

The 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War As Failure Of Conventional Deterrence

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Abstrak

Artikel ini bertujuan menganalisa faktor di balik keputusan Rusia untuk menyerang Ukraina dalam Perang Rusia-Ukraina 2022. Rusia dan Ukraina, dua negara dengan relasi yang bercirikan ketegangan dan permusuhan, menghadapi peningkatan ketegangan saat Rusia melaksanakan dua penempatan kekuatan militer di dekat Ukraina antara April 2021 hingga Februari 2022. Meski ada pendapat bahwa Rusia tidak berniat meluncurkan aksi militer, Rusia menyerang Ukraina pada 24 Februari 2022. Untuk menganalisa masalah tersebut, artikel ini mengimplementasikan teori Deteren Konvensional Mearsheimer sebagai kerangka analisa. Deteren Konvensional menyatakan eskalasi krisis menjadi perang bergantung keberhasilan atau kehahalan deteren terhadap negara penyerang dari negara bertahan. Deteren kemungkinan gagal jika penyerang memiliki keunggulan militer kuantitatif, persenjataan kedua pihak didominasi senjata ofensif, dan penyerang mempersepsikan bisa berhasil meluncurkan perang blitzkrieg. Sesuai dengan teori tersebut, artikel ini menemukan Rusia secara umum memiliki keunggulan personil dan materiil lebih dari tiga-banding-satu dibandingkan dengan Ukraina. Selain itu, militer Rusia dan Ukraina didominasi senjata dengan kapabilitas ofensif yang digunakan secara ofensif, termasuk pesawat udara tanpa awak, rudal jarak jauh, dan artileri berat. Terakhir, kalangan keamanan nasional Rusia mempersepsikan bahwa perang blitzkrieg dapat dilancarkan di Ukraina.

Kata Kunci: *Deteren Konvensional, Rusia, Ukraina*

Abstract

This article aims to analyze the factor behind Russia's decision to attack Ukraine in the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War. Russia and Ukraine, two countries with a relation characterized by tensions and hostilities, are facing heightened tensions as Russia conducted two military buildup near Ukraine between April 2021 to February 2022. While some argued that Russia does not intend to conduct military action, Russia attacked Ukraine on February 24, 2022. In order to analyze the problem, this article implements Mearsheimer's Conventional Deterrence theory as the analytical framework. Conventional Deterrence stipulated the escalation of a crisis into a war depends on the success or failure of deterrence of an aggressor state by a defender state. Deterrence is likely to fail if an aggressor has quantitative military advantage, weapons utilized by both sides are dominated by offensive weapons, and the aggressor perceives it is capable of waging a successful blitzkrieg. In accordance with the theory, this article finds that Russia generally has more than three-to-one advantage in strength of military personnel and materiel compared to Ukraine. Furthermore, the Russian and Ukrainian military are dominated by weapons with offensive capabilities that are employed offensively, including unmanned aerial vehicles, long-range missiles, and heavy artillery. Finally, the Russian national security community perceives that a successful blitzkrieg in Ukraina is possible.

Keywords: *Conventional Deterrence, Russia, Ukraine*

INTRODUCTION

For the past eight years, Russia and its neighbor country, Ukraine, has had relations that are characterized by tensions and hostilities. Clashes between the two countries started in February 2014 with Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region. It occurred amidst a political turmoil in Ukraine known as the "Maidan Revolution," where violent protests occurred due to the decision of the former Ukrainian President, Viktor Yanukovich, to abandon a deal with the European Union in search of closer economic ties with Russia. A week after Yanukovich decided to leave the country, Russian military forces seized Ukrainian government and military facilities in Crimea, setting the circumstances for a referendum for the region's population, which consists of mostly Russian-speaking ethnicity. Despite controversies surrounding the legitimacy of the referendum, it was reported that 97 percent of voters supported unification with the Russian Federation, and the region is consequently annexed (DeBenedictis, 2021).

Following the annexation of Crimea, another turmoil also occurred in Ukraine's Donetsk and Luhansk regions, collectively referred to as the Donbas region. An uprising by separatist movements which sought independence from Ukraine culminated in the declaration of Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic in early April 2014 (Oleksy & Studenna-Skrucka, 2019). The situation in the two regions further escalated into an armed conflict when Russia decided to unofficially support the Donetsk and Luhansk forces by delivering weaponries and deploying soldiers. In response, the Ukrainian government conducted what it dubbed an "anti-terrorist" military operation in the region, targeting both pro-Russian and actual Russian forces. While Russia's military involvement in the conflict was initially limited to insertion of special forces elements, regular soldiers were sent to fight against Ukrainian forces in the Donbas region by mid-August 2014 (Mitrokhin, 2015). Russia's denial of its participation by supporting the separatist movement remains as the Donbas conflict eventually turned into a "limited war." Peace process attempts have failed, and fighting along the lines of contact in Donbas region lasted into a steady grind. Ceasefire agreement violations became a frequent occurrence and hundreds of casualties from both Russian and Ukrainian forces are recorded every year (Käihkö, 2021).

After years of limited war in the Donbass region, tensions once again heightened between Russia and Ukraine. In April 2021, Russia initiated an unprecedented large-scale military force buildup in regions along the Ukrainian border, which involved approximately over 100,000 military personnel in more than 50 battalion tactical groups (Odynova, 2021). This buildup raised the alarm for a potential imminent crisis, considering that it was the largest since Russia massed its forces around Crimea in preparation for the region's annexation seven years prior. Russian Minister of Defense, Sergei Shoigu, stated that two combined arms armies and three airborne divisions were deployed as part of a readiness exercise (Bielieskov, 2021). On April 22, 2021, Shoigu announced that the readiness exercise had concluded and military forces deployed near Ukraine will be drawn down. Nevertheless, only the aforementioned armies and airborne divisions were confirmed to be withdrawn, while approximately 80,000 personnel and military hardware remain in the vicinity of Ukraine (Trevithick, 2021).

Russia's military force buildup in April 2021 is followed by another buildup in October, which extended into February 2022. This latest buildup has raised even more concern due to the larger size of the military force involved. By early February, Russia had deployed 83 battalion tactical groups near Ukraine with approximately 150,000 military personnel involved (Burns, 2022). In addition to deployments in western regions and Crimea, Russia also deployed a significant size of military forces to Belarus. While the Russian government announced that the presence of the Russian military in the country was due to the upcoming Allied Resolve 22 joint exercise, analysts have noted that many of the Russian units in Belarus were deployed south of the training area. Moreover, the location of

Russian forces was as close as several kilometers from the Ukrainian border, north of Ukraine's capital of Kyiv (Conflict Intelligence Team, 2022).

Throughout the two occasions of buildup, concerns were raised regarding a possible war if Russia intended to conduct military action. Analysts stated that the first military force buildup might potentially be a prelude to a large-scale Russian invasion past Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk territories. However, it was also noted that the buildup has coercive or signaling purposes, instead of preparation for any offensive operation. Particularly, Russia's objective might have been to dissuade Ukraine from any effort to retake Donbas and the annexed Crimea regions or to deter future anti-Russian policies by the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Lee, 2021). No attack occurred between March to April 2021, but this concern remains relevant as the second buildup commences. As early as December 2021, intelligence agencies of Western countries are warning that Russia's military buildup is done in accordance with a plan for a multi-front offensive towards Ukraine, potentially to be conducted in 2022 (Harris & Sonne, 2021). Nonetheless, some analysts have stated that Russia was less likely to attack Ukraine, arguing that the country's political and military leaders might perceive no strategic advantage for the huge cost of such action (Muraviev, 2022). As an alternative, others argued that the second buildup was part of a compellence strategy. Russia might have sought to further dissuade the Ukrainian government from pursuing anti-Russian policies, including strengthening ties with NATO members, failing to grant special status to the Donbas region, sanctioning Russian entities, and placing Viktor Medvedchuk under arrest, who was one of Russian President, Vladimir Putin's close friends (Lee, 2022).

On February 24, 2022, the intent of Russia's military buildup near Ukraine eventually became clear. The crisis between the two countries erupted into a war as Russia conducted what it has dubbed a "special military operation" in Ukraine. President Putin announced Russia's intention to demilitarize and eliminate "far-right nationalist" elements from the country, in order to protect the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic (The Kremlin, 2022). Despite earlier arguments that Russia does not intend to conduct military action as it builds up its forces amidst the crisis, Russia has eventually decided to attack Ukraine. Therefore, this article aims to answer the research question, "What is the factor behind Russia's decision to attack Ukraine in the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War?"

The topic of Russia's history of tense and hostile relations with Ukraine has drawn the attention of academicians for the past several years. Several works of literature have covered this issue from numerous viewpoints. A group of academicians has turned to the event of Crimea's annexation in order to discover the reason behind Russia's frequent tensions with Ukraine. Gasparini (2021) argued the potential of integration between Ukraine and the European Union (EU) has contributed to the tense situation between Russia and Ukraine, as Russia sought to avoid such occurrence. Crimea was annexed as part of Russia's political intent to strengthen its influence in Europe while weakening the EU. Others have also stated that the Crimea was annexed as it is a geostrategically important region. Crimea is an important operating location for the Russian Navy in the Black Sea, which also enables Russia to fulfill its interests in the Mediterranean (Javed et al., 2019). It was also discussed how the annexation of Crimea has been framed as a regional identity issue. While Russia perceives its legitimacy over Crimea from the Soviet era and its national narrative which gave importance to the region's city of Sevastopol, Ukraine considered Crimea as vital to its narrative of accommodating diverse and multiethnic regions due to the presence of Crimean Tatars (Charron, 2016).

Meanwhile, another group has focused on the limited war in the Donbas region to explore the tension between Russia and Ukraine. Lakomy (2016) highlighted how the tension between Ukraine and Russia in Donbas, which eventually culminated in a conflict is caused by multilayer domestic, regional and global rivalry. The layers consists of ethnical and religious differences between Western

and Eastern Ukrainians, Poland's plan to include Ukraine in the European integration, and Russia's interest of protecting its sphere of influence from the West, even with the use of force. Some also argued that what occurred in the Donbas region is part of a conflict escalation ladder. The events that are considered to be the juncture which raises the situation above the armed conflict threshold, is the seizure of government buildings by Donetsk and Luhansk separatists, appearance of armed groups in the towns of Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, followed by subsequent Ukrainian response of troops deployment in the region (Hauter, 2021). As an alternative, there are also literatures that analyzed the economic-geographic factor as a potential cause of hostilities in Eastern Ukraine. Nonetheless, the academicians in this group concludes that the Donbas region, although not very prosperous, was not economically depressed either. The economic situation does not warrant the Eastern Ukrainians to spark a locally rooted internal conflict. Hence, the paramount cause of hostilities in Donbas is Russia's military intervention (Mykhnenko, 2020).

Finally, the ongoing 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War has also drawn the attention of academicians. Götz & Staun (2022) argued that the Russo-Ukrainian War is caused by two of Russia's important strategic cultures. Russia sought to use Ukraine as a "buffer zone" in order to protect itself from its own perceived vulnerability from the West. Additionally, as mentioned in the previous group, Russia also feels entitled towards its sphere of influence in the Eurasian region, as part of its "great power" status. Ukraine's perceived move to strengthen ties with Western countries was consequently seen as a threat by the Russian government, providing the discursive and intellectual habitat leading to a large-scale hostilities. Others stated that the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War itself is a result from Ukraine's long history of conflict with Russia, instead of any single recent cause. While Russia sought to prevent Ukraine's recently surfaced plan for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), some drew the cause of war as far as the 2014 Euromaidan and Donbas conflict (Mdzinarshvili & Sa'atun, 2022). Nevertheless, not much has been said on the role of Russia's and Ukraine's military forces as a factor towards the decision to attack Ukraine in February 2022. Therefore, this article adds to the discourse by discussing the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War by using the analytical framework that enable the analysis of the military forces of both countries.

METHOD

The research method utilized in this article is qualitative research. Specifically, the type of qualitative research method implemented is single case study. The case selected to answer the research question, as a focus of the article is the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War. The case study method is used as it allows the investigation of a single phenomenon, instance, or example of specific interest to be done in detail (Franzese & Curini, 2020). Hence, by utilizing the case study research method, this article may discuss in detail several aspects of the war such as the comparison of Russian and Ukrainian forces' strength, the types of weaponry used and its employment, and the perception of the Russian national security community in selecting the strategy to be used to defeat Ukraine. This article also relies on documents as a source of data, particularly official documents from both state and private sources, mass media outputs, and virtual outputs from the Internet. This includes official statements from state entities, journal articles, books, papers published by think tank organizations, and news articles (Bryman, 2012).

RESULTS DAN DISCUSSION

Russia's Quantitative Military Advantage Compared to Ukraine

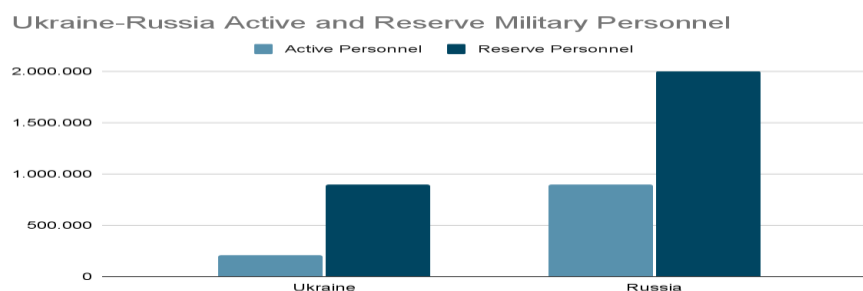


Diagram 1. Comparison of Ukrainian and Russian Military Reserve and Active Personnel (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021)

Diagram 1 provides a comparison of the number of military personnel in the Ukrainian and Russian military. As of 2021, the Ukrainian military consists of approximately 209,000 active personnel and 900,000 reserve personnel from all branches. Meanwhile, the Russian military has around 900,000 active personnel and 2,000,000 reserve personnel from all branches. Based on the diagram, Russia maintains a four-to-one quantitative military advantage in active personnel, and 2.6-to-one in overall personnel. This quantitative advantage is based on the Russian Army which has the largest number of active personnel of any Russian Armed Forces branch, numbering at 280,000 personnel. Furthermore, the Russian Armed Forces may also draw additional personnel from a total of 2,000,000 reserve personnel, which includes former conscripts and contract service members that have previously served and received military training (Stepanenko et al., 2022).

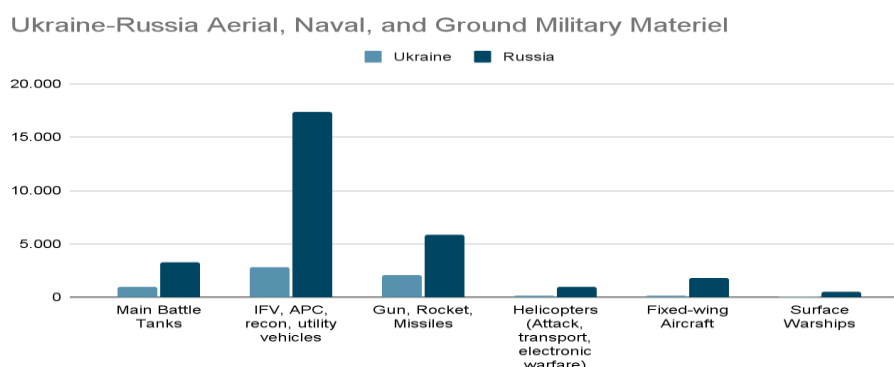


Diagram 2: Comparison of Ukrainian and Russian Military Material (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021)

Diagram 2 shows a comparison of the quantity of Ukrainian and Russian military materiel that are used by the country's aerial, naval, and ground forces. The Ukrainian Armed Forces possess 987 main battle tanks, 2,864 other types of ground combat vehicles such as infantry fighting vehicles, reconnaissance vehicles, armored personnel carrier and utility vehicles, 2,050 surface-to-surface weapons including gun, rocket artillery and ballistic missiles, 126 helicopters, 188 fixed-wing aircraft, and 45 surface warships. On the other hand, the Russian Armed Forces maintains 3,300 main battle tanks, 17,337 other types of ground combat vehicles, 5,839 surface-to-surface weapons, 961 helicopters, 1,847 fixed-wing aircraft, and 480 surface warships. All in all, based on the diagram, Russia maintains significant quantitative military advantage in material; three-to-one in main battle tanks, six-

to-one in other types of ground combat vehicles, 2.8-to-one in surface-to-surface weapons, seven-to-one in helicopters, nine-to-one in fixed-wing aircraft, and ten-to one in surface warships.

Nonetheless, the previous diagrams provide only a general overview of Russia's quantitative military advantage above Ukraine. A more specific assessment of the Ukrainian and Russian forces comparison leading up to the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, should also factor in additional Donetsk and Luhansk separatist forces that may fight alongside active Russian personnel in a major conflict against Ukraine. As a matter of fact, prior to the beginning of the war, separatist leader has expressed willingness to turn to Russia in order to combat Ukrainian forces (Zverev, 2022).

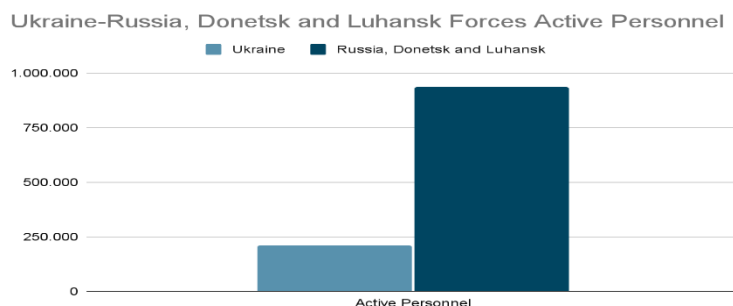


Diagram 3: Comparison of Ukrainian and Russian Military with Donetsk and Luhansk Forces Active Personnel (International Institute for Strategic Studies., 2021)

Diagram 3 shows the comparison of the number of military personnel in the Ukrainian and Russian military, along with Donetsk and Luhansk forces. The former has approximately 20,000 personnel while the latter has 14,000, bringing a total of the number of Eastern Ukraine separatist fighters at around 34,000. These additional forces raised the number of active personnel that may be deployed by Russian forces against Ukraine from 900,000 to 934,000. Hence, in a more specific assessment regarding the quantitative comparison of Ukraine and Russian forces leading to the conflict, there is a slight increase in quantitative military advantage to 4.46-to-one for Russian forces, due to the presence of Ukraine separatist elements in Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

Presence of Offensive Capabilities and Employment of Weapons in Russia and Ukraine Military Forces

Throughout the latest military buildup, the Russian government has voiced its grievances about Ukrainian modern weapon acquisition plans. Ukraine has purchased Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles produced by Turkish company Baykar, which are operational by October 2021. The Bayraktar TB2 offers offensive capabilities to the Ukrainian military which allows them to attack targets using smart munitions at least 150 kilometers away. Russia has subsequently expressed negative sentiments regarding the Ukrainian use of the Bayraktar. While Russian forces possess adequate air defense weapons to counter threats such as the TB2, the Russian-backed Donetsk and Luhansk separatist are not equipped with air defense weapons capable of reaching the TB2 at its operating altitude. Russia is concerned that the Ukrainian use of the TB2 will destabilize the situation at the relatively stagnant engagement line between the government and the separatist forces it supported (Mitzer & Oliemans, 2021). Ukraine's employment of the unmanned aerial vehicle in an offensive role was first demonstrated when on October 26, 2021, a Ukrainian TB2 attacked a separatist howitzer firing from beyond the range of Ukraine's own counter-artillery radar in the Donbas region (Cranny, 2021).

Furthermore, Russia correlated Ukraine's effort to strengthen its ties with NATO members along with its plan to apply as a NATO member itself, with the possibility of fielding of long-range missile systems in the country. The cause of significant concern for Russia is the potential deployment of United States long-range missile systems in Ukraine under NATO, such as ground-launched Tomahawk

cruise missiles. The BGM-109 Tomahawk provides offensive capabilities against targets within 1,600 kilometers (Dahlgren, 2021). In the case that Ukraine was to be accepted as a NATO member and long-range missiles in their territory were employed in an attack against Russia, it was assessed that the subsonic Tomahawks from Ukrainian territory could reach the Russian capital, Moscow, in less than 35 minutes. Moreover, Tomahawks launched from Ukraine would also have sufficient range to hit objects throughout the European territory of Russia, as well as beyond the Ural Mountains (Kremlin, 2022).

On the other hand, the Russian Armed Forces has also employed weapons that would provide offensive capabilities toward Ukraine, some of which were already present prior to the military buildup. Following the annexation of Crimea, Russia has intensified its military presence in the region, along with the surrounding waters of the Black Sea and Azov Sea (United Nations, 2020). The region became host to numerous long-range weaponry that may potentially be employed to attack targets in and around the Ukrainian territory. Russia has deployed batteries of K-300P Bastion dual-purpose anti-ship and land attack missiles in Crimea. With a maximum range of approximately 300 kilometers, Russia's Bastion is capable of hitting targets around Ukraine's Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson cities from the annexed region. Indeed, during the 2022 war, the Russian Armed Forces claimed to have employed its Bastions in Crimea in an offensive role, using their land attack capabilities to attack Ukrainian radio and reconnaissance elements, in addition to arms stockpiles (Newdick, 2022). Moreover, the Russian Navy has also deployed its surface combatants and diesel-electric attack submarines in Sevastopol Naval Base, Karantinnaya Bay, and Streletskaia Bay as part of the Black Sea Fleet. The base became home to Admiral Grigorovich-class frigates, Buyan-M-class corvettes, and Kilo-class submarines which are armed with 3M14 Kalibr cruise missiles. Aside from the Kalibr's range of around 1,500 to 2,500 km, the warships' and submarines' ability to move anywhere in the Black Sea and Azov Sea virtually enabled Russian naval forces in Crimea to target entire Ukrainian territory (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021).

More long-range weapons arrived near the Ukrainian border during Russia's military buildup. Russia has deployed Iskander-M short-range ballistic and cruise missile systems in parts of Russia bordering Ukraine, and also in the neighboring country of Belarus (Mezzofiore & Lister, 2022). Both ballistic and cruise missiles launched from the Iskander-M were reportedly capable of reaching distances up to 500 km, although the ballistic missile version has been launched at distances exceeding that. They were eventually employed offensively during the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War, launched from both Belarus and Russian territory to target command and control posts, communication centers, air defense sites, and arms stockpiles located further inside Ukraine's territory (Army Recognition, 2022). Additionally, during the second military buildup, Russian forces demonstrated that it is prepared to conduct and sustain a large-scale ground offensive operation in Ukraine. Among the weapon systems delivered to regions around the Ukrainian border are heavy artillery such as 2S7 Malka/Pion self-propelled howitzer, 2S4 Tyulpan self-propelled mortars, and TOS-1A Solntsepyok thermobaric multiple rocket launcher; IMR-2 combat engineering vehicles, UR-77 Meteorit mine clearing vehicles; and main battle tanks, particularly T-72B3s. These weapons have capabilities that enable them to be employed offensively in an assault against Ukrainian forces. The heavy artillery may be used to soften or destroy Ukraine's defensive fortifications, while combat engineering vehicles and mine clearing vehicles create a path through obstacles and minefields for the movement of main battle tanks into hostile territory (Lee, 2021). In addition to the aforementioned assortment of weapons with offensive capabilities, Russia also began establishing supply lines for fuel, logistics, spare parts, and other essentials, as well as medical units. This preparation, which also differentiated the first and second military buildup, was reported as early as December 2021 (Trevithick, 2021).

Russia's Perceived Capability to Conduct a *Blitzkrieg* in Ukraine

As of October 2022, the Russo-Ukrainian war has lasted for nine months with Russian forces occupying most of the Donbass region, and certain southern Ukraine regions, namely parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. The Russian axis of advance attacking Ukraine from the north had been pulled back after failing to take the capital, Kyiv. The Ukrainian military continues to fight Russian forces occupying the country, with major advances taking place in Kharkiv and Kherson regions (Hird et al., 2022). Therefore, Russia has not been able to achieve a quick victory against Ukraine in its "special military operation." Nevertheless, it should be noted that prior to the onset of the war, several conditions formed the perception that Russia is capable of conducting a blitzkrieg in Ukraine, thus ensuring a rapid victory. Furthermore, the actions of Russian military forces during the early days of the war indicate that as a matter of fact, they were initially seeking to rapidly defeat Ukrainian forces through a blitzkrieg.

Firstly, Russian forces aggressively maneuvered towards the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, which was seen as an attempt to depose Ukraine's government and end the war within the shortest time possible. On the first day of the war, Russian airborne forces (VDV) were deployed in a daring air assault operation behind enemy lines to take the Antonov Airport. It was assessed that the operation was conducted due to the potential of the airport to be used as an airbridge, enabling Russian forces to rapidly deploy additional soldiers and equipment as close as possible to Kyiv and start an advance from there. The fact that such an operation was undertaken despite the risk, demonstrates Russia's intent to avoid a prolonged war (Kofsky, 2022). Secondly, Russian advances into Ukrainian territory in the early stage of the war often consisted of small detachment forces, which rapidly moved forward using major roads without being tied down by additional support. The speed of these detachments enabled them to arrive in Kyiv suburbs within 48 hours of the opening shot of the war. Nonetheless, they are vulnerable to being destroyed or repelled when they are ambushed by defending Ukrainian forces (Glanz, 2022). Thirdly, Russian forces prioritized their speed of advance by bypassing major cities that have become Ukrainian strongpoints, which have inflicted losses and may slow down their movement. This is also considered one of the characteristics of a blitzkrieg (Mearsheimer, 1985). Notably, advancing Russian forces were seen bypassing Chernihiv and Kharkiv on their way to Kyiv after failed attempts to take the cities (Clark et al., 2022).

The first reason behind Russia's perception of being able to conduct a blitzkrieg in Ukraine successfully is the gross underestimation of the determination and ability of the Ukrainian people to fight back. According to Russian military observer Khodarenok (2022), one of the common views in Russia's national security community on the issue of Ukraine is that no one in the country will defend the "Kyiv regime." The least resistance was expected in case of a war between Russia and Ukraine, as Russian decision-makers presumed that the Ukrainian people would support and welcome Russian forces as "liberators." This presumption gained prevalence due to the deeply-rooted narrative in Russia that Ukraine was their inseparable "little brother," and that the Ukrainian people were misguided under Western influence imposed by the Poroshenko and Zelenskyy administrations. The aforementioned view is further solidified by the experiences of Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014, where pro-Russian sympathizers in the region were prevalent (Antonova, 2021). This view did not account for the shift in the majority of Ukrainian's attitude towards Russia following the annexation and Russian-supported armed separatism in Donbas. From 2014, a Ukrainian national identity coupled with anti-Russia sentiments grew strong despite the fact that many Ukrainian citizens, especially those outside the Donbas regions, are Russian speakers (Pifer, 2017).

The second reason is the failure to recall important lessons from Russia's previous experience in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War. On August 8, 2008, Russian forces attacked Georgian territory in defense of Abkhazia and South Ossetia breakaway regions, and waged a "five-days war". The conflict was described also as a "blitzkrieg" (Sieff, 2008) in which Russia was able to quickly achieve its goals of occupying the breakaway regions through swift military action, using overwhelming forces against a smaller country. Nonetheless, it has largely been forgotten that even Georgia's outnumbered military forces were able to inflict losses that were unexpected to the Russian military leadership. The Russian Air Force lost ten aircraft during the war, most of them downed or damaged beyond repair by Georgian air defense forces. Furthermore, although Russia claimed local air superiority, Georgian Air Force remained operational with their attack aircraft conducting combat missions until the last day of hostilities. Additionally, Russian forces also faced difficulties in destroying Georgian artillery units (Pallin & Westerlund, 2009). Despite what occurred during the five-days war, the Russian national security community generally presumes that military operations conducted in Ukraine will be done under complete air superiority. Under such conditions, their decision-makers are inclined to think that a Russian war in Ukraine will end in the shortest possible time (Khodarenok, 2022).

The third reason, related to the second, is an overestimation in the ability of the Russian military to dominate Ukrainian forces as well as an underestimation of the capability of the Ukrainian military. The Russian national security community is confident that war in Ukraine will rapidly reach its conclusion, due to the belief that it is possible to destroy nearly all surveillance and communication systems, artillery, and tank formations of the Ukrainian military in a single massive fire strike. The possibility of such war dragging on and entering a bloody phase of urban warfare was largely disregarded. In addition, the Ukrainian Armed Forces were assessed to be unable to hold a Russian attack as they were presumed to remain in their "deplorable state" as they were in 2014 (Khodarenok, 2022). The expectation of the rapid destruction of entire Ukrainian military assets does not consider the limited number of precision-guided munitions that can be delivered by the Russian military for a "fire strike" with such a large scale (Bronk, 2022). Additionally, the assumption that the Ukrainian Armed Forces remains in a deplorable state inferred the failure of factoring in the military modernization process Ukraine had undertaken since 2014 (Kiryukhin, 2018).

Conventional Deterrence in 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War: Success or Failure?

The previous discussions, guided by the three key assumptions of Conventional Deterrence theory have resulted in the following main points.

1. Deterrence likely fails as Russia generally maintains more than a three-to-one quantitative military advantage compared to Ukraine. With the addition of Donetsk and Luhansk separatist forces, Russia is able to ensure a 4.46-to-one active military personnel advantage compared to Ukraine. Similarly, Russia also maintains a significant advantage in the number of military materials; three-to-one in main battle tanks, six-to-one in other types of ground combat vehicles, 2.8-to-one in surface-to-surface weapons, seven-to-one in helicopters, nine-to-one in fixed-wing aircraft, and ten-to one in surface warships.
2. Deterrence likely fails as both the Russian and Ukrainian Armed Forces are dominated by weapons with offensive capabilities that are employed offensively. From the Ukrainian side, the acquisition of Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles, as well as the potential deployment of long-range missile systems capable of quickly reaching the Russian capital of Moscow should Ukraine become accepted as a NATO member has raised significant concern for Russia. Meanwhile, from the Russian side, the militarization of the annexed Crimea region and the military buildup has brought long-

range ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, heavy artillery, main battle tanks, combat engineering vehicles, and mine-clearing vehicles, which have demonstrated offensive capabilities and are known to be employed offensively.

3. Deterrence likely fails as Russia perceives that a *blitzkrieg* in Ukraine is possible. This perception exists due to the assumption of the Russian national security community that the Ukrainian people will not defend the Kyiv regime, and will instead welcome Russian forces as liberators. Furthermore, it is also assumed that military operations under claimed Russian air superiority may be conducted quickly, despite the previous “blitzkrieg” conflict in the 2008 Russo-Georgian War demonstrating that victory in such a war could also come with unexpected losses. Moreover, the Russian national security community is also guided by overconfidence that the Russian Armed Forces possess sufficient firepower to eliminate the Ukrainian military in a single strike, thus preventing the war from dragging on.

From the three main points based on the key assumptions, all points to the likely failure of deterrence between Russia and Ukraine. Referring to the Conventional Deterrence theory, the failure of deterrence means the aggressor believes that it would be possible to conduct a successful military action against a defender at low and acceptable cost. Between the quantitative military advantage, offensive weapons employed by both sides, and belief of the possibility to win the war swiftly, Russia would be inclined to attack Ukraine as its adversary in a situation of heightened tensions. Therefore, as conventional deterrence fails, the situation between Russia and Ukraine during the crisis leading to the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War is more likely than not, to eventually escalate into a war.

CONCLUSION

Implementing the Conventional Deterrence theory as its analytical framework, the research on the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War has produced three main findings. Firstly, Russia has a quantitative military advantage in terms of the number of personnel and materiel compared to Ukraine. In both aspects, Russia was able to ensure an advantage exceeding three-to-one. Secondly, both the Russian and Ukrainian military are dominated by weapons with offensive capabilities that have potential for offensive employment. Thirdly, the Russian national security community perceived that it is possible to successfully conduct a blitzkrieg in Ukraine.

The research question that has been put forward may be answered with the aforementioned main findings. The factors behind Russia’s decision to attack Ukraine in the 2022 Russo-Ukrainian War is Russia’s quantitative military advantage, the domination of offensive weapons in the military forces of both sides, and Russia’s perceived capability to conduct a blitzkrieg in Ukraine. The aforementioned factors point to the failure of Conventional Deterrence between Ukraine and Russia. With the failure of conventional deterrence, Russia as the aggressor was inclined to take military action in a situation of heightened tensions with Ukraine, as it is in a position to believe that it can wage a war with low and acceptable cost.

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