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The Military Situation in the Ukraine—An Update – The Postil Magazine

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19-24 minutes

The Operational Situation

As of March 25, 2022, our analysis of the situation confirms the [observations and conclusions made in mid-March](#).

The offensive launched on February 24 is articulated in two lines of effort, in accordance with Russian operational doctrine:

- 1)** A main effort directed toward the south of the country, in the Donbass region, and along the Azov Sea coast. As the doctrine states, the main objectives are—the neutralization of the Ukrainian armed forces (the objective of “demilitarization”), and the neutralization of ultra-nationalist, paramilitary militias in the cities of Kharkov and Mariupol (the objective of “[denazification](#)”). This primary push is being led by a coalition of forces: through Kharkov and Crimea are Russian forces from the Southern Military District; in the center are militia forces from the Donetsk and Lugansk republics; the Chechen National Guard is contributing with engagement in the urban area of Mariupol;
- 2)** A secondary effort on Kiev, aimed at “pinning down” Ukrainian (and Western) forces, so as to prevent them from carrying out operations against the main thrust or even taking Russian

coalition forces from the rear.

This offensive follows, to the letter, the objectives defined by Vladimir Putin on February 24. But, listening only to their own bias, Western “experts” and politicians have gotten it into their heads that Russia’s objective is to take over the Ukraine and overthrow its government. Applying a very Western logic, they see Kiev as the “center of gravity” (*Schwerpunkt*) of Ukrainian forces. According to Clausewitz, the “center of gravity” is the element from which a belligerent derives his strength and ability to act, and is therefore the primary objective of an adversary’s strategy. This is why Westerners have systematically tried to take control of capitals in the wars they have fought. Trained and advised by NATO experts, the Ukrainian General Staff has, predictably enough, applied the same logic, focusing on strengthening the defense of Kiev and its surroundings, while leaving its troops helpless in the Donbass, along the axis of the main Russian effort.

If one had listened carefully to Vladimir Putin, one would have realized that the strategic objective of the Russian coalition is not to take over the Ukraine, but to remove any threat to the Russian-speaking population of the Donbass. According to this general objective, the “real” center of gravity that the Russian coalition is trying to target is the bulk of the Ukrainian armed forces massed in the south-southeast of the country (since the end of 2021), and not Kiev.

Russian Success or Failure?

Convinced that the Russian offensive is aimed at Kiev, Western experts have quite logically concluded that (a) the Russians are stalling, and that (b) their offensive is doomed to failure because they will not be able to hold the country in the long term. The

generals who have followed each other on French TV seem to have forgotten what even a second lieutenant comprehends well: “Know your enemy!”—not as one would like him to be, but as he is. With generals like that, we don’t need an enemy anymore.

That being said, the Western narrative about a Russian offensive that is bogged down, and whose successes are meager, is also part of the propaganda war waged by both sides. For example, the sequence of maps of operations, [published by Libération](#) from the end of February, shows almost no difference from one day to the next, until March 18th (when the media stopped updating it). Thus, on February 23rd, on France 5 [TV station], the journalist Élise Vincent evaluated the territory taken by the Russian coalition as the equivalent of Switzerland or the Netherlands. In reality, we are more in the area of Great Britain.

As an example, let us observe the difference between the map of the situation on March 25, 2022, as published by [Ouest-France](#):

La situation au vendredi 25 mars





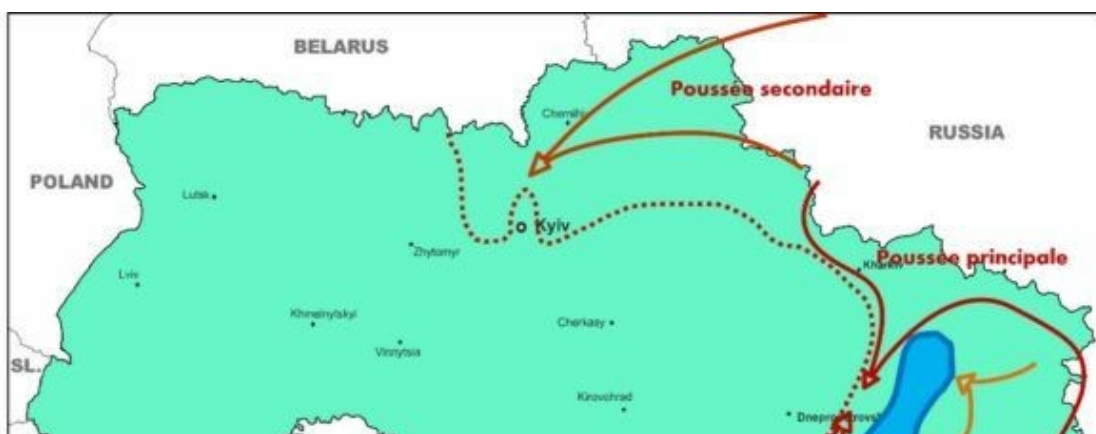
... and as published by the French [Ministry of the Armed Forces](#):



Situation Ukraine au 25 mars - © Ministère des armées

In addition, it should be noted that Ukrainian forces do not appear on any map (presented in our media) of the conflict-situation. Thus, if the map of the French Ministry of Armed Forces gives a slightly more honest picture of reality, it also carefully avoids mentioning the Ukrainian forces encircled in the Kramatorsk cauldron.

In fact, the situational map, as of March 25, should look more like this:





The Situation as of March 25, 2022. [*“Poussée principale”= main thrust;*

“poussée secondaire”= secondary thrust]. The bone-shaped, blue area marks the location of the mass of the Ukrainian army (in reality, this “massed” Ukrainian army is split into several smaller cauldrons). The red-lined arrows show the overall offensive of the Russian army. The orange-lined arrows show the thrust of the Donbass forces. The red dotted line shows the maximum advance of Russian coalition forces.

Moreover, Ukrainian forces are never indicated on our maps, as this would show that they were not deployed on the Russian border in February 2022, but were regrouped in the south of the country, in preparation for their offensive, the initial phase of which began on February 16th. This confirms that Russia was only reacting to a situation initiated by the West, by way of the Ukraine, as we shall see. At present, it is these forces that are encircled in the Kramatorsk cauldron and are being methodically fragmented and neutralized, little by little, in an incremental way, by the Russian coalition.

The vagueness maintained in the West about the situation of the Ukrainian forces, has other effects. First, it maintains the illusion of a possible Ukrainian victory. Thus, instead of encouraging a negotiation process, the West seeks to prolong the war. This is why the European Union and some of its member countries have sent weapons and are encouraging the civilian population

and volunteers of all kinds to go and fight, often without training and without any real command structure—with deadly consequences.

We know that in a conflict, each party tends to inform in order to give a favorable image of its actions. However, the image we have of the situation and of the Ukrainian forces is based exclusively on data provided by Kiev. It masks the profound deficiencies of the Ukrainian leadership, even though it was trained and advised by NATO military.

Thus, military logic would have the forces caught in the Kramatorsk cauldron withdraw to a line at the Dnieper, for example, in order to regroup and conduct a counteroffensive. But they were forbidden to withdraw by President Zelensky. Even back in 2014 and 2015, a close examination of the operations showed that the Ukrainians were applying “Western-style” schemes, totally unsuited to the circumstances, and in the face of a more imaginative, more flexible opponent who possessed lighter leadership structures. It is the same phenomenon today.

In the end, the partial view of the battlefield given to us by our media has made it impossible for the West to help the Ukrainian general staff make the right decisions. And it has led the West to believe that the obvious strategic objective is Kiev; that “demilitarization” is aimed at the Ukraine’s membership in NATO; and that “denazification” is aimed at toppling Zelensky. This legend was fueled by Vladimir Putin’s appeal to the Ukrainian military to disobey, which was interpreted (with great imagination and bias) as a call to overthrow the government. However, this appeal was aimed at the Ukrainian forces deployed in the Donbass to surrender without fighting. The Western interpretation caused the Ukrainian government to

misjudge Russian objectives and misuse its potential of winning.

You don't win a war with bias—you lose it. And that's what is happening. Thus, the Russian coalition was never “on the run” or “stopped” by heroic resistance—it simply did not attack where it was expected. We did not want to listen to what Vladimir Putin had explained to us very clearly. This is why the West has thus become—*volens nolens*—the main architect of the Ukrainian defeat that is taking shape. Paradoxically, it is probably because of our self-proclaimed “experts” and recreational strategists on our television sets that the Ukraine is in this situation today.

The Conduct of Battle

As for the course of operations, the analyses presented in our media come most often from politicians or so-called military experts, who relay Ukrainian propaganda.

Let's be clear. A war, whatever else it is, is drama. The problem here is that our strategists in neckties are clearly trying to overdramatize the situation in order to [exclude any negotiated solution](#). This development, however, is prompting some Western military personnel to speak out and offer a more nuanced judgment. Thus, in [Newsweek](#), an analyst from the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), the American equivalent of the Direction du Renseignement Militaire (DRM) in France, noted that “in 24 days of conflict, Russia has carried out some 1,400 strikes and launched nearly 1,000 missiles (by way of comparison, the United States carried out more strikes and launched more missiles on the first day of the Iraq war in 2003).”

While the West likes to “soften up” the battlefield with intensive and prolonged strikes, before sending in ground-troops, the Russians prefer a less destructive, but more troop-intensive approach. On France 5, the journalist Mélanie Tarvant

presented the death of Russian generals on the battlefield as proof of the destabilization of the Russian army. But this is a profound misunderstanding of the traditions and modes of operation of the Russian army. Whereas in the West, commanders tend to lead from the rear, their Russian counterparts tend to lead from the front—in the West they say, “Forward!” In Russia, they say, “Follow me!” This explains the high losses in the upper echelons of command, already observed in Afghanistan—but it also tells of the much more rigorous selection of staff-personnel than in the West.

Furthermore, the DIA analyst noted that “the vast majority of the airstrikes are over the battlefield, with Russian aircraft providing ‘close air support’ to ground forces. The remainder—less than 20 percent, according to U.S. experts—has been aimed at military airfields, barracks and supporting depots.” Thus, the phrase “indiscriminate bombing [that] is devastating cities and killing everyone” echoed by the Western media seems to contradict the U.S. intelligence expert, who said, “If we merely convince ourselves that Russia is bombing indiscriminately, or [that] it is failing to inflict more harm because its personnel are not up to the task or because it is technically inept, then we are not seeing the real conflict.”

In fact, Russian operations differ fundamentally from the Western concept of the same. The West’s obsession with having no fatalities in their own forces leads them to operations that are primarily in the form of very lethal air strikes. Ground troops only intervene when everything has been destroyed. This is why, in [Afghanistan](#) or in the [Sahel](#), Westerners [killed more civilians](#) than terrorists did. This is why Western countries engaged in Afghanistan, the Middle East and North Africa no longer publish the number of civilian casualties caused by their

strikes. In fact, Europeans engaged in regions that only marginally affect their national security, such as the Estonians in the Sahel, go there just to “get their feet wet.”

In the Ukraine, the situation is very different. One only has to look at a map of linguistic zones to see that the Russian coalition operates almost exclusively in the Russian-speaking zone; thus, among populations that are generally favorable to it. This also [explains the statements](#) of a US Air Force officer: “I know that the news keeps repeating that Putin is targeting civilians, but there is no evidence that Russia is intentionally doing so.”

Conversely, it is for the same reason—but in a different way—that the Ukraine has deployed its ultra-nationalist paramilitary fighters in major cities, such as [Mariupol](#) or [Kharkov](#)—without emotional or cultural ties to the local population, these militias can fight even at the cost of heavy civilian casualties. The atrocities that are currently [being uncovered](#) remain hidden by the French-speaking media, for fear of losing support for the Ukraine, [as noted by media](#) close to the Republicans in the United States.

After “[decapitation](#)” strikes in the first minutes of the offensive, the Russian operational strategy was to bypass the urban centers, and to envelop the Ukrainian army, “pinned down” by the forces of the Donbass republics. It is important to remember that the “decapitation” is not intended to annihilate the general staff or the government (as our “experts” tend to understand it), but to sunder the leadership structures so as to prevent the coordinated maneuver of forces. On the contrary, the aim is to preserve the leadership structures themselves in order to be able to negotiate a way out of the crisis.

On March 25, 2022, after having sealed the cauldron of Kramatorsk which denied any possibility of retreat to the Ukrainians and having taken most of the cities of Kharkov and Marioupol, Russia has practically fulfilled its objectives—all that remains is to concentrate its efforts on reducing the pockets of resistance. Thus, contrary to what the Western press has claimed, this is not a reorientation or a resizing of its offensive, but the methodical implementation of the objectives announced on February 24.

The Role of the Volunteers

A particularly disturbing aspect of this conflict is the attitude of [European governments](#) that [allow or encourage](#) their citizens to go and fight in the Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky's call to join the [International Legion for the Territorial Defense of Ukraine](#), which he recently created, has been greeted with enthusiasm by European countries.

Encouraged by the media that present a routed Russian army, many of these young people head off, imagining they are going—literally—on a hunting trip. However, once there, disillusionment is high. Testimonies show that these “amateurs” often end up as [“cannon fodder,”](#) without having any real impact on the outcome of the conflict. The experience of recent conflicts shows that the arrival of foreign fighters [brings nothing](#) to a conflict, except to increase its [duration and lethality](#).

Moreover, the arrival of [several hundred Islamist fighters](#) from the Idlib region, an area under the control and protection of the Western coalition in Syria (and also the area in which two Islamic State leaders were killed by the Americans) should arouse our concern. Indeed, the weapons we are very liberally supplying to the Ukraine are already partly in the hands of

criminal individuals and organizations and are already beginning to pose a security problem for the authorities in Kiev. Not to mention the fact that the weapons that are being touted as effective against Russian aircraft could eventually threaten our military and civilian aircraft.

The [volunteer proudly presented](#) by the RTBF on the 7:30 p.m. news of March 8, 2022 was an admirer of the “[Corps Franc Wallonie](#),” Belgian volunteers who served the Third Reich; and he illustrates the type of people attracted to the Ukraine. In the end, we will have to ask ourselves, who gained the most—[in this case] Belgium or the Ukraine?

Distributing weapons indiscriminately could well make the EU—*volens nolens*—a [supporter of extremism](#) and even international terrorism. The result—we are adding misery to misery, in order to satisfy the [European elites](#) more than the [Ukraine itself](#).

Three Points Deserve to be Highlighted by Way of Conclusion

1. Western Intelligence, Ignored by Policymakers

[Military documents](#) found in Ukrainian headquarters in the south of the country confirm that the Ukraine was preparing to attack the Donbass; and that the firing observed by OSCE observers as early as February 16 heralded an imminent outbreak in days or weeks.

Here, some introspection is necessary for the West—either its intelligence services did not see what was happening and they are thus very bad, or the political decision-makers chose not to listen to them. We know that Russian intelligence services have far superior analytical capabilities than their Western counterparts. We also know that the American and German intelligence services had very well understood the situation,

since the end of 2021, and knew that the Ukraine was preparing to attack the Donbass.

This allows us to deduce that the American and European political leaders deliberately pushed the Ukraine into a conflict that they knew was lost in advance—for the sole purpose of dealing a political blow to Russia.

The reason Zelensky did not deploy his forces to the Russian border, and repeatedly stated that his large neighbor would not attack him, was presumably because he thought he was relying on Western deterrence. This is [what he told CNN](#) on March 20th—he was clearly told that the Ukraine would not be part of NATO, but that publicly they would say the opposite. The Ukraine was thus instrumentalized to affect Russia. The objective was the closure of the North Stream 2 gas pipeline, [announced on February 8th](#), by Joe Biden, during the visit of Olaf Scholz; and which was followed by a barrage of sanctions.

2. Broken Diplomacy

Clearly, since the end of 2021, no effort has been made by the West to reactivate the Minsk agreements, as evidenced by the reports of visits and telephone conversations, notably [between Emmanuel Macron and Vladimir Putin](#). However, France, as guarantor of the Minsk Agreements, and as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, has not respected its commitments, which has led to the situation that the Ukraine is experiencing today. There is even a feeling that the West has sought to add fuel to the fire since 2014.

Thus, Vladimir Putin's placing of nuclear forces on alert on February 27 was presented by our media and politicians as an irrational act or blackmail. What is forgotten is that it followed the thinly veiled threat made by Jean-Yves Le Drian, three days

earlier, that NATO [could use nuclear weapons](#). It is very likely that Putin did not take this “threat” seriously, but wanted to push Western countries—and France in particular—to abandon the use of excessive language.

3. The Vulnerability of Europeans to Manipulation is Increasing

Today, the perception propagated by our media is that the Russian offensive has broken down; that Vladimir Putin is [crazy](#), [irrational](#) and therefore ready to do anything to break the deadlock in which he supposedly finds himself. In this totally emotional context, [the question asked](#) by Republican Senator Marco Rubio during Victoria Nuland’s hearing before Congress was strange, to say the least: “If there is a biological or chemical weapon incident or attack inside the Ukraine, is there any doubt in your mind that 100% it would be the Russians behind it?” Naturally, she answered that there is no doubt. Yet there is absolutely no indication that the Russians are using such weapons. Besides, the [Russians finished destroying](#) their stockpiles in 2017, while the Americans have [not yet destroyed theirs](#).

Perhaps this means nothing. But in the current atmosphere, all the conditions are now met for an incident to happen that would push the West to become more involved, in some form, in the Ukrainian conflict (a “false-flag” incident).

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*multidimensional UN intelligence unit in the Sudan. He has worked for the African Union and was for 5 years responsible for the fight, at NATO, against the proliferation of small arms. He was involved in discussions with the highest Russian military and intelligence officials just after the fall of the USSR. Within NATO, he followed the 2014 Ukrainian crisis and later participated in programs to assist the Ukraine. He is the author of several books on intelligence, war and terrorism, in particular *Le Détournement* published by SIGEST, Gouverner par les fake news, L'affaire Navalny. His latest book is *Poutine, maître du jeu?* published by Max Milo.*

This article appears through the gracious courtesy of [Centre Français de Recherche sur le Renseignement](#), Paris. Translated from the French by N. Dass.

[Featured image](#): “Medal in Khankala,” by I.S. Araslanov; painted in 2007. (Photo Credit: Moscow Museum of Modern Art).