



Romanas Judinas
**Defending
Baltics:
War Lessons
from Ukraine**

Discussion Paper

Vilnius, 2024



Author – Romanas Judinas, Locked N' Loaded analyst

Reviewer – prof. Tomas Janeliūnas

Design and Layout – Ieva Makarevičė

Language Editor – UAB SkrivaneK

Publisher – Geopolitics and Security Studies Center, 2024

Citation

Romanas Judinas, "Defending Baltics: War Lessons from Ukraine. Discussion Paper", Geopolitics and Security Studies Center, Vilnius, 2024

©GSSC, 2024

This document is based entirely on publicly available information.

The publication was prepared with the support of the Embassy of Sweden in Vilnius and the Swedish Institute.

Table of Contents

Introduction	4
Key theses of the document	4
I. Lessons Learnt	5
1. Strategic Element	5
2. Operational Element	6
3. Tactical Element	9
II. Recommendations	11
III. Developments and Processes Threatening the Security Situation on NATO's Eastern Flank	15
Annex 1	16
Annex 2	17

Introduction

The “Defending Baltics: War Lessons from Ukraine” International Security Conference held in Vilnius on 8–9 October offered a valuable platform for discussing and reflecting on the lessons from the Russia–Ukraine war. What made the conference particularly unique was its diverse mix of participants, including politicians, military personnel, academics, NGOs, and representatives from the defence industry, all gathering to assess the ongoing war in Ukraine from multiple perspectives.

This review goes beyond the discussions at the conference, offering a broader analysis of the lessons learnt from the Russia–Ukraine war and their implications for NATO’s eastern flank. It also covers issues that were raised only briefly or entirely omitted during the conference. Drawing from expert insights and additional information found in specialised sources, the review provides strategic, operational, and tactical recommendations. These recommendations focus primarily on identifying processes and tools to prepare NATO’s eastern flank for a potential conventional war with Russia. Furthermore, in the context of current geopolitical and military shifts, potential changes in the European security framework and Russia’s capability to maintain or escalate its aggression are discussed, alongside the impact of these changes on the feasibility of the recommendations and the overall readiness of NATO countries.

It is important to note that the purpose of this review is to extract critical lessons and propose recommendations specifically for NATO’s eastern flank. This region should be held to a different level of preparedness for a potential conventional conflict with Russia compared to the rest of Europe or North American allies, due to its geographical

proximity to Russia, its limited defence depth, and its unique demographic, economic, and military factors. However, certain lessons and recommendations could also be relevant to the broader transatlantic community.

Key theses of the document

1. The Kremlin has largely conditioned Russian society to accept a military confrontation with the West/NATO.
2. Russia’s military-strategic culture should compel the Alliance, particularly its eastern flank states and their armed forces, to prepare for a confrontation with a highly motivated, adaptable, non-compliant to international and military laws, evolving, and resource-rich enemy.
3. NATO and its eastern flank should not solely rely on the assumption that ‘deterrence’ will succeed but should instead create military security dilemmas for the aggressor, enhance military capabilities, strengthen the defence industry, and engage the public more actively in these efforts.
4. Russia will attempt to discredit the West and hinder its ability to follow through with its planned agenda and preparedness to confront threats to Western civilisation. In this context, the rapidly changing situation should prompt NATO and the eastern flank countries of the Alliance to accelerate their preparations.

I. Lessons Learnt

1. Strategic Element

- 1.1 The current global security environment is influenced by three key strategic tensions: Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the conflict in the Middle East, and the tensions surrounding Taiwan. These tensions can be viewed both as distinct conflicts and as interconnected, given that the authoritarian states involved in each are willing to cooperate, exchange experiences, share resources, and maintain a collective hostility towards the US and NATO. The political, economic, and military collaboration between Russia, Iran, China, and North Korea is significant, although it remains a fragmented process that has not yet been decisive. Nevertheless, the potential damage to the Western world, the Alliance, and NATO's eastern flank from such cooperation is immense. Authoritarian regimes do not tie their actions to international agreements and are not restrained by domestic opposition or civil society. The key factor in these dynamics is the conditions under which these regimes can push or cross the West's 'red lines' in the world without being punished.
- 1.2 Russia has been in conflict with the West since the early 21st century, at least within the 'grey zone' – from increasingly audacious actions in the information and cyber domains to violent acts against specific individuals and sabotage. To justify its aggressive actions against neighbouring countries, Russia has spent years cultivating an image of hostility towards the West. These Kremlin-driven narratives gained momentum during Russia's military campaigns in Chechnya between 1995 and 2004. Leading up to and during the 2008 invasion of Georgia and the 2014 covert

aggression against Ukraine, the 'Western threat' narrative became a cornerstone of Russian policy. By the time of the 2022 overt invasion of Ukraine, this narrative had reached an extreme point, with Russia demanding that NATO return to its 1997 borders, claiming the Alliance posed a threat to Russia. As the war unfolded, one of the Kremlin's central messages was that Russia was not fighting Ukraine but was instead engaged in a war with the West in Ukraine. This systematic policy is reflected in Russian public opinion as well. For instance, in September 2024, over 70% of Russians surveyed held negative views of the US and the EU.¹ Additionally, 65% of the population blamed the US and NATO for the 'deaths and destruction in Ukraine', while 58% believed the conflict would escalate into a war between Russia and NATO.² Thus, it can be concluded that the Russian political leadership has morally prepared the majority of the Russian public for a potential military clash with the West.

- 1.3 Leading up to Russia's large-scale aggression against Ukraine, NATO demonstrated its intelligence capabilities, including the ability to track military group movements, understand political decision-making processes, and provide short-term warnings of impending large-scale military operations. However, on the Ukrainian side, this information was not fully utilised. The Ukrainian leadership failed to implement significant political, social, and military reforms³ since independence, particularly between 2014 and 2022, and made errors⁴ in military planning in preparation for countering aggression, limiting the benefits of these early warnings.

1 Levada-Centr, Approach to Countries, 2024, <https://www.levada.ru/indikatory/otnoshenie-k-stranam/>

2 Levada-Centr. The Conflict with Ukraine, 2024, <https://www.levada.ru/en/2024/09/06/the-conflict-with-ukraine-key-indicators-responsibility-reasons-for-concern-the-threat-of-a-clash-with-nato-and-the-use-of-nuclear-weapons/>

3 Forging long-term, pragmatic alignment with the West, implementing economic and social reforms, combating corruption, and restructuring the armed forces.

4 The inability to repel the February–March 2022 attack in the southern direction led to the loss of extensive territories (Kherson, Melitopol, Mariupol) and strategically significant assets (Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant).

1.4 Despite efforts by Western leaders to warn off Russia from launching a future attack, deterrence ultimately failed. Russia was not dissuaded from its large-scale invasion of Ukraine by its conventional military strength⁵ or by Western threats of sanctions or other forms of damage. It can be inferred that conventional deterrence does not effectively influence the Kremlin, particularly regarding countries that were once part of the USSR and other nations on NATO's eastern flank. Russia views these countries as part of its national interests, with their future potentially decided through military action under favourable geopolitical circumstances. Moreover, Russia's intelligence services misjudged⁶ the Ukrainian resolve to resist and the political leadership's determination to stay in the country and defend it, and they underestimated the West's ability to unite in supporting Ukraine and expanding sanctions against Russia. It is important to recall the classic clause of deterrence logic: an enemy may inaccurately assess retaliatory measures, especially when these are not quantitative factors (such as conventional weaponry) but political, cultural, or economic ones. Misjudgments in assessment (on both sides) often contribute to uncertain deterrence.

1.5 Despite the full-scale aggression, Ukraine has managed to stay strong due to political, military, and social mobilisation. In contrast, NATO countries' societies remain hesitant to contribute more to the security of their countries and bear the significant cost if necessary. While 63% of respondents agree that their country should defend its allies in case of aggression, only 41% of NATO citizens support increasing defence spending.⁷ When asked whether they would personally join their country's defence, only 32% of EU citizens surveyed in 2023 responded affirmatively (data as of 2023).⁸ In other words, there is more declarative rhetoric than a willingness to back it up with action if required. This sentiment in Western societies is reflected in

the actions of politicians and decision-makers, who lack strong support for Ukraine and the reinforcement of the Alliance's security.

1.6 The politicisation, inconsistency, and lack of ambition in Western military support, combined with Ukraine's still undeveloped military industry and complicated mobilisation process, have hindered Ukraine's ability to achieve a breakthrough in the war against Russia. These strategic changes demand specific, and not always popular, decisions. Western politicians, reliant on a passive, domestically-focused electorate, have taken refuge in narratives of 'not provoking Russia' or the threat of 'escalation' and have shied away from making bold decisions that could alter the global and regional security situation.

2. Operational Element

2.1 Ukraine's successful counter-attack operations in autumn 2022, along with strikes targeting oil refining facilities, military infrastructure, and operations in Russia's Kursk region, demonstrate the ineffectiveness of the aggressor's A2/AD system and that relying solely on defensive measures is insufficient for achieving success in a war against Russia. It is essential to prepare not only for attack operations and 'deep strikes' during armed conflicts but also to create military security dilemmas for a potential aggressor during peacetime.

2.2 Russia conducts intensive 'deep strike' operations daily on Ukrainian territory. The aggressor is utilising a range of tools:

1. Long-range reconnaissance drones (e.g., Orlan). These drones gather high-altitude data on Ukrainian military and strategic sites and perform battlefield assessments post-strike.
2. Shahed drones. These suicide drones are employed to overwhelm Ukraine's air defences, deplete ammunition, and

5 In 2022, Ukraine, with a population of 41 million, had a full range of armed forces (air, naval, land), a military industry, a large mobilisation reserve and a defence in depth. The country has been resisting covert Russian aggression since 2014, gaining experience in conventional warfare.

6 It can be inferred that objectively evaluating this element was not a priority, as the Kremlin's political elite had already concluded that there is no distinct Ukrainian nation and that Ukraine's separation from Russia is solely due to the regime in Kyiv.

7 https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_227244.htm

8 https://www.gallup-international.com/fileadmin/user_upload/surveys_and_news/2024/Fewer_people_are_willing_to_fight_for_their_country_compared_to_ten_years_ago/GIA_EoY2023_PR3.pdf

strain personnel. Additionally, they identify vulnerabilities in air defence systems and attack insufficiently protected targets.

3. Missiles. Russia employs a diverse array of missiles, primarily designed to target high-value assets located within Ukraine's territory during or after reconnaissance operations conducted by Shahed drones.
4. Redesigned aerial bombs. Conventional aerial bombs⁹ have been modified into glide bombs capable of striking targets up to 100 km from their launch site.

As demonstrated in Table 1, the intensity of Russian deep-strike operations remains significant. The primary objective of these strikes is to terrorise the Ukrainian population, exert pressure on Ukraine's political leadership, and influence its allies by creating dilemmas over prioritising support – whether to focus on rebuilding Ukraine's energy infrastructure or continuing military assistance. Additionally, these strikes aim to disrupt Ukraine's logistical networks, impacting the flow of Western military support and targeting supply chains within the country. Despite lacking advanced Western air defence systems, Ukrainian forces have developed effective mechanisms through a combination of multi-layered air defence and electronic warfare. This has partially shielded logistical and replenishment infrastructure, preventing Russia from achieving air superiority across the entire Ukrainian territory. It is important to emphasise that the Ukrainian territories currently under Russian attack overlap with portions of NATO's eastern flank. This area includes the Baltic Sea straits, the Suwałki Corridor, major ports, and essential land and maritime routes.

2.3 The use of reconnaissance drones and other sensors, such as video cameras, in the Russia–Ukraine conflict has significantly enhanced the ability to monitor enemy troop movements and concentrations while drastically reducing surveillance costs. The widespread deployment of inexpensive civilian drones for reconnaissance has ensured continuous battlefield and enemy rear-area monitoring, allowing for the swift deployment of firepower. This has created significant challenges for planning and executing large-scale attack operations at the brigade or division level. Russia, however, offsets these constraints through its abundant manpower

resources and air support. In contrast, Ukraine faces greater challenges due to its limited aviation capabilities and inconsistent fire support caused by shortages of artillery ammunition, as evidenced during its 2023 summer counter-attack.

- 2.4 In ground operations, the ability to mobilise reserve forces and replenish personnel along the front lines is critical.
1. Ukraine has been engaged in continuous mobilisation. Following the adoption of a new mobilisation law in early 2024, reports suggest that the number of mobilised personnel has risen significantly, potentially matching the aggressor's monthly troop buildup of approximately 30,000 soldiers. While Ukraine is actively forming new units, the situation on the front line and the persistent shortage of personnel within these units indicate a critical lack of qualified soldiers, non-commissioned officers, and officers.
 2. Russia is replenishing its forces and forming new military units by mobilising populations in occupied territories, conducting partial mobilisations (2022), recruiting mercenaries (including prisoners), and utilising other measures, such as involving illegal migrants. Such forces are of medium to low quality, but due to the high motivation of the political–military leadership, a high tolerance for personnel losses, available reserves, and the social issues in Russia that military service helps to address, the aggressor is able to mobilise a significant number of reserves – around 30,000 soldiers per month. Despite experiencing a negative balance between personnel additions and losses as of May 2024 (Annex 2), Russia maintains battlefield initiative without needing to declare additional mobilisation.
 3. It is important to note that the primary challenges lie in rebuilding the personnel capacity of commanders and high-value specialists (e.g., drone operators, electronic warfare specialists, artillerymen, tankers, liaison officers). Upgrading or training them is the most time-consuming, costly, and impactful process on the battlefield.

9 FAB – 250, FAB – 500, FAB – 1500, FAB – 3000

4. The issues related to trainers, training facilities (equipment, weapons, other resources), and infrastructure (training grounds) are critical. While partial mobilisation was announced for 2022, the Russian mobilisation system was not adequately prepared and encountered significant issues. Ukraine faces similar challenges. The aggressor's deep-strike capability makes it difficult for Ukrainians to safely mobilise, train, and redeploy their military units. This burden is alleviated by the training of Ukrainian troops abroad by their allies.

2.5 Military industry and additional resource mobilisation mechanisms are key factors in conventional warfare:

1. Russian forces suffer heavy losses (Annex 2), but with large stocks of arms and ammunition, a military industry that can operate relatively safely in most cases, and Western sanctions on Russian military and dual-use goods being relatively ineffective, the Kremlin can at least partially replace combat vehicles, weapons, and equipment lost in Ukraine.
2. The transfer of Western weapons systems to Ukraine has had a positive effect on the battlefield but has not resulted in a radical shift. This is due to the limited quantities of these weapons, unpredictable delivery dynamics, and the lack of enablers (such as combat aviation). Additionally, the aggressor has adapted to the effects of modern Western weapon systems; for instance, Russian electronic warfare tools can interfere with 'smart' MLRS missiles and 155 mm munitions, and Russia has adjusted its tactics by deploying important military infrastructure along the line of contact.
3. Russia does not hold an advantage over the West in arms and ammunition production, even though its current military production is higher. For example, the US defence industry can produce 700,000 155 mm projectiles in peacetime, while Europe can produce 580,000 155 mm projectiles. In comparison, Russian military industries can produce around 1–1.5 million 152 mm artillery shells per year during the current war against Ukraine. However, Russia's

production capacity is not enough to sustain the war, which is why it is seeking support from North Korea. Western military industries are likely to increase their output in the future, potentially giving the West an advantage over Russia. However, the West's decision-making process, based on national positions, may complicate NATO's ability to initiate joint production and supply. Additionally, long supply chains and unhindered military aid to Russia from Iran and North Korea could shift the balance in favour of the Kremlin.

4. Both sides at war are not only replenishing their losses but also forming new units. For these units, combat vehicles, ammunition, equipment, and other supplies are being produced or retrieved from depots, and infrastructure is being allocated.
5. The assistance of civilian volunteers to the military, in the form of unarmoured military equipment, drones, surveillance tools (such as thermal imaging cameras), and repairs of transport or equipment, is critical. This support is essential not only for Ukraine, which has fewer resources, but also for Russia. The aggressor forces are also struggling without civilian assistance. This is particularly true when it comes to replenishing the number of drones and unarmoured vehicles.

2.6 Medical care. The Russia–Ukraine war has reminded us that in conventional warfare, high casualties and injuries are a painful reality. This forces both sides to deal with complex issues:

1. How to ensure medical evacuation from the battlefield under intense shelling (medevac).
2. How to ensure first aid by military units and treatment at higher-level facilities (Roles 1, 2, 3) when Russia does not respect humanitarian law and attacks Ukrainian medical facilities with deep strike capabilities.

2.7 The role of civilians in military operations is enormous, as often vulnerable people (pensioners, the sick, lonely people) remain on the battlefield. Often, they are involuntarily unable to retreat to safer areas on their own or with the help of others in the rapidly moving contact line. There is also a large group of

people who, for various reasons (sentiment for home, no one to stay with, etc.), remain voluntarily in battle-affected areas. This complicates operations for the Ukrainian forces, as they have to be more careful in their choice of targets and means of fire to avoid civilian casualties. It also poses operational security challenges.

2.8 Russia and Ukraine are conducting intensive information and psychological operations to:

1. shape the decision-making process of an enemy and its allies, often by mocking the leadership and actions of the opposing elite;
2. influence the support of opposing societies for the policies of their governments, reinforcing narratives of severe economic damage, fragmentation of enemy societies and resistance to the ruling elite;
3. undermine the morale of enemy troops by emphasising that joining opposing forces is unlawful and will inevitably result in death, showcasing their own victories alongside the enemy's defeats and offering information channels for surrender.

2.9 OSINT experts, who operate independently of the armed forces, play a crucial role in aiding military efforts and providing the public with updates on the war situation. Engaging citizens in this dialogue contributes to reducing uncertainty and alleviating societal tensions.

3. Tactical Element

3.1 Russian operations focus on capturing populated areas, railway junctions, and road networks. They traditionally aim to control enemy supply and rotation lines through fire, manoeuvring around enemy flanks to encircle them or force a retreat. Ukraine strives to maintain control of critical terrain on the battlefield and to maximise losses inflicted on the aggressor through both defensive and attack measures. The widespread use of drones by both sides places exceptional importance on controlling high ground (artificial and natural hills, tall buildings, etc.). Equipment positioned on these high points enhances drone signal strength, ensures uninterrupted communication, and facilitates deeper operational reach.

3.2 The Ukrainian counter-attack in autumn 2022 and the operation in the Kursk region in 2024 highlight the poor ability of Russian units to respond to unexpected attack operations, particularly against unfortified defences.

3.3 In the main line of effort, the aggressor has sustained a very high level of operations for over a year (as of 10 October 2023). Despite significant losses and a slow operational pace, the aggressor continues to advance after breaching the main defensive line (Annex 3). This progress stems not only from the aggressor's superior reserves and resources but also from weaknesses in the management of Ukrainian military forces, where the Joint Command directly oversees numerous units at the brigade and battalion levels.

3.4 Russia traditionally aims to gain an advantage through firepower and manoeuvre, but the Ukrainian forces' flexible structural and tactical approaches on the battlefield prevent the aggressor from fully capitalising on this. This success is largely attributed to the effective use of drones at the tactical level (brigade – battalion – company). Consequently, the aggressor has advanced its own drone capabilities, achieving parity with Ukraine in this domain. As a result, tactical adaptations in Russian operations can be observed:

1. The aggressor has modified battlefield tactics by employing small infantry group operations, which rely on the integration of infantry teams, drones (for reconnaissance and attacks), artillery, and aviation. Mechanised units remain involved, supported by reconnaissance and attack drones.
2. Reconnaissance drones significantly enhance the effectiveness of the aggressor's otherwise medium-to-low-accuracy firepower (artillery, mortars) by enabling precise target location, fire adjustments, and strike assessments.
3. Attack drones reduce the burden on artillery, allowing Russia to maintain a firepower advantage while conserving Ukrainian artillery ammunition.
4. Both sides actively employ drones for a variety of tasks, including air defence, electronic warfare, logistics, and minelaying.

3.5 At the start of the Russia–Ukraine war, air superiority along the line of contact was not a decisive factor. However, the situation began to shift towards the end of 2023, when the aggressor began deploying aerial glide bombs. The Russian forces enhanced their artillery fire superiority with powerful aerial bombs, significantly accelerating the destruction of Ukrainian fortifications and positions in urban areas (Annex 3). Ukraine’s air defence is still unable to address this challenge, as modern air defence systems are primarily designed to protect strategic inland targets, and any threats appearing near the line of contact can be quickly intercepted by enemy drones, putting Ukraine’s air defence capabilities at risk.

3.6 Aggressor forces are highly proficient at leveraging military engineering capabilities. Even after a minor breach in the line of contact, Russian tactical units (company – battalion) can rapidly construct trenches, lay mines, and create other engineering barriers, effectively covering them with fire. If necessary, the aggressor can quickly establish regimental–divisional fortified areas, utilising both military engineering resources and civilian assets (the ‘Surovikin Line’). For Ukrainian units, the construction of fortifications is hindered by the lack of military engineering resources at the brigade-joint command level and weak cooperation with civil administration.

II. Recommendations

Political statements about the threats posed by authoritarian regimes to the West should be translated into concrete plans and actions aimed at reducing the potential of these aggressive states, limiting opportunities for cooperation, and addressing the impacts of these actions. Therefore, it is advisable to develop both national and NATO strategies for joint prevention (creating security dilemmas for authoritarian regimes) and preparedness (enhancing the defence industry and fortifying the resilience of armed forces and societies).

1.1 Creating military security dilemmas for the adversary. To deter Russia from initiating a military campaign against NATO's eastern flank, it is crucial to begin by presenting the following military security dilemmas to the aggressor:

1. Ukraine. The most effective way to prevent the Kremlin from planning, preparing, and launching a military campaign against NATO's eastern flank in the short and medium term is through a Russian military defeat in Ukraine. The current strategy does not enable Ukraine to gain a strategic advantage or shift the dynamics of the war in its favour. Suggestion:

Changing the military support model.

- a) Replace the political process, which is often delayed and disrupted by national political challenges in various countries, with a NATO military operation by officially declaring a NATO military operation to supply arms to Ukraine and appointing a military commander (e.g., the Supreme Allied Commander Europe). This would not alter the actual involvement of NATO countries in the military conflict, as they are already supplying arms and equipment to Ukraine, and the coordination of these efforts occurs at the NATO level. However, it would make the current disorganised and politicised process more streamlined.
- b) The EU, in cooperation with NATO, should reassess and strengthen sanctions regimes targeting military, dual-use, and Russian military capability products.

- c) Significantly increase support for Ukraine's defence industry. Given Ukraine's long history in military production and its capacity to manufacture arms, ammunition, and other equipment even during wartime, the West could create optimal conditions for the development and strengthening of this industry. Fully empowering Ukraine's military industry would reduce the reliance on the West's direct military support in this conflict. Therefore, it is essential to intensify:
 - a) the development of Western military-industrial infrastructure within Ukraine;
 - b) investment in the expansion of Ukraine's military-industrial infrastructure;
 - c) the establishment of Ukrainian production lines within Western defence industry facilities.

2. NATO's Eastern Flank.

- a) A robust A2/AD capability must be developed in the Nordic, Barents, and Baltic regions. With Sweden and Finland joining NATO, there is an opportunity to turn the Baltic Sea into NATO's inner lake. Developing a comprehensive system of air defence, electronic warfare, coastal defence, air and naval forces, and deep-strike capabilities on NATO's eastern flank is essential. This would enable the following outcomes:
 - Safeguarding the arrival of Allied forces and resources to the eastern flank via air, sea, and land.
 - Maintaining intelligence and fire superiority in key areas of potential enemy dispersal and A2/AD zones, such as Murmansk, Leningrad, Pskov, Kaliningrad, and Belarus.
- b) It is crucial to enhance not only defensive but also counter-offensive capabilities on NATO's eastern flank to secure the territory of member states. This involves neutralising enemy concentrations, artillery, air defences, and aviation zones through firepower and manoeuvre, severing communication lines in the aforementioned

regions, and achieving military victory over the aggressor's forces through further operations on its territory.

- c) Additionally, regular training and/or show of force demonstrations in the Nordic, Norwegian, Barents, Baltic, and Baltic Sea regions should be performed.

3. Defence Industry.

- 1) Countries on NATO's eastern flank should move away from the misconception of urgently acquiring the broadest possible range of ultra-modern weapon systems without first establishing robust basic capabilities in firepower, manoeuvre, air defence, and reserves. Military production should be planned and ordered with a focus on the demands of potential conventional and exhausting war.
- 2) The defence industry at both NATO and national levels must identify clear priorities where governments and militaries seek technological advancements and are willing to commit to long-term investments. Simultaneously, it is crucial to highlight the need for acquiring weapon systems that may not be cutting-edge or highly advanced but are effective when deployed in large quantities, requiring the revitalisation and expansion of production lines.
- 3) The capability to develop and manufacture drones and electronic warfare tools should be advanced through close collaboration with the scientific community, NATO countries' armed forces, and soldiers who can contribute direct battlefield insights from the Russian–Ukrainian war.

4. Public Engagement. The aggressor, through its network of information operations and agents of influence, can shape the sentiments of specific groups within Western societies. Coupled with the low motivation among a significant portion of Alliance citizens to actively participate in their country's and NATO's defence, this presents a potentially dangerous challenge in the context of conventional warfare.

- 1) Enhance communication efforts to inform NATO societies not only about the spectrum of threats but also about practical steps each individual and family can take to prepare for crisis situations.

- 2) Strengthen collaboration between the military and civilian administration in cities and towns by establishing, developing, and training a network of military commands to address rearguard protection, fortification training, resource mobilisation, and other needs.
- 3) Establish territorial defence forces not only in NATO's eastern member states but also across other NATO countries. During conventional warfare, with a significant portion of Western Europe's regular forces deployed to the front, these forces could play a vital role in national defence, reserve training, and supplementary functions.
- 4) Create institutions, umbrella organisations, or platforms in NATO countries to unite NGOs and citizens interested in supporting the armed forces through material aid, OSINT, or other forms of assistance. This initiative should also focus on activating diasporas abroad.

5. Increasing Combat Potential. The warfare culture of a potential NATO enemy should compel the Alliance, particularly the countries of its eastern flank, to prepare for combat against a motivated, adaptive, lawless, evolving, and highly resourceful enemy.

- 1) NATO forces hold an overall advantage in manoeuvre and firepower. However, in the initial phase of military operations on NATO's eastern flank, where the depth of defence is relatively shallow, the importance of fortification and military engineering becomes paramount. To enhance this capability, the below actions are recommended:
 - a) Develop military engineering units at the corps, division, and brigade levels.
 - b) Ensure battalion-level units have the equipment, techniques, and skills necessary to independently construct primary fortifications, minefields, etc.
 - c) Foster cooperation between battalion and brigade-level units and civil administration (military commands) to utilise civilian infrastructure and equipment (e.g., construction companies) to establish defensive lines behind the front lines.

- 2) Fire and manoeuvre are critical for achieving operational and tactical success on the battlefield.**
- a) At Divisional Level:**
- Have at least a brigade-sized Allied unit from other NATO countries permanently stationed in each country on NATO's eastern flank as an integral part of the division. NATO's eastern flank countries must provide host nation support.
 - Design and develop a capability that ensures fire superiority and allows for attacking adversary forces and infrastructure at a range of at least 300 km, including coordinating procurement orders for long-range artillery to avoid competition.
 - Develop components of an integrated air force or, if unavailable, assign specific air force units to enhance the effectiveness of this capability.
 - Use reconnaissance drones as enablers in addition to traditional reconnaissance assets.
 - Develop an integrated long-range air defence and electronic warfare system to protect forces, V2 infrastructure, and logistics. Create mobile air defence teams (using attack drones, anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns, short-range air defence systems, and electronic warfare tools) to reduce the need for expensive air defence missiles to defend against long-range drones.
- 3) At Brigade Level:**
- Increase the number of mechanised units and 'heavier' mechanised units (tanks, tracked infantry fighting vehicles).
 - Integrate reconnaissance drone capabilities, enabling real-time coordination between units and individual combat vehicles on the battlefield.
 - Establish a drone unit (company) with capabilities in reconnaissance, attack, mine countermeasures, electronic warfare, and logistics.
- Develop an integrated medium-range air defence and electronic warfare system to protect forces, V2 infrastructure, and logistics. To reduce reliance on expensive air defence missiles for defending against attack drones (e.g., FPV), create mobile air defence teams equipped with more cost-effective means (heavy machine guns, electronic warfare).
- 4) At Battalion Level:**
- Strengthen fire support weapon capabilities (mortars, anti-tank missile systems, automatic grenade launchers).
 - Integrate reconnaissance drone capabilities, enabling real-time coordination between units and individual combat vehicles on the battlefield.
 - Establish a drone unit (squad) with reconnaissance, attack, mine countermeasures, electronic warfare, and logistics drone capabilities.
 - Develop an integrated short-range air defence and electronic warfare system to protect forces, V2 infrastructure, and logistics. To conserve costly air defence missiles for defending against attacks (e.g., FPV), it is recommended to develop additional machine gun and electronic warfare capabilities within drone companies to counter and destroy attack drones.
- 5) Development of Electronic Warfare Capabilities.** It is crucial to develop not only electronic defence capabilities (protecting forces, combat equipment, communications, etc.) but also electronic warfare capabilities that disrupt the aggressor's communications, sensor reconnaissance tools, and other equipment, thereby suppressing the aggressor's V2 system and the interaction between units.
- 6) Development of Drone and Anti-Drone Capabilities.** Merely acquiring drones for a unit or assigning personnel responsible for their operation is not sufficient. The following actions are necessary:

- Adjust the unit structure to integrate drone capabilities (from company to division level).
- Select and train soldiers suitable for drone operator roles and their respective unit commanders.
- Review and adapt not only standard operating procedures for units but also military doctrines and tactical manuals, defining the role of drone capabilities on the battlefield and how they interact with and enable intelligence, manoeuvre, artillery, and other units.

7) Medical Care.

- Develop military capabilities for Roles 1, 2, and 3, considering the ongoing risk of both direct and indirect fire.
- Collaborate with civilian medical facilities in preparation for Role 3 tasks and familiarise civilian medical personnel with the nature of casualties in military operations and the potential dynamics of patient flow.
- Plan and conduct regular casualty evacuation training.

8) Integration of Reserves.

- To ensure the rapid recovery of losses in a conventional war, the creation of new units, and the swift integration of reserve troops into operations, it is recommended to develop compulsory initial military service¹⁰ and provide regular, high-quality refresher training for reserve troops in the units they would serve in during the war.
- To maintain the high quality of the force, ensure the regular and high-quality upgrading of skills for reserve commanders and specialists in the units where they would serve during the war.
- To establish a realistic reserve capability that can be quickly deployed when needed, ensure the availability of combat vehicles, weapons, and other equipment for the Reserve Force.
- To counteract the aggressor's deep strike capability and the depth of defence in NATO's eastern flank states, it is essential to plan and conduct training for the redeployment and integration of national reserves with other NATO countries.

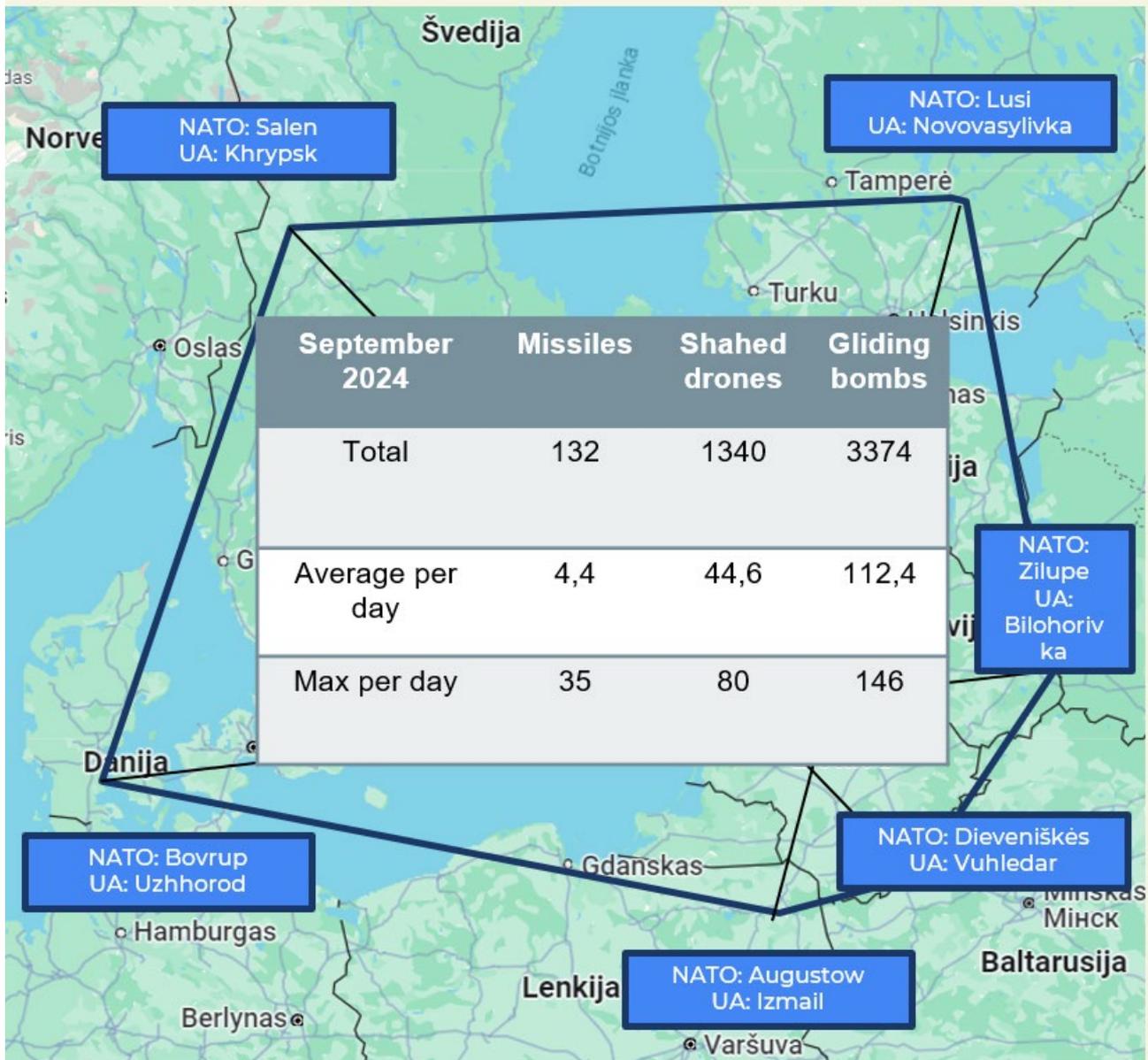
¹⁰ In NATO's eastern flank countries with compulsory initial military service, move towards a universal conscription system. In countries with only professional armed forces, develop compulsory military service with a view to transitioning to universal conscription (e.g., within 10 years).

III. Developments and Processes Threatening the Security Situation on NATO's Eastern Flank

1. In light of the lessons and recommendations outlined above, it must be acknowledged that adversaries are not static and will actively seek to disrupt the West's preparedness to address threats to Western civilisation. Consequently, it is vital to continuously monitor and assess developments and trends that might signal Russia's shift towards a military confrontation with the West on NATO's eastern flank.
2. Key Negative Indicators.
 - 2.1 Disruption in the NATO–EU decision-making process due to the escalation of national positions.
 - 2.2 A political and military victory for Russia in Ukraine, which would enable preparations for a conventional clash with NATO countries.
 - 2.3 Systematic political, economic, and military cooperation between Russia, Iran, China, and North Korea, focusing on a coordinated short-term effort (within five years) to secure their interests in current or potential conflicts.
 - 2.4 Restoration and expansion of Russian A2/AD capabilities (e.g., activation of Russian submarines in the North Sea) around the Baltic Sea to prevent the entry of Allied forces and assets in future operations on NATO's eastern flank.
3. The indicators mentioned above should prompt NATO and eastern flank countries to take the following actions:
 - 3.1 Accelerate and intensify efforts to raise security dilemmas for a potential aggressor.
 - 3.2 Enhance the readiness of armed forces through swift improvements in organisational structures and combat training.
 - 3.3 Increase combat power and resources by accelerating and expanding acquisitions.
 - 3.4 Strengthen interoperability with allies through training.
 - 3.5 Boost public resilience and engagement in supporting national security.

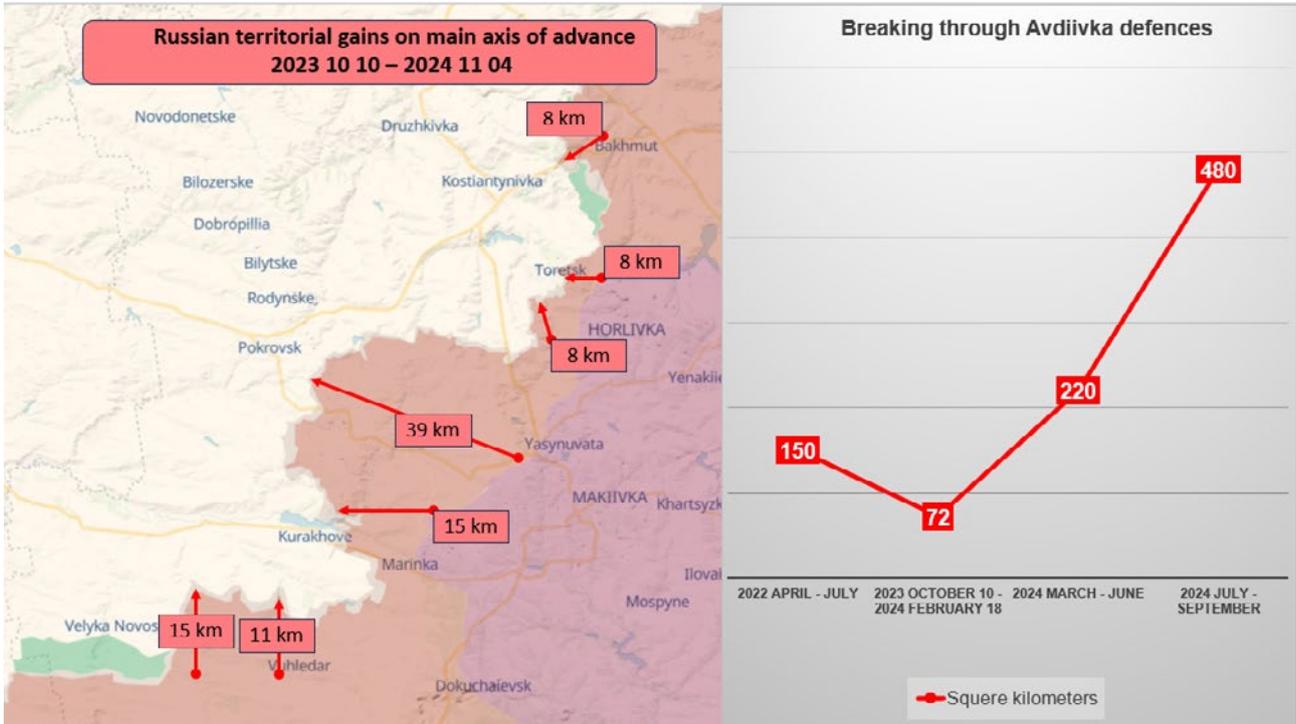
Annex 1

Ukraine territory merged with NATO Eastern Flank



Source: L'N'L Presentation at the Defending Baltics International Security Conference

Annex 2



Source: L’N’L Presentation at the Defending Baltics International Security Conference

