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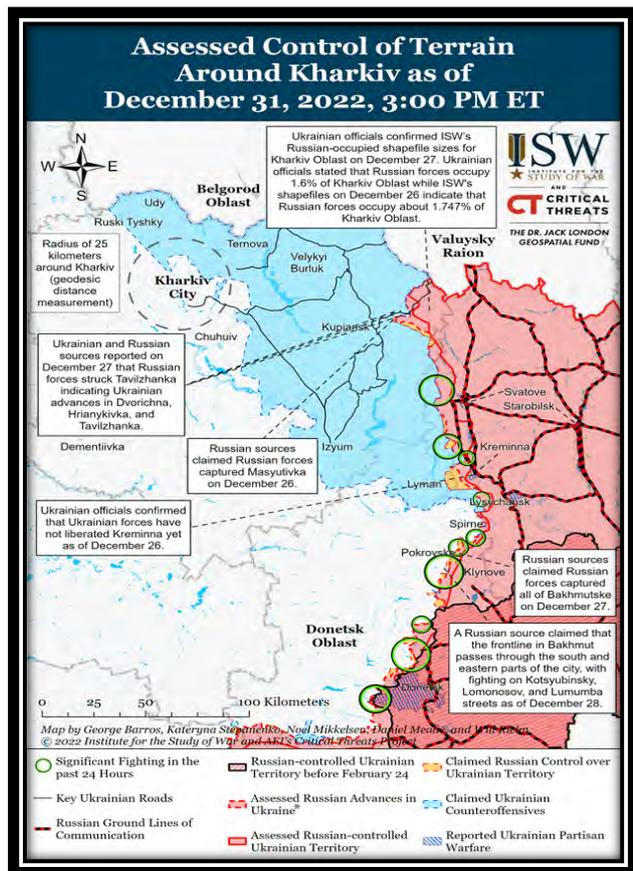
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Ukraine War Update 16-31 Dec 2022

During the last fortnight, the battlefield of the Russia-Ukraine War remained in a transitional phase, with both sides engaged in positional battles characterized by incremental gains and attrition. While harsh winter condition has slowed down the tempo of fighting over the broader front, it remains intense along several parts of the front. Ukrainian forces continued counteroffensive operations near Kreminna while Russian forces conducted limited counterattacks along the Svatove-Kreminna line. Russian forces continued offensive operations in the Avdiivka area as well as around Bakhmut, where the potential culmination of the Russian offensive is likely being expedited. Russian forces are continuing to establish defensive positions in left-bank Kherson and Zaporizhia oblasts and are conducting defensive operations in southern Ukraine. Russian SPETSNAZ are likely reconnoitring the Dnipro River delta to study Ukrainian defences on the right bank of Kherson Oblast. In addition, Russian forces have stepped up mortar and artillery attacks on Kherson city.

While the battlefield remained in stalemate, aerial offensives with missiles, drones and artillery continued unabated. Ukrainian-occupied Kherson and Bakhmut witnessed relentless and widespread artillery barrages. As per Ukrainian officials, Russian forces launched 69 cruise missiles and 23 drones at Ukraine on 29 Dec 2022 and Ukrainian air defences shot down 54 of the missiles and at least 11 of the drones. The Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has responded to ongoing Western assessments that it has severely depleted its stock of high-precision weapons systems amidst the massive strike against Ukraine by stating that it would never run out of Kalibr missiles. On the other hand, Ukraine targeted Russia's Engel air base with drones on 26 Dec 2022 and again on 29 Dec 2022, demonstrating its ability to strike deep inside Russian territory.

On 19 Dec 2022, President Putin made a rare visit to Belarus on Monday to strengthen his bond with the country's president and his closest regional ally. Speaking at a joint press conference in Minsk late Monday, the two leaders said that they agreed to continue a series of joint military drills that have caused alarm in Ukraine. Belarus's President Lukashenko called Russia "his closest ally and



strategic partner” and said that Belarus could not protect its “independence alone”. Putin’s visit to Belarus and subsequent buildup of Russian forces in Belarus had led to speculation in western media that Moscow seems to be setting the conditions for a renewed invasion of northern Ukraine possibly aimed at Kyiv. Thus far, this speculation has not been supported by further corroborative evidence.

After nearly 10 months of the war, but referring to the brutal invasion of Ukraine instead as “a special military operation,” Russian President Vladimir Putin, on 22 December 2022, finally called it a “war” for the first time. “Our goal is not to spin this flywheel of a military conflict, but, on the contrary, to end this war,” Putin said during a televised news conference. He also affirmed that the situation in four areas of eastern Ukraine – Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson – was “extremely difficult”. Putin said there were no “funding restrictions” for the military. “The country, the government will give everything that the army asks for. Everything.” Putin also gave his backing to a plan by his defence minister to boost the size of the military by more than 30% to 1.5 million combat personnel. He has also ordered Russian defence industry chiefs to ensure the availability of military hardware “in the shortest possible timeframes” to fight in Ukraine.

On 22 Dec 2022, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky, travelled to the US on his first foreign visit since Russia’s war on Ukraine to secure support for his war effort well into next year. Joe Biden told Zelenskiy that “it’s an honour to be by your side” and promised he “will never stand alone” as the US president pledged continued financial, military and humanitarian aid for Ukraine. In an address to Congress, Zelenskiy said Ukraine “will never surrender” as he reiterated how his country and the US “are allies in this battle”. The White House has pledged a new \$1.58bn aid package to Ukraine and will send advanced Patriot missile batteries. The US has already supplied \$22bn in military assistance to Ukraine since Russia’s invasion in February.

Coinciding with Zelenskiy's visit to Washington, former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev has undertaken a surprise trip to Beijing. Medvedev, now deputy chair of Russia’s Security Council, said he and Xi had discussed the two countries' “no limits” strategic partnership, as well as Ukraine.

During his diplomatic parley with global leaders, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been actively promoting his 10-point peace plan. In response, the Kremlin has insisted any proposals to end the conflict must take into account what it calls “today’s realities” of four Ukrainian regions which are now part of Russia.

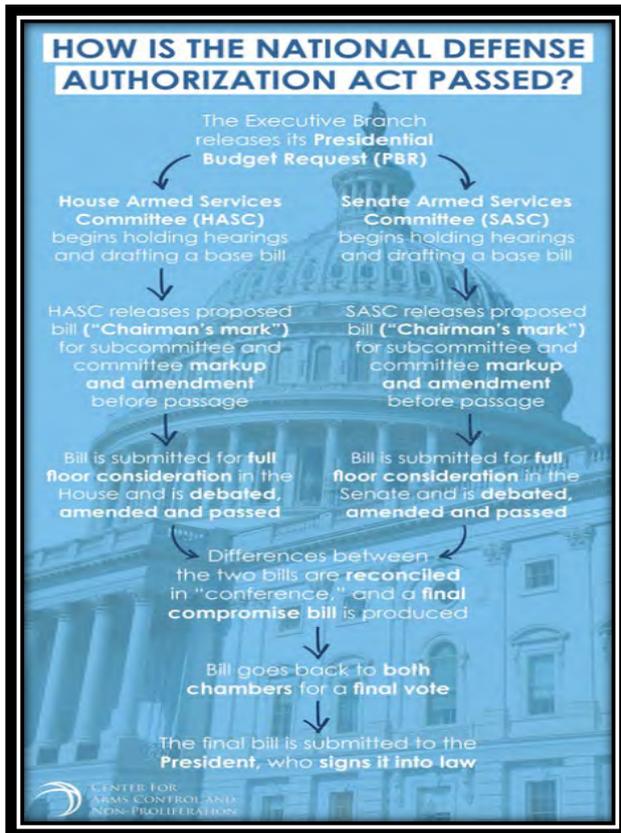
Biden Signs National Defence Authorization Act into Law

On 23 December 2022, US President Biden signed into law James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023 (NDAA 2023). NDAA 2023 aimed to provide necessary policy guidance and fiscal means for the

implementation of strategic pathways outlined in the Biden Administration National Defence Strategy to sustain and strengthen U.S. deterrence against China and Russia.

Lack of consensus over fiscal allocations and defence policies had delayed congressional approval for the fiscal year 2023 which has already begun on 01 Oct 2022. However, a compromise text of NDAA 2023 was passed by both houses with an overwhelming bipartisan majority. The NDAA includes a topline of \$858 billion for military and national security programs, \$ 45 billion more than the budget estimate projected by the Pentagon.

The bill increases the U.S. national security budget by just over 10% from last year’s \$778 billion. NDAA Authorizes funding to support a 4.6 per cent pay raise for both military service members and the DOD civilian workforce. The acquisition budget has considerably increased including a 55 per cent jump in Army funding to buy new missiles and a 47 per cent jump in the Navy’s weapons purchases.



The NDAA authorizes \$32.6 billion for Navy shipbuilding, an increase of \$4.7 billion. This will fund 11 battle force ships including three Arleigh Burke-class destroyers; two Virginia-class submarines; two expeditionary fast transports; one Constellation-class frigate; one San Antonio-class amphibious ship; one John Lewis-class oiler and one Navajo-class towing, salvage and rescue ship. The act also calls for the Navy to build a third Arleigh Burke-class destroyer and allocates \$2.2 billion to the effort.

For the Army, it authorizes funding increases for the CH-47 heavy-lift helicopter, the UH-60 Blackhawk medium-lift helicopter and the MQ-1 Gray Eagle drone. In addition, the budget provides funding support to

priority modernization efforts of the army which include long-range fires, future vertical lift capability, next-generation combat vehicles, and air and missile defence.

NDAA has approved the requested funding for the procurement of combat aircraft and munitions which includes four EC-37B aircraft, five F-35A aircraft and 10 HH-60W helicopters. It has also provided an additional \$301 million to accelerate the production of E-7 aircraft prototype. To maintain the force level,

the planned de-induction of B-1, F-15, F-22 Block 20, E-3 AWACS, and C-40 aircraft has been deferred.

It also allocates \$2.7 billion to procure new munitions; this is in part to backfill equipment sent to Ukraine but also designed to generally expand production capacity. Notably, it waives some restrictions for Pentagon contracts on munitions to Ukraine or to increase the Defense Department's critical munitions stockpile. The act provides \$1 billion to more than double the National Defense Stockpile — the U.S. strategic reserve of critical minerals — after years of depletion, highlighting congressional efforts to decrease Chinese influence in the U.S. defence supply chain.

The act provides \$4.6 billion for the European Deterrence Initiative (EDI) budget request and invests in additional capabilities that support deterrence in the European Command area of operations. EDI allocation includes \$1 billion for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), an increase of \$700 million above the budget request. EDI allocation caters to the replenishment of military equipment provided to Ukraine by the US allies and partners. \$225 million has been provided for the Baltic Security Initiative (BSI), to accelerate integrated air and missile defence.

The Act authorizes over \$11 billion for the Pacific Deterrence Initiative, ensuring full funding of training and operations, expedited construction of defence infrastructure, and the timely deployment of weapons systems and logistics throughout the Indo-Pacific to deter Chinese aggression. The US Indo-PACOM has been allocated \$1 billion for the “Seize the Initiative Fund” to increase the Command's ability to respond to contingencies. The US DoD has also been tasked to examine the desirability and feasibility of establishing a joint task force, a sub-unified command, or another organizational structure in the Indo-Pacific region. The Pentagon has also been asked to report on the existing or planned construction of naval bases in Africa by China or Russia.

Section 1260 of NDAA 2023 outlines measure to enhance major defence partnership with India. The Pentagon and the State Department have been asked by the US Congress to engage with the Indian Ministry of Defence to expand cooperation on emerging technologies, readiness, and logistics. Within the next six months, the US Secretary of Defence is required to brief the Congressional Committee regarding the feasibility and advisability of expanding cooperation in identified areas of cooperation such as Unmanned aerial vehicles; fourth and fifth-generation aircraft; 5G & Open Radio Access Network; Intelligence collection; Cold-weather capabilities; Critical and emerging technologies etc.

China has criticised NDAA 2023 which contains a large number of negative provisions on China. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson termed the US budget act as “a serious political provocation against China” and a blatant interference in China's internal affairs. Kremlin termed the US defence budget as "confrontational" towards Russia.

Japan updates Key National Security Documents

On December 16, Japan unveiled its three transformational national security documents. The new National Security Strategy (NSS) highlighted Tokyo as being “in the midst of the most severe and complex security environment since World War II”. This was the first major revision to the NSS which was published for the first time in 2013. The other two documents are the National Defense Strategy (NDS) and the Defense Buildup Program (DBP), which were approved along with the NSS at the same time for the first time.

According to Japanese Prime Minister Kishida, they are meant to ‘dramatically transform’ the country’s post-war approach to national-security policy. In a remarkable departure from its previous policy, Japan has decided to acquire ‘counterstrike missile capability’ and has committed to double its military spending, adding some \$315 billion to its defence budget over the next five years. These documents collectively articulated Japan’s security challenges and how it plans to respond to them in the next decade. The documents are indeed historic in many ways. They present a strategy that recognises the role of military capabilities in deterring aggression and bolstering Japan’s diplomacy.



The most striking aspect of Japan’s security documents is the planned acquisition of counterstrike capability, which refers to the capacity to hit missile-related sites within an attacking country. Japan’s long-standing aversion to such a capability has been facilitated by a combination of missile defences (to shoot down missiles already in flight) and reliance on U.S. strike capability. Counterstrike capability has been controversial in Japan because the weapons it requires can also be used offensively. While NSS argues that counterstrike is constitutionally permissible, Japan is considering necessary processes to ensure counterstrikes are responsive and not preemptive.

North Korea’s precipitously increasing rate of missile launches, as well as the modernization and diversification of China’s missile arsenal, has made it easier to justify the need to increase Japan’s deterrence and defence. A counterstrike capability would enable Japan to retaliate against enemy missile launchers and command-and-control sites to thwart further attacks.

The NSS considers China’s posture as “unprecedented and the greatest strategic challenge in ensuring the peace and security of Japan and the peace and stability of the international community”. Russia is seen as a dangerous spoiler whose “aggression against Ukraine has easily breached the very foundation of the rules that shape the international order.” North Korea’s military activities have been

considered to “pose an even more grave and imminent threat to Japan's national security than ever before”.

Erstwhile National Defence Program Guide (NDPG) has been rechristened as the NDS to fashion a strategic policy hierarchy similar to the US. The NDS highlights a defence strategy based on an ‘opponent’s capabilities and new ways of warfare’ by China and Russia. The NDS calls for Japan to take ‘primary responsibility to disrupt and defeat an invasion’, which is to say that it will no longer plan to rely primarily on US security guarantees in such a scenario. The plan calls for Japan to acquire or enhance seven core capabilities, including missile-based deterrence, cross-domain operations and greater resiliency in case of an armed attack (such as by securing sufficient ammunition and fuel).

The NDS also describes Tokyo’s aspirations to enhance defence cooperation with ‘as many countries as possible’ and promote defence equipment and technology transfers as key tools for shaping the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region.

The three documents attempt to coordinate Japan’s use of all dimensions of state power for national-security purposes, including economic tools and the country’s technological and intelligence capabilities. The NSS signals that the SDF will create new mechanisms to collaborate with civilian and commercial actors, whether during peacetime or a contingency. This approach aims to coalesce prevalent civil–military fragmentation which has been a serious impediment in harnessing the country’s advanced technological capabilities for military use. The NSS calls for greater civil-military cooperation in the space and cyber domains to enhance the security of critical infrastructures such as satellites and communication systems.

Japan has taken a major step toward becoming a “normal” world power by approving dramatic changes to its decades-old policy of military restraint. Despite the complaints from China that these moves reflect militarization, the core focus of these documents is very much on deterrence and its importance in maintaining peace and stability.

Realising the vision described in the NSS and NDS will require a major organisational, cultural and structural transformation in Japan’s government and patterns of civil-military relations. This will only be possible with sustained political support from Kishida and his successors. It may help that in November 2022, 68% of respondents to a public poll supported strengthening Japanese defence.