US-NATO WAR ON RUSSIA IN UKRAINE: LESSONS FOR VIKSIT BHARAT

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2024

WAR
TECHNOLOGY
ALLIANCES
ECONOMY
INFORMATION
NARRATIVE
PEOPLE
LESSONS



KEY LESSONS FOR VIKSIT BHARAT

- NATURE OF MODERN WAR
- ROLE OF TECHNOLOGY & DRONES
- POWER OF INFORMATION WAR
- IMPORTANCE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPACITY
- ALLIANCES AND GEOPOLITICS
- ECONOMIC RESILIENCE
- Civilian Impact and Global Opinion
- IMPLICATIONS FOR INDIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY

"UNDERSTAND
ADAPT
PREPARE
STRENGTHEN
DETER
WIN PEACE"

RELEVANT
LESSONS
FOR A STRONGER
INDIA

STRATEGY
MILITARY INNOVATION
GEOPOLITICS
ECONOMIC WARFARE
INFORMATION OPERATIONS
LESSONS FOR INDIA

STUDY
ANALYSE
LEARN
ADAPT
APPLY

UKRAINE
RUSSIE

Lessons for Viksit Bharat:
- ☑ Capabilities
- ☑ Self Reliance
- ☑ Strategic Partnerships
- ☑ Border Preparedness
- ☑ Information Strategy
- ☑ National Resolve

A STRONGER
SAFER INDIA

US-NATO WAR ON RUSSIA IN UKRAINE: LESSONS FOR VIKSIT BHARAT 2047

Original written as entry for United Service Institution of India (USI) Gold Medal Essay Competition, 2025. Adopted in 2026 for a broader audience.

Introduction

This essay was submitted as an entry to the United Service Institution of India's Gold Medal Essay Competition, 2025, on the ongoing US+NATO - Russia war fought on Ukrainian soil. It asks a single deliberate question at the outset — is this a 'Ukraine-Russia Conflict' or a 'US+NATO - Russia Conflict in Ukraine' — and uses the answer to separate the lessons India should draw for its own 'Pakistan Strategy' from those it should explicitly reject. Drawing on Mackinder's Heartland Theory, four centuries of Russian campaign history, Chanakya's सप्तांग and मण्डल Theories, and India's own medieval and modern military history, it sets out a long-term, whole-of-nation 'Pakistan Strategy' for building विकसित भारत 2047.

> *"Before acting resolve all doubts through consideration of these five: cost, means, time, place and the action itself."*
>
> -Thirikkural (675)[1]

Primer

1. **विकसित भारत 2047 in Amrit Kaal 2024-2047**. Opportunities of and challenges to the dream of विकसित भारत 2047 are plenty. The Government aims to achieve this dream with: firstly, a foreign policy based on 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' and 'No funding of terror'; secondly, a national security policy based on 'Make in India' and 'No Terror and Talks'; thirdly, an internal security policy based on 'zero tolerance to terror' and 'destroy terror ecosystem'; and fourthly, a development policy based on 'सबका साथ, सबका विकास, सबका विश्वास और सबका प्रयास.'

2. **Role of Armed Forces in Building विकसित भारत 2047**. Taking a cue from Tagore's poem *'Where the mind is without fear'*, our Armed Forces need to make India 'fear-free' so that विकसित भारत 2047 can happen. This translates into winning peace over our internal and external adversaries (with minimum cost to

men, materials, machines and money). It would be prudent to consider 'with minimum cost' as a terms of reference from a government leading the World largest democracy of 1.4 billion Indians (with 40 crore youth bulge).

Background to the Ongoing War in Europe

3. **Ukraine Conflict or NATO-Russia Conflict?** Inferences drawn from the war in Europe change when it is called 'NATO-Russia Conflict in Ukraine'. Thereafter, lessons India should NOT learn may outweigh (not outnumber) those which it may.

4. **Seeds of the Conflict**. The seeds of this conflict were sown in the 20th century's great game based on Mackinder's 'Heartland Theory', Hugo Grotius's and Hans Morgenthau's 'Theory of Balance of Power' and Gene Sharp's 'Gandhian Non-Violent Political Defiance'.[2] The West used bullet-free Cold War and *Ahimsic* people's revolution to break up the Soviet Union (1991), and used the Eastward expansion of NATO to pull Ukraine away from Russia (Euromaidan Revolution, 2014). After 1991, US-led NATO expanded eastward to include three former Warsaw Pact and Soviet states each, while denying inclusion of Russia into NATO.[3] Ukraine was to be the next to enter NATO. Russia responded with reunification of Crimea (2014) and a separatist movement in Ukraine's Donbas Region. The 1994 denuclearisation of Ukraine and conventional arming of Ukraine appeared to be a Western trap for the Russian Bear. Thus, NATO's proxy Ukraine also became the battlefield!



Map 1: Seeds of US+NATO - Russia Conflict in Ukraine

5. **Lessons Russia Must Have Learnt from its Previous Wars**. A simple study would indicate NATO's lists of 'Russian mistakes in Ukraine' are lessons Russia had already learnt in history. Firstly, pre-World War I lesson from the Fourth Muscovite-Lithuanian War (1512 to 1522) and the two Polish-Muscovite Wars (1605 to 1618 and 1654 to 1667); ideological wars are long drawn. Secondly, World War I lessons; drawn into war by misguided judgements, leakage of plans over insecure radio, sending ill-equipped conscripts to war, poor battlefield leadership, etc. The post-war stagflation resulted in the Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-1923.[4] Thirdly, World War II lessons; war avoidance by Hitler's appeasement failed, *jus ad bellum* of Nazism, support of anti-Hitler coalition, use of nationalism to rally military/ society, long battles (Stalingrad/ Moscow) won due to a large Red Army, 15 million Soviets and 6.7 million

Russians killed, tank superiority in numbers and by speed of replacement, impact of Rasputitsa/ winter on Germany's Operation Barbarossa, West's revision of history, etc.[5] Fourthly, Cold War (1947 to 1991) lessons; conflict between ideologies leads to a long hybrid war, whole of nation approach to conflict is a must, allies and statecraft matter and leadership is a war winning factor. Hence, the necessity for applying truth-filters on 'treated' 'Russian failures in Ukraine'.[6]

NATO-Russia Campaign Analysis

6. **Grand Strategies**. The main US grand strategy is 'liberal hegemony'. In Russia's case, USA also used 'offshore balancing' i.e., Ukraine as proxy to prevent Russia's rise. This project gathered momentum in 2019 with the election of President Zelenskyy. On the contrary, Russia seeks to re-exert influence for economic opportunities in a polycentric world. China's rise impacted both these, and it may exploit this war to further rise. Or worse for USA, China could apply Russia's 'Ukraine Formula' on Taiwan, hastening de-dollarisation and multi-polarity. The similarities with the British creation of Pakistan in 1947 to contain India and, thereafter with the US using Pakistan against India as a proxy from 1971 to 2005 contain poignant lessons for India.

7. **Military Strategy**. Churchill described Russia as *"a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma."* Russia's Ukraine offensive is a riddle, its reported failures are a mystery, and the end state of this long war is an enigma. For both sides, this war is a strategic effort to achieve political ends using political, diplomatic, information, military and economic (P-DIME) means and ways. Based on the visible unfolding of operations, Russia's choice of military strategy could be:-

(a) **Choice 1: Short War**. In this choice, phases of war could have been as under:-

(i) **Phase 1**. Capture Kyiv, Kharkiv, Kherson and Donbas (March-April 2022) with multiple simultaneous offensives.

(ii) **Phase 2**. Cross Dnieper River, establish land link to Crimea and annex Donbas (May-October 2022).

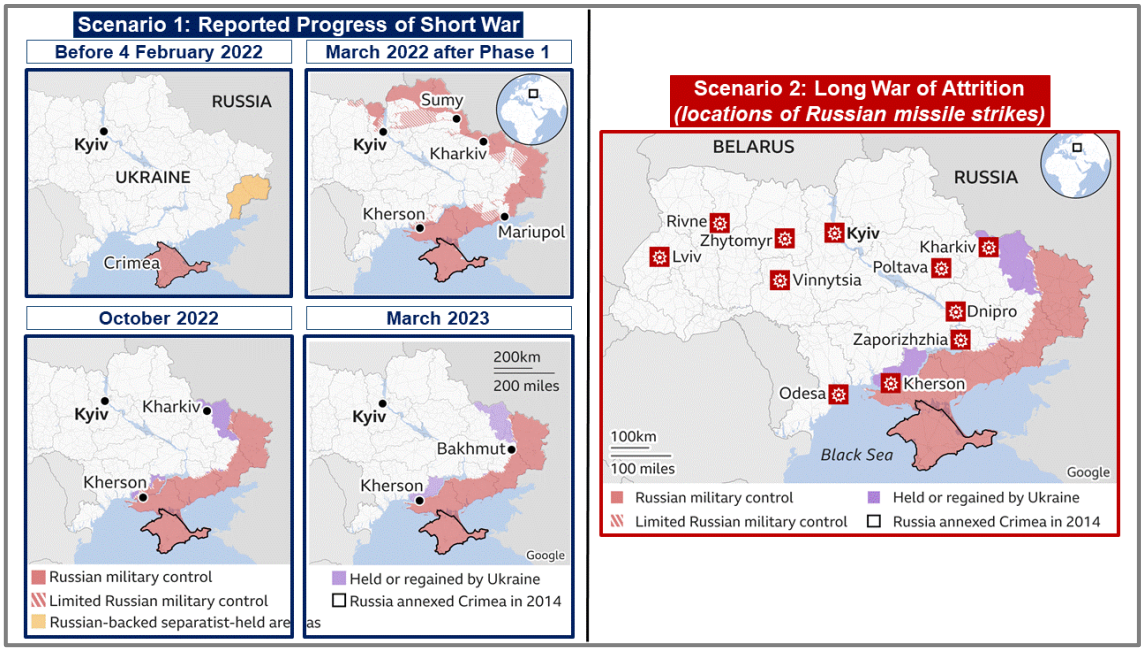
(iii) **Phase 3**. Coerce Ukraine into nonalignment through attrition by air, artillery and winter in 2023-2024.

(b) **Choice 2: Long War**. Assuming Russians are not as 'stupid' as projected by NATO-Ukraine,[7] their long war strategy could be as under:-[8]

(i) **Set Stage**. *Jus ad bellum* of NATO expansion and *Nazification* of Ukraine.

(ii) **Phase 1**. Threaten Kyiv, Kharkiv, Donbas, Kherson, Odessa and Dnieper River (to secure Crimea), degrade Ukraine and suck US-led NATO into this war. Likely 2022-2023.

(iii) **Phase 2**. Use multi domain operations and denial of natural resources to break the will of Ukrainians (and EU citizens). Likely 2022-2024.



Map 2: Progress of War[9]

(iv) **Phase 3**. Dismantle Ukraine as a sovereign state, Russify captured areas into Novorossiya (New Russia), dedollarisation in conjunction with China and re-emergence as a global player. Likely 2024-2027.

8. **Unfolding of Russian Operations**[10]. Russia mobilised gradually, did not use blitzkrieg, used hit and return offensives in Kyiv, Kharkiv and on Dnieper, did not have dedicated reserves and did not attempt to capture all cities/ entire Ukraine. Therefore, the likely Russian strategy is of a long war. A hint of this was visible in President Putin's interview to US journalist Tucker Carlson of 08 February 2024.[11] Possible objectives and progress of operations of this strategy are as follows:-

(a) **Conflict Objectives**.

(i) **Russia**.

(aa) **Immediate**. Push back NATO to pre 1997 line, de-militarise and denazify Ukraine (regime change), integrate Donbas, protect Russian diaspora, establish land link to Crimea, prevent Ukraine from joining NATO/ EU, and pullback Ukraine into Russia's economic bloc.

(ab) **Ultimate**. Tie down and tire out US and re-emerge as a pole in a fresh multipolar World.[12]

(ii) **US/ NATO**. Key objectives; weaken Russia as an 'imperialist' state, remove President Putin, spread liberal democracy, and maintain uni-polarity.

(b) **Political Operations**. Key milestones have been:-

(i) **Geo-Political**.

(aa) 01 March 2022, Turkey closed Turkish Straits to Russian warships.

(ab) April 2023, Finland joined NATO and Sweden asked for fast-track NATO membership.

(ac) China and India led assaults on Eurocentrism with Foreign Minister Jaishankar calling it 'colonial'.

(ad) Global South exposed the West's duplicitous 'Principle of Neutrality' in arming Ukraine.[13]

(ae) July 2023, second Russia-Africa Summit.

(af) July 2023, 'Prigozhin's Coup' and August 2023, death of Yevgeny Prigozhin.

(ag) September 2023, G20 Summit in India.

(ah) October 2023 onwards, Hamas-Israel war.

(ai) February 2024, Ukraine-European heads of state meet in Kiev on the third anniversary of the war.

(ii) **Geo-Economic**.

(aa) West sanctioned Russia by freezing $350 billion reserves and by imposing curbs on oil/ gas exports, etc.[14]

(ab) July 2022, Russia-Ukraine agreed to allow use of Ukraine's ports for export of food-grains. Russia called it off in July 2023.[15]

(ac) Ukraine received US aid worth $75 billion and NATO aid worth $80 billion.[16]

(ad) US announced 500 new sanctions on Russia due to its war on Ukraine and due to the death of imprisoned Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny on 16 February 2024.

(iii) **Geo-Demographic**. 8.2 million Ukrainian refugees migrated to Europe and 5.9 million are internally displaced.[17]

(c) **<u>Military Operations</u>**. There have been four stages viz., offensives by Russia, counteroffensives by NATO assisted Ukraine, defensives by both, and counteroffensives by Russia. Progress has been as under:-

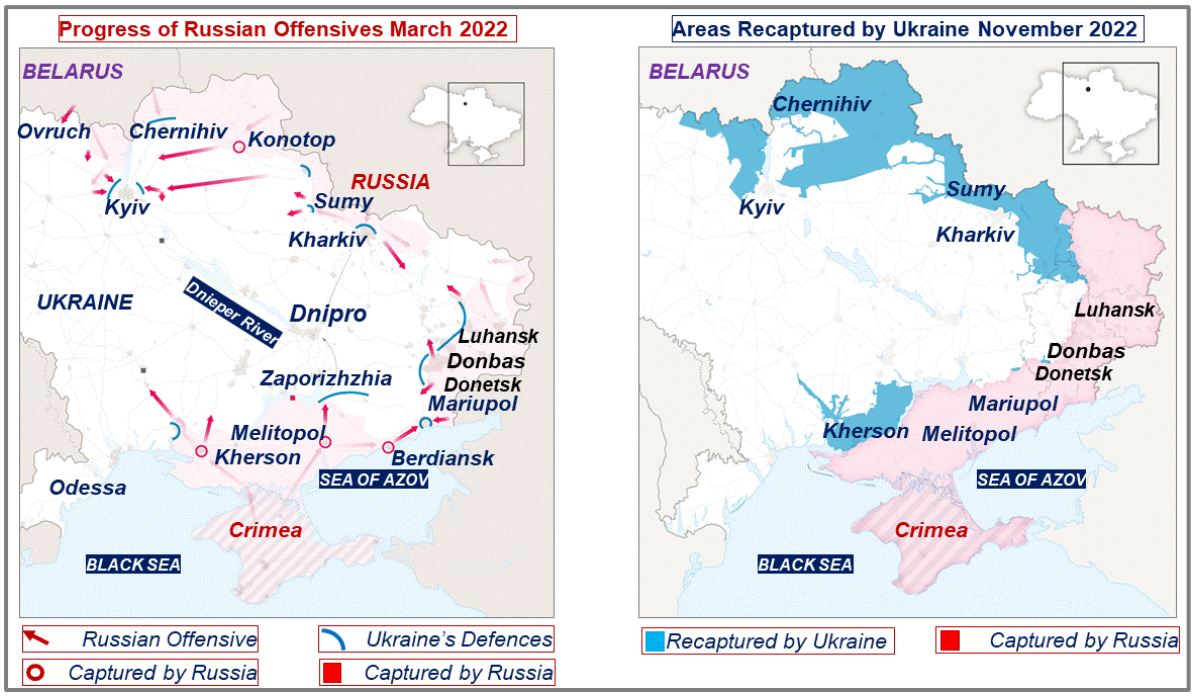
(i) **<u>Stage 1: Russian Offensives</u>**.

(aa) **<u>Kyiv-Kharkiv</u>**. The two-pronged offensive of February 2022 used Mechanised, Airborne and Special Forces, and mercenaries. Russia withdrew in April 2022 without an attempt to capture the cities. NATO-Ukraine labelled this as 'Ukraine's victory' and 'the biggest upset of modern military history'.



Map 3: Russian offensive operations 2022[18]

(ab) **<u>Kherson and Zaporizhzhia</u>**. After capturing Kherson in March, Russia withdrew in November 2022. Russian capture of Zaporizhzhia (Ukraine's largest nuclear power plant) and Nova Kakhovka Hydel Project resulted in the destruction of Nova Kakhovka Dam in June 2023. Answer to which side attacked the Dam remains lost in information operations (IO).



Map 4: Progress of War 2022-2023[19]

(ii) **<u>Stage 2: Ukraine's Pre-emptive and Counteroffensives</u>**.

(aa) **<u>Black Sea</u>**. Ukraine destroyed Russian amphibious ship Saratov on 24 March 2022 and missile cruiser Moskva on 14 April 2022. This with IO was used to prevent assumed Russian amphibious landing at Odessa.

(ab) **<u>Kyiv</u>**. Ukraine has been quick to follow up on all Russian tactical drawdowns since Kyiv in March 2022.

(ac) **<u>Kharkiv, Kherson and Bakhmut</u>**. Ukraine launched counteroffensives and reportedly recaptured nearly 3,000(?) square kilometres in Kharkiv and Kherson in November 2022, and in Bakhmut in August 2023.

(ad) **<u>Special Forces, Drones and Missile Strikes</u>**. Ukraine launched strikes on Moscow and other cities and on Russian ports and ships in Crimea and on the Crimea Bridge.

(iii) **<u>Stage 3: Defensives by Ukraine and Russia</u>**. Both established strong defensive lines, especially in the Donbas Region. This has seen the rising importance of Infantry based trench and ground obstacle warfare and the use of drones to target ships, bridges, etc.

(iv) **Stage 4: Russian Counter Offensive**. Russia decided to exploit faltering and falling support to Ukraine to launch its counter offensive. As a result it captured Marinka in January 2024 and Avdiivka in February 2024. These towns have been captured using typical small team based Infantry attacks supported by heavy Artillery and drone fire support. Russia is now focussed on recapture of Bakhmut and capture of Kreminna and Robotyne.[20]



Map 5: Russian offensives in 2023-2024

9. **Tools (Means) and Philosophies (Ways) of War**. Both sides have deployed multi domain hybrid non-traditional strategies from trenches to drones and from smartphones to nuclear blackmail. They have designed new tactics for old platforms and invented new technologies to outsmart each other. Key means and ways used are as under:-

(a) **Nuclear**. Denuclearisation of Ukraine encouraged Russia to attack, while nuclear threats by Russia, including of stationing nuclear weapons in Belarus did not deter NATO-Ukraine. Nuclear deterrence has made conventional wars possible, like terrorism, with United Nations (UN) a bystander.

(b) **Geography and Population**. The vastness of Russia's geography and its population provides Russia with strategic depth which, not only Ukraine on its own, but even the European Union collectively cannot match.

(c) **Intelligence and Surveillance**. Russia relied on human intelligence while Ukraine was assisted by NATO, including US-based private information technology (IT) companies.

(d) **Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)**. OSINT has been weaponised by both sides in the World's 1st Digital War/ 1st Social Media War. This happened due to the paradigms of information communication technology (ICT), internet-of-things (IoT), cellular telephony, and smartphones with ever-growing number of applications.

(e) **Cyber Warfare**. Russia has used cyber-attacks as a strategic weapon and mixed it with hybrid/ kinetic attacks to break Ukraine's economy.[21]

(f) **IO**. Both sides used IO for *jus ad bellum* and to deny *jus in bello* to the other. NATO-Ukraine, empowered by West's control over technology, have unfolded narratives 24x7x365. This helped Ukraine integrate IO with hard power. President Zelenskyy- Ukraine's messenger- has defeated President Putin in the war for hearts and minds. This perception has started changing July 2023 onwards.

(g) **Surprise and Deception**. Ukraine used low technology dummies and ruses reminiscent of World War II in the battles for Kharkov and Kherson. On the other side of the spectrum is the elaborate IO plan 'Prigozhin's Coup' in support of sidestepping of Wagner Group from Rostov-on-Don to Belarus, a distance of 1,094 kilometres.

(h) **Infantry**. Trench warfare is back! Both strengthened limited Infantry with citizen warriors and mercenaries (Wagner Group by Russia[22] and 20,000(?) from 52(?) nations by Ukraine[23]) and employed small teams for defensive and offensive operations.

(i) **Special Forces**. Both used them for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR). NATO-Ukraine armed them with anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles, and with anti-drone jammers. They also directed fires of M142 HIMARS and M270 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems onto Russian targets in depth.[24]

(j) **Armour**. Both used tanks mostly as protected mobile platforms to support Infantry, with no operational manoeuvres.

(k) **Artillery**. From setting the stage to destroying infrastructure and demoralising society, Russian unguided ammunition has achieved most objectives. However, the use of US supplied long range precision guided weapons/ munitions (PGM) by NATO-Ukraine has been more effective, even invoking Russian nuclear threats.[25]

(l) **Air Defence**. Accuracy of radars and weapons-imposed restrictions on Aviation and Air Force of both sides. Defence against drones and long-range precision weapons- with whole nations under their range- is a new problem.

(m) **Helicopters**. After initial losses to Air Defence weapons and drones, Russia reduced its behind-enemy-line operations.[26] It then innovated the use of Ka-52, Mi-28 and Mi-24 helicopters in combined 'jam+shoot' teams.[27] The final verdict may be that drones have made battlefield use of helicopters irrelevant.[28]

(n) **Drones- the New Super Weapon**. Drones are the new tool for intelligence and the weapon of choice- singly or in swarms- for kamikaze missions and for mass destruction. Iranian Shahed and Chinese DJI Mavic drones have outlasted the larger and easy to shoot Turkish Bayraktars.[29] The

drone wars fought in the air (and sea) littoral using large numbers of first-person view (FPV) drones is changing the character of war.[30]

(o) **Air Power**. Both Air Forces have not been optimally employed, albeit for different reasons. Majority sorties launched by Russian Aerospace Forces (VKS) were for close air support (CAS). Russia's deliberate avoidance of counter air operations (CAO) resulted in higher attrition by NATO-Ukraine's HIMARS and surface to air missiles (SAM).[31] Due to technological sensitivities, new inductions (e.g., F-16 Aircraft) are slow to get absorbed as they require trained human resource and quality logistics cum maintenance infrastructure. Hence, Russia continues to have the edge.

(p) **Naval Power**. The most important lesson to emerge is from the way 'David Ukraine' contained 'Goliath Russia' using aerial and undersea drones within the constraints of the Black Sea. However, Russia's successful blockade of Ukraine's food grain exports from the same Black Sea also throws up lessons, which sometimes appear contrarian.

(q) **Logistics**. In spite of easy terrain, Rasputitsa restricted logistics to roads, leading to interference. Moreover, length of the war has highlighted importance of autarky and alliance support for regenerating combat power. Sanctions have proven useful to Russia as idle funds have been diverted into energising Russian defence production.

(r) **Smartphones**. The 'always-on always-connected' smartphone has become the Kalashnikov of IO in this mediatized war.[32] Their impact on the character of war is second only to that of drones. They have been used for OSINT, IO, deception by 'event barraging', communications, FPV drone operations, targeting, etc.

(s) **Butterfly or Domino Effect**. In any war (short or long), the war impacts other regions as well. Hence, bilaterals between each nation at war and the rest of the World get impacted e.g., pressure by African nations on Russia to not stop export of food grains by Ukraine to them. Such unplanned effects will also be felt by the nations involved themselves e.g., diversion of Russia's idle FOREX (with oligarchs sanctioned by the US) for indigenous defence production. Such impacts cannot be foreseen, but must be catered for to be exploited as opportunities and defended against as threats.

10. **Impact of Niche Technologies**. Use of satellites and UAVs/ drones for ISR and of hypersonic missiles, Javelin/ Stinger missiles, HIMARs, PGMs, SAMs and drones for attrition warfare has helped NATO-Ukraine. Their use of encrypted radio, open-source intelligence and private IT companies has highlighted technology's role. The contest between large platforms and small weapons has initiated a noisy debate. 'Small, intelligent, unmanned, agile and accurate' may be the winner.

11. **Battles of Narratives**. Even if a military wins all battles, its nation can lose the war if it fails in narrative building (e.g., Pulwama-Balakot). In this conflict, NATO-Ukraine have integrated non-kinetic IO with kinetic power more effectively to achieve information dominance, resulting in the popularity of 'underdog Ukraine'. NATO-Ukraine have won the narrative battles of *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello* by use of social media {Telegram, X (Twitter), etc}. President Zelenskyy's role play is an apt IO case study in the use of smartphones to maintain national will and alliance support. He has defeated President Putin's *'Western neo-colonialism and US hegemony'* by his *'Oppressed Ukrainians struggling for existence of Ukraine'*. The Russia-Ukraine hate spawned by IO will harm future peace prospects. Key narrative victories for both are:-[33]

(a) **NATO-Ukraine**.

(i) Russia underestimated Ukraine's preparations/ will.

(ii) Russians do not want to fight Putin's war.

(iii) Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration is about democracy, not geopolitics.

(iv) Europe stands with Ukraine against hegemonic Russia.

(b) **Russia**.

(i) This war was initiated by the West and NATO against Russia.

(ii) Ukraine must be saved from Western cultural invasion.

(iii) Ukraine is run by Nazis with support from USA.

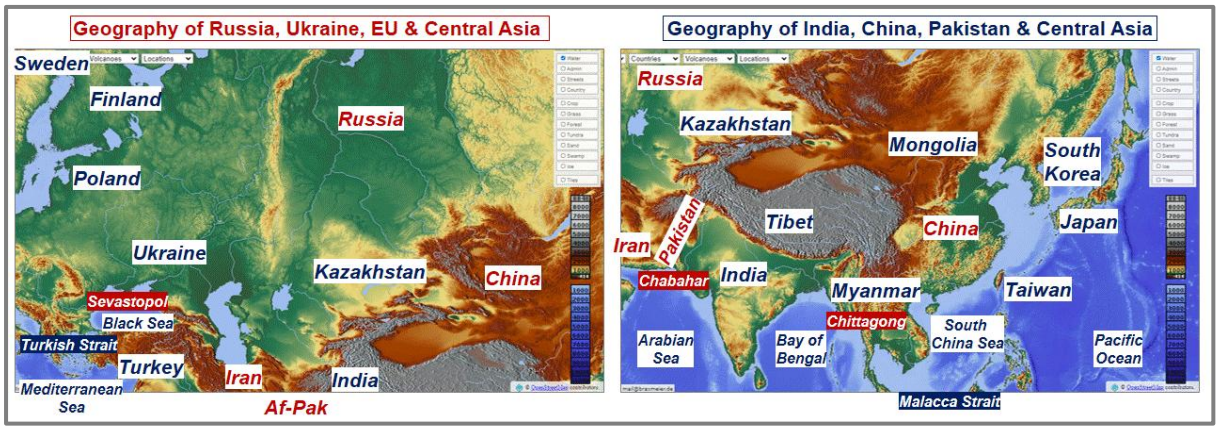
(iv) Sanctions by 'Russophobic West' have failed.

(v) Deception by Wagner Group's coup, June 2023.[34]

(vi) The Global South supports Russia against political and economic colonialism of the West.

Comparing Ukraine and Pakistan Situations

12. **Differences between Russia-Ukraine and India-ChiPak**. Geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic (P-DIME) situations of both vary. Therefore, a comparison is a pre-requisite to drawing lessons.



Map 6: Analysis of geographies of Russia and India

(a) **Comparative Geographies: China**. India is protected from China by the Himalayas (unlike Eurasian Steppes) and has free access to the seas. But, Naga Hills, Bangladesh and Pakistan restrict India's access to Asia and Eurasia. For China, Taiwan Straits demands amphibious operations to attack Taiwan, Pacific Ocean imposes limits on foreign support to Taiwan and the choking of Malacca Strait, may not be as big an impediment, as the closing of Turkish Straits was for Russia.[35]

(b) **Comparative Geographies: Pakistan**. India's borders with Pakistan, less in Jammu and Kashmir, are similar to Russia's borders with Ukraine. But, the well-developed plains of Punjab greatly differ from the less-developed deserts of Rajasthan and Gujarat. While the Karakorum, Himalayan, Hindukush and Sulaiman Ranges isolate Pakistan from Afghanistan and Central Asia, they also provide land access to Pakistan to Eurasia and the Central Asian Nations. On the other hand, Pakistan's lone access to the Arabian Sea provides India with the strategic opportunity to impose an effective economic blockade.



Map 7: Geography of Pakistan

(c) **Comparative Economies**. India can ill-afford to initiate a high intensity kinetic long war now. It will need autarky and strong alliance support, like Pakistan had and Ukraine has.

Parameter	USA	Russia	Ukraine	India	China	Pakistan
Area in sqkm	93,72,610	1,70,98,242	6,03,500	32,87,590	97,06,961	8,81,912
Population in million	335	143	32	1,440	1,410	231
GDP in trillion	$15.68	$2.06	$1.48	$3.74	$19.37	$3.76
GDP Per Capita ppp	$80,000	$34,840	$13,900	$9,070	$23,380	$6,840
Defence Budget in billion	$877	$86	$44	$81	$292	$10

Table 1: Economies compared

13. **Review of Situation of Pakistan February 2024**. Six years of India's 'Pakistan Strategy' of 'No Terror and Talks' with reducing support of the Global West and Islamic West Asia to Pakistan has begun to bear fruit. Pakistan's geostrategic irrelevance to the World and India growing relevance are likely to continue to increase, unless there is a black swan event. Pakistan faces a grim future with its Rupee at 280 per USD, FOREX reserve at $ 9 billion, inflation at 30%, $ 125 billion external debt, abortion of CPEC by Pakistan (and China), annual exports at $ 40 billion, a 500% rise in violence since Pakistan Army's capture of Kabul by supporting Taliban, and the growing dissent against hybrid military rule among the bulging youth population. This trend will continue as long as its ruling Pakistan Army refuses to sue for peace with India. This U-turn is unlikely to happen as peace with India threatens the existence of Pakistan Army. Pakistan Army's blatant rigging of the second consecutive election i.e., 2018 and 2024, to select a prime minister who toes their line has all the signs of being a black swan event. Failing economy, agitated Pashtun, Baloch and Sindhi people, worsening security situation, anti-Army undercurrents among the youth and their uncontrolled use of social media, and a U-turn by Saudi Arabia on Islamic theological matters bodes well for India. This geo-political and geostrategic opportunity should dictate the future contours of our 'Pakistan Strategy'.

Applicability of Lessons for India in Dealing with Pakistan

14. **Project Udbhav- Decolonising Our Strategic Culture**. A scan of Indian military history reveals that the concepts of 'short notice intense proactive war' and 'cold start doctrine' are alien to Bharat. None of our historical military campaigns, from those of the Mauryas to those of Kings Ashoka, Shivaji and Ranjit Singh, or even those of raiders Ghori and Ghazni were fought over 10-12 days. Nor did Chanakya or Thirukkural espouse such ideas. Surprisingly, even the wars of 1965, 1971 and Kargil were not short, neither was the mobilisation of Operation PARAKRAM. We will do well, as President Putin did in his interview to Tucker Carlson, to investigate our ancient scriptures and medieval history to learn the correct politico military lessons. Lessons from the ongoing US+NATO

- Russia Conflict in Ukraine will make more sense if they are studied through the lens of the Naval Campaign of the Chola's 1025 to 1068 CE, Rajput-Mughal War 1526 to 1779 (which includes the Battle of Haldighati), Maratha-Mughal War 1659 to 1780 (which includes the Third Battle of Panipat) and the War of Independence 1857 to 1947 (which includes battles fought by the Indian National Army). Only then will we rise to the expectations of our Prime Minister i.e., set India on a path to glory for a 1,000 years.

15. **Lessons India Should NOT Learn**. Nature of war remains the same, but character of every war is unique; Indian examples- 1962, 1971, Kargil, Uri, Pulwama-Balakot and Galwan. Hence, some 'Ukraine War lessons' being bandied around which we must NOT learn are:-

(a) Nuclear weapons will NOT prevent conventional war or have NO role in future wars.

(b) Big wars are back and terrorism has taken a back seat.

(c) Future wars will NOT be short and swift.

(d) India's wars and notion of victory will be land centric.

(e) Victory in conventional war by hard power will lead to peace.

(f) Drones are the panacea.

(g) PGMs can win wars.

(h) Technology can replace soldiers.

16. **Military Lessons for India**. The dream of building विकसित भारत 2047 by performing our कर्त्तव्य effectively in our Nation's अमृत काल 2024-2047 requires our Armed Forces to prepare to defend a $50 trillion economy. The lessons we may do good to learn from US+NATO - Russia Conflict in Ukraine (vis-à-vis Pakistan) to make विकसित भारत 2047 happen are listed below:-

(a) **Geo-Strategic/ Geo-Political Lessons**.

(i) UN and economic interdependence cannot guarantee external non-interference in India's dream of विकसित भारत 2047.

(ii) Nuclear, isolated and weak Pakistan means continued sub-conventional hybrid war (by Thousand Cuts).

(iii) Nuclear weapons will not help prevent/ stop use of economic, legal and other forms of non-kinetic warfare against India. Yet, a triad and ambiguity in nuclear strategy are must.

(iv) Designing a unique 'Pakistan Strategy' would require the use of Chanakya's सप्तांग Theory: Sengol inspired leadership (1st pillar) to rebuild भारतीय strategic culture (2nd pillar) so as to prepare territory (3rd pillar) and people (4th pillar) as fortresses of economic (5th pillar) and military (6th pillar) power and to build allies (7th pillar) to isolate Pakistan and support India.[36]

(v) We must use Chanakya's मण्डल Theory for geostrategic isolation of Pakistan and to improve own war waging capability using concepts of वसुधैव कुटुंबकम् and विश्वामित्र.[37]

(vi) Defence diplomacy has to move beyond intelligence acquisition and bilateral military exercises.

(b) **Strategic Lessons**.

(i) National security practitioners must study Pakistan (culture, religion, intent, capability, etc) and not only Nark/ Red Land (organisation, equipment, ranges, etc).

(ii) We must ensure 'utility of force' (kinetic and non-kinetic) to achieve political ends.[38] We have to out-manoeuvre Pakistan's 'nuclear war deterrence' and 'terror war avoidance' by first designing a strategy and then using/ designing equipment/ innovations to support our strategy. Operations VIJAY and PARAKRAM hold immense lessons for us on how-not-to-do-things.

(iii) Multi domain अहिमिसक compellence is necessary to stop an unwanted war initiated by Pakistan before we are ready.[39] Example, surgical strikes to stop Pakistan's use of irrational rationality/ bin-Qasim syndrome under its 'nuclear umbrella'.[40] We must gradually progress from deter to compel and coerce.[41]

(iv) Achieve escalation control by nuclear second strike mutually assured destruction, favourable power differential and whole-of-nation approach to national security.

(v) Design long-term Tri-Service 'Pakistan Strategy' using साम, दाम, दंड and भेद, and IO.

(vi) Develop a Tri-Service Western Theatre Strategy to win peace over Pakistan without adversely impacting our अमृत काल journey to विकसित भारत 2047.

(vii) मण्डल Theory and स्वदेशी (Make In India) strategy for weapons, equipment and आत्मनिर्भर logistics sustenance to win a long war while not unbalancing our dream of विकसित भारत 2047.

(viii) The politico-military end state must be clearly laid down and must guide all stages of the war. Ways and means must focus on the ends through-out the war, else we may again end up with another Pakistani vow of a new Thousand-Year War against India.

(c) **IO Lessons**.

(i) Use IO for victory without war (by defeating anti-ideology). Therefore, we must fix Pakistan's CoG as 'Two-Nation Theory'.

(ii) Consequently, a Pakistani 'Peoples Revolution' against 'Two-Nation Theory' and Pakistan Army must be part of our 'Pakistan Strategy'. The current situation in Pakistan is a hint.

(iii) As a precursor, a 'Kashmiri Tiranga Revolution' against *'Azadi'*, 'Pakistan' and 'Two-Nation Theory' must be part of our 'Pakistan Strategy'.

(iv) Project *'Jus as Bellum'* and *'Jus in Bello'* to build favourable international and national opinion in support of own strategy and plans.

(v) Achieve transparency over IO of military industrial congressional intelligence media academia think tank complex (MIC-MAC) to avoid being let down by the West or interference by China.[42]

(vi) Ensure *'Jus post Bellum'* for long-lasting peace and for fulfilment of विकसित भारत 2047.

(vii) Build IO plans into the overall 'Pakistan Strategy', Tri-Service Strategy and ground, air and naval plans. Capturing minds of Pakistanis in own areas of interest would be a prerequisite for success.

(d) **Operational Lessons**.

(i) Train commanders in understanding Pakistan and its Army, and in designing plans with inbuilt IO, cyber/ electronic warfare, surprise and deception.

(ii) Develop Tri-Service Ground, Air and Naval Plans to achieve assigned politico-military objectives without adversely impacting our अमृत काल journey to विकसित भारत 2047.

(iii) Prepare long-term operational plans using साम, दाम, दंड and भेद, and IO to deceive and conceal true intentions and plans.

(iv) New obstacles and built-up areas on both sides of the border demand a review of 'cold start' by 'integrated battle groups'.

(v) Secure own population in own launch pads and capture minds of Pakistani population in the intermediate and terminal objectives of our offensive operations.

(vi) Win battles of lines of communications, control and supplies to make Pakistani forces reach culminating point.

(vii) Ensure defence of infrastructure and cities against aircrafts, drones and PGMs to deny Pakistan 'war containment' by hurting dream of विकसित भारत 2047.

(viii) Review Air Force, Artillery, Armoured, Air Defence and Missile ammunition planning parameters for a long-war.

(ix) Review employment (principles, concepts and plans) of infantry soldiers, infantry combat vehicles, tanks, mounted and towed Artillery, attack and armed helicopters, large naval platforms, drones and smartphones.

(x) Develop realistic camouflage, concealment, surprise and deception plans.

(xi) Train leaders to defeat adversary's observe-orient-decide-act (OODA) loops.

(xii) Develop multi-skilled soldiers to weaponise intelligence and technology, and to develop new tactics.

(e) **Tactical Lessons**.

(i) Imbibe the correct ethos and skills in agniveers for operating under directive style of command.

(ii) Train commanders in IO and OSINT, and all soldiers in maintenance of faster and accurate OODA loops, and in the use of smartphones.

(iii) Induct IO, cyber/ electronic warfare and drone capabilities in tactical units.

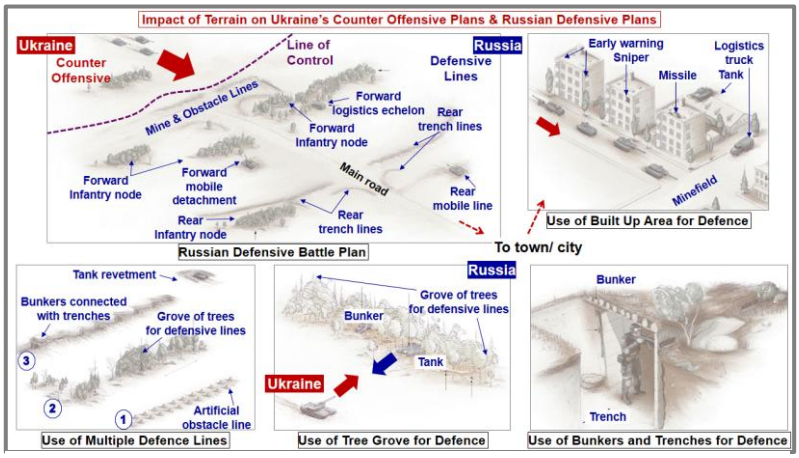


Figure 1: Tactical lessons from US+NATO - Russia War

(iv) Train to use terrain and obstacles to prevent loss of territory and to overcome multiple defensive lines with minimum losses. [43]

(v) Train in planning and execution of joint operations with other arms/ services and with the local government/ people.

(vi) Train in employment of FPV drones for ISR, targeting and logistics.

(vii) Motivation for long-war over multiple seasons/ years, including to wage war in nuclear, biological and chemical warfare environment.

(f) **Logistics Lessons**.

(i) Prepare intelligent integrated (Government, Security Forces and private sector) logistics plans with contingency and combat regeneration sub-plans.

(ii) Prepare underground logistics echelons and inherent supply chains with essential war reserves of 30 to 90 days.

(g) **Internal Security Lessons**.

(i) In Phase 1 of our 'Pakistan Strategy', include destruction of CoG of Kashmiri Separatists i.e., *'Azadi'* by a 'Peoples Revolution' against Pakistan-led Nexus in Jammu & Kashmir.[44]

(ii) Similarly, destruction of 'Khalistan' also needs to be part of Phase 1.

(iii) Secure own population to support the national war effort.

17. **Road Map for India**. Our colonial moorings have flattened the Himalayas and spiked the non-existent Gurdaspur-Kathiawar Salient with just ditch cum bunds and canals![45] Hence, Mile Stone 1 is indigenising our strategic culture. Following अर्थशास्त्र, Mile Stone 2 for विकसित भारत 2047 is internal peace.[46] Within Mile Stone 2, *Ahimsic* destruction of *'Azadi'* is the first step in destruction of 'Two-Nation Theory' in Pakistan (and in India). Peace within and over Pakistan will enhance India's comprehensive national power, helping us gradually shift from defend against, to deter, compel and coerce China. Designing indigenous strategies/ tactics for our unique geographies and inventing new tactics/ technologies to structure our Military's utility for political ends is Mile Stone 3.

Conclusion

18. The corporatized people's war in Ukraine may be heading for a Russia-NATO stalemate and unending Russia-Ukraine rivalry. The commonality of this situation, with India's liberation of East Pakistan as Bangladesh in 1971 is, the unending Pakistani hostility towards India. Therefore militarily, before sounding

the next bugle, we must be sure of a new peace (not victory) in the allotted cost (money, men, machines and material). Domino effect and black swan events will have to be imagined and catered for.

19. In 2021-22, our Army's Tricolour Revolution resulted in Kashmiris 'capturing' Lal Chowk, Srinagar by unfurling our Tricolours there.[47] Unlike Operation BLUESTAR, not a single bullet was fired for the Tricolour Recapture of Srinagar, even though everything (Tricolours, #, songs, videos, pictures, shikaras, yoga, etc) was weaponised.[48] This *Ahimsic* victory in Srinagar gradually spread peace across entire Kashmir.[49] Our Army's successful mobilisation of Kashmiri society using #AakhirKabTak Campaign- part of 'Tricolour Revolution'- against Pakistan-led Nexus has proven Army's 'utility of force' for political ends in Post-370 Kashmir.[50]

20. Thus, our 'Pakistan Strategy' and 'Pakistan Plans' should win us peace and effectively contribute in building विकसित भारत 2047. It must not derail the dream of विकसित भारत 2047, as is now happening in the European Union and NATO due to the black hole called Ukraine. These two advices by Chanakya sum up the idea in this essay…

"A arrow shot by an archer may or may not kill a single person;
but skilful intrigue, devised by a wise man,
may kill even those who are in the womb".

"If the end could be achieved by non-military methods,
even by methods of intrigue, duplicity and fraud,
I would not advocate an armed conflict".

CONCLUDING REMARKS (2026): READING WARS BEFORE THE HEADLINES CATCH UP

A postscript on why the reading in this essay matters beyond the battlefield

This essay was deliberately built around a single analytical choice made explicit at Paragraph 3: is this a 'Ukraine Conflict', or a 'US+NATO - Russia Conflict in Ukraine'? In 2024, when most global commentary still described a bilateral Russia-Ukraine war, this essay argued for the latter framing — tracing the conflict's roots to Mackinder's Heartland Theory, NATO's post-1991 eastward expansion and the 2014 Euromaidan Revolution. That framing — naming a war by its actual power structure, not merely by the participants shown on a map — is the one now used on the cover of this very essay: 'US-NATO War on Russia in Ukraine'. Getting the name of a war right, before it is fashionable to do so, is not a semantic exercise. It decides which lessons a nation draws — and which it wrongly imports.

Correctly read, ahead of consensus:

The long-war call. At Paragraph 7, this essay set out Russia's 'Choice 2: Long War' as the more probable strategy, built on four centuries of Russian campaign history rather than on the 'quick Ukrainian counteroffensive' narrative that dominated Western coverage through mid-2024. The war has continued into 2026 substantially along that arc.

The narrative half-life. Paragraph 9(f) flagged, already in 2024, that Kyiv's information-war advantage had 'started changing July 2023 onwards' — naming the erosion of a narrative that most Western coverage at the time still treated as settled.

The lesson NOT to learn. Paragraph 15(b) warned India against concluding that 'big wars are back and terrorism has taken a back seat' — a caution borne out as the Hamas-Israel war and continuing sub-conventional conflict elsewhere confirmed that both forms of war persist side by side, exactly as this essay argued they would.

This is the pattern I bring to any table — military, government, corporate or think tank: separate the participants of a conflict from its actual power structure; test every 'lesson' against history before adopting it; and say the uncomfortable name of a war while it is still unfashionable to do so. For organisations that need an advisor, risk analyst, strategy developer or strategy director who reads conflicts — geopolitical, market or organisational — correctly and early rather than accurately and late, this essay is the record, not the résumé.

The same record speaks to book publishers. This essay carries a full-length book's worth of argument in miniature — archival military history, live conflict analysis and an original strategic doctrine for India, written in one disciplined voice. It is offered as a writing sample for a book-length treatment of India's 'Pakistan Strategy' read through the mirror of the US+NATO - Russia War in Ukraine.

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