

**April 26th-May 26th, 2022
Monthly Overview**

ONGOING RISKS & THREATS

- The pace of redeployment and the scope of the hidden mobilization of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia) is worrying. The developments seen in the past month may speak of the planning of a new Russian offensive in northern Ukraine and the advancement of the Russian troops towards Kherson and Zaporizhzhia.
- Maintaining the unity of the political and military leadership of Ukraine will become increasingly challenging as the war continues.
- The psychological resilience of Ukrainians, coupled with unmet expectations and existing Euro-skepticism risk mounting if Ukraine sees further or continued delays in financial and military support provided by, for example, the USA, EU, and NATO. It is critical that allies are also aware of the risks associated with the amount and quality of the aid provided.
- Tensions regarding the social and economic situation of Ukraine risk aggravating unless resolved and addressed.
- Domestic political conflicts and diverging priorities between political allies risk mounting and leading to either the stagnation or polarization of decision-making. The threat is aggravated by the attempts of President Volodymyr Zelensky's inner circle to consolidate opposition and counter the rise of new political elites.
- Threats by the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate should be monitored, especially in light of allegations regarding the church's collaboration with the Russian forces.
- Ukraine's political leadership is experiencing a loss of trust due to mounting military losses, including the loss of the Azovstal steel plant, defeats suffered by the Ukrainian army across front lines, and ongoing discussions regarding prospective concessions regarding territorial losses.

NEGOTIATIONS & RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

- Russian authorities have continued their attempts to compel the EU and Ukraine into quasi-compromises, such as returning to the negotiation table at the expense of Ukraine's political and territorial integrity. Russia's diplomatic maneuvers include:
 - offering export corridors for Ukraine in exchange of the lifting of economic sanctions,
 - attempting to pull Collective Security Treaty Organization (hereinafter: CSTO) member states into the conflict and pushing them against Ukraine and NATO;
 - creating a situation paving the way for a frozen conflict;
 - searching trade partners for the grain stolen from Ukraine;
 - seeking allies among EU member states willing to block the sixth sanction package and oil embargo.

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- The full-scale offensive mounted by the Russian forces and the continuation of hostilities have blocked the negotiation process and related discussions on international security guarantees for Ukraine. The political leadership of Ukraine has announced new red lines defining the conditions for the return to negotiations, including the withdrawal of Russian troops to the positions they held on February 24th or the complete liberation of all Ukrainian territories. Russian forces have in turn pressured Ukraine to accept further military concessions by threatening them with the use of chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons.

CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- Intense fighting has taken place in eastern parts of Ukraine during the reporting period and the eastern front line has moved to the Siverskyi Donets river. During the third month of the conflict, Russian troops have:
 - established effective [control](#) over the entire territory of the Luhansk oblast;
 - intensively and indiscriminately shelled settlements in the Donetsk oblast;
 - established partial control over some cities located in the Donetsk oblast.
- Russia's strategy of encirclement and destruction of the armed forces of Ukraine in the so-called big Donetsk cauldron has failed. However, Russia has managed to gain ground in numerous territories in the front lines, having almost encircled Ukrainian troops near Severodonetsk and Lysychansk. Russian forces have also attempted to encircle several smaller units of the Ukrainian army in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, namely in the rayon of Severodonetsk (including Rubizhne and Lysychansk), Bakhmut-Lysychansk, Zolote (to the north-east of Popasna), and in Avdiivka.
- The Ukrainian army has managed to push Russian troops back to the north of the Kharkiv oblast, while defending their positions in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. Furthermore, Ukrainian troops have successfully curbed the attempts of the Russian forces to cross the Siverskyi Donets river.
- Future developments across front lines largely depend on Ukraine's ability to receive military support from the West. As it stands, the capacities of the Russian troops vastly exceed those of Ukraine.
- Ukrainian territory has continued to be subject to constant missile strikes, although the intensity of airstrikes has decreased during the reporting period. This is due to the strength of Ukraine's air defense which has successfully hindered the violation of Ukraine's airspace by Russian fighter jets.
- Since the beginning of hostilities, the Russian army has launched 1474 missile strikes on Ukraine and has used 2275 different missiles in its attacks.
- Settlements located in the [Chernihiv, Sumy](#), Kharkiv, and other oblasts bordering Russia have been exposed to shelling launched from Russian and Belarusian territories as well as those occupied by Russia in Ukraine.
- Russian local authorities have accused the Ukrainian army of shelling Russian border towns. The first casualty of such an attack was reported on May 19th, however, Ukrainian officials have not confirmed the attack.
- Ukrainian forces have incurred heavy losses in the past month. According to President Zelensky, 50 to 100 Ukrainian soldiers are killed every day. According [to](#) the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as of May 24th, at least 3942 Ukrainian civilians have been killed and 4591 wounded. As per

Ukrainian sources, the death toll in Mariupol is feared to exceed 22 000 civilians. The figure can only be corroborated once the city has been de-occupied and if the Russian troops retreat without destroying the evidence of their actions. By now, 1297 bodies have been found in the Kyiv oblast. New victims of the war continue to be identified across oblasts.

- After several months of defense, the Azovstal steel plant has been evacuated and the Ukrainian fighters who defended the plant are currently in Russian detention. The conditions the fighters are being held in are known to be acceptable and no reports of torture have surfaced. According to reports, Russian officials will organize show trials before any exchanges of prisoners of war are to take place.
- Ukrainian courts have begun delivering verdicts for Russian soldiers responsible for crimes committed in Ukrainian territory. For example, a sergeant of the Armed Forces of Russia, Vadim Shyshymarin, who confessed to having killed a civilian, has been sentenced to life imprisonment in Ukraine. The potential of exchanging Russian soldiers convicted in Ukraine for Ukrainian fighters held by Russia has not been ruled out.
- The Black Sea remains blocked and war and cargo ships are unable to leave and enter the sea. The blockade imposed by the Russian army has had a heavy toll on Ukrainian grain and other products, potentially cascading into food crises across the globe. Furthermore, the Ukrainian railway infrastructure continues to be subject to shelling, with, for example, the strategically important bridge across the Dniester Estuary in the Odesa oblast shelled numerous times. The destruction of railway networks will further hinder international exports from Ukraine.
- The gravity of the risk posed by the blockade of the Black Sea has led to the formation of a coalition of countries seeking to end the transport impasse. The next delivery of weapons from the United States, Denmark and other allies, is expected to help Ukraine to re-establish control over the sea and destroy the infrastructure of Russia's Black Sea Fleet located on Snake Island. The Ukrainian army managed to destroy several Russian landing crafts near the island in early May, yet the island remains under Russian control.

HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- The Russian military and its administration have continued to implement measures terrorizing the residents of occupied territories. Reported violations include:
 - Abduction and harassment of local authorities, businesses, volunteers, and activists;
 - Mobilization of locals by force sending the recruits to the eastern front lines without adequate training. Despite the upper hand of the occupying force, the deployment of Ukrainians to conflict zones has sparked a wave of protests in the Luhansk oblast;
 - Ukrainian businesses and hospitals continue to be plundered, and reports of Ukrainian grain, vegetables, and other products illegally transported to Crimea and exported to Russia and other countries have not abated;
 - Educational institutions have been forced to introduce Russian as a language of instruction and switch to the Russian curriculum;

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- The Russian ruble has been introduced as the primary currency or circulated alongside the Ukrainian Hryvnia;
- Russian authorities have handed out Russian passports or have been forcibly imposed them on Ukrainian citizens in some of the areas they control;
- Ukrainian mobile operators and Internet providers have been blocked and Russian counterparts introduced.
- Filtration camps have been set up both in the occupied territories of Ukraine. According to reports, filtration procedures have been followed by accommodation in unhygienic conditions without access to adequate medical services.
- More than 1.3 million Ukrainians have been deported to Russian territories since the beginning of the invasion. Some of the deported individuals have managed to leave Russian territories and make their way to Ukraine. The returnees have at times been aided by Russian human rights activists and volunteers, however, whether supported or not, for many, the financial burden of returning to Ukraine has made travelling impossible.
- Demining efforts have continued across liberated territories in Ukraine. By now, roads in the Kyiv oblast have been demined. However, mines and duds left in buildings and fields remains acute and reports of civilians killed while working on fields are numerous. The shelling of agricultural infrastructure, especially in oblasts close to the front line, has continued.
- Evacuation operations from territories in the Luhansk and Donetsk oblast close to the front line have continued and the evacuation of civilians from the Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, and [Kharkiv](#) oblasts has been hindered by hurdles imposed by the Russian forces on Ukrainian citizens trying to enter government-controlled territories. In addition and despite ongoing hostilities, the number of individuals evacuated has remained relatively low due to the unwillingness of individuals to leave their home towns in fear of shelling. Towns in eastern Ukraine have remain under incessant shelling and have incurred significant damages and destruction and loss of civilian life.
- Approximately 6.5 million Ukrainians have fled the country since the beginning of hostilities and more than 10 million individuals have been internally displaced. Some returns have been reported, and, for example, the Kharkiv subway was symbolically reopened on May 25th to mark a step towards stability. Despite the liberation of some Ukrainian territories from Russian occupation, returns are hindered due to financial factors defined by unemployment, destroyed infrastructure, damaged homes, and the risk of continued shelling.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

- Russia has begun to double down on the use of economic pressure to break Ukraine's resistance. As of yet, Ukraine has managed to protect the management of its national economy, however a state cannot be held at bay much longer.

- The fall of Ukraine's GDP, absence of exports, loss of budget sources, looming risks regarding the payment of salaries and social support, instability of the national currency, substantial deficits in oil deliveries, and rising food prices are all pushing Ukraine on the brink of financial chaos.
- The ongoing fuel crisis caused by the cessation of Russian and Belarusian oil imports coupled with the massive shelling of Ukrainian oil refineries and depots is a cause of serious concern in Ukraine. The Ukrainian government manage to normalize the deliveries of petrol from the EU in May, however, the price of petrol remains high. The high price tag of petrol has been felt in the pockets of Ukrainian citizens who are in dire need of fuel.
- The economic losses incurred by Ukraine have been lessened but not compensated by the relocation of businesses to Western Ukraine, re-orientation of transport logistics and export systems, and the introduction of state regulations in defined sectors of the economy.
- It is likely that the government will be unable to prevent the economy from plummeting further by resorting to crisis management measures only. As it stands, Ukraine is critically dependent on the financial support provided by western countries and international financial organizations. Ongoing diplomatic efforts paving the way for economic recovery programs should maintain the financial survival of Ukraine as their top priority both, as the country grapples with the ongoing conflict, as well as it prepares to move towards post-conflict rebuilding measures.

INFORMATION DIMENSIONS

- Russian officials have continued spreading claims discrediting the Ukrainian army and accusing the army of war crimes. On the other hand, Russian officials have systematically denied all accusations regarding their role in the crimes committed against civilians by their troops in Ukraine. On the contrary, the government of Russia has publicly praised the heroic acts of its troops in Ukraine.
- The Russian media has continued to present Russia and the Russian forces as an actor bringing peace and liberation to Ukraine while undertaking humanitarian missions across Ukrainian territories. Deportations of civilians from Ukraine to Russia have either been denied or presented as operations conducted under humanitarian initiatives set up by Russia.
- Narratives regarding the so-called denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine spread across Russian media landscapes have largely remained unchanged. For example, Russian senior officials have made statements claiming that the goals of the military operation have been achieved, and in a speech held on May 9th, President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, referred to Kyiv, Odesa, and Mariupol as Russian cities.
- The Kremlin has accelerated the spread of anti-western and anti-NATO claims threatening Western countries with an adequate response if the situation is to aggravate, in the form of, for example, continued arms deliveries. Poland has been targeted by accusations in the past month with rumors regarding the planned invasion of Poland into Ukraine spread across Russian platforms.
- Ukraine has been accused of stalling negotiations and the spreading deepening of anti-Russian sentiments across Ukraine.

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- Campaigns seeking to legitimize the potential annexation of the Kherson oblast and parts of Zaporizhzhia and Mykolayiv oblasts are undergoing with annexation plans put forward by official Russian sources.
- Russian officials have continued to underscore the illegal nature of the financial sanctions imposed by Western countries, while ensuring the public that the Russia's economy is strong enough to manage the challenges imposed by the economic blockade.
- In its internal discourse, Russia has represented itself as a fortress against fascism. Parallels have increasingly been drawn from the Second World War deepening narratives of a Western block threatening Russia.
- Russian sources have remained silent regarding the military losses its troops have incurred in Ukraine. On May 24th in a meeting of the Council of Ministers of Defense of the CSTO, Russian Minister of Defense, Sergei Shoigu, [said](#) that Russia was deliberately slowing down the pace of the military operation in order to avoid civilian casualties. According to Minister Shoigu, the Russian army has not targeted civilian infrastructure or buildings with civilian residents. [Nikolai Patrushev](#) has borne this statement out. Furthermore, Russia has [claimed](#) to have destroying weapons delivered to Ukraine by its western allies.
- Russia has continued to spread narratives claiming that the goals of the special military operation have been reached. On May 24th, the Secretary of the Security Council of Russia, Nikolai Patrushev, [said](#) that all of the goals set by the Russian President will be reached since the truth, in particular, in its historical dimension, is on the Russian side.
- Anti-western and anti-Polish narratives have been spread at high-levels of the Russian administration, including by representatives of Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. According to these claims, Poland [is about to roll out](#) its plans regarding invading Ukrainian territories. The claims underscore that Ukraine will [lose](#) its sovereignty due to Polish actions.
- Russian officials have issued threats targeting Ukraine and the West and proposals regarding reaching a negotiated settlement to the conflict brought forward by Western nations, Italy in particular, [have been criticized](#). On May 24th, Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of Russia, Dmitry Medvedev made a statement claiming that were the trajectories of the Russian military operation to changed, Ukrainian political and military leadership would not be safe even in their underground bunkers. Mr. Medvedev also stated that meetings between Ukraine and its western allies would not be held in Kyiv but on Ukraine's western, Polish border. Furthermore, Mr. Medvedev [underscored](#) that reaching full autonomy for Crimea may serve as a justification for a full-scale war against Ukraine.
- The Press Secretary of the Russian President, Dmitry Peskov, has [welcomed](#) the initiative of using the Russian name to refer to the Kuril Islands.
- Russia is taking [active](#) steps to spread narratives [discrediting](#) the Ukrainian army and [accusing](#) Ukrainian soldiers of committing crimes against civilians through European states.
- [According](#) to the Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Rudenko, prisoner exchanging into the soldiers of the Azov battalion will only be discussed once official verdict against the Ukrainian soldiers is announced.
- Russia has continued to persecute and pressure those who have spoken against its policies. At the meeting of the Council of Regions held on May 25th, senator Pavel Tarakanov [suggested](#) prohibiting Russian cultural

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figures who have spoken against the war and against Russia's official policies from participating in projects financed by the state or state companies.

- Russia has continued creating opportunities for Russians to be conscripted into the army. On May 25th the Federation Council [passed](#) a bill abolishing the age limits for those willing to sign a contract with the Russian armed forces. Prior to this, the State Duma had passed a [bill](#) abolishing age limits for Russian citizens and foreigners willing to sign their first military service contract.
- Russia has launched mechanisms enabling the accession of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia oblasts to Russia under the scenario of the Temporarily Occupied Territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast and Crimea. On May 25th, President Putin signed a [decree](#) enabling inhabitants of the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblast to [acquire Russian citizenship](#). As plans for annexation are rolled out, Russian sources have continued to [spreading](#) claims stating that the inhabitants of both oblasts welcome the annexation and joining Russia.
- On May 25th, Russia forces [accused](#) Ukraine for shelling Russian border settlements in the Belgorod oblast. Similar claims have been voiced several times during the reporting period.