

RESURGENCE OF RUSSIAN STRATEGY

Emergence of Regional Cracks

Executive Summary

With partial mobilisation of reservists occurring today, September 21st in Russia at the behest of President Putin, the aim of requisitioning 300,000 personnel comes at an auspicious time. This insight will cover the geopolitical consequences for not only Ukraine, former Soviet satellites, and the West, but also for the world.

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**22 Sep,
2022**

Events in Central Asia

**Kazakh Pipeline
disruption
(Caspian Pipeline
Consortium- CPC)
July, 2022**

- Kazakh denies support to Russia in war against Ukraine
- In response Russia shuts off the CPC pipeline for 30 days which obstructs the supply to south eastern Europe and Turkey. Technical glitch was the statement given by Gazprom for the obstruction

**Tajiks- Kyrgyzs
skirmish
Sep 14, 2022**

- Armed conflict with one another over water and border disputes
- 100+ fatalities
- Predominant usage of artillery and air strikes, supplemented by troop engagements
- Russian negotiations led to de-escalations of tensions leading to withdrawal of heavy weapon systems from border regions

**Armenia,
Azerbaijan and
Nagorno-
Karabakh
conflict
Sep 12 to 14,
2022**

- Azerbaijan initiates armed incursion into Armenian territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh
- 300+ fatalities
- Peace brokered by Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) with Turkey playing major role
- Russia has base in Armenia, however remained non committal in troop involvement

**Shanghai
Cooperation
Organization
Sep 15- 16 2022**

- President Putin says he wants to end the war quickly
- Indian PM Modi openly criticises the conflict of Ukraine in his talks with President Putin
- Turkish President Erdogan's takes stance towards the full reinstatement of Ukrainian territories under Ukrainian sovereignty
- Chinese Premier Xi Jinping stays ambivalent on the conflict

Ukrainian Territorial Considerations

Kharkhiv Oblast

- Entire Oblast recaptured
- Mass graves being unearthed in Izium and Kupiansk
- Estimated 4000 square kilometres have been recovered by Ukraine in the beginning weeks of September- demining and clearing operations prevent over extenuation of Ukrainian armed forces

Kherson Oblast

- One of largest presence of Russian troop contingents and fortification
- Presence of Russian leadership
- Minimal gains by Ukraine
- Preparations on for referendum

Zaphorizhzia Oblast

- IAEA intervention led to shutdown of ZNPP
- Demilitarization of the ZNPP
- Artillery and air strikes continues

Donetsk Oblast

- Offensive and reactive operations being conducted by both sides
- Stalemate continues in the region
- Disinformation campaign is being propagated

Luhansk Oblast

- Presence of Ukrainian forces for first time since June
- Oskil river recaptured leading to arresting of progression into Donetsk
- Increase of Partisan activities

Given all of these territorial and geopolitical factors with winter looming, as well as Ukraine gaining ground in large aspects, Kremlin and separatist forces are calling for referendums to approve of annexation of Zaphorizhzia, Donetsk, Luhansk, and Kherson oblasts under the sovereignty of Russia

This development would mean that Russia would then have justification for full scale mobilisation, declaration of war, and the utilisation of more extreme measures such as nuclear deterrence that has been spoken of throughout the duration of the crisis

Russian Resource Crunch

Manpower

- Estimated casualties- 80,000 Russians injured or dead (US Dept of Defense)
 - Russian appeals - Tajiks , Syrians, Iranian, African, Central Asian volunteers
 - Incentivization plans - Naturalization through military service lowered from 3 years to 1 years of service for foreign volunteers
 - Relocation strategy- Units from the 217th Parachute Regiment in Syria reallocated to Ukraine due to personnel shortage
 - Conscription measures-Removal of exemption of job roles for conscription in Crimea & Russian controlled Ukraine (factory professions, steel and metallurgical, etc)
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Technological

- Reverse engineering - Mandate by President Putin for Russian Defense Contractors to reverse engineer Western weapons
 - Impediment on 'smart'munitions - Sanctions will obstruct the Research & Development of new age precision weapons which will need technological support from MNCs from West
 - Supply chain choke points -
 - Ukrainian forces have access to longer range weaponry such as the HIMARS multiple rocket launcher platform, the M777 artillery platform, and 'smart' munitions that extend the effective range while compounding accuracy- like the geo-guided Excalibur artillery round to target the Russian supply chains
 - Russia is refraining from large ammo dumps due to supply chain attacks, instead relying on an exponential increase in smaller arms caches delaying resupply
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Winter warfare considerations

- Long duration- Maintenance unit configuration in Russian military have singular points of failure, leading to exasperation of weapons sustainment
 - Topographical outlay- Severe temperatures would mean frequent breakdowns and high lead times for serviceability of equipment
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Procurement cannibalism

- Challenge in winter gear procurement for the 300,000 new recruits
- Historical figures
- Second Chechen War- Previous decade 350 Bn rubles was embezzled (double of annual military budget)
- Composite figures- 1 in 1000 officers were complicit each accounting for 0.3% annual budget
- Black market proliferation- Sale of equipment clothing and fuel are happening and will rise in Belarus, Belgorod and other staging points

What Can be Expected Next

- 45 % of Europe's commensurate energy concerns were provided by Russia in 2021, and while Russia's military might be at extreme disadvantage for Winter fighting, economic and energy leverage are tools Russia has been seeking to utilise to bring about a politically influenced end to the war. The UN has announced recommended measures of punitive taxation on energy companies seeking to profit from this war; additionally, the EU has sought out alternatives- Venezuela, the Gulf States, Norway, and Azerbaijan especially (adding a piece to the conflict's recent eruption in Russia's backyard) have proved to be their most viable candidates- in addition to coal and nuclear power
- Potentially, the referendums will be conducted and 'ratified', allowing Putin to accede the aforementioned oblasts and use more extreme measures, like full mobilisation and nuclear deterrence to defend territorial integrity
- In most likely case, the influx of troops on Russia's side will aide in providing a stalemate in Zaphorizhia, Donetsk, Kherson, and Luhansk oblasts, which will prolong the war, denigrate their conflict capabilities and allow for Ukraine to possibly claim more gains especially in terms of geopolitics with the waning of Russia's influence as other states are now opposing the war in areas that previously weren't- this will also test the West's resolve as fragments of disgruntled European and American society- at the expenditures and sacrifices they see are unjustified (far-right AfD of Germany just recently visited Russia to 'gain their own impressions of the war and its realities)
- Europe and Asia has already seen a political shift as a result of supporting Ukraine- British PM Boris Johnson was ousted for focusing on Ukraine and not cost of living, President Macron has come under fire for several scandals and relying on Ukraine to dissipate political fallout, Italy has seen snap elections and Prime Minister Draghi on the ropes, Japan, with pro- militarisation and pro-Ukrainian politician Shinzo Abe assassinated; both Russia and its opponents have shown growing pains during this war and can encourage possible societal shifts gearing towards nationalism and populism as a result of poverty inducing factors like cost of living and inflation occurring during this war (all sides, including the United States, have used Ukraine as a crutch during fledgling political statuses)
- A tertiary effect of all of this is a deterrent to China acting on Taiwan given the results, or lack thereof for Russia. China is already struggling socially and economically for a myriad of reasons, and although war would provide a distraction, as Russia tends to resort to, it would only exacerbate their own woes and isolation.

About the Author

Michael Ferkol is the Primary Consultant for WoRisGo in Europe. His experiences in the United States Army have taken him globally, most recently to Ukraine in February to April where he conducted crisis evacuation, first aid, and training to critical care responders. He currently resides in Copenhagen, Denmark.



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