrainian victory. Ukraine's stunning offensives in late 2022 led to expectations that they would defeat a lacklustre Russia by 2023. The west has poured in billions of dollars of arms and equipment into Ukraine and provided substantial training. But Ukraine has suffered severe losses and providing them with a wide variety of weapons systems in a short period of time may have been a mistake, as such an approach has overloaded the capacity of the Ukrainian Armed Forces to use them effectively. Furthermore, hundreds of Ukraine's effective junior officers and non-commissioned officers – trained by western advisers – have been killed or wounded and draftees have been sent into battle with inadequate training, poor fieldcraft skills and a tendency to panic according to the testimony of Ukrainian officers.

As of November 2023, when this analysis was completed, neither side appeared amenable to a negotiated political settlement, although there are indications that external observers are pushing Ukraine to consider the possibility of a political settlement to avoid a protracted and ruinous war. The influential *Economist* of November 30, 2023, concluded that Vladimir Putin was winning the war...at least for now, it added. The simple fact is that Ukraine is losing heroically, and Russia is winning ugly. Neither side, however, will attain its grandiose goals.