

# Hard Work for 2023: Supporting Ukraine to Win the War against Russia

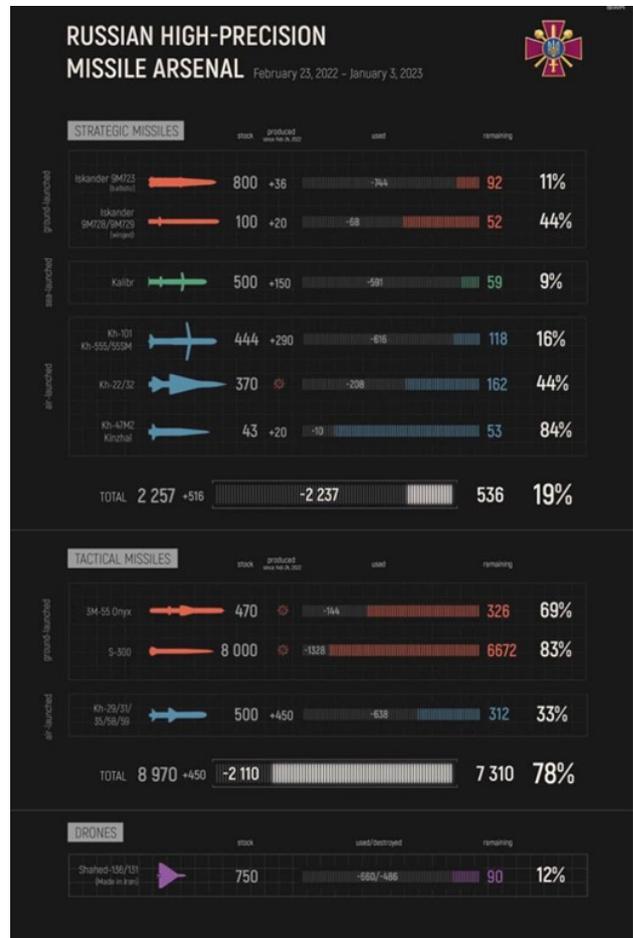
By Iuliia Osmolovska, Director, GLOBSEC Kyiv Office, Senior Fellow, Ukraine and Eastern Europe Program

With the world entering spring 2023, the situation on the frontline of the Russian war in Ukraine is looking far from being still or stabilized. Both Ukraine and Russia are preparing for a decisive breakthrough in March-April, however many military experts say that Russia has de-facto started its new offensive in mid-January. Western partners have shown their determination to upgrade their military assistance to Ukraine and provide the requested heavy armory more ammunition, and technologically advanced air-defence systems like the Patriot. Will it be enough to enable Ukraine to enter a decisive breakthrough leading to a victory in the war? What else is needed to keep the momentum and launch a scaled counter-offensive by the Ukrainian Armed Forces? How justifiable are assessments that Ukraine will defeat the enemy in 2023?

At the end of 2022, Ukraine, while countering the aggressor, met the following results: 40% of the territories occupied by Russians since the 24th of February, 2022, were liberated; over 100,000 Russian invaders were killed; 1 893 aerial targets shot down; and 3 000 tanks, 6 000 armoured fighting vehicles, 2 000 artillery systems, 420 multiple launch rocket systems, about 300 combat aircraft, and 270 helicopters of the Russian forces destroyed. The Armed Forces of Ukraine conducted the mine clearance of 1 346.22 hectares of land, 21.18 hectares of forest, 182.1 kilometres of roads, 165 200 square meters of buildings, 134.66 kilometres of power lines, 39 kilometres of gas pipelines, as well as destroyed 41,800 explosive objects. These figures were [revealed](#) by General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, who reminded us that the war was still far from being over, with the current active front line being 1 500 kilometres long and the whole front - where Ukraine was holding the enemy back - stretching for 3 786 kilometres.

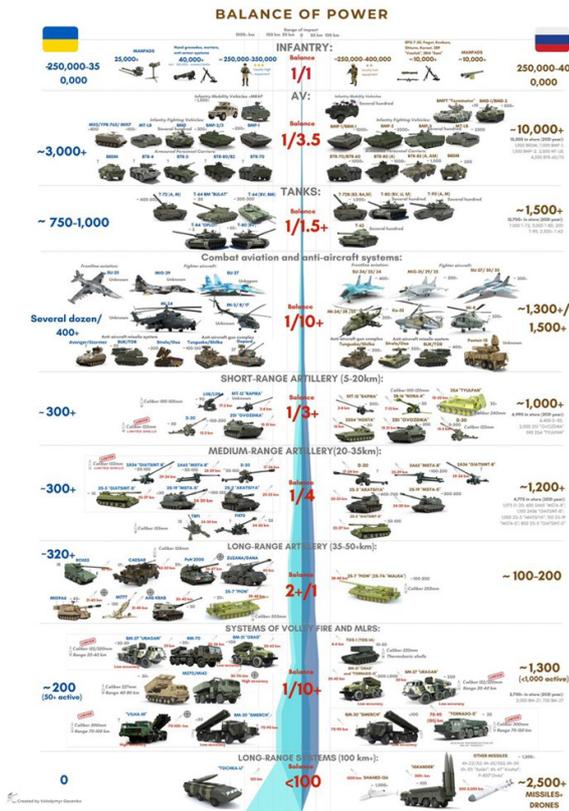
Recent data from the Ukrainian Ministry of Defense Chief Mr Reznikov found in picture A on Russian missiles' stockpiles also keep all Ukrainians who understand that air attacks will last at least as long as the war alert. While one can be relatively comforted by the numbers of Russia's exhausted strategic stockpiles of certain types of high-precision missiles, it should

be kept in mind that Russia still has some significant stocks of the S-300 type and that it is self-sufficient to produce Kh-555 missiles. Regardless Russia's own slow production capacity (around 30 missiles per month), potentially refillable stocks of Iranian [kamikaze drones](#) and [ballistic missiles](#), still make Ukrainians uneasy.



## Getting Stronger

Summarizing the results of 2022, the [2023 Military Strength Ranking](#) of Global Firepower shows Ukraine jumping from 22nd to 15th place in the list of strongest armies in the world. With more and more Western military assistance coming into Ukraine in 2023, we can justifiably expect that Ukraine will have occupied an honourable place in the top ten by the end of



this year. Interestingly enough, despite all the losses in its barbaric war in Ukraine, Russia still managed to maintain second place in the rank, owed to its size, population, and stock numbers.

Another comparative statistic (picture B), prepared by military expert Volodymyr Dacenko, reminds us that Ukraine is performing miraculously in its withstanding, even in its forcing of its giant-by-size enemy. This wonder has well-known components: bravery, professionalism, strategic capability, intelligence, creativity, and assistance from Western allies.

## Driver for Changes: Western Military Assistance

In GLOBSEC's [Five Security Scenarios on Russian War in Ukraine for 2022–2023](#) report, 21 Ukrainian experts in military and international relations unanimously agreed that the level of military lethal weapons support provided by international allies to Ukraine is the top factor driving the changes in the war landscape. From the list of ten, the other two most important are: (i) operational-tactical achievements of the Ukrainian forces within the active combat actions area and (ii) resources available to Ukraine's defence and security sector. These two factors also to a significant extent depend on Western assistance: trainings of UAF in the partner countries and financial support to the

budget of Ukraine, which enables to allocate more of Ukraine's own revenues to security and defence sector

The key challenge here is determining how far Western allies are ready to help Ukraine win this war and defeat Russia. Will Western assistance match the actual needs of Ukraine to conduct an efficiently scaled counter-offensive to force Russia to retreat and restore its sovereignty to 1991 borders? The reality of early 2023 is between two GLOBSEC projections: a basic scenario of a two-phase gradual defeat of Russia and a more likely negative scenario of a protracted conflict. By end of 2022 Ukraine managed to regain control of only 40% of the territory occupied by Russia since the 24th of February, 2022. By March 2023 18% of Ukraine's land still being under Russia's control. The main reason that UAF has not managed to get back more, as GLOBSEC paper shows, is lying in a discrepancy between the weapons Ukraine needed and possessed. Major General Andrii Kovalchuk, the Commander of the Operational Command South, perfectly illustrated this in his [interview](#) with Sky News TV on the 17th of December, 2022. He admitted that the counter-offensive in Kherson had only been 50 to 60% successful, partially due to shortfalls in ammunition that enabled the Russian troops to retreat and regroup to fight Ukrainian positions in the east.

The problem of closing the gap between what is needed, promised, and delivered to Ukraine by Western partners becomes ever more acute as the war enters a [decisive phase](#) in the 2023 spring campaign. Ukrainian military command remains confident in Ukraine's ability to win and alert to Russia's attempts to regain strategic initiative on the battlefield with the possible launch of new offensives from the north to capture Kyiv again. Speaking on Russian potential in an [interview](#) with The Economist on the 15th of December, 2022, Colonel-General Oleksandr Syrsky, the Commander of the Operational Command East, warned: "the Russians aren't idiots. They aren't weak. Anyone who underestimates [them] is headed for defeat." This was further proved by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi, who is [confident](#) that "somewhere beyond the Urals, they [Russians] are preparing new resources. They are 100% being prepared".

Still, this reality check does not mean that Ukrainians are considering surrendering. The number of Ukrainians who will not give up on any of Ukraine's territory, even if that means a longer war, remains as high as [85-87%](#), now with an upward dynamic among the population in the east. General Zaluzhnyi [highlights](#)

the importance of the momentum: “It can be fought, it must be fought today, here and now. And in no way should that be postponed until tomorrow because there will be problems.” Chief of the Defence Intelligence of Ukraine, Major General Kyrylo Budanov, [promised](#) that “it will not take too long now” to defeat Russia and called not to be afraid” of the transformation of Russia”.

Ukraine is determined to keep up the fighting momentum and to not let Russia seize an opportunity to strengthen itself with new mobilization and military resources. Are the Western partners ready to match the energy of Ukraine for further fighting?

## Matching Needs: Light at the End of a Tunnel

It was not a coincidence that, by the end of 2022, the senior military command of Ukraine went public with interviews with the foreign media, talking explicitly about the prospects and challenges of the war. [General Zaluzhnyi](#) was straightforward: “We have enough people...we need tanks...APCs [armoured personnel carriers], IFVs [infantry fighting vehicles], ammunition. I know that I can beat this enemy. But I need resources. I need 300 tanks, 600-700 IFVs, 500 Howitzers... I get what I get, but it is less than what I need”.

It is justifiable. To radically change the strategic situation on the battlefield, Ukraine must launch several consecutive and, ideally, simultaneous counterstrikes throughout 2023. Ukraine would need sufficient manpower, ammunition of different calibres, heavy armoury, longer-range missiles, and extra fighter jets. Simultaneously, Ukraine must receive more advanced air defence systems to protect itself from Russian aerial attacks.

Combat forces. However, Ukraine has enough combat manpower. In his September [article](#), Gen Zaluzhnyi stated that “preparation of an offensive campaign demands that Ukraine sets up one or more operational (operational-strategic) groupings of forces consisting of 10 to 20 combined arms brigades”, which means up to 60 000 fresh combatants, preferably trained in the West and equipped with modern armaments. So far, more than 20 000 personnel members have already been trained on the territory of 17 European countries. The Ukrainian military assessed the dynamics positively, projecting that by Spring 2023, there will be around 35 000 combatants trained with the assistance of Western allies. However, this does not match the desired target. A new [EU Military Assistance Mission](#) in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine) with

the perspective of training up to [30 000 combatants](#) could be an important contribution to the training process, but it needs to become fully operational as soon as possible. There are concerns among Ukrainian officials, not said publicly, about heavy EU bureaucracy, which significantly slows the process.

Ammunition. With an intensity of the war equaling to WWI or WWII, Ukraine needs as much as possible of 102mm, 105mm, 120mm, 122mm, 152mm, 155mm and other calibres. But the partners’ stocks have almost been depleted and production capacities still remain very [limited](#). Along with new production lines in [Ukraine](#), some new facilities have been announced in [Germany](#) and [Slovakia](#), and increased production is underway in the [US](#) and the [CEE](#). NATO is considering [re-opening](#) of old military factories in Eastern Europe. The good news is that the issue is being energetically addressed now. The bad news is that it might take from months to years to achieve the target level.

Heavy armoury. The beginning of 2023 saw President Zelensky’s intense [diplomatic marathon](#). In his talks with foreign leaders, he got a new breakthrough in the kind of military assistance supplied to Ukraine. After the [eighth meeting](#) of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group (Ramstein format) on the 20th of January, Ukraine received pledges to receive more [armoured vehicles](#), [light tanks](#), ammunition, and air defence equipment. Germany’s [decision](#) to go ahead with permission to send Leopard tanks to Ukraine is a qualitative leap in terms of the kind of equipment supplied, with several NATO countries entering a [coalition](#) of respective supplies. These developments could substantially narrow the gap between the needs and deliverables. But this is still far from enough, both in numbers and pace of deliveries.

Longer-range missiles. Disproportionate capabilities of the missiles’ range hold Ukraine particularly vulnerable to Russia’s attacks. While Russia can attack Ukraine with its up-to-2 000-km range of cruise missiles, Ukraine is obviously in a comparative disadvantage with missiles range being something slightly over 100 km. This disproportion still prevents Ukraine from being very effective on the battlefield as Russians have already adjusted to high precision HIMARS and learned to keep their military depots deeper in the operational rear, beyond the 100 km line. However making their logistics more troublesome, this has not effectively hampered Russia’s offensive potential. Longer-range missiles in Ukraine’s possession will force Russians to move further, thus, significantly outstretching the enemy’s combat capacity with over 150 km depth of its operational rear. With recent UK

decisions to equip Ukraine with GLSDB's 150km missiles by spring 2023, Ukraine still [needs](#) a decision on longer-range missiles like ATACMS (297km). It may. More Russian atrocities in Ukraine will probably make Ukrainian allies more [decisive](#), but at what cost? Do the Western allies need to wait for more escalation from the Russian side to respond proportionally?

Fighter jets. Speaking on Ukraine's needs in 2022 General Zaluzhnyi deliberately omitted then the issue of fighter jets, but it does not mean that Ukraine does not need them. Ukraine's political and military leadership has seemingly taken this approach to ask for something, which is of more immediate need, but leave the other requests open. Having successfully protected the sky from Russian aviation's penetration deep into the country since April 2022, Ukraine still [cannot](#) claim control over its entire airspace. Moreover, Russia operates modernized multi-role aircrafts, whereas Ukraine has an outdated park of Soviet heritage aircrafts in significantly fewer numbers. Despite that some of them have been possible to adjust to use American HARM missiles. To respond to the current threats, Ukraine [needs](#) multi-role aircraft, such as F-15 and F-16 fighters. Saab JAS 39 Gripen fighter jets also seem like an [attractive](#) option. There are already [discussions](#) on the issue with Ukraine raising [hopes](#) for a breakthrough at the next Ramstein meeting. But commitment and deliveries on that complex issue may take years to complete.

Overall, given the dynamics of changes, weapon supplies have begun to improve in the way Ukraine wanted. Yet, timing remains a crucial factor. If we want to avoid a protracted war, deliveries should be accelerated at a scale. Russians are not wasting their time, either. "Faster" – is a key word on issue of military equipment deliveries, [according](#) to the chief of Ukrainian diplomacy Dmytro Kuleba.

## Physically Outstretched or Politically Hesitant?

There are obvious [constraints](#) on the physical ability of Western partners to deliver some of the existing stocks or reproduce military equipment needed for Ukraine and refill stocks for their own needs. However, there is also still substantial consideration among Western partners not to provoke Russia further. Apparently, this is why the US still [refrain](#) from supplying Ukraine with ATACMS or has allegedly secretly [modified](#) HIMARS to disable them being used by Ukrainians to fire ATACMS or other types of longer-range missiles in attacks on Russian territory.

Some Ukrainian officials tend to attribute this to a lack of a coherent Western vision about what is to qualify as a victory for Ukraine and a respective strategy for dealing with unpredictable nuclearized Russia. This ambiguity is mostly responsible for just tactical reflective moves of the West, which help Ukraine to sustain, but not defeat, Russia. There is also fear among Western political elites about the consequences of a defeated Russia. However, as it was shown in GLOBSEC's report on the [Five Security Scenarios](#), this cautious approach is more costly to the West in the long run than the utmost decisive efforts to help Ukraine win the war already in 2023. A more courageous and decisive approach from the Western allies is a top priority now.

## Key Tasks for 2023

- To ensure a coherent vision and consent that the military victory of Ukraine in 2023 is in the interest of the Western allies. For this to be achieved, more open discussions are required to address all political reservations and constraints. As the most exposed to Russia's threat, CEE countries are very well placed to act in a consolidated position to pursue their hesitant partners in Europe and the US.
- To assess possible implications of a defeated Russia for the security landscape in Europe and to elaborate measures to mitigate the risks arising from that. This requires proper scenario planning work by Ukraine and Western partners.
- To enhance the range of military assistance to Ukraine to match the requests for heavy armoury, ammunition, longer-range missiles, fighter jets, and enhanced training. Diplomatic efforts should be doubled. Advanced military planning of equipment available, speedy productions, and supplies to match Ukraine's needs for military operations should remain the focus of Ukraine Defense Contact Group discussions in the Ramstein format meetings and other relevant platforms
- To extend networks of international cooperation projects on the production, repair, and maintenance of weapons and military equipment with the participation of leading enterprises of the defence industry of Ukraine.

- To take advantage of the timing factor to support the momentum of Ukraine's strategic initiative on the battlefield. Not to give Russia time to re-generate its resources for war and benefit from more public support of newly emerging volunteer movements and territorial defence groups to back up Russian forces.
- Only consider diplomatic solutions as a final option once Russia is militarily defeated. To avoid naivety that any negotiated status quo with part of Ukraine's territory remaining under Russian control will be a lasting solution to deter Russia. Pressure on Ukraine to stop and negotiate will be met with a hostile reaction from the Ukrainian population and shake the country's unity, thus fitting Russia's plans to destroy Ukraine well.