



June 2022

# DE RE MILITARI JOURNAL

DRM Journal

Issue 7 Sofia, Bulgaria



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**Published in Sofia, Bulgaria**  
**De Re Militari Association**  
**Issue: 6.2022**

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**ISSN 2367-9476**

# Local, homegrown terrorism and organized crime in the Western societies

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*The report views terrorism as a local, homegrown problem of the members of the West, as a societal phenomenon, and compares it with organized crime through the prism of social and criminal psychology. Without giving any pretence to exhaustiveness or depth, the report also makes a psychological analysis of the personalities of individuals engaged in criminal, whether terrorist or organized criminal activity.*

## OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN EUROPE AND WESTERN SOCIETIES

In the modern world of a globalized economy, societies, open European borders, technologies, and information, one thing remains unchanged - the man in its nature and wholeness. The personality, which, according to psychology, constitutes the individual way of thinking, feeling, and acting, remains unchanged. Interaction and environment are different depending on geography, confessions, historical and cultural values, and norms of the respective society in which the individual has grown up and has been civilized. Of course, every individual, each person has a life cycle, but the cultural-historical rules, norms, and values are constant, although changing, as the constant is the resetting of the process of personality development in death and its development from *initium novum*\* in the new life. The collective human, historical spirit of every society is passed on precisely in its mechanisms of building the individual, his schooling, education, and his present functioning to each of his newly born members.

The active shooters, terrorist organizations and their members, and the professional criminals - traffickers, assassins, and organized crime groups (henceforth, OCG) are personalities, in a psychological context, individuals from our collective communities, linked by common political and ideological similarities and interests as we are. They come from the same societies of law-abiding and altruistic citizens who aim to change their environment of living for the better and/or to achieve financial wealth and success for themselves and their own countries and societies with the instruments available for all of us within these very same countries and societies. Everybody strives to fulfil his personal needs and everybody starts his life journey with different social-economic status. As most people strive, others do not, the question is what tools each individual uses and if it harms others and/or trespasses the laws of the state. Under comparable conditions, we have different results, of course, and the free will of each person plays a decisive role, but after all one thing is certain - the general object and subject of activity of terrorist organizations and individual terrorists as well as organized crime groups and their members are our societies. The same societies that have tutored and created them, gave them the opportunity and the environment to be what they have chosen to be. To form themselves as

criminals or terrorists, willingly or not, and to exploit us and our societies for resources to supply their criminal and terror activities.

Here we do not talk about the exported terrorism of the 20th and 19th centuries, mainly originating from the local nationalism and state-to-state politics, where members of an organization or state are carrying out a subversive activity against the neighbouring one to achieve economic, political, social or other interests. We observe and subject the contrary - terrorists raised by their and our own. Citizens who are part of terrorist groups (henceforth TG) and members of criminal groups that have made the conscious choice to commit crimes against their societies who they deny, exploit, and use to achieve certain criminal or terrorist purposes.

We must see the fight, as it is between cultural and social differences, where objects are not separate states, but ideologies and social norms and classes. Such a comparison can be made between the manifestations of the so-called radical, white nationalists and the statements of so-called extreme Islamists and radical jihadists, where we see the ideological postulates of white internationalism uniting all white nationalists and the Islam, who unites all the "righteous" Muslims and divides them into their righteousness against all *kafirs* (from Arabic, infidels). In both cases, we have a global conflict between ideas of globalized ideologies that do not have a single flag and a state, that is united not on the public sign of the nation and society, but on the conceptual idea of an ideology that does not respect boundaries and states, and whose target is the West and its citizens, states and societies with their cultural, social norms and political freedoms.

An equivalent is a situation with organized crime, where the ideology among members can easily be found in the popular postulates on the topic and it is most easily expressed through its main goal - acquiring money - the economic rise at any cost without respecting and obeying the law, the freedom of others and social and public norms.

## LOCAL, HOMEGROWN TERRORISM AND THE ORGANIZED CRIME

For the present work, in the term terrorism we should understand "*an activity that (1) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life, property, or infrastructure; and (2) appears to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by mass destruction, assassination, kidnapping, or hostage-taking*", which is the US Department of State definition. The author recalls that there are over 100 definitions of terrorism and not one officially, unified, well-established by all nations on a global scale definition. The same problem - the lack of a clear definition, unified and internationally accepted stands before the definition of organized crime and organized crime groups. For this paper, we will use the United Nations definition of an organized criminal group - "*a group of three or more individuals that is not randomly formed exists for a while and acts to perform at least one punishable by law crime for more than four years, to obtain, directly or indirectly, financial or other material benefits.*"

In this section, we will look at the relationship between terrorist organizations and crime as well as the social characteristics and individualities of today's terrorism in the West and its perpetrators. The main events of local, homegrown terrorism in Europe and Western societies in recent years are the events in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Spain between 2015 and 2017, where eight terrorist acts were committed with 349 murders and over 1 500

injured. For example, we will also use the terrorist acts committed by the active shooters, such as the Anders Breivik in Norway, which killed 77 people and injured more than 300, and Brenton Harrison Tarrant from Christchurch, New Zealand, where 50 people died and over 40 were injured.

Despite their membership in international terrorist organizations or the sharing of radical ideas, Anders Breivik and the Christchurch shooter share the origin and nationality of the country whose citizens they were attacking. The same model is represented by other terrorists, motivated by Jihadi ideology who were also citizens of the countries they attack. The terrorists who committed the violent acts in November 2015 in Paris, France, the heavy truck attack in Nice, France, and others ... are people with French citizenship and has had lived and raised in the attacked countries for years.

This statement is supported by the conclusions of the study "Jihadi terrorists in Europe: their characteristics and the circumstances in which they have joined the Jihad: an exploratory study", which states that "A significant part of these persons of non-European extraction, however, have been born and raised in Europe: i.e. the group of second and third-generation migrants."

The same can be observed in 56 out of 146 cases where we could determine the country in which the jihadi terrorists grew up." and "Looking at place of residence, the overwhelming majority of the jihadi terrorists in our sample are residents of a European country (211 out of 219 persons). As mentioned above, more than a third of them have been (born and) raised in these countries. Others have been living for more than ten years in a European country". Peter Bergen, CNN National Security Analyst, reaches a similar conclusion that "every lethal terrorist attack in the United States since 9/11 has been carried out by an American citizen or a legal permanent resident."

In this sense, domestic, homegrown terrorists on the territory of the United States, based on their motivation, may be divided into two types:

Ideologically motivated. These are all cases falling within the section of the presently described terrorists, where the perpetrators are motivated by a radical ideology aimed at influencing a wide audience. An ideology that is shared by themselves due to different individual and personality traits. This is the case with Omar Matten, who killed 49 people at a nightclub in Orlando, USA, and identified himself as a "Soldier of Allah".

Pathologically motivated includes violence committed due to obvious personally motivated character deviations, such as a desire for revenge, personal aggression, compensatory desires for self-affirmation, power, glory, etc. These are all personal deviations, pathological patterns classified by psychology, and ICD-10 (the international classification of diseases) as psychological disorders. Such an example is Maurice Clemmons, who killed 4 people in 2009. Five weeks before the murders, during a court-ordered mental health evaluation, Clemmons told psychologists he had experienced hallucinations of "people drinking blood and eating babies, and lawless on the streets, like people, were cannabis".

Investigating the criminal element and the links of terrorism with crime, it should be noted that 38 of the 76 people involved in the terrorist acts in France for the period had a criminal record of previous arrests and criminal acts - 28 of these perpetrators had been convicted before 2015 and 27 had been serving prison sentences. A total of 15 had been in a situation of severe relapse with more than one law violation and multiple detentions, repeating the offence acts and 16 of

all future terrorists, had criminal registrations and a history of participation in combat actions in foreign territories.

The attached data show that a large part of today`s terrorists who are attacking Western societies come exactly from these societies. In cases where they profess the ideology of radical Islam, they are 2nd, 3rd generation migrants or have been resident for at least 10 years in the country which they attack and their family and background are from non-European / Western countries. In the cases of the so-called white nationalists, professing a radical ideology, they were also born and raised, originating from the target country.

In the case of pathological personality disorders and deviations, terrorists are also nationals of the target countries. They are even closer to the object of their attack due to personal connections and directed compensatory relations to the victims' target group.

At first sight, the pathologically motivated perpetrators lack one of the main aspects of the US Department of state definition - political motivation. However, if we look deeper, the crimes are connected to the micro-sociological climate of power politics of groups or institutions, such as local schools, military bases, private companies, etc. In that matter, we can consider that ideologically motivated perpetrators try to affect the power dynamics of a whole political system or a country while pathologically motivated perpetrators want to influence the same matter in a more domestic, local aspect of a city, or social group or institution.

Different countries define differently such crimes based on specific circumstances, but the thin psychological line connecting ideologically and pathologically motivated terrorists is their radicalisation, where both described groups stand on identical behavioural models and execution patterns.

In the majority of the cases, the perpetrators have previous criminal offences and a clear history of a violation of the law, all of whom have a personal motive linked to their specific idea of the world, which is associated with their being. For example, this is clearly expressed by Anders Breivik who had unsuccessfully applied in the army and also in the majority, almost all cases of pathologically motivated terrorists. Investigating the 76 terrorists in France, 56% of them were unemployed at the time of their arrest while 63% had secondary education as the highest level of education. These data put them in the commonly accepted criteria for risk profile for committing crimes and norms used in profiling persons in the conventional crime, where the same problems in social and public adaptation are observed. Some exceptions are made by the cases of white nationalists, where both cited before perpetrators (Christchurch shooter and A. Breivik) have permanent income and funds to fund themselves, their terrorist acts and interests.

In conclusion, in this chapter, we can say that although they are part of our society, perpetrators of terrorist acts do not share the same values, interests and ideologies as the majority of people and do not adapt to the society successfully. It is the same with criminal groups and individuals doing illegal acts as a means of self-assertion in society, income and career. These people are choosing the social role of a criminal and associated it with their personality. The role of the criminal is, by its very nature, socially dangerous and is a form of social radicalization as it directs personal aggression and methods of survival against the weak individuals of the society from which resources can be extracted by force, instead of contributing to the given society and receiving a reward for it (such as working and taking a salary).

A criminal deprives society of assets without respecting social norms, using violence for personal gain, and contributing nothing. A similar psychic process also occurs in the mental

worlds of terrorist perpetrators. Society is victimized and offended by the abuser because of a personal desire to the imposition of ideological norms on defenceless and vulnerable members with the idea to gain satisfaction. It might be either a sense of justice or rightness, martyrdom (in the name of Allah, for example), glory or political and even financial benefits.

A further subject of analysis and research is whether it is a non-adaptation process that precedes the radicalization process - or - radicalization precedes the process of non-adaptation. In both cases, modern perpetrators of terrorist acts and criminal acts in the Western societies have grown up among us, educated and built by the same state and homogeneous mass of people of which we are part too.

## CONCLUSION

Looking at these processes through the prisms of evolutionary and social psychology, history shows that criminality has always existed, as there were also various forms of terrorism within different borders in different historical periods, societies and the states.

From the perspective of personal psychology, these processes show that it is not possible to adapt to the anti-social or marginalized members of our society forcefully. Even if we create the necessary factors and conditions, the factor of free will always be decisive. For example, the situation in the highly social and economically rich Scandinavian countries with a supportive state system can be considered a good place for a living. However, there are still anti-social behaviour and marginalized society members who are at risk of radicalization and recruiting from TG and OCG.

In contrast to fighting crime, where the strengthening of policy measures and the return forms of aggression against aggression gives results, in fighting terrorism, such force methods lead to the recruitment of new members and create martyrs who popularize the radical ideology. Due to the variety of radical elements and profiles, progress in countering and detecting terrorist cells and groups could come from evaluating and studying the information in a way where results will be least negative to the society and the affected risk groups (such as immigrants) and innocent members around them. This means that solving the problem requires a more sophisticated and specialized approach that intelligence services and reconnaissance units can offer in the specialized government security structures.

If we can generalize the two strategic approaches, for fighting the OCG, the state can operate and utilizes more drastic and uncompromising, aggressive measures against the criminal syndicates and families, the mafia. But this approach cannot be used against TG, where members emerge from more sensitive parts of society like religious, ethnic or social minorities. There the state must utilize perfect precision or it risks fueling the radicalization process and empowering the TG. In this manner, showing force is counter-productive.

To effective counter both threats we can't use the same approach on the strategic level, even if they follow identical psychological models. OCG are more familiar with the security services and the state where most of the perpetrators are already known and were part of the underground life for years, but TG is born and raised in more law-abiding circles, following the same process of individual radicalisation

The answer to counteract the OCG and the TG is one and it depends on all society members and the state - to oppose the radical counter-cultures through law, love, compassion, kindness, diligence, charity, and selflessness. These are values that have made Western societies economic and global political leaders. The personal example of civil societies and each of us for kindness to the neighbour, hard work and the contribution to the state and society, persistence and discipline, compassion and mercy, active participation in the social processes and the personal responsibility are the best weapon against radicalization, crime and terrorism.

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# The Cold Peace: Why did the West embark on a NATO enlargement that threatened to destabilise a fragile Russian Federation?

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## Introduction

The decision to expand the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union was, and remains to this day, one of the most significant developments in modern international politics. The enlargement of NATO into the former Warsaw Pact offered a new opportunity for a Europe that had been divided ideologically, militarily, politically, and psychologically for decades, to come together as a community for a new era, yet this also aggravated and isolated Russia to an extent that is still being felt to this day: Russians have long justified their actions in Ukraine, for example, as reactionary moves against NATO encroachment (Cullen-Irace, 2021). Enlargement was never inevitable many assumed NATO would disband, yet despite Russian objections, the West went ahead with the eastwards expansion of the Alliance.

This analysis will highlight that the West pursued NATO enlargement for several key reasons, driven by the goal of transforming the organisation from a defensive alliance into an instrument of collective security: a 'new' NATO which could project stability across the continent and support the growth of democracies in Eastern Europe. The West pursued these goals for a variety of reasons that will be assessed, yet along the way ignored warnings from Russia. Consequently, in assessing the factors that led to enlargement, this essay will take Moscow's perception into account to develop a holistic understanding.

## A 'New NATO'?

Following the end of the bipolar international system that had defined the Cold War, through the collapse of one of its 'poles', the Soviet Union, many observers predicted the demise of NATO soon (Lévesque, 1999:3), as after all, its mission in outlasting the Soviet threat was

complete and the alliance seemed to have outlived its *raison d'être*. However, at its London Summit in July 1990, NATO had declared that it was transforming into more of a political alliance than a military institution (Goldgeier, 1999:17), signalling its intent to outlast the war it was created to win. Through the 'North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) and later the 'Partnership for Peace' framework, NATO began improving its ties with the former Warsaw Pact nations (McCalla, 1996), and as early as 1992 U.S government officials were declaring that the close partnership between NATO and these nations could 'contribute to transforming the composition of the Alliance itself' (Secretary Eagleburger, 1992, cited in Goldgeier, 1999:18).

The West soon began to view NATO as an organisation dedicated to collective security, as well as a community primarily devoted to building and reinforcing the shared value of democracy. The spirit of this transformation of NATO was espoused by President Clinton, (1997) who commented 'we are building a new NATO... it will be an alliance directed no longer against a hostile threat, but instead to advance the security of every democracy in Europe - NATO's old members, new members, and nonmembers alike'. It is in this context that Western leaders saw the opportunity and perceived benefits to expand NATO eastwards, and in this context that the various former Warsaw Pact states were invited to join the Alliance, the 'new' NATO for the future.

Concerning Russia and its relation to the new, post-Cold War NATO, there was a blend of attitudes. For some, wishing to build off frameworks such as the Partnership for Peace, and seeking improved relations, it was even suggested that Russia itself could one day be admitted to the Alliance, as George H.W Bush's Secretary of State James Baker suggested (2002), with the hopes that Russia would move further towards democratic reforms. Political leaders often tried to emphasise moving past the 'NATO-Russia dichotomy', highlighting that the threats of the day were those such as local conflicts fueled by aggressive nationalism, terrorism and the potential misuse of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction, rather than conflict with Russia (Havel, 1997). On the other hand, some retained a hostile perception of Russia, and viewed any moves to facilitate NATO's former rival as appeasement: former Secretary of State and influential foreign policy expert Henry Kissinger highlighted this feeling, complaining 'whoever heard of a military alliance begging with a weakened adversary? NATO should not be turned into an instrument to conciliate Russia, or Russia will undermine it' (Kissinger, cited in Eisenhower, 1997).

Kissinger's characterisation of Russia as an 'adversary' despite the Cold War's conclusion is notable, as this hostile rhetoric was not commonly espoused by the Kremlin in the early days of the Russian Federation. Moscow had expected the post-Soviet consensus to be built around a 'strategic partnership' between Russia and the US on somewhat equal terms. Instead, as Eisenhower (1998:108) notes, Russia was either relegated to a junior partner, not acknowledged at all, or demonised as a potential threat to the future. With rhetoric such as Kissinger's, it is not difficult to see why Russia did not accept the idea of a 'new' NATO and feared the US-dominated Alliance's encroachment on its borders. Moscow rejected enlargement from the onset as a threat and has vehemently opposed enlargement ever since it was declared, with most Russian analysts firmly believing that expanding NATO eastward reflected Washington's desire to isolate Russia from other European countries (Volkov, 1997:63)

The path taken by the West to expand NATO eastwards towards Russia ignored objections from across the Russian political spectrum: from westernising reformers warning that NATO

expansion would boost Russian nationalism and anti-Western sentiment, to nationalists directly threatening force if NATO moved too close to Russia's borders (Plekhanov, 1999:168). Declarations about the transformation of NATO into an organisation of collective security and community rather than an instrument to isolate Russia may have been genuine, and certainly many political leaders in the West sincerely believed it, but it should be noted that assertions about the 'new' NATO were never accepted by Moscow, and this was only aggravated by the belief that the West had 'betrayed' Russia by breaking promises that it would not expand eastwards after the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact (Putin, 2007). In this context, it is clear to see why Russia has always viewed NATO enlargement with distrust, why the concept of a 'new' NATO was rejected, and why Moscow still perceives NATO as an anti-Russian alliance.

## Fostering Democracy

With the collapse of the 'evil empire', the various former member-states of the former Warsaw Pact, free after decades of being tied to Soviet totalitarianism, began to view inclusion in NATO as evidence that their nations could finally and irrevocably become 'part of the West' (Carpenter, 1998:19) and escape the yoke of authoritarianism forever. Highly respected leaders in East-Central Europe, such as the Czech president Vaclav Havel and Polish president Lech Walesa began to urge the West to support their nation's admittance into the Alliance, and Yost (101:1998) comments that this encouraged the Clinton administration's growing interest in NATO enlargement. The push to join the West by states who had suffered under communist dictatorship for so long, therefore, began to inspire leaders in the West who wished to promote the growth of democracy and by 1994 the United States, with strong support from Germany, began to seriously consider NATO as the vehicle to consolidate and encourage the political and economic transition that was beginning to take root in Europe (Mattox, 2001:17). Consequently, it is clear to see why the West pursued a policy of NATO enlargement despite objections from Russia: Western political leaders believed that this 'new' NATO represented the perfect opportunity to help foster democracy in the formerly oppressed nations of Europe, and thus guide the post-Cold War transformation of Europe.

The idea that NATO was not just a defensive alliance, but a mechanism to promote democracy and Western values was wholeheartedly advanced by the leaders of East-Central Europe, with President Havel (1997) commenting on the debate over enlargement by highlighting that 'the Alliance should urgently remind itself that it is first and foremost an instrument of democracy intended to defend mutually held and created political and spiritual values'. Volkov (1997:65) contends that many of these leaders believed joining NATO was the 'catalyst' for joining other Western institutions such as the European Union (1997:65), highlighting NATO's status as a door 'to the West' for many of these long-suffering nations.

In the uncertain international context of the age, proponents of enlargement argued that admitting the former communist states into the Alliance would secure a principal gain of the Cold War by securing democracy within them for good and promoting the growth of free markets in East-Central Europe (Gallis, 1994:2). Haas (1997) argues that in this regard, the diplomatic case for enlargement was 'relatively straightforward' as by extending beyond the 'arbitrary line' of the Cold War, NATO could strengthen democratic and free-market reforms for all of Europe, just as it has done for Western Europe in the decades since 1949, acting as a 'reassuring anchor' to these newly independent democracies to ensure there was no backslide into authoritarianism or violent conflict among them. Thus, by offering political and economic imperatives to these states, the West could ensure their stable transition into Western-style

democracies, which would thus establish lasting peace in the region. Whereas, if they were refused admission into NATO, nationalistic anti-democratic forces could potentially rise to power and the lines of Europe would again be drawn between democratic and authoritarian states: taking this into account, many in the West believed the choice was obvious. In its promotion of democracy to the former Warsaw Pact states, the Clinton administration was, according to Goldgeier (1999:20) influenced by the ‘democratic peace theory’, the idea that democracies do not go to war with one another, and thus the West was hoping that through promoting these democracies it could increase global peace and prosperity.

It is necessary to briefly consider how Russia responded to the democratisation of states in its former sphere of influence. As already mentioned, westernisers in Russia during the Yeltsin era had warned that enlarging NATO would boost anti-Western sentiment in Russia and it is crucial to understand that, in the context of Yeltsin's Russia, these pro-Western Russian liberals were far more prominent in Russian politics than today. Liberal westernisers staunchly opposed NATO enlargement, believing that if NATO were to move closer to Russia's borders, it would vindicate the most reactionary forces in Russian society (Plekhanov, 1999:178). This thinking was echoed by US foreign policy expert George F. Kennan (1997), who famously called NATO expansion the ‘most fateful error of American policy in the entire post-Cold War era’, stating that such a decision would ‘inflare the nationalistic, anti-Western, and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion; hurt the development of Russian democracy and impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to US liking’.

In a scathing critique of how the West handled its approach to the liberated states of the Warsaw Pact, Lukin (2018:9) argues that rather than make any serious attempt to assimilate Russia into the Western system, the West chose to ‘wrest piece after piece’ from Moscow, believing that ‘the future belonged to the West’, calling the West's promotion of its ‘universal values’ such as democracy to be little more than an ideological smokescreen for imposing its hegemony. Lukin (2018:11) further contends that NATO expansion was done not to secure democracy in ‘several small states that would have joined Europe anyway’, but to ‘bring an ever greater number of countries into its orbit in an attempt to remain the dominating force in a unipolar world’.

Whether this is true or not, it highlights Russian sentiment over NATO enlargement, and Plekhanov (1999:178) notes that the fact the West ignored the westerniser's warnings helped contribute to their marginalisation within Russia and the backslide towards nationalist foreign policy thinking: ultimately it could be argued that in taking the path it did, the West sacrificed liberalisation movements in Russia to secure NATO expansion.

## Strengthening Security

With the end of the Cold War and the end of the division of Europe, political leaders in the West saw an opportunity to build the foundations of a new security architecture on the continent that was not restrained by the borders of the Cold War. In this view, the West's decision to enlarge NATO was also a strategic decision undertaken to increase the security of Europe in the post-Cold War era. Proponents of NATO enlargement stressed that by expanding the borders of the alliance to include the former Soviet-aligned states of Central and Eastern Europe, they could upgrade defences in these areas and prepare NATO forces to project power in the region in case of a major geopolitical crisis (Asmus et al. 1996:7). Above all, NATO

expansionists argued that enlargement would promote lasting stability in the region and that it would extend Europe's zone of peace and prosperity from the West toward the East, guaranteeing the security of nations that had often been sacrificed to great power politics in the past (Goldgeier, 1999:2).

The West had significant cause for wanting to expand NATO eastwards following the collapse of the Soviet Union: by inviting the newly democratic states of the former Soviet Bloc into the Alliance, NATO could preempt and limit any potential destabilising power vacuum in Europe that the Kremlin's retreat could cause. Haas (1997) highlights that twice in the 20th century Central and Eastern Europe were the sources of great instability which plunged Europe into great wars, and thus the expansion of NATO into these areas was a way to greatly diminish the odds that these regions would again become battlefields. Additionally, the West was also eager to alleviate any fears in Europe that the vacuum in Central Europe would result in a geopolitical rival confrontation between Germany and Russia, the two large states on its flanks, and thus considered NATO expansion to the area 'necessary' to prevent a destabilising balance of power confrontation there (Holbrooke, 1995), as well as general concerns over a reunified Germany's power projection.

Those in favour of enlargement pointed to events such as the war in Yugoslavia and the ensuing flow of immigrants from the Balkans into Western Europe as evidence that, without expanding NATO's security shield eastwards, unsettled disputes in Central and Eastern Europe could bring similar threats of violence and instability across the entire continent (Gallis, 1994:2). The brutal conflict so close to Western Europe had helped create a permissive environment for the proponents of enlargement to push their policy forward, with Goldgeier (1999:4) highlighting that the failure of the Europeans to manage the situation increased their willingness to follow America's lead, hoping to avoid similar crises: this was especially pertinent due to the unresolved tension between Hungary and its neighbours over the treatment of their Hungarian minorities, which was already highlighted as a potential flashpoint for a crisis that could reverberate around Europe (Layne (1998:57).

From the West's point of view, if NATO did not expand east, not only was it risking possible instability and violence in Central and Eastern Europe, but it was risking this instability spreading to Western Europe too: this point was perhaps best encapsulated by President Havel, who argued (1997) that 'if the West does not stabilise the East, the East will destabilise the West'.

By expanding into these areas with the admittance of new member states, however, NATO would be able to 'project stability eastwards' (Yost, 1998:110) casting a net of security that would provide stability to the East and ensure that there was no potential for insecurity to spread to the West. Not only would this allow NATO to preempt any causes of instability, but by bringing the states of these areas together into one collective alliance, the West could constrain any rivalries for local primacy among them just as it had done in Western Europe in the aftermath of the Second World War (Yost, 1998:51). In this view, NATO can be highlighted as the framework within which different states can solve issues of power politics, solving the security dilemma to some extent by binding them together as allies in a common security apparatus. NATO's rhetoric promoted the Alliance's role in mediation and crisis resolution in relations between allies in its 1995 publication *Study on NATO Enlargement*, highlighting that one of the key rationales for the enlargement of the Alliance was to curb the tendency towards disintegration along ethnic and territorial lines, through reinforcing tendencies towards cooperation based on democratic values (NATO, 1995).

It is worth noting here that whilst the West embarked on NATO expansion to strengthen European security, this policy caused intense insecurity in Moscow, which has directly contributed to Russia's aggressive acts of foreign policy such as its invasions of Ukraine and Georgia. Volkov (1997:65) contends that NATO has always been viewed as a conquering force and the admittance of former Soviet satellites as a move 'as provocative as the Soviets sending missiles to Cuba', whilst Lukin (2018:11) notes that 'Western expansion is tearing apart countries close to Russia. It has led to territorial splits in Moldova and Georgia, and Ukraine splintered before our eyes'.

## The United States

Finally, it is worth noting that NATO expanded eastwards simply because the United States wished to enlarge the Alliance. It was the US who drove NATO through every step of the process of allowing new members, it was the US who made all the key decisions, and it was the US who ultimately decided who could join NATO in the first round of post-Cold War enlargement (Goldgeier, 1999:4). Washington's reasons for desiring NATO enlargement were relatively straightforward. Strategically, the US was worried that if the European Union expanded and NATO did not, decisions on European security affecting U.S. interests could be made without Washington's participation (Gallis, 1994:2). The ongoing involvement of the US in European security has long been tied to NATO, and in both Washington and Europe itself there was a desire to maintain and expand US security commitments on the continent. Furthermore, as Solomon (1998:162) notes, NATO expansion across Europe made Europe a more coherent partner for the US in international politics, whilst the fostering of a more stable environment for economic reform aided in US trade and investment into the area.

## Conclusion

Overall, it is clear that the West, led by the United States, embarked on NATO expansion because it saw an opportunity to monopolise the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union by promoting greater stability and security in Europe, fostering democratic and free-market reforms in Central and Eastern Europe, and encouraging closer relations between Europe's nations. The West undertook the decision to transform NATO from a defensive alliance into an instrument of collective security which could project stability across the continent, and, given the uncertain future of much of Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain, pursued NATO enlargement into the former Warsaw Pact as a means to spread security into the area, and support its new democracies. Whether done entirely out of altruism or to protect US interests fundamentally did not matter, as it fulfilled the wishes of those such as Havel and Walesa who struggled so long against Soviet totalitarianism. Regarding Russia, it is clear that the West acted without forethought and could have tried harder to accommodate Moscow whilst still pursuing its goals, yet US policy was dominated by an attitude of 'who cares what they think? They're a third-rate power.' (Borger, 2016). Instead, as Zbigniew Brzezinski (1995) argued, enlargement should have been accompanied by a 'simultaneous invitation to Russia to help create a new transcontinental system of collective security that goes beyond expansion'. The failure to do so appears all too costly with decades of hindsight.

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# The Ukraine debacle: How the first conventional war in Europe for over 80 years is reshaping the face of modern war

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## The long prelude

Since the events of the Maidan revolution in 2014, the following annexation of Crimea and the brutal war in the two infamous regions in Ukraine ( Donetsk and Luhansk) Ukrainian military has faced a daunting task in fighting separatists with outside help, reforming the military from the ground up and all of this while suffering from major economic problems and political turmoil. Russian troops most certainly came in direct contact with Ukrainian forces on more than one occasion (the brutal ambush at Debaltsevo and many other small occasions). Since the 2014 political shift in Kyiv Russian armed forces also began to ramp up their regular west military exercises (Zapad) and more than once concentrated large numbers of BTGs on the border using them as both methods of imposing diplomatic pressure and getting the troops to get used to living in combat readiness (this in itself is a vital element since modern standards of living make individuals highly unused to conditions in a possible war).

At that time Russian diplomacy adopted a more aggressive posture in an attempt to ensure its interest were met. The biggest asset in that regard was again the Russian military which began to pursue an active role in Syria (mostly CAS missions against FSA and ISIS targets). On the ground in Syria, they started to use more and more mercenaries from the infamous Wagner group (using para militaries gives plausible deniability diplomatically). Those contractors earned infamy with their brutality on a couple of occasions but for the article, they became the ground arm of the Russian military and even tried to overrun a US FOB at Khasham housing a small tier one element and their ground combat controllers. That ended in an entirely one-sided butchery that left 200/300 Syrian troops and Russian mercenaries dead 5 miles from the FOB.

## Eastern and Western doctrine

Since the humiliation suffered by Ukrainian armed forces in Crimea and Donbas and subsequent training and aid by US, British and Canadian military experts Ukraine has seen a

shift to a new NATO-style army trying to decentralize its command structure and shift to making the NCO in its military their backbone. This means focusing on training and educating its officer and NCO core and encouraging them to take initiative on the ground and not strictly wait for orders from central command. This goes along with changing the focus of its units from artillery (IE infantry has the role of finding the enemy and then having artillery do all the work) to main infantry (IE centring infantry as the main body and using artillery and other assets in support of the infantry rather than the other way around). This comes alongside equipment modernization from individual firearms and personal protection to heavy weaponry. This modernization has not however been exactly perfect. Like most countries from the post-soviet bloc, Ukraine was engulfed in a mist of corruption spreading to all levels of government, including the military. While the war in the Donbas certainly whipped the Ukrainian military into shape, still there were many cases of corruption disrupting the military reforms.

On the other hand, the Russian military has been gradually modernized since the Georgian war of 2008, which highlighted its stagnation in the 1980s with units being unable to communicate and coordinate assaults and artillery or air support. When it comes to its ground forces and more specifically infantry, they have implemented the so-called Ratnik program which aims to improve individual firearms, protection and most importantly communications of individual foot soldiers. This program aimed at solving simple but vital needs like the lack of modern helmets and weapons having no rails that allowed for optics/thermal/night vision devices and IR lasers, which made Russian infantry blind at the night when its peer-to-peer adversaries in NATO have night-fighting capabilities down to the individual soldier.

This sweeping modernization extended to the heavy equipment of the Russians introducing new light armoured vehicles like the Tiger M, modernizing its ageing tank arsenal (T72B3, T80BV, T90 and the brand new but still in prototype phase T14), keeping a highly developed airforce (evidence for this is its sales to other countries), developing its AA capabilities to very high levels, and last but not least pursuing modernization of its long-range strike capabilities with cruise missiles from both land and sea. As for doctrine Russian military hasn't done much in that field sticking to a classic top-down command structure. The reasons for this can vary from political (purposefully limiting the potential of its military command structure to make them more subordinate to its political leadership) to simply financial (not having the funds to invest heavily into specialization and improving leadership). Also Russian military continues to be an artillery and firepower-centric force not relying on its manpower to carry the fight. This is due to two huge problems in the Russian army – the mentioned above lack of very competent leadership on the platoon level (IE field officers and NCOs) and it's still not fully implemented professionalization and reliance on conscripts to fill a huge gap in its military. Overall Russian military still has its huge problems given the fact that even from an equipment standpoint its modernization has been lacking. Since the war began the average Russian troops have been seen mostly using 90s-era kits still lacking modern comms and thermal/night vision equipment. Even its firearms are still mostly AK74 with a few modern AK12 thrown around which ironically are barebones without any optics (for which the AK12 has been specifically developed). Logically the cause of this would be the endemic Russian corruption, which also extends to its armed forces and flourishes in its rank and file.

## First salvos

On the 21 of February Russia recognized the two separatist republics in the east of Ukraine, after a series of demands towards Ukraine and NATO which were unanimously rejected due to them being openly disregarding other nations' free will. Those overly aggressive postures

were taken as the last salvos of the Russian buildup, which was supposed to be a bluff but recognizing and later positioning troops in the two separatist regions made the ball drop and Ukrainian leadership was convinced that the long-awaited strike was about to happen in the next few days. At midnight on the 24 of February Russian military issued a NOTAM warning over the airspace above Ukraine. After that, in the early hours, Russian President Vladimir Putin delivered a national address in which he declared a “special military operation” to denazify and demilitarize Ukraine. A few short minutes after this Russian military began to hit targets all across Ukraine with its long-range ballistic missiles fired from both land (Iskander, Kalibr and Tochka), sea and air-based platforms. The first strike was aimed at mainly AA installations, logistics centres, airfields and command and control facilities of the Ukrainian military. In 6 hours the barrage inflicted huge losses on Ukraine’s capabilities. However, the Russian strikes failed to fully knock out the connection between the leadership in Kyiv and its frontline units, which since the 21<sup>st</sup> of February combined with the few critical hours they had during the NOTAM warning gave them just enough time to minimize damage on critical infrastructure and organize a response. On the following morning, Russian troops officially crossed the border with Ukraine from Belarus, Russia and Crimea.

The first day’s progress was fast given the fact that Ukrainians were still reorganizing after the lethal first strike. Ukrainian air assets were mostly destroyed and its airforce suffered massive casualties trying to contest the airspace against a numerically and technologically superior foe. Russian airborne troops launched daring air assaults deep into Ukrainian territory most notably against Hostomel airport near Kyiv intending to capture it and use it as a FOB to land troops and equipment near the capital. Also, an old tactic used in Crimea was implemented but to a horrible result – the use of saboteurs dressed either like civilians or the Ukrainian military tried to infiltrate Kyiv and neutralize the political and military command leadership. This failed spectacularly and almost all of them were either captured or gunned down in their vehicles by Ukrainian SOF and units of the Ministry of Interior. Ukrainian response was at first very muddled and it mainly concentrated on maintaining civil order and insuring the political and military decision-makers remain in contact with its citizens, army and the outside world. This was made much easier by the fact the first strike was either poorly planned or deliberately ignored hitting television/radio and internet infrastructure. In those first days, the survival of Ukrainian statehood hung in the balance as even the Pentagon warned Kyiv might fall in the next 3 days. This all changed after 3/4 days of the invasion.

## Ignoring the lessons of modern warfare

From the looks of it, the Russian general staff expected a 2021 Afghanistan-like scenario in which in the course of one or two weeks the entire Ukrainian political and military system collapsed without much of a fight. That would explain a decision made by the Russian staff- using 150 thousand troops for the invasion. This number might sound a lot but the front on which Russia decided to initiate this invasion is very large, actually larger than the opening front of operation Barbarosa back in 1941 when the German army had amassed a much larger force. Ukraine had a numerical advantage, which made for a curious position where the defender had more troops than the attacker. With a 150 thousand corps on a wide front, the Russians had two choices – to either overextend and thin outline of supply or concentrate and leave huge gaps in the line leaving their elements with exposed flanks.

As the Russians probably expected a full-on collapse of Ukrainian morale and command and control abilities they made the fateful decision to stick to the roads via columns and rely on rapid advances often racing forward, not allowing logistical, and artillery elements to catch up behind them ready to support and assist. As it turned out neither morale nor command and

control was even close to collapsing. After the first days, the Ukrainian troops started to respond decisively and highlighted those major Russian mistakes in planning. While Ukrainian regular troops began to consolidate around points of huge strategic importance, Ukrainian SOF, airborne and all the other elite elements began heavily exploiting Russian gaps, ambushing entire armoured columns and practically whipping them out with artillery and man-portable antitank weapons supplied from the West. Those small unit tactics were soon employed by regular troops, which as said above had the operational autonomy to engage and disengage at their own will. Russian top-down command structure practically paralyzed its units which got bogged down with supply, communication breakdowns and ambushes and couldn't effectively deploy and react. As Russian troops were trying to move quickly and close the salients they did not buy enough rear echelon troops back on the border, which could be deployed to the captured territories to ensure public order, mop up leftover resistance and most importantly provide security for communications and logistics to the frontline units. Those that were deployed often became victims of ambushes. That left a lot of Ukrainian troops (which had purposefully not engaged and instead hid from the leading Russian troops) free to wreak havoc on Russian supply which was mainly via trucks. The second week of the invasion was full of footage showing convoy after convoy of Russian supply trucks (mostly soft targets) getting ambushed and destroyed or even just disabled by small arms fire and later sabotaged in the middle of the road leaving the roads blocked to other Russian convoys. As supplies dried out that same week was also full of footage of Russian armour out of fuel. Ukrainians correctly assumed that Russian tanks were as tough as the supply trucks that fuel them. This caused the entire advance to stall after the first week or so and got bogged down by its incompetence, low morale and heavy Ukrainian resistance. Then started the trend for Russians to abandon their gear en masse.

## Stuck in the 90s

On the individual level, Russian troops proved to be in no better position. The first week into the war there was already footage of how poorly the so-called Ratnik program was implemented. The average Russian kit excluding the new camo pattern is pretty much from the 90s. Most of the helmets and weapons still don't have rails and mounts to allow mounting optics, NVGs and other accessories (not that there were any, to begin with). Communications are the same with many units using unencrypted radio channels allowing Ukrainians to listen in or jam them. Others have been shown using radios from civilian markets which again are not encrypted or in some instances units using mobile phones to communicate between them or call in air support.

In terms of tactics, Russian troops were supposed to be peer-to-peer rivals of those of NATO but for much of what we saw those last weeks, they are more peer-to-peer with FSA rebels in Syria than a professional military. Russian troops don't seem to be properly trained on how to manoeuvre and be the security element for their tanks and IFV, most often they stay huddled together in narrow streets or inside their troop carriers. In rural areas that would be understandable since a platoon-sized element can't provide 24/7 security for its assets and since they are located in an open area with good visibility constant combat readiness is not needed. What is unforgiving is the lack of readiness when entering hostile urban areas when infantry is supposed to amp its activity and provide almost constant security for its tanks and IFV who are easy prey for hunter-killer teams in urban areas. First 2 weeks of the war most Russian convoys entering towns and villages had poor infantry support with the infantrymen either doing a poor job at it (IE not spreading out, this is a basic must especially in urban areas since a single burst of machinegun fire or shell injure or kill multiple squad members if they are not properly

spaced) or not been there at all which made them easy targets for Ukrainian troops waiting in preplanned ambushes with kill zones.

## David vs Goliath

As Russian infantry failed at its job to support armour Ukrainians showed exactly how vulnerable armour is on today's battlefield. While Russian tanks and APC aren't the most modern in terms of tech (like thermal optics for gunners and commanders or hunter-killer abilities) it's highlighted how deadly modern man-portable antitank weapons like NLAWs and Javelins are. Before man-portable AT weapons were only a viable option when they are used in urban areas where they could be used effectively when utilizing the terrain. Even then using AT weapons in urban areas had huge disadvantages, the biggest of which was the back blast of those weapons which is very dangerous and requires constant supervision. Using older types of AT weapons against tanks outside of urban centres from huge distances was nonviable—they were just a stop-gap option to give the average infantryman enough firepower to stay alive until ground or air assets came to take on the enemy armour and do the real killing. Now the new arsenal of AT weapons gives the average infantryman a huge and often unequal advantage against armour – back blast is no longer such a big problem and the warhead is now not only an explosive-shaped charge but includes a complex guiding computer, which allows the weapons effective range to an extent much more than the average RPG for example. Also, both weapon systems have the capabilities to defeat reactive armour by either using a tandem warhead or a dynamically shaped charge in the case of the NLAW. Those factors combine turned Russian tanks and APC from a relatively secure means of transport to often the easiest targets on the battlefield given their huge size.

## Guerra - a lesson in asymmetrical warfare vs brute firepower

While the Russian army did cause a lot of carnage to Ukrainian defences practically depriving them of the ability to launch large scale counter operations and made huge gains, especially in the south taking Kherson and closing off the Azov sea, this was more or fewer thanks to their sheer advantage in firepower with its artillery and strategic assets like air power and ballistic missile capabilities. Instead of playing the decisive role in those early victories, Russian ground forces proved more or less to just count on that firepower to do the job for them and their advances were slow, sluggish and poorly coordinated. This huge advantage in firepower still gives the initiative to the Russians even after all those huge mistakes.

Counter to the relatively sluggish and slow response Russian ground attack Ukrainian troops adapted fast and with deadly effect. Given the fact that they couldn't match the firepower of Russian BTGs head-on in the open fields, individual elements of the Ukrainian Army made good use of both their new doctrine and the arsenal of man-portable AT/AA weapons. Units comprised of elite troops like SOF, airborne or police SWAT which had a significant amount of training formed small mobile squads of up to 20 operators that mainly utilized light off-road vehicles. Their kit is comprised of the latest gear including thermal/night vision equipment, surveillance drones, laser range finders, foreign weapon systems like NLAWs or Javelins, Stingers also light portable mortars and a mix of modern small arms for both suppression and marksmanship. Then they took full advantage of the gaps between Russian units and effectively went on a semi-independent search and destroy missions behind their lines, avoiding open areas and mainly moving thru forested or urban areas (this proved very effective in the north of Ukraine where the terrain is heavily forested). Utilizing their modern equipment and the terrain

which was hard for the Russians to reach with their heavy gear those small elements wreaked havoc among the Russian armoured units, arranging ambushes and destroying numerous vehicles in the span of minutes and then making a quick exfill on foot/via their cars before the Russians could react and call in support. Thermal/night vision gear proved to be vital in this since it gave those units the ability to hit the Russians with impunity at night stemming from the fact that very few Russian units had night vision gear. Western training, which focused on individual initiative and independent operations was also a huge factor that ensured the success of those raids against a foe who to a large extent had no real idea how to react independently and was often stuck waiting for the command structure to hand down orders.

## Cold eyes in the sky

Unmanned combat aerial vehicles also proved to be very important in this war. The wide spread of drones and their relatively low costs made them an everyday part of modern combat from the Syrian desert to the central European fields of Ukraine. Many units from both sides of this war use drones as passive recon (providing security over a location by surveying the area for possible enemy movements) and active recon (seeking out enemy positions). In addition, the infamous Bayraktar TB2 medium-altitude long-endurance drone once again proved its worth. Those drones proved to be cost-effective – worth 2-3 million apiece they encourage daring attacks, some supposedly even been used to lure the AA of the flagship of the Russian black sea fleet the “Moskva”, while Ukrainian antiship missiles hit it from its blind spot. Their small size, medium altitude and long flying hours proved to outsmart Russian anti-air coverage above its units, which led to them losing precious equipment (which is worth millions and is extremely vital for conducting ground operations) destroyed by those drones. This is a repetition of the 2020 Karabakh war where Russian SAMs proved somewhat ineffective against the Azeri TB-2s and from the looks of it, the Russian army hasn’t made huge steps in improving its anti-drone capabilities and defences besides the make-do cages on top of its tanks and IFVs.

Artillery on the other hand has reemerged as a very effective weapon thanks to drones. Before them, the process of calling artillery was often long and prone to mistakes with frontline observers relaying coordinates for a fire mission back to the artillery. Now drones have largely replaced forward observers and give the artillery teams a direct picture of the area and a much better idea of how, when and exactly where to send those rounds. Combine this with the smart shells that the west is probably giving Ukraine and we now see some incredibly accurate artillery fire missions whipping out whole areas saturated with targets.

Another element of drone warfare is the huge psychological impact it seems to have on individuals on the ground. Since there has been more and more footage of loitering munition being used and also commercially available drones dropping small ordinances on unsuspecting targets, drones have started to take a serious practical and psychological toll on soldiers. From intercepted radio communications between Russian troops and footage of Russians desperately running away from drones we can see that there is certainly a so-called terror effect on individual soldiers stemming from the fact that they can be under constant surveillance from an aircraft that can stay in the air for tens of hours and drop or call in death from above - all this without the men on the ground even knowing before it’s too late. This will certainly become more and more apparent as the war goes on and it is highly probable it will take a toll on the overall morale of Russian troops.

## OPSEC- waging war on a whole new front

Information is king, whoever has a better understanding of the enemy, his plans and movements always have the upper hand. To avoid this armies across history have always searched for new ways to cover movements and planning. From cyphers and camouflage to maintaining vast perimeters and not allowing anyone near to document what is going on.

This always has been a daunting task but with the new advancements in tech, the widespread ease of getting internet access and having a high-resolution camera in the pocket such as maintaining operational security has shifted to a completely new level. In the beginning, many Ukrainian civilians helped the war effort by shooting photos and videos of Russian troops taking positions in their towns and villages. Those images were actively collected by Ukrainian intelligence, which used them to construct an overall picture of the locations and movements of Russian troops. On the Russian side, this might have led to a sense of paranoia, since there are many reports indicating arrests or outright executions of Ukrainian civilians taking pictures and videos of Russian soldiers.

Furthermore, unit discipline is now more vital than ever with ensuring individual soldiers don't use their phones since it could render every other precaution useless. In Ukraine, Russian troops don't have an independent network infrastructure and use cell towers belonging to Ukraine meaning every time they decide to connect to the internet or to make a phone call via Ukrainian networks they can be instantly tracked down by the security services. Those coordinates and conversations translate into vital intelligence.

The problems don't end there – even if a certain soldier somehow avoids getting tracked he can still get himself or his buddies killed by posting on social media like Tik-Tok or V Kontakte. This also extends to careless Russian news networks posting footage of Russian assets. Ukrainian intelligence is closely monitoring Russian social networks and a video/photo can give important information like exposing troop locations, regiments, troop and equipment movement. This however is not monopolized by Ukraine since Russians have been doing the same thing and conducting open-source intelligence on Ukrainian social networks. In one famous case, a touching video of a western volunteer playing the violin helped expose his location, which led to a cruise missile strike that killed at least 200 soldiers.

For now, Ukrainians have the upper hand in this open-source intelligence since they still control the internet and telecom infrastructure giving them a free hand in tracking Russians using it. A silent but vital help for them has also been the STARLINK system supplied by the American tycoon Elon Musk giving the Ukrainians internet access everywhere even in areas where the communications infrastructure has been out of action since STARLINK doesn't need it to operate.

## Conclusions on the development of modern combat and the art of war

Until now, the current analysis has covered a large part of the Russo-Ukrainian war but still ignored other vital elements of it like the utter failure of the Russians to establish clear air superiority over Ukraine. It will not be discussed, as in terms of air support and power not much

has changed while the purpose of this article is to highlight the general changes in warfare this debacle will bring.

What we can see clearly from all the explanations above is that with the increasing firepower modern tech gives on the individual level, modern armies must adapt both their planning, armaments and also their tactics. The highly mechanized Russian army that relies mainly on heavy armaments like artillery, tanks and APCs suffered huge losses at the hands of an opponent, which has much less heavy equipment but utilizes modern tech and firepower. Ukrainian heavy equipment has also suffered catastrophic losses from air power, cruise missile strikes and artillery. In terms of their heavy equipment both countries are stuck into a slugging match suffering devastating losses of gear and many troops on the ground seemingly now prefer moving on foot via light vehicles and using the terrain as cover rather than staying in their armoured vehicles which can be destroyed at any time without proper support.

### Raise the budget or go cheaper?

Many NATO countries rely on a small but highly modernized pool of heavy equipment and the question is raised can those countries maintain their gear in reasonable numbers for a prolonged amount of time in the modern war – which judging from Ukraine could be very difficult stemming from the fact that firepower is so big (air power, accurate artillery, drones, cruise missiles, man-portable AT/AA weapons) and widely available it causes devastating losses on heavy equipment especially on tanks and APCs turning them from vehicles offering acceptable protection to often metal coffins when left without proper support. Modern militaries should decide how to address this – producing more of their up-to-date gear or if funds are not available risk and switch to more affordable but numerous alternatives.

### Operational security – a huge new front

With the immense technological advances in the past 20 years, OPSEC is now crossing into a new dimension and the task of maintaining it gets much, much harder. Finding ways to ensure operational security will be vital since everyone could nowadays use open-source intelligence and technology to devastating effect against an adversary if not countered the right way. US and NATO countries have started to take steps both in terms of technological counters and enforcing discipline on the individual level, but one rule remains true, even more now than ever: Talking kills. As a friend of the author who served in the US military once said: There is a reason the Green berets are the greatest asset to the US military and it's because they are the quiet professionals.

### Evolution of the modern infantry – back to the Rifles

Earlier in 2020, USMC announced a massive restructuring that would see the marines evolve from a heavily equipped fighting force with its artillery and tanks to a more mobile and light fighting force relying on its infantry. They went so far that they decided to disband its artillery and tank core and outsource it to the US army, which is seen as a very risky change. When this change is done the freed-up funds will be relocated to the infantry of the USMC, investing heavily in more training, more equipment and better gear on the individual level. The idea is to turn the average grunt into a highly-skilled fighter on par with tier 2 units like Rangers and MARSOC. Also maybe taking great inspiration from the Rangers (which are the most rapidly deployable elements the US has) USMC also wants to greatly improve the mobility of the core allowing it to make quick deployments.

Before the war in Ukraine, this radical change was heavily questioned but now after the war erupted it looks like the marines had the right idea. Infantry must now adapt and become more light, instead of using heavy vehicles they must now shift to lighter more mobile transports, instead of conventional tactics they must learn more than ever how to wage unconventional warfare. Ukrainian SOF and other conventional units proved that if modern infantry is to survive and be effective it must abandon the idea of just sitting in trenches and providing support for heavy gear like tanks and APCs like before. It must develop much more complex capabilities like making the best use of the terrain exploiting it as both cover and concealment, getting used to more independent operations without proper support from tanks and IFVs and often just using off-road vehicles or just moving on foot.

Recon, forward observation, ambushes and hit and run attacks are all things that must be taught and learned by every unit not just special troops like SOF, airborne and others. This of course would be almost impossible without capable NCOs, which as many experts say are the backbone of every effective western army. In this sense, investment into NCOs must continue to ensure they remain this reliable backbone. The top-down command structure proves once again it is ineffective compared to the western command structure that encourages operational integrity and freedom to act and should be scrapped wherever it is still used. Hand in hand with different training and tactics also comes a huge shift in equipment, which must be modernized and made widely available to all soldiers – things like NVGs, thermal optics, drones, IR lasers, communication devices, man-portable AA/AT weapons and better small arms. From a financial standpoint, they cost much less than multimillion-dollar IFVs and from the war in Ukraine, we see they are far better utilized and effective. Once again we can see that learning to use the tools of modern warfare is the difference between winning and utter destruction.

## How an underdog is again rewriting military history

Ukrainians knew for eight years what they would be against most expectations they figured out what to do on political and military terms and most importantly they implemented this knowledge properly all the while facing a constant war in the east, nonstop political and economic hardships and constant destabilization caused by a country with one of the most dangerous and capable intelligence agencies. With the Russian retreat from the north now a decisive battle will take place in Donbas and this will be the most difficult challenge for Ukrainians until now.

The new front in the Donbas now offers a different approach to the Russian high command since it has wide-open areas allowing for them to utilize their doctrine and use more effectively their huge pools of vehicles and air power. This front is also smaller allowing better coordination between units. Last but not least Russian command has learned a thing or two from the last two months of carnage and now moved to centralizing its command structure around a single decision-maker- General Aleksandr Dvornikov, widely described as the most capable officer in the Russian staff when it comes to major independent command. This front will decide the fate of Ukraine and arguably world affairs for the next decades.

Countries should take an example from this and forget the “sexier for the voter/taxpayer” idea that investing in the army means buying new IFVs and tanks from time to time and leaving all other important issues to waste away. If we want to improve the overall capabilities of our militaries there will be no better way in moving forward than to invest in the strength and intellect of our soldiers. This is what Ukraine did even with limited resources.

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