

## Tuesday, March 29th, 2022

### Ukraine Situation Report

#### CONFLICT DEVELOPMENTS

- The Armed Forces of Ukraine continue to launch counterattacks and have successfully pushed the troops of the Russian Federation (hereinafter: Russia) back, in particular, in the Dnipropetrovsk and Kherson oblasts as well as from the city of Kryvyi Rih towards the Kherson oblast. However, Russian forces continue to launch attacks with troops strengthened by the forcefully mobilized citizens of the temporarily occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts (TOT).
- A missile attack has destroyed the Mykolayiv Oblast State Administration building. Several people have reportedly been killed and injured in the attack.
- A missile strike has devastated the airport in Starokostyantyniv in the Khmelnytskyi oblast.
- Rockets launched by Russian troops have destroyed a strategically important bridge in Pavlohrad in the Dnipropetrovsk oblast. The strike assumedly sought to halt Ukrainian counterattacks and to cut connections between Ukrainian troops in Dnipropetrovsk and Donetsk oblasts.
- Oil depots have been subject to airstrikes, particularly in the Rivne oblast. The destruction of the depots will negatively impact the Ukrainian army as well as complicate the planting season, thus aggravating the environmental and economic situation in Ukraine.
- According to estimates, losses in damages and economic activity incurred by Ukraine due to the Russian invasion exceeded 560 billion USD.
- The shelling of civilian and residential infrastructure continues in cities including Mariupol, Kharkiv, Chernihiv, Izyum, and Severodonetsk. Due to shelling, Severodonetsk has been cut off from electricity and water supplies.
- Several cruise missiles have been shot down by the Ukrainian Air Defence, including two rockets launched by Russia from Belarus.

#### POLITICAL DIMENSIONS

- Another round of negotiations between the Ukrainian and Russian delegations began on Tuesday the 29<sup>th</sup> brokered by Turkey. Russia is feared to have no serious intentions of reaching a peaceful settlement to the conflict, and attacks have continued despite public statements regarding the termination of hostilities in some war zones.
- The acts and statements from the Russian delegation conveying a willingness to negotiate and even to sign a peace agreement may support positive sentiments regarding Russia as a party open to arriving at a compromise.
- Ukraine has deemed Russia's demand for the total demilitarization of Ukraine as unacceptable. The request has been removed from the Russian list of demands.
- Both the Ukrainian and Russian public has voiced negative sentiments regarding the negotiations as a betrayal of their countries' interests. Ukraine and Russia's failure to communicate to domestic audiences has been seen as an outcome of the leaderships' attempt to seek the approval of western partners.

#### HUMANITARIAN DIMENSIONS

- Russian troops continue to impose their authority over captured territories and terrorize local authorities as well as pro-Ukrainian activists. The head of Holoprystanska's city council, Oleksandr Babych, was abducted on Monday night and remains in Russian detention despite demonstrations held on Tuesday. The mayor of Balakliya, Ivan Stolbovyi, has also been abducted and is reportedly being compelled to collaborate with Russian forces.
- A few humanitarian green corridors were established on Tuesday. No humanitarian corridors were created in the Kyiv oblast, despite Russia's statements regarding de-escalation in the Kyiv oblast.
- Freed territories in the Sumy oblast continue to work on addressing the effects of the Russian occupation. Some villages and towns are still to be reconnected to electricity lines and mobile networks.
- A number of buildings have reportedly been mined.
- The list of pressing humanitarian needs to be met is being compiled.

## INFORMATION DIMENSIONS

- The Russian media has reported that the negotiations in Turkey are ‘the first concrete sign of the willingness of Ukraine to arrive at a compromise in writing’. The negotiations have also been seen as a sign of Russia’s willingness to take ‘steps towards the de-escalation’.
- Putin’s supporters have voiced their deep disappointment regarding the outcome of the negotiations and regard them as a betrayal of Russia’s interests. Disapproval is assumed to stem from the lack of confirmation of Russia’s authority over conquered territories. The ‘Istanbul Agreements’ is being seen as a compromise imposed on Russian society.
- Following the negotiations, Russian Ministry of Defence made a statement declaring a drastic reduction of military activities in the Chernihiv and Kyiv oblasts. Despite the statement, air raid sirens continue to go off in Kyiv.
- Russia continues to disseminate the narrative developed by Russian Minister of Defence, Sergei Shoigu, according to which ‘the main goals of the first stage of the special military operation in Ukraine has been completed with considerable damage inflicted on the Armed Forces of Ukraine’. According to the narrative, the so-called military operation will continue until its objectives are reached.
- Russian sources continue to disseminate information regarding crimes committed by the Ukrainian army and the mistreatment of Russian prisoners of war held in Ukraine. The Chief Investigator of the Investigative Committee of Russia has opened criminal proceedings looking into alleged attempts of homicide.
- Russian media continues to present the actions of international organisations, such as the OSCE, as biased in favour of Ukraine.
- The head of the so-called Donetsk People’s Republic, Denis Pushylin, has stated that a decision regarding the oblast’s integration with Russia will be made once the oblast has been re-established within its constitutional borders. The statement confirms the expected continuation of hostilities in the Donetsk oblast. The statement stands in contrast with developments seen in the so-called People’s Republic of Luhansk, where a referendum on the question of joining Russia has been announced.
- Narratives regarding the justification of hostilities in Ukraine as measures taken to protect Russian Muslims are being spread in Russian and Russian-linked media spaces. The supreme mufti of Chechnya, Salah Mezhiev, stated that the special military operation in Ukraine is jihad, a sacred war, against the globalization of all evil in the world. According to Mr Mezhiev, the operation seeks to eradicate Nazism, fascism, satanism, and Wahhabism from Ukraine.
- The government of Crimea had disseminated guidelines clarifying the narratives that are to be used when speaking about the war in Ukraine, relations with western countries, and about Russia’s actions and resilience. The guidelines have been handed to local authorities and village councils as tools to inform local populations of the current political agenda. There is reason to believe that similar materials are being disseminated to local authorities across Russia.
- Regional Russian media continues to spread information about Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine.