

Ukraine's Frontline Dilemma

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The hard truth of the SMO in Ukraine is at last percolating through to Ukraine's leadership and a few of its western backers. It is not a question of weapons nor is it a question of money, it is a question of manpower.

There is still a misunderstanding of the way this war is fought by the Russians. Traditionally in the 20th century war casualties had a high percentage of bullet wounds, the majority of these wounds left the wounded man fit to fight again after a period of hospitalisation and recuperation. Artillery was far less accurate and the average number of artillery shells expended to cause the death of one man was around 80:1. Up until 2022 wars in the 21st century had been fought by advanced nations against relatively poorly armed adversaries. The use of airpower reduced the need for man to man contact to minimalistic proportions. And again the majority of wounds and deaths sustained by these advanced nations were small in comparison to the number of troops engaged.

The Russian Special Military Operation in Ukraine demonstrated a complete sea change in the methodology of well armed adversaries fighting one another. Russia used high precision artillery, rockets and airpower to smash enemy formations before they became a real threat to the Russian infantry. The causes of enemy casualties confirms this approach had a deadly effect in increasing both the kill and maiming rate of enemy troops confronting the Russian armed forces. Thus a relatively small Russian force of 200,000 men, technically outnumbered 4:1 inflicted over one million casualties on the Ukraine military during 2022 alone. The staggering feature of these casualty rates were the number of dead versus wounded. Of every 10 casualties 6 were killed in action. Of the remaining 4 wounded only one would be fit enough to return to active service after treatment. The manner of the weapons used resulted in maiming injuries, the loss of arms or legs or both. The use of thermobaric rocket weapons killed entire platoons of men simply by collapsing their lungs or incinerating them.

The response of the Ukraine leadership and their NATO backers was to throw more men and weapons against the Russians rather than to change their tactics. The Russian response was to build a defensive screen along the entire front line that ensured that Ukraine attacks never reached the Russian positions. At the same time Russian increased both its manpower and weapon density to the rear of the front line in a gradual manner so as to insure the stability of the line and have sufficient reserves to deal with any breakthrough. During the period of January to April 2023 Ukraine lost another 55,000 men and the Russians achieved a casualty rate of 10:1 in their favour. It was clear to the Russians that they could sit tight taking minimal casualties whilst reducing the Ukraine military by attrition. This had the added benefit of reducing civilian casualties. The battle for Bakhmut changed the situation somewhat as the controversial Russian Wagner Group employed infantry storm tactics to take the city, taking 20,000 casualties in the process. This long battle was frowned upon by the Russian chiefs of staff who argued that the same result could have been achieved by simply cutting off the supplies of food, ammunition and reinforcements to the city forcing the garrison to withdraw or surrender. This criticism saw the Wagner leadership start a two day rebellion that ended with the dissolution of the group and the death of its leaders. In April and May 2023, Ukraine took 27,000 more casualties.

After sounding off many press announcements and media interviews June saw Ukraine launch its much heralded counter offensive. Tanks from Germany, armoured infantry carriers from the USA supported by artillery and rocket launchers supplied by NATO countries flung themselves at the Russian lines along the entire front line. The attack was a disaster as the Ukraine forces got bogged down in Russian minefields and were then decimated by precision artillery, rocket and air attacks. The much vaunted western 'game changer' weapons were destroyed in large numbers. Rather than stop and rethink their tactics the Ukraine continued these attacks daily and continue to do so right up to the present day. The suffered 90,000 dead in June alone and have taken another 125,000 casualties between July and November. The casualty rate increased to 14:1 in Russia's favour.

Now, at last the penny has dropped the Ukraine government can no longer find enough conscripts to replace the horrific daily casualty rate of its army, The Russian policy of attrition has worked well, minimised Russian military casualties and reduced the risk of civilian casualties that would have resulted in they had chosen to use their military might to simply smash through the Ukraine army.

Currently Ukraine loses an average of 650 men a day. On top of that there is an ever growing number of voluntary surrenders of Ukraine soldiers to the Russian forces. Russia prevents the rotation of Ukraine's front line units by an interdiction plan that breaks up and destroys supply convoys and reserve troop positions. Many Ukrainian conscripts, poorly trained, poorly armed and underfed come under fire before they ever see the front line and take up their assigned positions. The results of these tactics on the morale of the Ukraine army is disastrous.

Increasingly Ukrainian POWs in Russian hands describe military service as a one way ticket to death. They talk of their officers who always desert their men when they come under fire. They talk of the corruption that sees their food, replacement weapons, and even their wages disappear.

That the Ukraine army is still forced to fight and die is the product of the deranged policies of Zelensky who seems to live in a world of make believe and boasts to the world of great Ukrainian victories that exist only in his own imagination.

The stark reality is that Ukraine has lost this war and only the reluctance of the Russians to move forwards at the cost of Ukrainian civilian casualties prevents the loss turning into a rout. The final and irrevocable destruction of the Ukraine military is just a few weeks away and Russia will wait patiently until that happens.