Lutz Unterseher

Ukraine: Option for a Confidence-Building Defence

LIT

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Basics and Programme

*"I need
ammunition, not a ride."*
Volodymyr Selensky

"*Arm in such a way that the maxim
of your protection can become
the principle of a general
armament policy* !"

Application of the
***Categorical
Imperative***
(Afheldt
1989:
104)

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INTRODUCTION

At the conclusion of this text, Russia's war against Ukraine is entering its third year. It did not fall from the sky. The first steps were the annexation of Crimea and the infiltration of Donbass in 2014 – which lured Ukraine, a poor country, into a resource-consuming war of attrition (Unterseher 2023).

The event of February 2022 was foreshadowed long before: by troop deployment a year earlier, and there were very specific warnings from Western intelligence services several weeks prior to the attack, which were overlooked or and not taken seriously by European governments. Wasn't Russia the quasi-indispensable trading partner that had, so to speak, enticed Germany and other EU states with its extremely favourable supply of fossil fuels?

Russia's all-out strike was deeply and surprisingly frustrated by Ukraine's initial defence. Following the recapture of territory by the Ukrainian armed forces, which took place in two phases (spring and late summer/ autumn 2022), the fighting turned into a war of position reminiscent of the confrontation in France during the First World War. The winter offensive (2022/2023), with which the Russian army cum criminal gangs attempted to turn the tide, apparently failed with heavy losses. The territorial gains were minimal.

However, at the beginning of 2024, Moscow is still in control of almost a fifth of Ukraine's territory, namely the most developed regions. Without this land, Ukraine must be considered severely damaged beyond the current war losses. It will be dependent on support for an unforeseeable period of time – from a West whose solidarity and willingness to help are questionable.

In this situation, Ukraine has no other option but to launch a counter-offensive to restore its territorial integrity under international law. There are two caveats to its success, however. On the one hand, a great deal depends on Western arms deliveries, which have so far been tardy, insufficient and not always adequate to relevant military tasks. On the

other hand, it is questionable whether the Ukrainian army would be able to regain the offensive, even if more adequate weapons were supplied by the West, against an opponent who enjoys the defender's advantage and who has been given plenty of time to make terrain preparations (field fortifications).

In this context, the debate as to whether the supply of long-range precision guided weapons (Taurus, ATACMS etc.) could turn the tide betrays a certain confusion. More and more observers seem to be predicting a stalemate, from which the need for an internationally mediated ceasefire is being inferred. Such an agreement would be ill-fated from the outset, however, as it has been Moscow's declared policy to date to ultimately annex Ukraine as a whole or to render it submissive. From Vladimir Putin's perspective, a negotiated ceasefire would therefore only be a step towards the final goal – as Russian expansionism is systemic.

It is also conceivable, and incidentally announced by Moscow, that Russia will continue the war – especially as the Western sanctions have not damaged the country's economy as much as expected. The Kremlin could hope for a change in Washington's policy in an isolationist direction: a prospect that is not without substance against the problem of the renewed presidential candidacy of the hardly inspiring old man in office.

It sounds banal: no free Ukraine without US support. In some quarters, this has once again given rise to concern about the dominance of the Atlantic partner. Evidently it is due to the self-inflicted restraint of many European states. If the senior partner withdraws – partial disengagement is already recognisable in the spring of 2024 – the question remains whether the Europeans will be willing and able to fill the gap or whether they will even – in majority or minority – once again flirt with Putin and his regime.

If Ukraine survives the conflict as a viable entity, either as a whole or after giving up parts of its territory, its security will remain precarious, even with international guarantees. The big neighbour will very likely continue to pursue its neo-imperialist goals in the long term or – as a result of internal turbulence – be unpredictable.

This makes it important to work on a solution for the military protection of Ukraine that does not exacerbate the situation, but rather contributes to détente: through a defensive array that is militarily credible, both at home and vis-à-vis *all* neighbouring states, and that does not place an unacceptable burden on the country's scarce resources, in terms of funding and personnel.

This work is presented in the present study – against the background

of a description and analysis of the conflict parties and their profiles, as well as a critical review of the war and its embedding in international relations. The resulting proposal for a military solution that pragmatically fits Ukraine's needs has been called ***Confidence-Building Defence***.

This is a concept that emerged in the context of the discourse on alternatives to the established NATO defence of the 1980s. At that time, the aim was to minimise the significance of nuclear weapons, avoid provocation in relation to potential opponents and to deter conceivable military threats in a reliable, cost-effective manner. Doesn't that sound topical?

In order to better understand the approach of Confidence-Building Defence, it is set out in considerable detail, including considerations of intellectual and real history, systematic stability calculations and a look into the workshop of the "model builder". The immodest claim of this study is to serve as a stimulus: inspiration for all those who are concerned with the future military security of Ukraine.

Recently, the American political Scientist Matthew Evangelista has called for a debate on conventional defence alternatives that lend themselves to improving Ukraine's security (Evangelista 2023/24). This debate is overdue.

Lutz Unterseher
Study Goup on
Alternative Security
Policy (**SAS**)

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AGGRESSOR

Putinism and Hitlerism
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Aspirations

In its relations with the rest of Europe, the Russian regime is confronted with a circle of democratic states. Its need for recognition and status suggests that a democratic façade must be maintained: above all, therefore, retaining the last remnants of political opposition and a media scene that is not completely controlled. By contrast, the Hitler regime existed in an environment in which dictatorships were ubiquitous and hence, the control of the media could be absolute.

The resurgence of the concept of self-sufficiency in Russia – following the economic sanctions imposed by the West in the wake of the annexation of Crimea – has a real basis in the vast empire's natural resources. Near-total autarchy would be possible, and does not require an offensive land grab. The imperial urge has other reasons. In the Third Reich, the fixation on self-sufficiency was closely linked to the conquest of "Living Space" (*Lebensraum*).

Beyond the talk of self-sufficiency: for Russia, the decoupling from the world market, as was pursued by the national socialists, is not a viable option. Its status aspirations externally and the maintenance of power internally require large-scale exploitation of its own raw material base for export. However, as the world market prices for the main export goods, oil and natural gas, fluctuate considerably, and as Russia has little else to offer due to serious modernisation deficits in its economy, the long-term picture is one of instability. In this context, arms sales can only have a very limited stabilising effect (and, incidentally, have been trending downwards for several years).

As in the case of the Third Reich, Russia's international status depends largely on military power. However, there are clear differences in this respect: the Nazi regime spent a higher proportion of its gross domestic product on armaments and, against this background, was able to

develop the illusion of eventually being able militarily to dominate many relevant states in Europe.

Russia does not have this perspective. It sees itself increasingly encircled and its autonomy threatened by an alliance that is perceived as hostile, namely NATO. To date, it has concentrated its military expenditures on nuclear weapons, in order to maintain equal status with the United States, the leading Western power in this area (Rudolf 2018).

The Russian leadership sees a provocative threat to this status in the fact that NATO, inspired by the USA, has set up a missile defence system which is officially directed against Iran's strategic weapons (not yet existant), but is actually aimed at the respective Russian arsenal, at least with its sensors (Unterseher 2014: 1).

In recent years, we have seen a further modernisation of nuclear weapons in Russia and – based on the assumed encirclement – at the same time plans for an expansion of the conventional potential (after a period of restraint due to temporarily very low oil prices): the latter with the obvious intention of fuelling fears among neighbouring states. This applies both to those who do not enjoy alliance protection (example: Ukraine) and to the relatively weak NATO members in Eastern Central Europe (to test the solidarity of the alliance). This double effort by Russia is likely to require a significant mid-term increase in the share of military spending in the country's gross domestic product.

However, it would be wrong to regard perceived (alleged) encirclement as the sole – or even essential – basis for explaining what has happened politically in Russia in recent years. It seems much more plausible that the "feelings of anxiety", which could only become virulent against the background of exaggerated imperial claims, have been instrumentalised by the Russian leadership in order to assert power aspirations both internally and externally.

Collective and national community

Adolf Hitler's *Volksgemeinschaft* ("national community") was racially based. Almost everyone belonged to it without any special proof of qualification. Those who identified themselves as "Aryans" could feel ennobled. The Jews were rejected as "un-German": representative of human rights, democracy, liberalism and libertinage as well as everything else that could have subverted the community.

In this community, there was a pre-understanding of "natural" leader-

ship. There was no need for formalised selection processes and complicated procedures for controlling power. The Volksgemeinschaft had the right to take land at the expense of others because it was entitled to adequate living space – in its asserted superiority.

Vladimir Putin's regime invokes the "collective" as the basis of "Russianness". Anyone who adheres to the history and culture of Russia and recognises the Orthodox Church is a part of it (Laqueur 2015: 91-144; Unterseher 2014: 1). This sounds similar to the construction of the Volksgemeinschaft. Yet it sounds a little more intelligent, more contemporary: After all, "history" is something comprehensible, and "race" a highly dubious concept.

Nevertheless, the Putin regime allows itself to be vehemently anti-Semitic on a case-by-case basis and is aggressively ethnocentric to complement its Russianness. The natural collective, the informal fraternal community, is a conceptual vehicle for rejecting everything "un-Russian", following the example of the 19th century Slavophiles: liberalism, libertinage, Western entertainment culture, democratic separation of powers and "fascism" as a code word for whatever appears foreign.

Of course, a democratically legitimised leadership must be replaced by an autocrat: one who is "enlightened", as Ivan Alexandrovich Ilyin (1883-1954) demanded. Ilyin is one of the ideologues of today's regime who was brought out of historical obscurity. How the leader's "enlightenment" could be guaranteed, though, he failed to demonstrate.

Moreover, from the construction of genuine Russianness, and its role of being the "Third Rome" in succession to Byzantium, it is concluded, as it has been for centuries, that "Russian soil (is) to be collected" (Gitermann 1944). This motive is further fuelled by the fact that with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a point of reference for Russian imperial thinking, many regions were removed from its former influence. This means that wherever Russians live, Moscow may or must intervene to protect them.

State, society, economy

The Russian state has created its own party ("United Russia") – a mass organisation like the (Nazi) NSDAP without high entry barriers. It is intended to promote the idea of the "collective" along with the corresponding enemy images, and organise support for the state leadership. However, in order to "play democracy", the task of providing the regime

with even larger majorities is also entrusted to other, smaller parties.

Almost as in the Third Reich, where there was only one party, the legitimising branch of the political system has lost its structural autonomy. Party politicians are servants. The price the leadership has to pay for this is the uncertainty as to whether the people will really follow the official line in everything, whether they will be able to cope with any losses in relative prosperity, caused by the regime's policies, without major resentment.

There have been public opinion polls. But aren't their results too irritating from the perspective of power? Should it become public knowledge what the mood in the country is like? In any case, at the beginning of September 2016, President Putin had the prestigious Moscow polling institute "Levada" placed on the list of "foreign agents" by his Ministry of Justice because it had not only conducted election research, but also market research, in some cases on behalf of foreign companies.

The intimidating effect of such a measure is hard to beat. If you are not sure of the mood of the population (or the information about it is not reliable): Don't you have to constantly entertain, play tricks and give benefits to keep the "people happy"?

The arsenal of measures developed for this purpose resembles that of the Nazi regime in many respects. The propaganda of the state media, in conjunction with that of the state party, seeks to distract from the regime's shortcomings and direct any potential for protest towards the external enemy. In Russia, however, the propaganda is much more martial, whereas in the Third Reich shallow entertainment appeared to be more important as a strategy of distraction.

in Russia the entertainment culture is tightly integrated into Moscow's propaganda: no pop festival without martial songs, without performances by singing soldiers – often in the field uniforms of the Great Patriotic War. The civilian pop artists also often present themselves in combat gear.

As a flank-supporting measure, the Orthodox Church, loyal to the state since the bloody purge by Peter I, is harnessed to agitate the people, in return for the granting of lucrative privileges to the higher ranks of the clergy.

Conformity with the regime brings advantages at work and also when dealing with state institutions. In addition, there are other benefits: a share of the proceeds from raw materials has been passed on to the "working class". Indeed, the incomes of Russia's work force have appeared attractive: to calm the masses and the weak trade unions (almost as weak as the German Labour Front in the Third Reich).

These mechanisms and measures may have helped to keep a majority of the population "in line". However, it is not possible to determine how large this majority really is, due to the state's influence on the elections. The aforementioned problem of fluctuating commodity prices means, of course, that "stabilisation through consumption" does not have a reliable perspective. In the event of a slump on the world market, the economic belt has to be tightened and the other strategies for securing legitimacy then take on a correspondingly greater weight. However, such a renunciation of consumption has its limits, as the support of the people, which is ultimately needed despite all the hubris, is seen as precarious.

The Nazi regime brought advantages to the labour elite too: protection against dismissal ("binding to the job"), raising real incomes between 1935 and 1938/39, at least in the arms industry (Mason 1975). For a short period of time private consumption demands came into conflict with those of military spending (Barkai 1977). This conflict was "solved" by the war, however.

Despite inherent stability risks, the Russian state, following its historical role concept, presents itself as strong and always capable of acting. Following a process of de-federalisation, its structure is highly centralised and hierarchical – like that of Hitler's Germany. The judiciary has also been – largely – brought into line.

Even more so than in the Third Reich, general corruption seems to serve as a kind of "lubricant" to ensure a certain flexibility for the rigid structures of power. The Nazi regime also tended to utilise competition between different administrative and military bodies (*dualism*) or arbitrary encroachments by the NSDAP to bring established institutions up to speed.

As in the Third Reich, the state in Russia is the central player in the economic system, while private property (including the means of production) is accepted in principle. In both cases, state ownership plays an important role and there are elements of a command economy.

As in the Third Reich, foreign trade in Russia is controlled by the state. Although some of the raw material revenues siphoned off by the Russian state benefit the population, they mostly end up in the pockets of an alliance of state managers from the raw materials and defence industries ("technocrats") and the top echelons of the security apparatus ("siloviki"), whose representative, and also "boss", is Vladimir Putin (Laqueur 2015: 52-57).

Against this backdrop, the resources for a general modernisation of the country are scarce. The funds not siphoned off by the profiteers are largely concentrated on the sectors of the defence industry and the

exploitation of raw materials. The general modernisation of industry and the national infrastructure, education and healthcare systems is notoriously neglected. Russia is decaying.

World Bank statistics show that Russia imports more than it exports in all categories of goods, with the exception of raw materials and defence equipment. This even applies to the agricultural sector (!). There is also an immense outflow of capital: indication that those who are plundering the country are feathering their nest (Triebe 2014).

Army, security services, violence

Russia's land forces currently (*2017)* number just under 400,000 people in uniform. Around half of these are organised in operational units. Like the other branches of the armed forces, this combat potential is under the control of the Russian president via the Ministry of Defence. He is the commander-in-chief (as was Adolf Hitler).

The domestic intelligence service FSB, which has around 100,000 employees and competes with the corresponding organisation in the armed forces, is subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior. The FSB conducts counter-intelligence, spies on citizens who appear problematic to the regime and also serves as a control centre for Russia's border troops, with a complement of over 200,000.

Putin's very personal relationship with this service gives him direct access to its resources.

The foreign intelligence service SVR, with 15,000 employees, reports directly to the president. Since July 3 2016, the head of state also has forces directly under his command that were previously the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior and whose structure was then changed. This involves 350,000 to 400,000 personnel.

This innovation is called *Rosgvardyja*. It includes the "internal troops" (170,000-180,000) and the special police forces, with OMON formations for subduing protest movements (30,000) and the OMSN/SOBR counter-terrorism units (4,000-5,000).

The overall complex includes administrative and training facilities as well as a state-owned company that offers protection to private individuals and companies. It is appropriately named "Okhrana" – which was the name of the feared secret police of the Tsarist Empire.

The regulation of 3 July 2016 "*is the most significant restructuring of Russia's internal security organs in more than ten years. The reform*

reveals Putin's concerns about the stability of the political system he has created – in view of the ongoing economic crisis and upcoming presidential elections. The National Guard can serve not only as an instrument of repression against possible mass protest, but also as a disciplinary tool against potentially disloyal elite groups" (Klein 2016: 1).

When it comes to dealing with domestic political crises, President Putin is not dependent on a specific force or its leaders. The parallel to the Third Reich is evident – direct access by the Führer to competing organisations: Wehrmacht against Waffen-SS, Gestapo against SD. This fact in particular suggests that Putin, like Adolf Hitler (Mason 1966), is his own master and not merely the figurehead of the clique he represents.

Despite the Moscow leadership's apparent need to divert attention from its domestic plight with images of the enemy, Russia is not expected to start a major war like the Third Reich. The risks are simply too great. ***Commentary from the perspective of the year 2024: Putin had expected his invasion of Ukraine to be successful within a few days.***

However, militarily backed attempts at blackmail against the states on the periphery, infiltrations or the formation of "fifth columns" appear to be anything but out of the question. Secessionist conflicts over Gagauzia, Transnistria, Donbass, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh are being kept alive in order to exert imperialist influence on the policies of Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia (Fischer 2016).

The five Central Asian republics also have to reckon with Moscow's interference in principle: some more, others less.

In addition to this muscle flexing vis-à-vis its neighbours, it should be noted that Russia – as already indicated – is attempting to stand up to the USA geostrategically on a global scale: although, in terms of gross domestic product, the Russian potential (adjusted for purchasing power) is only around a fifth (!) of that of the US. Relevant in this context are the military presence in Central and South America and in parts of Africa as well as the intervention in the Syrian civil war – resulting in further, murderous escalation.

Centralisation, monopoly of power, learning deficits

The Putin regime presents itself as a rock of reliability, as a model with a future. And yet everything that could secure a future of stability for the country has been systematically neglected. The gap between the under-developed regions of Russia and the few centres of prosperity has become

ever deeper. The overdue modernisation of industry, in all its breadth, has been repeatedly postponed, and dependence on raw material revenues on the world market has become a constant – with all its risks.

A political system with a problematic legitimacy basis and a high degree of centralisation is responsible for all of this. All strands of power, from the economy, the administration, the armed forces and the security services, converge on one leading figure.

As the concentration of political power has substantially weakened the autonomy of Russia's society, abolished most self-regulating social subsystems, the decision-making centre is overloaded (Deutsch 1963). The overload with information relevant to power is exacerbated – as in the Third Reich – by the fact that reports generated by a "system of lickspittles" can hardly be reliable. Decisions are often made without really processing the information about the situation, impulsively and without being able to develop a sustainable long-term perspective. The system therefore has serious learning deficits.

Russian fears
*First publication "Dominanz, russische Ängste und Pufferzonen" in S. Lange/L. Unterseher: Kriege unserer Zeit, Berlin: LIT **2018**, edited*

On the alienation of Russia

A widespread assumption is that Russia's alienation is mainly due to the behaviour of the West, the US-dominated NATO, but also the European Union (Teltschik 2018). A series of developments are addressed that have allegedly led to Russia's marginalisation and fears of encirclement:

• the eastward expansion of NATO, announced in 1994 and implemented from the turn of the millennium onwards (Zimmermann/Klein 1999),
• the neglect of the NATO-Russia Council, which was founded to take the edge off NATO's eastward expansion,
• the enlargement of the European Union following in the footsteps of the Atlantic Alliance,
• the development of a defence system against ballistic missiles in east-central and south-eastern Europe, which is allegedly directed against a corresponding threat from Iran, but is more likely to affect the Russian strategic arsenal (Rudolf 2018),
• the refusal of the USA to cooperate with Russia on missile defence,
• the advance into geostrategically important areas in North Africa and the Middle East, which the Soviet Union and then Russia counted among their spheres of influence, and
• the expansion of weapons exports in order to displace Russian suppliers, as well as the political and economic isolation of a partner, namely the "People's Republic" of Venezuela.

The global strategy of Western dominance, which originated in the United States, the repression of Russia and the efforts to control the country's immediate neighbourhood are ultimately the cause of its neo-imperialism. One author even goes so far as to suggest that Russia, with its recent policy of covert invasion and breaches of international law, is basically merely

imitating previous acts of dishonour by the West, of which there are indeed some (Pradetto 2018: 45-47). This view appears to be clouded by selective perception, however. *Before* the alleged encirclement began, Moscow's leadership was already aggressively exerting influence on the Russian periphery (Klein 2018).

Hegemonic behaviour

There have been events, operations and concepts that not only fuelled very specific fears – and the desire to join NATO – in the affected periphery immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, but also aroused great concern in the West:

• When the Republic of Lithuania claimed its independence in a referendum, forces loyal to Moscow called in the Russian military in January 1991, but – despite some bloodshed – they were unable to prevail over the majority of citizens.
• Particularly in the direction of Latvia and Estonia, with their larger Russian minorities (whose integration has, incidentally, made significant progress), there have been considerable propaganda efforts by Moscow *since the independence of these states* to undermine the loyalty of the addressees to their governments.
• With the end of the USSR, Moldova fell into turmoil, resulting in the secession of Transnistria, on whose territory elements of the Russian army have been stationed.
• There is a military presence in Armenia too: Russia was granted the right to station troops and paid for this with energy supplies, which were, however, occasionally interrupted for disciplinary purposes.
• Russian attempts to destabilise Georgia also began in the early 1990s. Some parts of the territory (Abkhazia, South Ossetia) were virtually broken off from the state as a whole. Georgia's unsuccessful war against Russia, which was provoked by this, has not been able to change the situation, but has rather aggravated it.   .

It is also worth noting that the Russian military press has developed a discourse very early on about what troop formations would have to look like in order to be able to invade the 'near abroad' in a flash (PDA/SAS 1994: 7).

None of this was very reassuring for observers in Russia's neighbouring states. Sheer horror was also caused by events that took place within the Russian Federation and which can at best only be linked very indirectly to the alleged encirclement by the West.

These are the two coercive wars against Chechnya. The first, under President Yeltsin, was lost, while the second, launched by presidential candidate Putin to increase his nationalist credentials among the people, was "successful". According to the Moscow Ministry of the Interior, a total of 160,000 people died in these wars. Groznyi, the capital of Chechnya, was destroyed.

It seems problematic in principle wishing to maintain business-like or even closer relations with a regime that slaughters its own citizens by the thousands.

True motive

The Russian cultural philosopher Alexander Markovich Etkind has pointed out an essential motive of the Russian leadership for interfering in the affairs of its neighbours (Etkind 2014). From Moscow's perspective, the main aim is to prevent the development of liberal, democratic tendencies on the periphery that could affect Russia, "spill over" or spread like a contagious disease: as the ultimate threat.

In this sense, Etkind interprets the efforts to destabilise Ukraine in the wake of the events on the Kyiv Maidan in 2014 as a "***preventive counter-revolution***".

On hybrid warfare

First publication "Die Gestalt des Unkonventionellen" in
*S. Lange/L. Unterseher: Kriege unserer Zeit, Berlin: LIT **2018**, edited*

Nebulous

Defining the nature of hybrid warfare is as difficult as understanding what actually happens in such a case. Hybrid warfare leaves much in the mist. How can it be made tangible?

The term became popular when the world was astonished to see that Russia first grabbed Crimea and then Donbass in 2014 without "outing" itself. It was only later that Putin admitted his full responsibility, at least for what had happened in Crimea. Hybrid warfare is typically a state affair. It is conducted on a wide variety of levels: political, economic, sub-conventional military, combined with propaganda and disinformation or *cyber war,* but pursues clear objectives, which requires efficient coordination.

Although a hybrid war can in principle also be waged by superior states, it is more likely employed by the less powerful side of a confrontation: the "poison fang of the weak".

The aim is to assert or expand a claimed sphere of influence and to harm the other side in its own sphere without taking the risk of an escalation. Dirty tricks are used according to plan. The boundaries to "perfidy", which is prohibited in international conflicts under the Geneva Convention (*prohibition of perfidy*), are blurred.

Multifaceted

The following is an – incomplete – list of the measures taken against Ukraine (*before the recent war of aggression*):

• The Duma gives the government the right to intervene militarily in neighbouring countries if (ethnic) Russians appear to be in danger.

• Dissidents, critical journalists, opposition leaders and other "apostates" are murdered, subjected to death threats or sent to the new GULAG by the judiciary. This "message" is also directed at those sympathising with Ukraine.

• The *military* aid for the insurgents in eastern Ukraine includes: the deployment of regular but "anonymised" Russian special forces, of mercenaries (ex-soldiers salaried by Russia and freshly trained volunteers, including criminals), the training of military personnel, practical military advice and the generous provision of weapons.

• Added to this is the sporadic employment of long-range artillery from Russian soil against targets in eastern Ukraine.

• *Civilian* aid for the insurgents includes: the supply of money and food, the training and organisation of political cadres, support in the implementation and forging of referendums, the facilitation of travel with Russia and nationalist propaganda.

• A special propaganda campaign is being unleashed against Ukraine – with the aim of denigrating its efforts towards democracy as an expression of rotten Western civilisation, aggression and "fascism".

• Russian land and air force manoeuvres are repeatedly held on the borders of Ukraine and the Baltic NATO states, which can and should be understood as threats.

• A passenger plane is shot down by regular Russian military personnel over insurgent territory (298 dead) and the act, a "crime of the century", blamed on the Ukrainian armed forces.

• A flood of "factual information" based on the judgements of "military experts" counterfactually suggests the superiority of Russian military technology.

• The very limited and generally defensive military support given by NATO to the Baltic states and by some NATO members to Ukraine is declared to be an offensive deployment.

• In view of the conflict situation caused by itself, the Russian leadership expresses its willingness to negotiate, but at the same time emphasises that it does not have sufficient control over events "at the front".

Threat

Valery Vasilievich Gerasimov, Chief of the General Staff of the Russian armed forces, explained in 2013:

> "*The role of non-military means in achieving political and strategic*

goals has grown; in some cases, their effectiveness is significantly higher than that of weapons."

This mainly refers to operations in the sphere of Western democracies. There, the organised use of weapons above the level of international crime would be highly inappropriate and risky.

However, the Russian leadership is also aware that in cases where things get out of control and the shooting commences, it is ultimately a matter of observing the rules and recipes of successful warfare, despite all the non-military machinations.

The "non-military clothing" – propaganda, disinformation, disruption of the political process in Western countries – may help delaying the military support for Russia's endangered neighbours or even stopping it.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of the Russian leadership, it seems necessary to develop credible containment options in view of a possible perpetuation of Western support. Moreover, it may be considered appropriate to underline the regime's inherent expansionism with real military power. The result has been a latent threat of intervention.

Affinities

It is obvious that the Russian leadership is trying to establish contacts in the "enemy camp" in order to divide it. After all, right-wing populist sympathisers of Moscow have managed to lead, or participate in, governments in Hungary, Austria and Italy: much to the delight of the Kremlin.

Quite a few European right-wing populists obviously view themselves and Mr. Putin on the same wave length: anti-democrats, declared opponents of institutionally guaranteed plurality.

A trend that in Moscow is also regarded as very helpful has developed in moderate democratic parties, within the centre-left spectrum. This refers to the endeavour to "understand Putin". Among German social democrats in particular, a corresponding syndrome has been identified. Originally, it was inspired by celebrities such as Egon Bahr and Erhard Eppler. "No security without Russia" was their mantra – which very much influenced the social democratic attitude vis-à-vis Putin's regime.

In order to understand the "Putin-understanders", it must be recognised that they want to express collective guilt over the immense suffering that Germans inflicted on Russia during the Second World War (even though Ukraine suffered more overall during that time).

In addition, there is a growing political distance from the U.S.A., which – admittedly – has been rendered plausible, supported by a more solid argumentation than ever before, during the Trump era: making Russian foreign and military policy appear comparatively less unpredictable.

However, the fact that social democrats have deliberately overlooked the Kremlin's links to the European right-wing radicals is more than disconcerting. The sympathy for "the Russian" as such while rejecting "Western" influence has deeper causes, however, and this is anything but reassuring. There seems to be an underlying "disgust with the West". What is meant by this is that many Germans feel emotionally closer to the Russians than, for example, to the Americans.

On the one hand they see people with depth of soul and – despite occasional outbreaks of barbarism – great culture. On the other, they see the emptiness of a supposedly purely materialistic, barren civilisation. Behind this assumption we find the traditional German pattern of distinguishing between *community* and *society,* which Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) had introduced towards the end of the 19th century, with its disastrous historical consequences (Tönnies 1979).

On the one hand, there is the national community (or the collective) that supposedly fosters human solidarity and bonding; on the other hand, there is the ensemble of institutions and complex rules that protect the individual but are rejected as strange and un-German (or un-Russian).

UKRAINE AND THE WAR

New Ukraine: contours and facts

Since 1991

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a referendum was held in Ukraine at the end of 1991, in which 90.3 per cent of the citizens voted in favour of the independence of their state. The approval rate was particularly high in the east of the country. The elites there, as well as the population, expected that their productive industrial region would receive better state benefits in a "separate state" than in the old Soviet Union.

In this sense, there were initially justified hopes when the Donbass had particular influence on the policies of the central government. But then the democratic process brought other forces to the centre of power, and the initial enthusiasm gave way to a certain alienation. The distance between the East and the rest of the country was therefore more politically than ethno-culturally determined.

When Ukraine became an independent state, there were as a legacy of the Soviet Union over 1,800 nuclear warheads on its territory, the third largest arsenal in the world. Ukraine renounced its possession of nuclear weapons, ceded them to Russia and in return received a legally binding guarantee of its security and borders from the USA, Britain and Russia in the Budapest Memorandum of Understanding (1994) – which included the Crimean peninsula.

From the outset, the country's domestic politics were characterised by turbulence related to the search for identity between East and West and determined by the disharmony of very different actors.

There are the old elites, for example in the security apparatus and the judiciary, as well as the "nouveau riche" oligarchs with their special demands. In addition, there are a growing liberal middle class and ultranational elements (the latter of which becoming marginalised). The political party system representing these societal forces has been in a state of unstable development, which lends particular importance to leading

political figures.

In 2004, the "Orange Revolution" gave a jolt in the direction of "westernisation" but the hopes placed in it were disappointed, mainly due to the disunity of its exponents. And there were disruptive measures by Moscow that completely damaged the new beginning. As a result, the 2010 presidential elections brought to power a candidate with a tendency to align himself with Russia, who ruled in an authoritarian manner and had the 2012 parliamentary elections forged. When he withdrew Ukraine's application for EU association under Russian pressure, the protests known as the "Euromaidan" erupted in Kyiv, starting in November 2013. He then fled the country.

Ultra-nationalist elements, labelled fascist by Moscow, also took part in the protests, but – according to the perception of the German Greens, for example – they were not influential overall.

The Russian leadership, which apparently sees any sign of liberalism and democracy on its borders as a threat to its own rule, responded in 2014 by annexing Crimea and recognising two "people's republics" in eastern Ukraine (Donetsk and Luhansk), which had been proclaimed by pro-Russian separatists supported by Moscow.

The efforts of the Kyiv government to restore the *status quo ante* in Donbass by military means resulted in a prolonged confrontation that initially caused a high rate of casualties. East-West diplomacy (Minsk Agreement) succeeded in containing the conflict to a certain extent.

Following the departure of the authoritarian president, the political climate became noticeably more liberal again. Under Presidents Petro Poroshenko, an oligarch, and Volodymyr Selenskyi, a popular showman, there were a number of cabinets based on fragile parliamentary majorities. This hindered overdue reforms, such as the restructuring/privatisation of unprofitable state-owned enterprises and the fight against corruption. Progress has been made in the area of further developing partial regional autonomy.

Key data

The territory of Ukraine, including Crimea, covers around 604,000 square kilometres. This makes it the second largest territorial state in Europe, after France. The population, including the peninsula, was 44 million before the wave of refugees caused by the war.

Ukraine has serious demographic and economic problems. Between

1990 and 2021, the population fell by over six million. This was compounded by the recent refugee movement. Economic output had fallen by at least 30 per cent since 1990 – not counting the severe slump caused by the war.

In 2020, the gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, adjusted for purchasing power, was around 13,000 US dollars (Russia: 28,000). This put Ukraine, together with Kosovo, at the bottom of the list for per capita income in Europe.

Incomes are relatively evenly distributed in Ukraine. Despite the often suspected influence of oligarchs on society, the *Gini Index*, which measures the income distribution, was 26 in 2020, but 36 for Russia (the lower the value, the "fairer").

The country was ranked 122nd out of 180 in terms of perceived corruption in the state and economy in 2021 (Russia: 136th). And it was ranked 106th in terms of the degree of press freedom in 2022 (Russia:155th).

These problematic impressions, which still positively distinguish the country from Russia, are offset by the fact that no elections have been forged in Ukraine since the "slip-up" of 2012: something that should be emphasised in a world of increasing political manipulation – and especially in comparison to Russia.

A look at the linguistic landscape and cultural identity: In a 2001 survey, two thirds of citizens named Ukrainian as their mother tongue, while 30 per cent said "Russian". In everyday life, however, Russian was spoken by 53 per cent, in the sense of a *lingua franca*.

78 per cent of the population defined themselves as "Ukrainians", while 17 per cent felt they were "Russians". This means that some people with a Ukrainian identity considered Russian to be their mother tongue. (The rest were of various other ethnicities.)

Before the proclamation of the separatist republics, Ukrainians with a Russian identity did not even have a majority in the Donbass. Only in Crimea was there a Russian preponderance – albeit not a dramatic one – which would by no means have legitimated annexation, but rather the expansion of the existing regional autonomy. Before the annexation, those who considered themselves Russian, made up less than three-fifths of the population there – as a result of Stalin's forced Russification, as well as the deportation of the Crimean Tatars, who still held the relative majority of the population at the beginning of the 20th century.

To conclude the data review, a reference to the education system: Before the war, Ukraine spent 5.4 per cent of its GDP on education. A

similar proportion was also recorded for France, for example, while the figures for Germany (5 per cent) and Russia (4.7 per cent) were significantly lower. This means that education is of considerable importance in Ukraine, although it should not be overlooked that the percentage value relates to a comparatively low economic output.

The war: course, losses, characteristics

The invasion

Harbinger

Preparations for the war against Ukraine began with the annexation of Crimea and the founding of the two "people's republics" in the Donbass. The permanent military confrontation along the border of these – in the narrower sense – "rogue states" meant a constant strain on the human and economic resources of an already weak country.

The international image of Ukraine as a crisis state was not suitable for attracting foreign capital. No member of the international community felt compelled to support Ukraine to such an extent that a restoration of the *status quo ante* would have been possible (not even the USA and the UK, guarantors of Ukraine's territorial integrity under international law).

Apparently, the Russian provocation had remained below the threshold that would have suggested an escalation if crossed. This was probably due in particular to the fact that a number of Western countries, especially Germany, had made themselves dependent on Russia for fossil fuels.

The annexation and military occupation of Crimea was used to develop the peninsula as a base for a deployment of Russian troops for operations in Ukraine. As Crimea was initially only connected to the Russian mainland by sea, a 19-kilometre-long bridge was built across the mouth of the Sea of Azov. This bridge, which was completed in 2018 (with railway tracks and motorway), connects the Krasnodar region with the city of Kerch. The height of the bridge arches is 35 metres. This means that very large container ships, which are common in global sea transport today, can no longer serve the port of Mariupol.

In November 2018, the Ukrainian parliament imposed a state of emergency for a limited period of 30 days. This was to be repeated in

spring 2021. In the first case, the reason was that the Russian coast guard had significantly obstructed Ukrainian civilian ships and a large deployment of troops could be observed at the country's borders, which – erroneously – suggested Moscow's immediate intention to invade. In the second case, it was "only" a matter of a corresponding troop build-up (which in retrospect may very well be regarded as preparation for the final invasion).

By then at the latest, the time had probably come for the European neighbours to strengthen Ukraine's military defence in a non-provocative manner in order to deter adventurism and neutralise the psychological effect of Russia's demonstration of power. Only the USA and Britain, which had already provided assistance in terms of light armaments, took Moscow's behaviour as a reason to do more, albeit in a limited way.

Parallel to its policy of military provocation, the Russian leadership endeavoured to tighten the leash on energy supplies to some Western countries, above all Germany. The plan "Nord Stream 2" took off, even though the USA and later the EU Commission warned of even greater dependence on a neo-imperialist Russia.

*The basic contracts for Nord Stream 2 were concluded **after 2014.** The managing director of the project on the German side was a former **Stasi** officer whom Vladimir Putin had recruited for his service during his time as a KGB resident in Dresden.*

The war was not only prepared at the level of military and economic-political measures, but also through propaganda. This was aimed primarily at the country's own population, but also at the political extremes in Western countries.

In Russia itself, the idea of reviving the old concept of *Novorossiya*, in the sense of extending control over the Black Sea coast, found favour with the right-wing conservatives. However, as a formula, it appeared insufficient to attract a wider public, sounding somewhat old-fashioned.

Another approach proved to be better in this respect. It called for the enactment of Russia's world-historical role: namely to take on the mission of "Third Rome", as a code word for Russian hegemonic aspirations. This formula has come in two versions: in the fight against US imperialism, of which Ukraine is portrayed as the spearhead (also attractive to right-wing and left-wing extremists in Europe) and in the battle against fascism – especially in Ukraine.

The latter aspect raises problems of evidence: "fascists" or ultra-nationalists are not present in the Kyiv parliament – which distinguishes it from several other parliaments in Europe.

Attack and progression

Hardly anyone wanted to believe that the Moscow leadership, which of course claimed the opposite, was serious. Who wanted to follow the CIA, whose analysts had been convinced of an imminent attack for several weeks beforehand? Hadn't political scientists repeatedly argued that there would ever again be a "traditional" war between states in Europe, with its close economic ties, and that the future would belong to the "new" wars in the Third World?

But Vladimir Putin, driven by his claim to omnipotence, had decided to leave the sphere of the hybrid and invade Ukraine. When he did so, however, he hardly expected any escalation risks and a quick victory. How else could one explain the attempted coup by airborne troops against Kyiv's Hostomel airport and the rapid advance of long columns of armoured troops? An invasion on a few major roads, without substantial reconnaissance: as if no serious resistance was to be expected! With insufficient logistical support, as only a short affair had been envisaged.

Putin had been misinformed by his secret services, whose central institution (FSB) he himself had once headed. According to the services' reports, serious resistance was not to be expected because Ukraine appeared to be politically and socially divided and – in considerable parts – Russia-friendly, without the unifying bracket of patriotism.

It turned out differently. The airborne landing was a disaster in the face of resistance from light, well-armed and well-led infantry. The same troops brought disaster to the long marching columns and then – in the first half of April 2022 – drove the invaders out of the area around Kyiv and the north-east of the country.

Meanwhile, the Russian forces succeeded in establishing themselves in south-east Ukraine, now through a more systematic and gradual advance, thus creating a broad land connection between the Donbass and Crimea. Their forward movement could only be stopped beyond the mouth of the Dnipro River. After a period of movement, a months-long trench war began, which came to a temporary end in September and early October with the advance of Ukrainian forces, albeit only in the area south-east of Kharkiv and – to a more modest extent – south-west of the Dnipro mouth. Despite Ukrainian and Western jubilation, Russia still occupied almost a fifth of the area of the attacked country.

The Russian withdrawal from the right bank of the lower Dnipro (Kherson region), which began in the first half of November 2022, was to be seen more as a consolidation measure to continue the war of position

and not as the beginning of major retrograde operations. Positional warfare became the basic pattern of the confrontation throughout the winter of 2022/2023. There were energetic attacks by the Russian army, especially in the centre section of the front. Here, the criminal mercenaries of the oligarch Prigozhin ("Wagner militia") served as a spearhead. In the vast majority of cases, these attacks were bloodily repulsed by the Ukrainian forces, resulting in only minimal territorial gains for the Russian side. According to DER SPIEGEL, the British secret service declared the failure of the Russian winter offensive on 1 April 2023.

In the summer of 2023, there were signs of a renewed Ukrainian counter-offensive at various points of the front. However, they did not reach much further than the line that had been consolidated during the war of position. The Russian army was able to use the six months during which the fighting had been fierce but events had been frozen, as it were, to build up a deeply echeloned defence system, which significantly enhanced the defence advantage they now had.

Apart from that, the Western arms supplies that Ukraine urgently needed repeatedly reached the front too late and in insufficient quantities. This has contributed significantly to the current situation (spring 2024): an entrenched stalemate, but increasing Russian pressure.

But let's take another look back! After the situation of the Russian army came to a head in the late summer of 1922, a partial mobilisation (of 300,000 reservists) took place at the beginning of October 2022, which was often chaotic and led to protests and a flight to non-Moscow-friendly neighbouring countries. The official labelling of the war as a "special operation" was thus finally unmasked. Due to the high losses in the winter months, the next partial mobilisation of probably of up to 400,000 men was announced in the first half of 2023. Further recruitment followed.

There was also a more symbolic reaction and, a little later, a real one. *Symbolic*: Putin annexed the districts of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson, even though they were not fully under Russian control at the time of the declaration, in order to be able to announce that attacks on these regions were directly aimed at Russia. *Real*: In autumn 2022, systematic air strikes began on civilian infrastructure, especially Ukraine's energy supply.

Russia varied its war aims throughout the course of events. To offer just a selection: R*emoval of the regime, establishment of a "reasonable" government, dissolution of the Ukrainian state, demilitarisation of the country, complete control over the Donbass, appropriation of the Black Sea coast to the mouth of the Danube, eradication of fascism, dividing*

up most of Ukraine among Russia, Romania and Poland.

Interestingly, President Putin is said to have made a sibylline remark in July 2023, according to which Ukraine has a right to its security – but not at Russia's expense. Does this constitute a move away from the total threat? It would not be worth much, however, if Russia were to keep the land it has conquered.

As already indicated, there were certain difficulties with the issue of "fascism": the ultra-nationalists, who Moscow likes to call fascists, are politically on the wane (although there are still chauvinistic elements in the Ukrainian society whose weight is difficult to determine).

Moscow's propaganda focused on the Azov Battalion, which had grown into a regiment (with 2,500 soldiers) and whose volunteers (not mercenaries) were bravely defending Mariupol. The fact that a number of fighters wore insignia of Waffen SS units (probably as a sign of their ruthlessness) was a point of contention. It should be noted though, that this formation has been professionalised in the course of its integration into the Ukrainian National Guard and that its members include Jewish Ukrainians.

Losses, refugees, damage

The data on the consequences of the war is still uncertain. In view of discrepant figures from various sources, only rough estimates can be given, or plausible assumptions made, for which the author of this study is solely responsible.

At the time of going to press (March 2024), it was estimated that the Ukrainian armed forces (army, national guard and other volunteer units) had suffered around 160,000 dead and wounded, while the Russian army (with mercenaries/separatist militias) had suffered around 340,000. A quarter (Ukraine) to a third (Russia) of the respective total number is likely to have been killed.

Destroyed weapon systems: The estimation error appears to be particularly large here. For example, Ukraine stated a number of destroyed Russian tanks that was higher than the total number of these machines in active units at the start of the war. Although video footage showed that obsolete Russian depot tanks (T 62) and even armour produced shortly after the Second World War (T 34/85) reached the front, this is not enough to verify Kyiv's claim. The obvious consequence is to generally refrain from providing information on material losses at this point.

Almost 10,000 civilians have been killed in Ukraine (spring 2024).

This shows that the war – despite the Russian terror bombings – has so far claimed the lives of more military personnel than civilians, even though the general trend of armed conflicts points in the opposite direction. This speaks in favour of the high intensity of the fighting on the front line.

According to the UN Refugee Agency, ten million Ukrainians left their homes during the war – including 3.7 million domestic refugees and 6.3 million who went abroad and were registered there. Most of them came to Russia (many of them deported). Germany and Poland followed in terms of frequency.

In March 2023, the World Bank and the UN estimated the cost of rebuilding destroyed residential quarters, industrial facilities and civil infrastructure at 411 billion US dollars. This is 2.6 times the gross domestic product generated in Ukraine in 2022. The financial requirements stated – somewhat later – by the Ukrainian government are significantly higher at 750 billion US dollars, and there is a projection that amounts to a long-term financial burden for reconstruction of around eight trillion (Blum 2023). The aid provided or promised by Western countries falls far short of the first-mentioned figures. So far, it is all about humanitarian aid, 17 million Ukrainians are in need, the ongoing operation of the government apparatus, and military equipment. Without the mobilisation of private capital in the supporting nations, the financing of reconstruction remains illusory. If the war continues, it is questionable, however, whether this will succeed – even with state guarantees.

Finally, there is immense environmental damage. For example, it has been estimated that in the first eight months of the war, an additional 33 million tonnes of CO_2 were emitted and 2 million hectares of forest lost.

Characteristics of the war

Scope, structures, tactics, operation

At the beginning of the war, the Russian land forces (including the special forces and airborne troops under the Supreme Command) comprised almost 440,000 active uniformed personnel. Of these, 240,000-250,000 were considered operationally deployable (the remainder were in training, command authorities, site security, stationary logistics, foreign deployment, etc.). There were also around 40,000 mercenaries.

As already mentioned: due to considerable losses, the force has been filled up several times with reservists since October 2022 (probably over

700,000 in total): partial mobilisations from a pool of several million reservists. These inadequately trained personnel replacements were supplied to a problematic force: largely exhausted, poorly led and with relatively low cohesion, which is so important for combat morale.

The Ukrainian land forces totalled around 180,000 soldiers at the beginning of the fighting. In addition, there was the National Guard, subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior and with an initial strength of over 70,000 fighters, into which some previously independent volunteer units were then integrated. (Other such units, the size of which is difficult to estimate, were formed during the war). These forces are largely deployable in combat, but only locally mobile. Reservists, usually adequately trained, have been used to augment the number of army formations, but increasingly also to plug vacancies in existing units. The total Ukrainian reservist pool in 2021 was around 900,000 persons.

Moscow's army based its attack in the first wave on 90-110 "Battalion Battle Groups" (Russian: BTG), an organisational innovation (Reisner/Hahn 2023), and also on extensive heavy artillery at the disposal of higher command levels. The BTGs are formations with a personnel strength of 700-900 soldiers, the core of which consists of at least 30 armoured vehicles – a situation-dependent mix of main battle tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and armoured infantry transporters. Other elements are also included: artillery, anti-tank defence, reconnaissance, air defence, engineers and command support. This rather complex combination should enable the BTG to operate relatively independently in both attack and defence.

However, serious problems emerged: Leading such an assembly requires practice, and that was often lacking – especially because battalion battle groups were only formed temporarily. And as far as independence is concerned, Russian officer training did not seem to have encouraged personal initiative to any great extent.

Incidentally, it became clear once again that the Russian armoured infantry carriers can hardly cooperate with the main battle tanks in combat: after all, they weigh around 30 tonnes less than the latter, which means a strikingly lower level of protection (up to 11 men in the infantry vehicles, only three in the tanks).

The Ukrainian army took a different approach. Its considerable terrain gains south-east of Kharkiv in September 2022 were achieved through remarkable tactical cooperation: precise artillery fire (tube and rocket) to eliminate key positions, command posts and logistical infrastructure of the enemy, and immediate exploitation of weak points by light

infantry and special forces, which – supported by local fighters – moved forward fluidly and quickly on compact off-road vehicles or even motorbikes (DER SPIEGEL 2022: 87-89). Armoured or mechanised forces served as flank protection. The rapid advance was quickly fuelled by reserves. Otherwise success would not have been possible.

First reminiscence: Ukraine has a special tradition of light troops. Think of the operations of Nestor Ivanovich Makhno at the end of the First World War (Arschinoff 1998) *and later partisan activities against the Soviet regime.*

Second reminiscence: The Ludendorff offensive in France (spring 1918) saw the premiere of the combination of flexible artillery fire focused on specific breakthrough points with light assault infantry (Sturmtruppen). After initial astonishing success, failure followed: mainly because it was not possible to supply reserves in sufficient numbers quickly enough (Messenger 1978: 9-35).

On the French front in the First World War, the defensive arrays of either side could only be overcome with great difficulty because the dominance of fire severely hampered the movement of troops. This pattern is experiencing a renaissance in Ukraine. As in the past, tactical-operational innovations are currently required to get things moving again. In this context, heavy armoured forces are not necessarily required or appear to be of secondary importance (as in the case sketched above).

What distinguishes the situation in Ukraine from the First World War, however, is the range and quality of fire. It is no longer just the artillery, which has increased enormously in range and precision, but there are also other effective means of delivering destruction in depth: drones, operational-tactical guided missiles, fighter-bombers.

Military technology

"Reconnaissance" and "fire" are the key terms of this war. Reconnaissance results come from various sources: forward deployed troops, loyal people in occupied areas, land and airborne sensors, electronic signal detection, satellite photography, intelligence services. All of this must be processed with as little delay as possible and converted into action-relevant information. Here Ukraine has a significant advantage over its opponent: due to the provision of information and processing software by the USA.

It should be noted that the Ukrainian tube and rocket artillery, whose volume of fire is less than a seventh of that of the Russian, made the successes of the light, fast troops on important sections of the front possible in the first place – thanks to its precise and flexible action.

With regard to the volume of fire, it appears that the Russian troops are running short of high-precision ammunition, while the Ukrainian side is enjoying the supply of such ammunition from the West – albeit in very limited quantities so far. It is therefore understandable why the Russian army is deploying relatively precise "kamikaze drones" from Iran.

With regard to stocks of conventional projectiles, it can be assumed that the Russian army will probably be able to maintain its large volume of fire. After all, the People's Republic of China and North Korea are potential suppliers of such weapons – and their technology is compatible with that of Russia.

The quantitative fire superiority – that can thus be expected to continue – poses a considerable problem for the Ukrainian defence. Offsetting this with quality – better reconnaissance and precision weapons – is not possible at will and depends almost entirely on Western support.

It can also be noted in this context that the Russian air force apparently was not as effective against ground targets as the planners had hoped. Before the war began, this air force had over 1,300 tactical combat aircraft, of which several hundred were deployed against Ukraine.

Although the Ukrainian air force initially only had just under a hundred comparable aircraft at its disposal, the Russian side did not succeed in achieving complete air supremacy, but only superiority over certain areas. The reason: Ground-based air defence – with anti-aircraft missiles largely still of Soviet, but also partly of Western provenance – has so far proven to be quite effective. However (as of spring 2024): The supply of missiles, especially the older types, appears to be running out soon – which makes the delivery of Western systems particularly urgent.

In spring 2024, the Ukrainian fleet of tactical combat aircraft had fallen to well under 50. These are primarily used to supplement ground-based air defence (although there have also been successful missions with air-to-ground weapons). A limited increase in the number of aircraft from NATO countries would appear to make sense in order to strengthen the defence.

As already noted, on the Ukrainian side the combination of precision fire with light, fast troops has relegated the armoured elements to second place. The question is whether this is primarily due to the relative weakness of these heavy components. The main battle tanks of both sides

are derived from Soviet developments of the 1960s (T 64/T 72), that were later modernised with additional protection (reactive/active) and better fire control equipment (T 80/T 90: T 90 only in Russia), but which could not sufficiently compensate for the weaknesses of the basic platforms (Chalmers/Unterseher 1988).

The question is therefore whether a delivery of more powerful main battle tanks from the West (Leopard 2, Abrams, Challenger) would significantly improve the capabilities of the Ukrainian army – more than the successful attack concept mentioned above. The origins of these vehicles date back to the 1970s which are therefore not much younger than their eastern counterparts. But their structural vulnerability is lower and, as relatively robust platforms, they are more suitable for modernisation. However, the idea of far-reaching counter-attacks with tanks is subject to conditions whose fulfilment appears problematic.

Deployments only promise success if they are carried out in large formations (e.g. with 100 tanks), fighting according to the principle of *combined arms.* Accompanying the main battle tanks with infantry fighting vehicles with adequate armour protection would require the German PUMA. This model suffers from a very high failure rate due to its over-complexity, however. The use of the older MARDER model as a substitute is not entirely satisfactory (even less so are the US and British designs).

Although the armoured artillery (good example: Panzerhaubitze 2000), which is also relevant to the concept of combined arms, meets the requirements, it would probably make more sense to use it in a different tactical context (namely combined with light infantry).

The concept of far-reaching operations based on a complex combination of heavy elements demands a great deal of practice as well as great skill on the part of the commanders at all levels. It is unlikely to be implemented soon. Should such operations nevertheless be carried out successfully (the increased troop density in the occupied territories and the field fortifications created there do, however, hinder sweeping movements), there ***would be the option of crossing the state border – a possibility that appears very risky due to its provocative quality***.

Dangers of escalation

The question of escalation results in an almost grotesque asymmetry: on the one hand, Ukraine, which at least ***so far*** has tended to hold back with provocations in order to emphasise its legitimate defence – on the other

hand, the Russian leadership, which tends towards the other extreme.

Until March 2024, Ukraine has essentially confined itself to military actions aimed at driving the enemy out of its territory. Exceptions include a limited number of missile and drone strikes against logistical facilities (including oil refineries) on Russian territory, the sinking of the flagship of the Black Sea Fleet and of several smaller vessels. (Recently, there have been indications, however, that Ukraine's leaders are gradually shifting away from their course of restraint.)

Attacks against facilities in Crimea, such as an air base, were – in terms of international law – on its own territory. The attacks on the illegally built Crimean bridge can be justified accordingly.

Surprisingly, even Ukrainian advances *on its own territory* were sometimes seen as a provocation or escalation. In view of such an event, French President Emmanuel Macron has publicly asked whether this would not be too much of a challenge to Monsieur Poutine. It is fitting that France is not excelling in its military support for Ukraine.

Russia has continuously escalated: from atrocities and devastation in the occupied territories to nationwide acts of destruction with changing focal points. The reaction to the damage to the Crimean Bridge was particularly violent and inhumane: namely by attacking the electricity supply before the beginning of the winter period.

Moscow's leadership seemed to have a particular interest in triggering fears in Ukraine as well as in NATO/EU Europe with the possibility of nuclear contamination: not only by the oft-repeated threat of using nuclear weapons, emphasised by the stationing of nuclear missiles in Belarus, but also by stirring up uncertainty with regard to Ukraine's nuclear power plants.

Most Western military experts agree that the Kremlin has no really plausible options for the use of nuclear weapons (except perhaps for a "symbolic" one, somewhere high above the open sea). Using such means of mass destruction on the front would jeopardise its own troops and the supposedly liberated population. Strikes against the interior of Ukraine would finally make Russia a pariah in the international community and seriously jeopardise support from the People's Republic of China. And there is also the risk of exposing one's own territory to nuclear fallout.

After all, an operation that affects NATO territory is unlikely to provoke nuclear retaliation from the USA – NATO has been very cautious in this regard – but it could provoke conventional punitive measures, such as the "liberation" of Russia from parts of its maritime assets, such as the Black Sea Fleet.

MILITARY SECURITY

Western support

The support from Britain and the USA, in the form of arms deliveries and military advisors, that the country received after the Russian violations of international law in 2014 was mostly for defensive purposes: the main items were light infantry weapons, transport vehicles, man-portable anti-tank/anti-aircraft guided missiles and electronic reconnaissance equipment.

If NATO's inhibitions (fear of escalation!) about helping Ukraine only with the aforementioned equipment were to diminish, a situation could arise in which this country comes to have resources that do indeed promote escalation, but which it does not need for its own protection.

In NATO there is the conceptual tradition of the massive operational counterattack with heavy, armoured formations (combined arms style) and also that of massive "deep strikes" into the territory of the enemy. Both are problematic due to their provocative aspects.

The delivery of internationally outlawed cluster bombs (as a stopgap solution) decided by the US government in July 2023 may be disapproved of in this context, but it should be borne in mind that this measure can serve to at least slightly reduce the aforementioned multiple quantitative superiority of Russian artillery.

The German Federal Government initially had to persuade itself to supply weapons at all. However, light anti-tank and anti-aircraft defence systems were then very quickly put on the way, soon after followed by general infantry equipment, means of transport, ammunition – although not in sufficient quantities – and other gear. (Ukraine's need for ammunition was not really recognised in NATO until three quarters of a year after the war had begun. The corresponding production was boosted far too late.)

When it came to the question of sending main weapon systems months after the war had begun, it was declared the Bundeswehr was unable to deliver any major items from its own stocks due to its lack of equipment and that one would have to fall back on the material stored by the industry. Deliveries were then slow to materialise: mostly with grand

announcements followed by the statement that everything had to go according to plan and that coordination with the allies was necessary.

Under the pressure of events, however, namely the increasing Russian attacks on civilian infrastructure, it was possible to bring oneself to promise Ukraine a high-performance weapon hat not even the Bundeswehr had. This is the IRIS-T air defence system – although the delivery of a sufficient number of units is likely to take place far too late.

In the first two years of the war, the USA was – by far – the main supplier of weapons to Ukraine. The deliveries soon reached a value that was more than double of what the Europeans were prepared to provide.

This picture has changed considerably, however. The data collected and analysed by the *Ukraine Support Tracker Project* at Kiel University for the period from February 2022 to January 2024 show that the military equipment provided by European countries (delivered or firmly promised) now exceeds the value of the corresponding support from the USA.

While the United States gave just over 40 billion Euros in military support, the respective figure for the Europeans (EU plus Britain) is around 50 billion Euros.

This is above all a reaction to the fact that the Republicans have used their strong position in the US Congress to put the brakes on support for Ukraine. The prospect of Donald Trump's possible re-election as US president makes the picture look even bleaker. It appears rather unlikely though that an eventual loss of American support could be fully compensated for by the Europeans – despite increased efforts in recent times.

It is striking that the German government seems to have woken up. With military supplies totalling almost 18 billion Euros, it now leads the ranking of Europeans – far ahead of Britain. The main focus here is on small equipment as well as strengthening logistics and infrastructure. There is still no particular emphasis on major weapon systems that could really contribute to a change in land warfare.

Deliveries (planned in brackets) of main weapon systems and large items of equipment were recorded, as at the beginning of 2024: 18 Leopard 2 main battle tanks; 30 Leopard 1 (105); 90 Marder infantry fighting vehicles (30); air defence systems: 2 IRIS-T (9), 2 Patriot air defence system; 52 Gepard air-defence tanks (15); 14 Panzerhaubitze 2000 (armoured howitzers); 5 MARS II multiple rocket launchers; 25 mine-clearing ploughs (16); 19 mine-clearing armoured vehicles (16); 15 bridge-laying vehicles (15).

In their entirety, these deliveries appear to lack a concept. If at all,

there is an orientation towards armoured warfare, albeit rather half-heartedly.

It is to be hoped that more will be provided that actually meets the needs of Ukrainian defence. The aim could be to equip three artillery battalions, each with 18 fire units and precision ammunition (Panzerhaubitze 2000/MARS II) as penetration aids for light troops – a combination that has already proved successful.

Last, but not least, it is astonishing that France's military aid so far amounts to no more than 0.6 billion Euros: a glaring contradiction between pretentious public statements and actual behaviour.

Long-term survival of Ukraine

Some conditions of survival

Ukraine is a severely damaged country. Its survival as a viable entity and in independence is questionable. To ensure such a survival, there must be a reconstruction of housing, infrastructure and industry. However, the financial injections from the West, including those promised, have so far fallen dramatically short of what is needed.

As mentioned above, a large part of this financial aid has been provided for the ongoing expenses of the Ukrainian state, for humanitarian purposes and military equipment, and not for civilian reconstruction. The solidarity of the West has so far been expressed primarily – rather symbolically – in ever new packages of sanctions against Russia and Belarus.

The effect for the sanctioned countries has so far been rather moderate. Contrary to expectations, Russia's GDP did not shrink dramatically in 2022 (between -2.2 and -3.9 %), as it was possible to circumvent sanctions with the support of China, India and Iran. There was economic growth again in 2023.

Another key condition for Ukraine's survival is overcoming the crisis resulting from population losses. The country was already in a demographic imbalance before the war due to the emigration of younger people. During the war, the situation worsened considerably: many men at the front and millions of younger women abroad.

Energetic efforts must be made to win back a large proportion of refugees and to significantly reduce emigration in the long term. This requires people to see development opportunities in their country. Financial aid from abroad, if it is provided to a sufficient extent at all, would not be enough. It is about modernising the economy and society. In this sense, *EU accession is of crucial importance*.

Above all, Ukraine must be put in a position to regain at least large

parts of the territories occupied by Russia. Because without their economic potential, the survival as a state will become even more problematic. In the longer term, the aim is to achieve military stabilisation and lasting, sustainable protection. The aim should be to develop a non-aligned national defence that is self-sufficient and concentrates on the defensive with considerable cost-effectiveness, which can be developed without provoking neighbours – building on existing structures.

Helping people to help themselves

It is well known that the Ukrainian leadership is striving for NATO membership. This must be critically scrutinised. It is unlikely that all NATO members will agree. Turkey and Hungary are not the only countries likely to cause problems. There are also negative signals from other states. But even if Ukraine were to become a member, this in no way means that it would receive significantly more military support in the long term than it has to date. Nor is it to be expected that NATO countries will station combat troops in Ukraine – either symbolically or as a substantial measure.

Should Russia become militarily active again in the future after the end of the current operations, there is no guarantee that the alliance will show its support with more than expressions of solidarity (and perhaps an increase in arms deliveries).

Nevertheless, a certain deterrent effect could be assumed. This is offset, however, by the prospect of further aggravating the situation. Against the backdrop of this complex state of affairs, there is the option of "helping people to help themselves".

This implies supporting Ukraine with material resources and conceptual advice to enable it to develop a system of national defence that is fit for the future. It is about self-sustaining, emphatically defensive military protection: without integration into a military alliance and suitable as a possible building block of an all-European security system.

EMPHASISING DEFENCE

Kant and von Clausewitz

The Categorical Imperative (Unterseher 1999)

In 1795, the Königsberg philosopher Immanuel Kant presented his treatise "On Eternal Peace", which he called a "philosophical outline" (Kant 1900a). This is a concise work, written in lively language, which impresses by its unity of form and content: Kant chose the style and structure of a peace treaty of his time.

The proposals he makes to prevent the outbreak of wars are astonishingly pragmatic. For example, he argues for preventing the financing of wars through loans (think of the examples of Iraq's credit-financed war against Iran or Putin's backing by Swiss banks).

When it comes to military precautions at the state level, only the "voluntary, periodic exercise of the citizens ... in arms", i.e. a militia, is acceptable to Kant (ibid.: 345). Only in this way, he was convinced, could armed forces be rendered truly defensive – which would finally enable a way out of the vicious circle of mutual threats between states.

All measures that Kant proposes to promote peace in the world of states must pass a test. They must not contradict the Categorical Imperative – the universally valid rule that, if followed, enables the minimisation of conflicts that threaten humanity. In one of several formulations, this reads: "Act only according to that maxim which at the same you want to become a general law" (Kant 1900b: 421).

Horst Afheldt, the *spiritus rector* of the school of thought that developed in the 1970s and 1980s and which became known under terms such as "defensive", "alternative", "non-offensive" or "***Confidence-Building Defence***", applied the Categorical Imperative to defence policy: "Arm yourself in such a way that the maxim of your armament can become the principle of a general armament policy" (Afheldt 1989: 104).

The superiority of the defence

Carl von Clausewitz was a Prussian officer, a graduate of the "Berlin Academy for Young Officers", who worked – under the military reformer Gerhard von Scharnhorst – on plans for the creation of the Prussian Landwehr: originally a regional militia. In 1812, he transferred to Russian service, took part in the strategic retreat of the Tsar's army and its counterattack, only to rejoin the Prussian army after the victory over Napoleon (1814). When he died of cholera in 1831, he had just been appointed chief of staff of the army in the Prussian part of occupied Poland.

In his main work on the philosophy of war "On War" (which he was unable to complete), he distinguished between the concept of absolute, pure war and that of reality with all its frictions – i.e. deviations from the model. This model, with its statement that war drives itself "to the extreme", and a certain fixation on the shortest possible course of military confrontations by means of decisive major battles, motivated some critics to see the Prussian general as an advocate of the offensive and the originator of the idea of total, unleashed war (Wallach 1967).

An opposing interpretation, according to which the doctrine of Carl von Clausewitz can be used to legitimise a defence limited to the defensive, primarily refers to the fact that for the Prussian "the superiority of defence (correctly understood) is very great and much greater than one might think at first sight" (Clausewitz 2003: 40).

The political will, which – in his view – should control the real war and makes it a limited event, can use the superiority of the defence. If one side is outnumbered, fighting from a defensive position may be instrumental in reducing the discrepancy of forces and to achieve a standstill – a "pause" during which a non-military solution to the conflict could be sought.

What makes the defence so strong? Firstly, it should be noted that, according to Clausewitz, an aggressor only initially has the advantage of surprise and initiative. The defender, however, can repeatedly use the element of surprise in his reactions to the attack and take the initiative himself (ibid.: 372-373).

Moreover, from a systematic point of view, the attack plays into the hands of the defence in a variety of ways. This has been summarised as follows:

There are ... "means mobilised by the advance of the offensive, ... such as mountains and rivers, the resistance of the population, and the

support of other states who fear the future strength of a victorious aggressor."

When "the defence actively intervenes, the attacker encounters not only mountains and rivers randomly scattered by forces of nature, but also other 'dead' forces, such as ramparts and moats, built with care and with the intention of making conditions more difficult for the attacker and ... to improve the conditions for one's own forces ... . In the form of attack, one has only one type of forces at one's disposal, which can be freely mobilised, 'live' forces, the field army and nothing else. With the form of defence, you have both this type and the *bound* forces that an attack unleashes. Ultimately, this relationship, the general (fundamental) inequality of means, determines the superiority of the form of defence over the form of attack" (Boserup 1990: 254).

For Carl von Clausewitz, defence always has something to do with waiting in order to be able to react appropriately. But what is an appropriate response? "The defensive form of warfare is ... not a direct shield, but a shield formed by skilful strikes" (Clausewitz 2003: 370).

The image of a shield is misleading, however, insofar as Clausewitz cannot imagine the defence without the depth of space in which the attacker can be bought off the initiative by well-dosed counter-moves (we think of Napoleon's fate in Russia).

But what should happen if the defence, that we should by no means imagine as purely static but rather as very dynamic, is successful in the end? For Clausewitz, " ... everywhere where the victory achieved in the defensive form of war is not consumed in some way in the military household, where it withers away, as it were, unused, a great mistake is made ... A quick, powerful transition to attack – the flashing sword of retaliation – is the most brilliant point of defence: Whoever does not immediately think of it, or rather, whoever does not immediately include it in the concept of defence, will never understand the superiority of defence" (ibid.: 384).

Carl von Clausewitz thus abandons the idea of real war and the possibility of moderation (for example: a politically utilisable ceasefire after a defensive success). In other words, the essence of "absolute" war gains prescriptive significance: the dialectical unity of attack and defence becoming an obsession.

Discussion: defence or retaliation

The idea of the "flashing sword of retaliation" may have been a brainchild of Carl von Clausewitz and derived from his model of "absolute" war, but in the trivial reality of "everyday" war there always have been military operations that were driven by motives of revenge and retribution.

Since the third dimension of warfare has been opened up, such operations often took the form of strikes deep into the enemy's territory. Usually, proponents are justifying such measures on the grounds that this can paralyse the resistance of the other side or that the destruction of key military infrastructure can facilitate victory "on the front". These claims are countered by sobering historical experience:

• After the front was "frozen" in France during the First World War, the German High Command ordered terror bombing of the English south-east coast by airships and – later – heavy biplanes. The results were a strengthening of the British will to resist and an enormous waste of resources.

• Despite the Allied strategic bomber offensive against Germany during the Second World War, the popular support for the regime remained unbroken, and the arms production reached its peak in 1944.

• The NATO air strikes against rump-Yugoslavia in spring 1999 were supposed to force its government to surrender within three days. This turned into more than three months. It is questionable whether the air campaign or the international isolation (cancellation of Russian support) led to Belgrade giving in.

• In the summer of 2006, the Israeli air force bombed Hezbollah territory in southern Lebanon: for weeks, massively and with a large-scale use of precision ammunitions. When then the ground offensive followed, Hezbollah's resistance proved to be unbroken.

If the Ukrainian armed forces were to rely increasingly on strikes at their enemy's rear, this should be critically scrutinised:

It is quite understandable when improvised drones (with relatively

small explosive charges) are used to attack residential neighbourhoods in large cities such as Moscow. This is a symbolic response to the extensive Russian attacks against civilian targets in Ukraine and at the same time makes it clear that there is a real, bloody war going on, and not a "special operation". Further low-yield strikes with such flying gear may test the nerves of the aggressor.

Apart from that, as already alluded to: precision attacks (with greater explosive power) against important targets of infrastructure may seem very tempting. According to the motto: a kick below the belt (Unterseher 2013), and the other side collapses. Yet, caution is required in this context:

There can be no doubt that such measures have an extremely pro-vocative character – with the potential of putting further strain on the overall situation. Even the most precise strikes can cause considerable collateral damage, which raises a problem under international law – which Ukraine has to adhere to if it does not want to lose international support.

The cost-effectiveness of imported precision-guided weapons is often less than hoped for. Example: A guided weapon costing 1.5 million US dollars destroys a fuel depot that is worth 250,000 dollars and can be rebuilt within a week.

The reliance on such weapons creates a dependency on partners who will hardly be prepared to supply them in numbers that promise a re-sounding effect.

A clear focus on the confrontation at the frontline with **the aim of regaining the entire lost territory** seems to make more sense.

To avoid any misunderstanding: Such an unambiguous concentration should by no means exclude weapon systems (for example: tube and rocket artillery with precision-guided ammunitions and ranges of around 70 km) that are directed against forces and installations which appear *immediately* relevant to the enemy's combat operations at the front (*shallow* instead of *deep* strikes!).

HISTORY – STABILITY – DESIGN

Denial of access: three examples

There are cases of prudently conceived defensive operations in recent history which, carried out in the depths of the defending side's territory, during an ongoing war, had a significant impact on the outcome of the entire encounter. To name just a few: the British success at Alam Halfa (Dorman-Smith 1962), in the summer of 1942, which decisively prepared the failure of the German Afrika Korps at El Alamein; Stalingrad, in the winter of 1942/43; and the Battle of the Kursk Bulge, in the summer of 1943 (Conetta et al. 1994).

However, three military encounters should be remembered here, which – from a strategic point of view – are situated at an even higher level: The subject is "denial of access" – measures to prevent an opponent from penetrating deep into one's own territory (or at least coming close to this goal).

The Finnish Winter War (Vigor 1983: 48-68)

In 1939, the leadership of the Soviet Union – with the intention of improving their country's geostrategic position – offered Finland an exchange of territory, which would have been in favour of the smaller country in terms of square kilometres (quantity), but appeared problematic to some in its government in terms of quality (giving up islands that would have been important for Finnish defence).

Finland refused, and the Soviet Union attacked at the end of November of that year, whereby superior motorised and armoured troops with air support attempted to penetrate an echeloned system of field fortifications (*Mannerheim Line*), which was defended by highly mobile small teams of infantry with intimate knowledge of the terrain.

Despite a grotesque imbalance of forces, the aggressor suffered horrendous losses for weeks, and his troops made slow progress at best.

After fresh troops had been brought in, which further increased the superiority of the Red Army, and a certain tactical adaptation to terrain and enemy, the invasion troops managed to break through, with extremely strong artillery support. In the end, the Soviet government prevailed with its territorial demands. End of the war: mid-March 1940.

In this case, the defender had to give up, but at an outrageously high price for the attacker. Soviet casualties are estimated at over 200,000, Finnish losses at around an eighth of that figure.

This fact probably contributed significantly to the Soviet Union refraining from invading Finland (which had been an ally of Nazi Germany) again towards the end of the Second World War. It can therefore be concluded that the relative Finnish success in the Winter War had a ***deterrent effect for the future***.

After the Second World War, Finland perfected its defence with modern means, specialising even more in denial operations and tactics. During the East-West confrontation, the Finnish population had greater confidence in their defence than the citizens of NATO countries in Central and Western Europe had in their own military protection (Ries 1989).

The Battle of Britain (Liddell Hart 1970: 119-145)

After the victory over France in June 1940, the leadership of Nazi Germany decided to neutralise the Royal Air Force (RAF) before taking the British Isles, relying on promises made by the head of the Luftwaffe, Hermann Göring: as a prerequisite for landing operations with as little interference as possible.

The balance of power: at the time, the RAF had around 550 modern single-seat fighter planes. On the German side, over 700 single-seater fighters of a similar technological level were provided for "saturating" the airspace over Britain and for escorting bombers, which initially attacked the air defence infrastructure, and later also population centres. While more fighter aircraft were built in Britain than in Germany, the RAF suffered from a shortage of pilots.

(The higher production could not have had any effect in the short span of the air battle anyway).

The fact that the attempt to gain air supremacy over Britain nevertheless failed was due to the systematic exploitation of the home advantage by the air defence:

• The defenders had much better situational information than the attackers, which helped them to optimise the allocation of their forces. This was mainly due to the fact that the UK had a tried and tested, integrated aerial observation system whose evaluation centre could generate reports with very little delay. This system relied not only on optical observation posts, but already also on radar chains (especially in the threatened south-east).

• Aircraft flying into Britain and moving close to airfields, other military installations or population centres were exposed to concentrations of anti-aircraft artillery, which often enough caused losses or forced the intruders to take evasive action, giving the airborne elements of the defence "good opportunities".

• Assuming the same range of aircraft on both sides, the defenders had a significant time advantage: with a much shorter approach, they were able to linger and fight longer over the area of operations than the attacker, who came from a relatively long distance. This alone neutralised the numerical advantage of the invaders.

• If a British aircraft was shot down but the pilot survived, he could bail out over his own territory and then – probably after a breather – take part in the fighting again. This was essential for the success of the RAF – given its shortage of flying personnel. In contrast, a German pilot who was shot down generally did not have the opportunity to return to his airbase.

• Finally, the fact that the young RAF pilots were directly committed to protecting their homeland boosted their combat motivation.

China versus Vietnam (Jencks 1979, Harkavy 1984)

At the beginning of 1979, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) had approximately 300,000 soldiers assembled on the border with Vietnam. In February, Chinese elite divisions with a total of 80,000 soldiers, 1,500 guns and 1,000 tanks invaded the neighbouring country. In order to secure this operation against a threat from the air, numerous anti-aircraft missile batteries (with a range of around 50 kilometres into Vietnamese territory) and 1,000 fighter aircraft were deployed.

This attack by mechanised troops, which had been prepared by the infiltration of light infantry and sappers, soon faltered and proved to be un-

expectedly costly for the aggressor.

The government in Beijing presumably had no intention of militarily overthrowing Vietnam as a whole, but probably had in mind to teach the rising smaller power a thorough lesson, i.e. to inflict a severe, humiliating defeat on its armed forces in just a few days.

Hanoi's army, victorious in the war against the United States, had just liberated Cambodia from Pol Pot's murderous regime, which meant that Vietnam was about to assume military supremacy in South-East Asia. The Chinese leaders perceived this as a challenge that demanded disciplinary action.

With the capture of the fortified city of Lang Son in the border region, a strategically important gateway to the Red River Valley, the Chinese troops achieved their limited objective. However, it took them almost five weeks, not a few days, and they suffered losses of around 20,000 to 25,000 casualties. The consequence was a rapid retreat. In the course of this campaign, it was not so much the Vietnamese as the Chinese who were taught a lesson.

During the period in question, there were practically *no combat troops at all* in northern Vietnam, close to the border with China. An opportunity therefore seemed to present itself for the northern neighbour. What absorbed the thrust of the PLA was a total of 200,000 men, widely distributed contingents of construction troops tasked with rebuilding the civilian infrastructure.

These troops consisted of inexperienced conscripts – including political deviants and young men of limited fitness – who were led by veterans of the war against the USA. The equipment of these Vietnamese units in the North consisted almost exclusively of light infantry weapons (in insufficient numbers) and explosives for road construction.

Along the Chinese thrust axes, these forces were extremely outnumbered. The construction troops improvised a deeply echeloned, flexible defence against the invaders. Obstacles in the terrain were systematically utilised or reinforced (the fighting took place in mountainous, heavily dissected terrain). At the same time, counterattacks by small squads were constantly aimed at the flanks of the aggressors, employing the pinprick principle.

The specific nature of this resistance thwarted the Chinese concept of carrying out the attack in a "mechanised manner". In particular, the logistics of the aggressor's heavy troops proved to be an Achilles' heel. In the end, the PLA was forced to resort to the costly practice of massed infantry attacks (*human wave tactics*) in order to achieve its politically

predetermined objectives.

During the last stage of the encounter, the Vietnamese construction troops were significantly reinforced by mobile teams with anti-tank guided missiles and anti-tank guns. These reinforcements in particular made it possible to further delay the advance of the invaders, so that elite combat troops could be flown in from the south of the country.

It must therefore be considered highly unlikely that the PLA would have been able to advance any further towards Hanoi after the fall of Lang Son (even if the invasion force had been reinforced by the reserves on the border).

Confidence-Building Defence:
stability calculus

Variables of the war decision

Dependent variable (to be explained): war/no-war.

 Independent (explanatory) ***variable***: It comprises the causal driving forces which can lead a state (or a civil war party) to seek armed conflict. That can happen to preventively maintain power – in the face of a competitor who is feared to become too strong – or simply to make use of one's superior might (Howard 1984): perhaps because a dynamic capitalism demands expansion for access to new resources (imperialism/ colonialism) or because the instability of a regime generates enemy images and a desire to conquer.

 All of this does not happen in isolation, but in the context of the relations to the international system. Policy is formulated within the field of tension between the nation (or grouping of nations) in question and the wider environment, embedded in cultural developments – for example: the cult of the offensive (Evera 1998).

 Intervening variable: If strong tendencies towards war develop, we can speak of a *necessary* condition. This is not *sufficient to explain* the actual events, however. Often an open conflict does not occur despite the corresponding driving forces. We therefore need to look for the intervening (mediating) variable that ultimately leads to the decision to go to war.

 Of central importance in this context is the organisation and thus the performance of the information perception and processing of the actor who sees himself driven to war. There is a double input here: on the one hand, the political (and cultural) requirements must be processed, and on the other hand, the knowledge about the potential opponent.

 How strong is his defence? Is there a threat of an advance by the opponent? Should one consider pre-emption? Are the opposing forces concentrated to such an extent that they offer open flanks which can be exploited (Mearsheimer 1983)?

The processing of information is fed into the final calculation from which the war decision (yes/no) results. Ultimately, it is a question of feasibility: Can the set goal be achieved in a *relatively short time* with reasonable resources and sacrifices? The latter aspect in particular is of central importance. Wars are usually started on the assumption that it will be a short affair at minimal costs (Ruloff 1987): "Back home for Christmas".

By its very nature, a defence that specialises in the defensive can frustrate precisely this expectation.

Variables

| independent | intervening | dependent |

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┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐          ┌──────────────┐
│ Maximising/  │          │ Feasibility: │─────────→│    War:      │
│ maintaining  │          │  costs/time  │          │   yes/no     │
│    power     │          └──────────────┘          └──────────────┘
└──────────────┘                 ↑
      ↑  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
      │  │Culture/politics│→│ Information  │
      │  └──────────────┘  │ processing   │
      ↓                    └──────────────┘
┌──────────────┐                 ↑
│ International │          ┌──────────────┐
│   System     │          │  Relation:   │
└──────────────┘          │  offence/    │
                          │  defence     │
                          └──────────────┘
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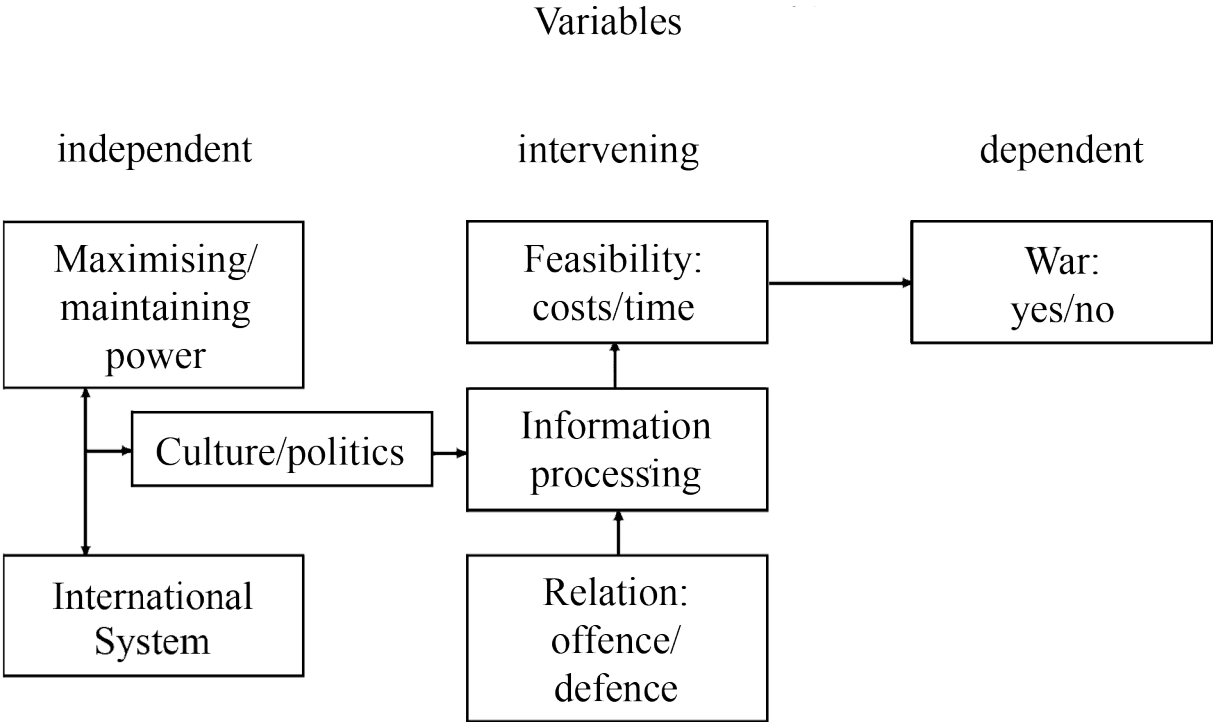
Measures and goals: relations

The concept of a **Confidence-Building Defence (C-BD)**, introduced here, refers to a development of the armed forces that has a positive effect in a double sense: by minimising fears of insecurity not only beyond the borders through non-provocation, but also at home through a viable offer of protection. Basic guidelines are as follows:

The most important goal is to **avoid war**. In the sense of ***stable denial***, the aim is to ensure that the defence is efficient and does not overtax one's resources and, as far as possible, does not offer any structural vulnerabilities (opportunities) that invite disarming strikes: It should

frustrates those who seek to exploit a power vacuum or "Achilles' heel".

If a defence is efficient, minimally vulnerable and also poses no threat to neighbours (no invasion potential, no provocation), and if this state is likely to endure, there would not be a motive for prevention (***prevention stability***).

And if the defence does not possess any relevant means with which it can have a lightning-fast and massive impact on the key positions of neighbouring armies, there is no compulsion for them to immediately eliminate such a risk during a crisis (***crisis/pre-emption stability***).
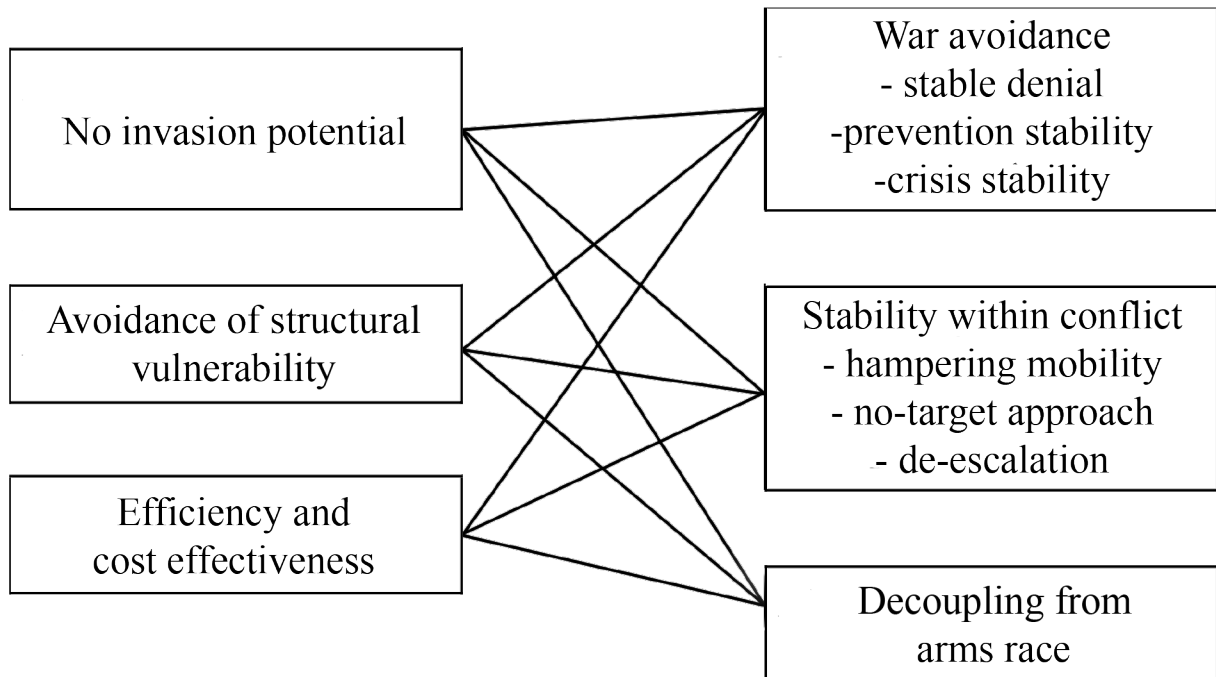
Damage limitation and **stability within the conflict** are also essential. A defensive system that is effective in its repelling function, which does not invite long-range manoeuvring on its own territory through any gaps (***hampering mobility***) and does not offer lucrative targets for concentrated strikes (***no-target philosophy***), has a good chance of minimising the damage to the armed forces, population and infrastructure, if open conflict should occur despite all efforts to avoid war.

A defensive defence that does not invite enemy strikes also helps to minimise damage, as it takes the sense out of an adversary's potential escalation planning (***de-escalation***).

Finally, a **decoupling from the arms race** should be sought. If it were possible to "pay back in other coins" in technical and tactical terms, a way out of the arms race would become a real prospect. This would be supported above all by the fact that C-BD would not require resources, normally very significant, for large-scale armoured warfare and for massive deep strikes into the hinterland of the opponent.

And since it does not seek to answer an invasion with a counter-invasion, it can make optimal use of the protection offered by its own space. Hence, the offence would have to bear significantly disproportionate expenditure, which would eventually open up the possibility of reversing the armaments spiral.

Stability

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┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│                         │        │     War avoidance       │
│   No invasion potential │        │    - stable denial      │
│                         │        │   -prevention stability │
│                         │        │    -crisis stability    │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│  Avoidance of structural│        │ Stability within conflict│
│       vulnerability     │        │   - hampering mobility  │
│                         │        │   - no-target approach  │
│                         │        │     - de-escalation     │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘

┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│       Efficiency and    │        │     Decoupling from     │
│     cost effectiveness  │        │        arms race        │
│                         │        │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
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The overall outline of the basics of C-BD suggests that – especially against the background of damage limitation and escalation containment – a war limited to the defence is actually feasible. It is therefore not a question of suicide. Moreover, such a fight is also morally justifiable for the fighters and the affected population. A realisable, credible option of containment is more likely to *prevent war* than a *self-deterrent* one.

Report from the workshop

Fundamental design

Based on the guidelines of C-BD, **SAS** (the **S**tudy group on **A**lternative **S**ecurity Policy), has presented a model of defence called "spider in the web" (Boeker 1986: 62). It is the concept of a defensive web (or network) structure *within* which mobile, armoured intervention forces operate. The web has four main functions*:*

Combat: This function comprises delaying, wearing down, fragmenting and channelling penetrating forces. For these purposes one requires a randomised system of terrain preparations, i.e. an array of obstacles and barriers that is difficult to reconnoitre, and a component of flexible (especially indirect) fire. Due to the relative "lightness" of the decentralised network (which in its early versions consisted of infantry teams), the fulfilment of the combat tasks may occasionally be too challenging. It should be borne in mind, however, that the mobile intervention/spider forces can help out in such cases almost without delay, due to their rapid availability.

Cover: This means that the forces of the space-controlling web should contain the rapid advance forces of an aggressor and delay them for a sufficiently long time so that own counterattack elements can move largely undetected and quickly to where they are needed. In addition, the concealment of these forces' movement may be facilitated by the troops of the basic net structure employing electronic jamming and decoy targets.

Support: This involves various tasks such as the continuous collection, processing and provision of information (especially for the intervening mobile forces) by means of a fine-meshed (fibre-optical) communications network and the operation of a decentralised system of largely stationary logistical depots: not only for self-supply, but also as a service for the mobile element. This frees the mobile element from ponderous replenishment columns and increases its agility – as long as it

moves *within* the web-supported system.

Control: The basic structure offers the advantage of seamless spatial surveillance: in other words, a clear picture of the position of one's own forces and those of the aggressor. As that time can be gained through the delaying and covering capacity of the web, it is clear that rational military decision-making is facilitated: especially when it comes to security policy implications.

As already mentioned, the **mobile element** operates in the web like a spider. While the web-like structure is comparatively light and could only respond to attacker advances by means of (indirect) fire, the mobile intervention troops are quite capable of concentration for certain – expediently short – phases. Their repertoire includes tying up, blocking, flanking attacks and finally destroying invading formations.

Since they can count on the conditioning function of the space-controlling structure, i.e. on the obstruction of the invader's movements while covering and supporting their own, the overall size, but also scope of the individual formations, can be kept relatively small.

It is not just about the base structure helping the intervention elements. There is also a reverse support relationship. The intervention forces support the area-covering web at its weak spots, either by evacuating overly exposed combat teams whose own evacuation resources may no longer be sufficient due to losses, or by "repairing damaged meshes", i.e. bringing fresh personnel and material to locations under threat.

The **overall picture** is one of a continuous, very flexible defence based on redundant, deep structures. It appears difficult or even impossible to circumvent, outmanoeuvre or leap over the protective array. Due to the "lightness" of the web and the relatively small scope of the intervention elements, the target profile of such a system is quite low.

With such an approach, it cannot be completely ruled out that one's forces will cross the border. However, since the mobile element is greatly reduced and dependent on cover and support from the web, it would be irrational from a military point of view to leave the sanctuary for an adventure.

The lethal efficiency claimed for this concept is due to the ***synergetic relationship*** that exists between the web and the spider forces. It is about the intensive interaction and co-operation of different elements that complement each other. We see the systematic interlocking of two structures, each of which is relatively simple, yet in their complementarity confront an intruder with a complexity that can hardly be overcome. The

invader can never know what to expect: light, area-covering forces, energetic blows by mobile troops or a combination of the two. A summary (Grin/Unterseher 1990: 251-253):

- *Firstly*, the synergetic cooperation gives both the teams of the web and the intervention elements a significantly higher combat value than they have when viewed in isolation.
- *Secondly*, the cooperative relationship confronts the intruder with an overly complex, constantly changing problem structure. For the aggressor the resulting problems of adaptation go far beyond mere tactical relevance.
- *Thirdly*, the optimised allocation of forces within the defensive system means that crises can be resolved as soon as they arise, i.e. at minimised cost.
- *Fourthly*, no matter how energetically an attack of operational-strategic significance is carried out, it requires a series of tactical successes. These can be denied to the attacker in sequence, because of the depth of the defence, the flexibility and tenacity lent to it by the intervention forces.

The conclusion is that, in view of such flexibility and tenacious resistance, there is no need for potentially provocative heavy counterattack forces on a larger scale – in other words: the defence can do without escalation.

Development

As the network concept forms the basis of the SAS approach, its modification in the course of adaptation to changing conditions (technology/personnel) is of particular interest. Before 1982, the systematic work of the study group began in 1979/1980, the model of Horst Afheldt, the pioneer of defensive defence, had essentially been adopted (Afheldt 1976).

He had proposed the creation of a deep-reaching infantry web consisting of small combat teams on constant alert, each equipped with anti-tank guided missiles (ATGMs). In the event of enemy advances that threatened to tear this web apart, concentrated fire from stationary rocket artillery deployed at the rear was conceived as a countermeasure. There were to be no mobile formations.

However, analysts in the study group had doubts about the viability

of such a tactical and technological monoculture. So the network was supplemented by rapid-firing multi-purpose cannons, combined with a limited thinning out of the – expensive – missile component. This was developed before Bogislav von Bonin's secret defence study from the early days of the Federal Republic of Germany, which had proposed a similar setting, was made available to the specialised public (Bonin 1989). At the same time, the close co-operation of the web with mobile counter-attack elements was being considered: an approach which later became the "spider-and-web" model.

1983 to 1985 (SAS 1984)*:* During this phase, the group developed its first own web concept (SAS 1984). The main characteristic was that the troop density increased with the depth of the defence. This was inspired by Basil Henry Liddell Hart, who had proposed a tactic known as the "*contracting funnel*" (Liddell Hart 1965: 36-38): avoiding costly frontal encounters and strangling the attacker by increasing resistance with depth.

Compared to Afheldt's approach, the denser force configuration of the SAS network led to significantly improved attrition of penetrating forces – at least, this was the result of OR analyses (Hofmann et al. 1984: 47-50). But now, the question of cost-effectiveness became more acute. After all, the SAS concept had a lot of space-bound potential that would probably never come into contact with the enemy in the event of a concentrated attack. How to solve this dilemma? Answer: through a greater reliance on reserves.

In order to minimise the risk of surprise, the forward, relatively wide-meshed net zone was still to be manned exclusively by active soldiers. With greater depth of defence, however, and thus denser troop deployment, an increasingly higher proportion of reservists was to be integrated. A personnel model was developed for this approach that was in line with West Germany's demographic developments (Thimann 1989).

1986 to 1989 (SAS 1989)*:* The previous network concept was retained with minor adjustments in terms of troop deployment and the personnel model. The basic pattern of the "*contracting funnel*" and the maxim of active presence only at the forward edge of the defence were unchanged in principle.What changed substantially during this period, however, was the configuration of the arms mix (Unterseher 1989). Afheldt's idea of extensive space coverage by short-range ATGMs of the (then) latest technology in quasi-stationary use was abandoned due to its considerable costs.

Such weapons were to be replaced on the one hand by relatively simple, rugged equipment, in particular remotely triggered directional mines and state of the art RPGs, and on the other hand by platforms for fibre-optically guided projectiles. The latter solution promised particular efficiency and cost-effectiveness thanks to the ability to precisely engage point targets beyond direct line-of-sight distances without "artificial intelligence".

This offered the prospect of flexible "neighbourly" support within the web and, due to overlapping ranges, the possibility of considerable fire concentration. It seemed sensible to make the platforms of such essential means of fire mobile and to provide them with light armour protection. This measure would hardly have opened up any offensive options (logistics and information were still to come from the network), but it gave the possibility to allow the weapon systems to fall back under enemy pressure in order to thicken the defence further to the rear.

The range of this fire component (whose significant increase seemed technically feasible) was seen as a prerequisite for allowing larger gaps within the net where the terrain was unsuitable for the deployment of light infantry. These gaps were to be controlled only by the fibre-optically guided systems. Thus a step was taken towards increasingly thinned out territorial coverage by infantry network forces. This opened up the prospect of a considerable reduction in costs: by deploying light combat teams only where robust redundancy was really needed. At the same time, however, the advantage of almost complete spatial control would have been retained – albeit with modified means.

1990 to the present day: A model of spatial control has been developed in which network-like structures have assumed a virtual character, and the original concept of light infantry distributed across large areas only plays a rudimentary role: *Personnel are becoming increasingly scarce*.

What remains is above all the following: a static and therefore particularly effective fibre-optic communications network (Grin 1990) with integrated sensor systems distributed over the area, a network of decentralised logistical depots and a largely invisible system of barriers and covered positions – mainly for the protection of indirect fire platforms: fibre-optically guided systems, tube and rocket artillery, the latter with ranges of about 70 kilometres. These operate in such a way that their mobility would only be used for commuting between alternating protective positions, and that the fire allocation would generally not be determined by the march of the weapon systems, but their effective range.

The picture is that of a dome, or umbrella, of indirect fire whose platforms are bound to the space by multiple supporting networks (Unterseher 1995). Like the old-style web, the protective umbrella is the decisive prerequisite for the optimal application of mobile intervention forces.

THE PATH TO REALISATION

Precursor and modern solution

Back in November 1994, political scientist Barry Posen, who teaches at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), published a comprehensive study entitled "A Defence Concept for Ukraine" in the journal "Ukraine: Issues of Security". On the occasion of the war in Ukraine, there was a "re-publication" in 2022 by the MITSSP (Security Studies Programme), Cambridge, MA (Posen 1994/2022).

The author sketches the outlines of a defence that – some Western help notwithstanding – is conceived as autonomous and "non-aligned": at a time when NATO's eastward expansion was beginning to become a real prospect.

Posen's draft is still characterised by the Cold War era. For example, he expects Ukraine to be able to generate a relatively large number of infantry divisions (50) from the reserve: under the cover of a dozen "streamlined" heavy armoured formations.

At the same time, however, he borrows from the work on defence alternatives for Central Europe in the context of the Cold War, especially from SAS, a group that had given substantial inputs during the 1980s (Mengelkamp 2023). For example, he advocates defensive depth to erode superior attacking forces, and proposes careful "terrain preparations" for the cover and benefit of the defender's counterattack forces.

In this context, Posen cites "The spiderweb defence" (Grin/Unterseher 1988). Not surprisingly, the organisational structure and weapon mix of this concept, in an up-to-date version adjusted to the realities of our time. differ considerably from what Posen had envisaged.

A solution is being proposed that aims for both the gradual recovery of Ukrainian territory and the long-term stabilisation of its national defence – building on Ukrainian developments and achievements: in particular the co-operation of indirect precision fire (tube/rocket artillery) with mobile light forces.

It is conceivable that a decentralised network of artillery bases may

be created (covering almost the entire area of the country in order to frustrate thoughts of bypassing the defence and of airborne jumps to the rear), which is condensed, however, along likely invasion axes (Unterseher 1995: 17-20). Closely linked to this scheme would be another network, namely that of quasi-stationary air defence installations – which, in principle, have already proved their potential and which should be complemented, for the sake of flexibility, by a component of flying interceptors.

The arrangement outlined serves as a kind of dome or umbrella (as already explained), within which light, mobile intervention units can move protected and directly supported: but only on their own and not on foreign territory: outside there would be no protection.

This structure rests on a "sub-structure" formed by the decentralised National Guard, which is to be modernised. The doubly redundant web structure of the National Guard and indirect fire acts as a *force multiplier.*

As alluded to above, it enables the mobile intervention forces to be "leaner", both as a whole and at the unit level. The advantages are: conservation of resources, reduction of the target signature and minimisation of provocation (beyond the binding function of the network structure).

Non-aligned, defensive National Defence

1. General guidelines

The military protection of Ukraine, which is to be conceived as non-aligned, should have the following key characteristics:
✗ structures that exclude cross-border power projection,
✗ avoidance of a military vacuum that invites unfriendly action,
✗ robustness/functionality under the most adverse conditions,
✗ transparency and political controllability,
✗ moderate burden on human and fiscal resources, and
✗ openness for arms control and disarmament.

2. What needs to be protected

Ukraine has an area of just over 600,000 square kilometres. This must be protected in its entirety in order to frustrate calculations of flanking threats and "leapfrogging". The defence should be condensed along plausible threat axes. However, urban centres and other densely populated areas are to be excluded. If other areas that are unsuitable for the stationing or movement of combat elements due to their terrain conditions (water surfaces, mountains) are also taken into account, plus a safety distance along the borders, a rough estimate leaves around *500,000* square kilometres to which protection must be applied. The protection of urban centres etc. is achieved by controlling the surrounding space (denial of access), as a "militarisation" of populated areas is very problematic from a humanitarian perspective.

Protection against targeted, concentrated terror attacks, for example with ballistic missiles, on such areas should be entrusted to a European defence system (without compromising Ukraine's non-aligned status).

3. Organisation and equipment

The division into the traditional services (army, navy, air force) is to be given up. Due to the clear dominance of the terrestrial element and in order to overcome the competition for resources between the services, the "triad" has been replaced by an integrated organisation.

3.1 The control centre

A central institution (ministry/general staff) assumes the following functions:
✗ Overall conceptual development, political control,
✗ Structural and equipment planning,
✗ Integrated military command and control (land/coastal protection/air defence),
✗ Personnel management,
✗ Disarmament initiatives, verification,
✗ International connections, diplomacy.
Personnel requirement (with security infantry): **1,800**

3.1.1 Operational-strategic drones component: 36 (plus) platforms, personnel requirement: **1,000**

3.1.2 Regiment "rapid intervention": 3 battalions (mountain, airborne and special operations)
Personnel requirement: **2,400**

3.2 Basic organisation

It includes the following tasks:
✗ Web management: support, expansion and modernisation of a fibre-optical communications network (based on civilian structures),
✗. Ground-based air surveillance,
✗ Logistics: operation/modernisation of a decentralised depot system,
✗ Operation of training and advanced education facilities,
✗ Site management, operation of properties,
✗ Evaluation of defence equipment,
✗ Military police.
Personnel requirement: **29,400**
The decentralised *basic training organisation* (with 2,500 regulars) has an

intake of up to 20,000 recruits four times a year: **22,500**
The medical service has a personnel requirement of: **12,300**

3.3 The land-based defence

3.3.1 Indirect fire

In order to control an area of 500,000 square kilometres with indirect fire with significantly overlapping ranges, 60 batteries of tube artillery and 30 batteries with multiple rocket launchers, each with 6 fire units are (more than) sufficient. On average, each of the tube artillery batteries can cover an area of approx. 5,000 square kilometres, while in the case of the rocket launchers around 15,000 can be assumed. This results in a requirement of 540 fire units: two thirds of which are tube artillery and one third rocket artillery. Precision ammunition ensures a high impact on the target with considerably minimised collateral damage. The batteries are each tied to a specific area by the stationary depot organisation (30 installations). They utilise their mobility for self-protection (shuttling between prepared positions). Target information is mainly obtained from the nation-wide comprehensive communications system, which is fed from various sources: sensor fields, stationary radar, tactical recce drones, reconnaissance by mobile units, etc. The coverage of the overall area can be thinned out without structural problems (*disarmament signal!*) or condensed by adding artillery in order to react to any deterioration in the security situation.

The following organisational structure can be designed on the basis of the assumed data: Three batteries (2 tube, 1 missile) form the core of each battalion. In addition, there are sub-units with counter-battery radar, drones (light equipment for procuring additional firing information), infantry for direct protection, and a staff and logistics company (with maintenance and linited transport facilities). Personnel requirement (30 batallions):   **25,500**

The basic protection of the entire network structure with communications, stationary logistics and the elements of indirect fire is the responsibility of the National Guard: a militia with local ties, whose structure and personnel requirements are not discussed in this sketch. (It is assumed that 100,000 fighters are available in the event of an emergency).

3.3.2 The mobile element

Within the protective umbrella created by indirect fire, and with its selective support, 39 light mechanised infantry/reconnaissance battalions

can move swiftly to resolve "crises in the system": not only in infantry situations, but also those caused by heavy armoured forces. These battalions are highly mobile at the operational level, but tactically reliant on the defensive. The battalions are divided into three line companies and a staff and logistics company – the latter drawing supplies from the decentralised depot organisation. The retrieval of network data, in particular the coordination with indirect fire, works via short-range radio contact with the nearest web access point (Grin 1990). The line companies are equipped with light, protected vehicles of a single family. This results in a requirement of up to 2,500 half-group vehicles, 60 per battalion. Weight: 10 tonnes, 4X4. Two vehicles each can dismount the usual 8-person group ("*not too many eggs in the basket*"). Three configurations of armament are to be provided: light automatic cannon (20mm)/ MANPADS, light automatic grenade launcher (40mm)/MG, anti-tank guided missile system/MG. The type of unit outlined here offers the option of participating in United Nations *peacekeeping missions.*

Personnel requirement: **21,450**

3.3.3 Ground-based air defence

Provision should be made for 30 AD (missile) battalions integrated into the general network and based on depot logistics. Each formation would comprise 12 largely stationary fire units (range: 50 km) and the corresponding control systems. This means a total of 360 launch platforms.

Personnel requirement: **10,500**

3.3.4 Coordination

There are 3 corps commands: North-East/East, West, South. Each of them leads an average of 33 battalions (10 fire/13mobile/10 AD), employing subsidiary headquarters. The numbers may vary depending on the situation. Directly subordinate to each corps 4 battalions of engineers: support for the local fire units in the construction of barriers and covered positions, use of commercially available equipment.

Personnel requirement: **14.100**

3.4 Coastal protection

The coastal defence is based on a fleet of 32 boats (8 of which are in reserve), 300t , 30 kn, crew: 30. Basic platform with 4 versions: patrol, mine sweeping, coastal submarine hunting, guided missile carrier. This is complemented by three battalions with a total of 54 mobile land-based

platforms for anti-ship missiles. In addition: a battalion with naval drones. There would also be a coastal radar organisation and infantry for base security. Personnel requirement (with command module): **7,200**

3.5 The flying component

This element could include the following elements:
✗ Air police/interception: 56 light/medium fighters in 8 locations for airspace surveillance (*look-down-shoot-down*),
✗ Air transport (24 medium airlifters, 12 heavy/24 medium utility heli-copters. Personnel requirement (with command module):: **7,100**

4. Personnel, recruitment, reserves

The active strength of around **155,000** is made up of 85,000 career and contract soldiers with an average service of 10 years and 70,000 conscripts (12 months service). This results in an annual recruitment need of just under 80,000. The number of ready personnel – including 5,000 training posts – is **160,000** (a figure of 30,000 is assumed for the civilian administration).

After leaving the forces, contract soldiers and conscripts remain in the reserve for up to 12 years: with annual exercises or involvement in the militia.

5. Costs

The expenditure for the national defence outlined above is likely to be significantly lower than for a force of 200,000 uniformed personnel and 45,000 civilian staff, which Ukraine had at its disposal before the Russian attack. Two things in particular may contribute to fiscal relief: firstly, a simplified technostructure and secondly, the abandonment of the concept of manoeuvre warfare with highly complex large-scale formations and a horrendous logistical burden.

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