

Ukraine War: Russia is Pressing Westward. Is a Bigger Russian Offensive Coming Soon?

General Carl von Clausewitz and "The Principles of War"

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This week, February 24, 2024 marks the beginning of the third year of the war in Ukraine. Hundreds, if not thousands, of assessments of the first two years of the war will be published, heard, or viewed.

As the war now enters its third year, Russia recently announced victory in a major regional battle for the strategic city of Avdeyevka in the Donetsk region of east Ukraine. Avdeyevka was the lynchpin for Ukrainian defenses throughout the region which, by some indications, are beginning to fracture.

After similar Russian strategic victories in the strategic cities of Bakhmut in 2023, and Mariupol in 2022, Russia lacked sufficient numerical forces to capitalize on those victories and launch new offensives to further expand its area of control.

However, after the taking of Avdeyevka it appears that now may be changing. This time Russia is pressing westward and taking more villages and towns formerly in Ukrainian control. Moreover, rumors of an ever bigger Russian offensive coming soon are being reported by reliable sources.

Some of those sources report more than 110,000 new, additional Russian forces have been positioning in the north Kharkhov-Kupiansk area directly bordering Russia. A new Russian front and offensive may soon emerge in that region. If so, it would make Russia's recent Avdeyevka victory—where 40,000 Russian troops were employed—appear as mere dress rehearsal. Others have identified another 60,000 Russian troops are also amassing in the

far south Zaporozhiye region.

In short, the bigger picture that emerges is that Russian forces have now significantly increased in number all along the Ukraine front. While its initial invasion in February-March 2022 involved only 190,000, spread across roughly 1500 miles of front from Kiev to Crimea, the Russian Ministry of Defense admits it has more than 600,000 troops now deployed along a front in East Ukraine half that long. This number is also more or less confirmed by the Ukrainians as well. In contrast, while Ukraine had a total force of more than 500,000 in 2022, and likely significantly more by the summer of 2023, it now has by various accounts no more than 350,000 available combat troops.

In 2023 Ukraine launched a general offensive starting in early June. It called a halt to the offensive by early fall 2023 after suffering massive losses in killed and wounded. Estimates vary from 100-300,000 Ukrainian forces killed and wounded depending on sources.

Most independent sources put Ukraine's losses around 200,000 during the summer 2023 offensive and including all of 2023. The magnitude of the losses have resulted in Ukraine recently announcing plans to draft another 500,000 in 2024 to replenish its ranks. Initially this 2024 mobilization was to include women and students. However, a public outcry has now forced the Ukraine government to reconsider and change the composition of that planned draft, the results of which have yet to be finalized yet. In the meantime reports and smartphone videos abound showing 'recruitment teams' composed of Ukrainian police and other para-military forces kidnapping military age Ukrainian men off the streets who are then sent to quick military training and then to military units on the front in east Ukraine.

In contrast to Ukraine's difficulties replenishing its military forces, in the fall of 2023 Russia announced it was already training 420,000 new troops in 2023, available for combat by the winter 2024 and after. This mobilization of manpower was composed, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense, completely of volunteers, not draftees. Russia said Russian citizens were volunteering to join the Russian army at a rate of 1500 per day. It's likely some of the 420,000 may have already been committed to the recent strategic battle of Avedeyevka, as part of Russia's 40,000 troops there who took that city in mid-February 2024.



Residential building in Avdiivka city (Donetsk region of Ukraine) after Russian shelling and airstrikes on the city on 17 March 2023 (Licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Some of the 420,000 recruited and trained in 2023 are also certainly among the 110,000 Russia has amassed in the north Kharkhov-Kupiansk front, as well as among the 60,000 Russia has additionally assembled at its southern Zaporozhiye front.

All this preceding reference to the relative force numbers engaged at the outset of the conflict, then lost over two years, and now being mobilized in the third year is with a purpose.

The Principles of War

Wars are seldom won when both sides are roughly evenly matched in numbers of troops, weapons and equipment. According to the Principles of War a decided military advantage lies with the side that is able to concentrate superior forces and commit that relatively superior force at the opponent's weakest point.

Concentration of Force is probably the first principle of war, although there are clearly others—not least of which include: element of Surprise, Mobility, Maneuver, sufficient Reserves, which side has Internal lines of Communication and Supply, quality of Intelligence, Morale, Deception, etc. However, all these other principles mostly serve in various ways to enhance the principle of Concentration of Force.

The principle of Surprise may allow a smaller attacking force to catch a larger off guard, create confusion and disarray, disperse its forces, and disrupt its ability to respond. Mobility is about moving forces to a point to quickly create a concentration; Mobility and Maneuver enables the concentration temporarily of superior forces along an opponent's various weak points. Having sufficient Reserves is a principle of particular importance the longer the conflict; Reserves restore a concentration when depleted; Intelligence discovers weakness of an opponent along a line of conflict; Deception convinces an opponent to incorrectly

deploy its forces, etc.

The point here is not a lesson in basic military tactics or strategy. It is to provide a basis for explaining why the Ukraine war over the past two years has appeared to swing back and forth in its outcome.

When conflict initially erupted in February 2022 there were significant Russian gains and advances in spring of 2022; thereafter Ukrainian gains later that late summer-fall 2022; followed by Ukraine's defeat in its summer 2023 offensive by Russia's superior defense; now, in 2024 once again, Russia is advancing at multiple locations across the Donbas front and appears may soon launch even broader offensives elsewhere.

The Principles of War are universal and apply in every conflict, whether during the world wars of the 20th century, US wars of Empire in the 21st, civil wars, regional wars, and even guerilla insurgencies—in the latter case one side may be outnumbered but is able nonetheless to concentrate its forces at a single point to gain a relative force advantage temporarily and thereby defeat a larger opponent.

These and other basic principles of war have been observed and written about for centuries. Julius Caesar wrote of them in his War Commentaries and in his reflections on the Roman civil war. So did Napoleon's general and military theorist, Bertrand de Jomini, during the Napoleonic wars. Britain's Liddell Hart during the world wars of the 20th century. And in guerrilla warfare both Mao and Vietnam's general Giap.

Image is from the Public Domain



Perhaps best known to the general public, however, are summations of the Principles of War by the Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz. Clausewitz wrote about applying the Principles of War both tactically as well as strategically. The latter includes how the Principles are impacted by economic power, political maneuvering by elites, and psychological factors.

The infamous phrase, 'war is the extension of politics by other means' is generally attributed to him. Although others have reversed that phrase to say no, in contrast, 'politics is an extension of war' (Henry Kissinger).

So how have the Principles of War appeared to influence the current Ukraine war? How have the two sides—NATO/Ukraine on the one hand and Russia on the other—applied (or misapplied) the principles to date, such that the seesaw outcomes between the two sides is the result? Which side has Clausewitz's Ghost haunted the most?

Russia's Initial Special Military Operation (SMO): First Offensive Spring 2022

For the past two years western media and the Biden administration has tried to create the message that Russia's Special Military Operation (SMO) launched in February 2022 was about capturing the capital of Ukraine, Kiev. As the message goes, Russia was then defeated in some mystical battle of Kiev and retreated from Kiev that spring. Ukraine's army then drove the Russians all the way back to the eastern Donbas region of the breakaway 'provinces' (called Oblasts) of Lughansk and Donetsk.

However, evidence that has appeared over the past year, and in recent months in particular, reveals this was not true. There was no battle of Kiev. And Russian forces withdrew from around Kiev and were not defeated in some assumed major combat event.

This actual alternative reality was revealed by public statements of participants of both sides in the secret negotiations held in Istanbul, Turkey in March-April 2022 where the representatives of Ukraine and Russia apparently reached a tentative peace deal and compromise at that time. The key elements of that tentative deal were that Ukraine would not join NATO and the eastern 'states' of Lughansk and Donetsk would remain in Ukraine, albeit with a degree of autonomy.

In the middle of the Istanbul negotiations Russia was asked by leaders of France and Germany (Macron and Sholtz) to show good faith in the negotiations by withdrawing its troops around Kiev. It did. While the withdrawal was underway, and the Istanbul tentative peace deal was being considered by Ukraine's president Zelensky, it is now confirmed that British Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, flew overnight to Kiev and convinced Zelensky to reject the tentative deal and continue the war. Johnson reportedly promised Zelensky all the military arms, money and NATO support necessary to defeat Russia militarily.

Johnson and NATO's military strategy was based on NATO's inaccurate intelligence assessment at the time that the Russian military was weak and disorganized; that its economy could not survive the sanctions being imposed by the US and NATO; and that Putin's political position was tenuous and regime change likely as Russia losses mounted and its economy crashed. That intelligence and that NATO strategy proved completely erroneous as the historical record has since shown. But Russia's own intelligence assessment when it launched its initial SMO in February 2022 may not have been any more accurate than NATO's. In terms of Principles of War, the principle of Intelligence was misapplied by both sides.

It is now known that the initial objective of Russia's SMO was political, not military. As the tentative Istanbul deal in March-April, shortly after the invasion revealed, the goal was a military show of force by Russia in order to convince Ukraine to come to the negotiations table in Istanbul. In that regard, Russia's SMO was successful. It brought Ukraine to the negotiations table in Istanbul.

However, Russian intelligence politically underestimated the influence of NATO in the Zelensky government and the ability of NATO (Johnson) to convince Zelensky to continue

the war. Russia's political objective was thus trumped by NATO's political influence to convince Zelensky to continue the military conflict.

Politics thus drove Russia's initial SMO while NATO political counter-measures by Boris Johnson led to a continuation of military conflict. Clausewitz's famous dictum 'war is an extension of politics' was confirmed by Zelensky's decision to continue fighting. But so apparently was Kissinger's reverse dictum: 'politics is an extension of war' was confirmed as Russia succeeded in bringing Ukraine to the negotiations table.

There was no way that Russia's initial SMO intended to take Kiev by military action—let alone conquering all of Ukraine as western media . The SMO force was composed of only around 190,000 Russian troops. That's about four divisions, spread along a 1500 mile front from Kiev to Crimea. That wasn't even a sufficient Concentration of Force to even take Kiev let alone all of Ukraine. The initial phase SMO was therefore ultimately and fundamentally a political not a military strategy. Its objectives were ultimately political, not military. If the SMO first phase failed in its political objective, it was due to poor application of the principle of Intelligence.

Putin's intelligence advisors reportedly assured him Ukraine would come to the table and compromise if a military show of force were undertaken. That intelligence assessment underestimated US/NATO ability to ensure the war's continuation, however. Not surprising, after Ukraine rejected the Istanbul compromise and opted for more war, Putin reported sacked a hundred of Russia's intelligence operatives.

Putin himself was also deceived during the Istanbul negotiations by the request of France's Macron and Germany's Sholtz to show good faith by withdrawing Russian forces from around Kiev. Putin admitted he fell for that NATO use of the Principle of Deception in his public interviews later in 2024.

NATO failed in its Intelligence as well. NATO grossly underestimated the political, economic and military strength and durability of Russia. But NATO's intelligence failure was more long term consequential, while Russia's was more short term tactical.

It wasn't the first time Putin fell for NATO deception. He recently also admitted he trusted France and Germany's assurances in 2015 when they, in the persons of then German Chancellor, Merkel, and France President, Holland, assured him Germany and France would enforce the Minsk agreement of 2015. That agreement called for a halt in hostilities between Ukraine and the Donbas breakaway provinces, Lughansk and Donetsk. But Ukraine's Kiev government did not halt its attacks on the Donbas for the next eight years, continually shelling Donbas from 2015 to 2022, in the process killing 14,000 of Donbas Ukraine citizens.

Of course the grandest deception was US and EU assurances in 1991 when the USSR collapsed that NATO would not 'move east'. Starting in 1999 it did so. So in its effort to reach some strategic security arrangement with NATO, Russia has repeatedly been duped.

Given the events of 1991, 2015 at Minsk, and now March 2022 in Istanbul, it's not likely Putin will ever trust any verbal assurances by Germany and France—or the UK or US—ever again. As the well-known American saying goes: 'fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me'.

It is thus highly unlikely Putin and Russia will fall for any tentative agreements in the Ukraine war. In 2024 any resolution of the conflict will be determined by military force. Kissinger's reverse statement 'politics is the extension of military action' (not military action the extension of politics) seems more likely the application in 2024 and beyond.

Ukraine's First Offensive: Summer-Fall 2022

If Concentration of Force, Intelligence and Deception were the key Principles of War at play in the initial phase of the Ukraine War in spring 2022, by late summer 2022 Concentration of Force and the element of Surprise were the dominant forces.

In the summer of 2022 Ukraine quickly followed up on Russia's withdrawal from Kiev and northern Ukraine and launched an offensive of its own. It used the four months from February 2022 to build its manpower and arm itself with western weapons (or older Soviet weapons that East Europe was giving it). By summer it had 500,000 troops available, to Russia's still limited 190,000 most of which were no longer located in the north but were committed to the taking of the strategic city of Mariupol in the south. That left the northern Kharkhov region sparsely defended and overly extended. With the planning and strategy assistance of NATO officers, including US generals in Kiev, that summer 2022 Ukraine overwhelmed Russian forces in Kharkhov province in the north and drove them back to Lughansk. It was a clear tactical defeat for Russia.

Russia consolidated its forces in Lughansk by mobilizing an emergency force of 300,000 from its reservists in Russia. That regrouping also included pulling some forces back across the Dnpr river in the southern province of Kherson. That too was a withdrawal not a defeat, notwithstanding the spin by western and Ukraine government media.

Thus by early 2023 Ukraine's initial advantage in numerical forces committed to its 1st offensive in Kharkhov was neutralized by Russia's call up of 300,000 reservists. As 2022 came to a close both sides were about numerically equal with around 400,000 troops.



A bombed-out school in Orikhiv (pictured in July 2023), around which much of the fighting has taken place in western Zaporizhzhia (Licensed under CC BY 4.0)

Ukraine's Defeated Second Offensive: Summer 2023

A new military phase in the conflict was about to begin in 2023. Russia went over to the defensive while Ukraine planned on yet another, larger 2nd offensive for some time in the spring or early summer 2023. And here Ukraine made a major strategic mistake which may in hindsight indicate a turning point in the war long term: Ukraine waited nine months to launch a second offensive in June 2023. While it delayed, Russia built massive defenses in depth all along the now shorter 800 mile front. Those defenses were especially deep in Zaporozhiye where Russia expected Ukraine's next offensive to concentrate. It was not difficult to assume that location was where Ukraine would concentrate its forces. Zelensky and his government repeatedly said publicly that's where the offensive would come. So much for the Principle of Surprise which Ukraine used to its advantage in its prior summer 2022 offensive in the north.

Clausewitz and every general before and after knows that defensive forces have a numerical advantage over offensive when it comes to Concentration of Force. Typically and on average an offensive force needs to be at least three times as large as a defensive one in order to prevail. In attacking a major urban area, the ratio needs to be perhaps as much as five to one. (Another reason why Russia in February-March could not have planned to take Kiev with only around 40,000 in that area).

Russia's massive defense, called the Surovikin line, were at least three lines deep. Extensive fields of mines, anti-tank gun emplacements, artillery or all kinds were positioned on the high points, along with drones, thousands of tanks and around 400,000 Russian troops most of which were concentrated in the Zaporozhiye line. Ukraine in turn failed to concentrate sufficient force in that region as part of its offensive, keeping large forces deployed elsewhere. US military advisors at the time reportedly criticized Ukraine's failure to concentrate sufficient forces in its major point of offensive in Zaporozhiye. The outcome of Ukraine's 2023 offensive was predictable. The Principle of relative Concentration of Force determined Ukraine's failed offensive. Defensive warfare—which Russia has always been good at—prevailed—as the Nazis in world war II discovered in battles for Moscow in 1941, Stalingrad in 1942, and then Kursk in summer 1943.

Ukraine's summer 2023 offensive proved a military disaster and a huge tactical defeat. Reports of Ukrainian losses ranged from 90,000 killed or wounded in the summer offensive alone and 250 to 300,000 through the first two years of the war. The western source Mediazone estimates Russia's total losses in killed and wounded for the first two years of the war at 37,000.

Ukraine's 2nd offensive gains for that expenditure of manpower during were measured in mere hundreds of meters in a handful of locations. Many tens of thousands more of its troops were also lost trying to hold the strategic city of Bakhmut in central Donetsk in spring 2023. These losses were sorely felt when a couple of months later the main 2nd offensive was launched. Ukraine's summer offensive needed a force of perhaps one million to prevail over Russia's dug in 400,000. It barely had a ratio of 1.5 to 1, if that. Clausewitz's primary Principle of War was thus fundamentally violated, with predictable results.

Ukraine's 2nd offensive was decimated by Russia's 1st Defensive. Actually 'decimated'—a word taken from the old Roman word for 1/10 of losses—was an underestimation. Ukraine may have lost one third and certainly one-fourth. Clausewitz must have looked down and just shook his head.

As Ukraine's 2nd offensive cracked its teeth on the rock of the Surovikin line, Russia was already preparing for 2024. Once Ukraine's 2023 offensive was halted by fall 2023 Russia announced it had been training 420,000 new troops. These forces be available to join the front in 2024.

In contrast, by year end 2023 Zelensky announced Ukraine needed to recruit (draft) and mobilize another 500,000 in 2024 to replenish forces lost in 2023. At first that draft plan included students and women but Ukrainian public protests forced him to back off that plan. To date, the final plan has not yet been defined in final form; nor recruitment begun. Reportedly the new plan will employ means to force the estimated 6 million Ukrainian men who emigrated to Europe when the war began to return. In the interim teams of Ukrainian police and paramilitaries have been forcibly kidnapping military aged Ukrainian men off the streets and sending them to the military.

So the picture as of February 2024 entering the third year of war is Russia with 600,000 men in arms on the front at start of 2024, as confirmed by Russia's Ministry of Defense, with possible more of the 420,000 enlisted and trained in 2023 also coming on line. Assuming some rotation, Russia's total deployment in Ukraine should reach around 800,000 this year. Meanwhile, Ukraine's forces are estimated at 350,000 which includes 100,000 of reserves of its best units.

Russia's Second Offensive: Spring 2024?

Russia forces are amassing across multiple fronts. There are the 60,000 located reportedly in south Zaporozhiye province who may be planning to take the rest of that province still occupied by Ukraine. And an estimated 110,000 more amassed in the north reportedly preparing to retake Kharkhov province as well. One or both of those regional offensives are expected to begin sometime this spring. In the meantime, Ukrainian forces are steadily being driven back from their recent defeat in Avdeyevka—the third major strategic city taken by Russia (the first Mariupol and second Bakhmut)—as 40,000 Russian forces push a third front west from Avdeyevka. This time the Concentration of Force advantage lies decisively with the Russians.

Internal Lines of Supply and Communication are also key principles of war. Here as Russia's anticipated second offensive begins, Russia has another strategic advantage. It has virtually all internal lines of supply. In contrast, Ukraine has to depend on lines reaching back into Europe and across the Atlantic. And Ukraine's lines appear to be drying up for two reasons.

First, Europe has run out of the old USSR weapons it had been given Ukraine. Now it is dipping into its store of more modern US provided weapons like cruise missiles and F-16s. More troublesome, both the USA and Europe appear unable to provide Ukraine with necessary military ammunition, most notably 155mm artillery shells. EU at best produces only 4-5,000 a month. (During the summer offensive Ukraine was using 6,000 a day!) US production of 155mm is barely more sufficient. It began the war producing 14,000 a month. Now it's 28,000 a month. Still not enough. After one more year US claims it will produce 50,000 a month. But Zelensky says he needs 1m shells a year now.

The US has had to arrange ammunition for Ukraine from South Korea and reportedly now from Japan. Russia on the other hand produces 1m shells a year. That's nearly 100,000 a month plus the additional shells it's getting from No. Korea. This ammunition problem is replicated across other ammunition production to varying degrees.

At the same time, opposition appears to be growing within the US military to provide Ukraine with more modern US weapons thereby depleting US stocks. For example, only a small number of Abrams tanks have been provided Ukraine to date. F-16s will be drawn from Europe's stock but of older versions of the aircraft. The US has provided so far only 7 Patriot anti-missile defense units but 5 have already been destroyed. Patriot systems cost billions and take a long time to produce. It's not likely the US military will want to sacrifice too many more in 2024 quickly.

Then there's the matter of US funding for Ukraine which continues to struggle through Congress with little light at the end of that tunnel. Ukraine's totally dependent, in other words, on sources other than its own production and those supply lines are susceptible to political winds changing in the west. Even Ukraine's early advantage in battlefield intelligence via surveillance is fading. It initially had total use of Elon Musk's Starlink satellite system but Russia has reportedly found a way to tap into that on the battlefield as well now.

In short, Ukraine's disadvantage in critical weapons is growing. So too is its disadvantage in air superiority on the front. It's main successes have been sinking several Russian ships with west provided drones and long range missiles. But that has not had any appreciable impact on the progress of the ground war. Nor have any of the western media's many NATO 'game changing' weapons throughout the war.

Shifting Strategies in the Ukraine War

Ukraine may have lost the war as far back as its failed summer-fall 2023 offensive. Since then it has not been able to recoup its losses in men or material, as Russia's advantages in both grows steadily. Ukraine is totally dependent on US/NATO funding, both for weapons and for keeping its economy afloat. Half of Ukraine's budget has been provided by the west. And that funding is getting harder to provide, as events in Congress have shown recently with the failure of the Biden administration to convince it to pass his requested \$61B further aid to Ukraine. For its part, Europe has passed legislation to provide Ukraine with another \$54 billion, but that's in the form of loans distributed over several years.

But no amount of funding by the west can substitute for Ukraine's simply running out of men (and women) in arms as war depletes its available sources of military manpower. Whether Ukraine can restore a Concentration of Force to neutralize Russia's is highly doubtful.

At the outset of the conflict, US and NATO strategy was to arm Ukraine to the teeth with weaponry to fight the war, impose sanctions on Russia they thought would undermine its economy and ability to produce military arms, reduce its ability to sell oil globally with which to fund its military and even its civilian economy, and bet that the losses in the war and economic crises would result in political instability in Russia and Putin's overthrow. But none of the above had, or will, happen. If anything, the war has strengthened Putin's position in which polls show a 80% public favorable impression. His re-election this spring is all but ensured.

In contrast, Zelensky's government is rift with discontent and rumors of coups. He has replaced most senior military generals and many government officials. His ability to continue martial law runs out in a couple months after which elections are likely and, if held, most independent accounts predict he'll lose re-election by wide margins.

In this increasing bleak scenario for NATO and the Biden administration, the US and NATO strategy is now shifting as well. The US new strategy is not formally finalized but appears to be moving toward the following elements: Ukraine militarily must shift to a defensive strategy with a new line somewhere east of the Dnipro river in the Donbas-Zaporozhiye area and Kharkov in the north. It must rebuild its military forces in 2024. The US/NATO will provide it new advanced weaponry needed (F-16s, ATACMS long range missiles, long range drones, etc.) to hold the Russians back from bigger gains. After the US elections in November 2024, Ukraine can then launch yet another, 3rd offensive in 2025 after it has rebuilt its forces. In the meantime, Ukraine (and NATO) should 'play for time' behind the scenes, as it had in 2015.

However, not all in Washington DC accept this future change in US strategy. Some neocons want again to 'double down', either sending NATO troops to west Ukraine to release more Ukraine forces to the front; to allow Ukraine to use US provided long range weapons (F-16s, ATACMS missiles, drones) to attack deep inside Russia; to seize and distribute Russia's \$300B assets in western banks frozen at the start of the war and use them to fund Ukraine; and even to consider using tactical nuclear weapons should Russia ever cross the Dnipro river or try to take Kiev.

For its part, Russia's SMO has changed as well. While Russia is open for discussions with the west (some early contacts reportedly going on in secret), military action will determine the outcome of the war. No more western verbal 'assurances'. At minimum, Ukraine must clearly reject joining NATO. It must remove fascist influences in its military and government—i.e. de-nazify. It must henceforth be neutral and no longer a strategic threat to Russia. NATO must agree to a longer term security arrangement with Russia. But there may be more.

Signals from Putin and other high ranking Russian officials in recent months also suggest that, should Ukraine continue the war, or the west escalate further, then Russia considers all the Russian speaking provinces must become part of Russia just as the four eastern ones already have. That means the area of Kharkov, all the provinces east of the Dnipro river and the southern provinces of Mykolaiv and Odessa as well. Perhaps even Kiev. Russia will likely not talk to Zelensky either, but only with NATO. In other words, continued military action will determine the eventual outcome of the war.

As the respective positions indicate, all sides are still quite far apart. Negotiations or a deal is not on any table or about to be. That means all sides are still betting on a military solution.

But as Clausewitz's Principles of War have already shown, which side has the greater Concentration of Forces, both tactically and strategically, has the ultimate advantage. In addition, the equation of war is influenced as well by which side runs out of Reserves first; which has the stronger Internal Lines; which can deceive the other better as to how and where it will attack next; which forces have the better training and morale; which economy can out produce the other; which has the more and better weapons. And, not least, which leaders are more capable and can remain in office to provide continuity of effective leadership. In 2024 it appears Russia either has, or is gaining, advantage in all the above.

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