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# Trend Analysis and Assessment Report

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**CLASSIFICATION LEVEL: DECLASSIFIED AND APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE**

**Report Topic:** Military developments in the Russo-Ukraine War

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## A military victory is unlikely to end the Russo-Ukraine War

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### Key Takeaway

Despite initial success for about the first two weeks of the invasion of Ukraine, Russian forces have been unable to secure sustainable progress in Ukraine. We assess with high confidence that the end of the Russo-Ukraine war will not be the result of either military achieving a decisive victory over the other. Trends we have noticed include increased aggression by Russian forces against the Ukrainian population, logistical issues among Russian forces, a sustained higher casualty rate among Russian forces, newer counteroffensives conducted by Ukrainian forces, and a noticeably high casualty rate among Russian general grade officers in Ukraine. The main battlefronts thus far have been on three fronts: the Northern front, Southern front, and Eastern front. The Southern front has mainly been around Kherson, Mykolaiv, and Mariupol. The Northern front has mainly been Kyiv and the northwest area outside of Kyiv. The Eastern front has mainly been around Chernihiv, Kharkiv, and Donetsk. We assess that it is highly likely that Russian forces will shift their focus to secure the Donbas region and use fewer ground troops to conduct offensive operations on the Northern and Southern fronts for at least the next two weeks. We have assessed who is winning the war and as of now we assess with high confidence that Russia is winning by a small margin, but we still do not estimate that a military victory by either side will be the cause for the end of the Russo-Ukraine war.

### Trend Pattern

A series of recent events indicate that Russian armed forces are struggling to achieve a decisive military victory over Ukrainian defense forces

- Throughout the war, Russian forces have increasingly targeted Ukrainian civilians mostly by artillery and rocket fire. One week into the invasion, the United Nations (UN) claimed that 102 were killed and currently, it claims 1,417 civilians have died [1]. On 17 March, a Russian airstrike targeted a theater in Mariupol, which was clearly a designated civilian shelter with the word for “children” marked in paint on the ground on two sides of the building. The theater housed 1,300 civilians and was targeted by Russian forces [2].
- On 1 March, an approximately 40-mile-long armored column was halted on route to Kyiv due to fuel shortages. It was halted for ten days until the column received fuel and dispersed [3]. Current US intelligence suggests that Russian forces are being refitted with manpower in small numbers, which is not ideal for purposes of continuing offensive operations [4].
- Russian forces have experienced a casualty rate of approximately 2:1 to 3:1, when compared to the estimated Ukrainian losses, not including civilian casualties. [5]
- After Russian forces slowed in terms of progress, Ukraine forces launched smaller counterattacks, beginning northwest of Kyiv and then in the south near Mykolaiv [6]. So far, the counterattacks have been successful in Irpin and at the Hostomel airport [7].

- So far, seven Russian general grade officers have been killed by Ukraine forces during the Russo-Ukraine war.
- Russian forces have been unable to capture Kyiv and progress has slowed to a near-halt on the Southern front. On 25 March, Colonel General Sergei Rudskoy, first deputy chief of Russia's General Staff, announced that Russian forces would commit more effort to secure the Donbas region [8].

### **Assessment**

Russian forces are likely to continue targeting civilian infrastructure and lives out of frustration and to put political pressure on Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. After Rudskoy's announcement, Russian forces are likely to take an operational pause on the Northern and Southern fronts, attempt to secure the Donbas region, then resume offensive operations on the Northern and Southern fronts. It is unlikely but possible that Russian forces will use chemical and nuclear weapons in Ukraine as part of their continued increase in aggression. We assess that Russian forces will not make significant gains in Ukraine for at least the next month.

### **Broader Implications**

Russian frustration over a lack of progress will likely lead to an increase in aggression in Ukraine. This may come in the form of further increased artillery and airstrikes against civilians, as noted previously, and it may come in the form of chemical or nuclear attacks against Ukrainian targets. Before a chemical or nuclear attack would occur, Russia would likely pressure Belarus to declare war on Ukraine. It is less likely, but still possible, that Russia may even target neighboring countries of Ukraine if it perceives an external threat because of appearing militarily weak during the Russo-Ukraine war.

### **Indicators**

We will be watching for updated estimated casualty comparisons between Russian and Ukraine forces. We will be collecting data on where the fighting continues or shifts to, as well as who is initiating the engagements. We will also be watching for more accurate ways to assess morale among both sides, and comparing it to perceived combat effectiveness, to better assess which side will be able to sustain combat operations longer.

### **Sources**

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