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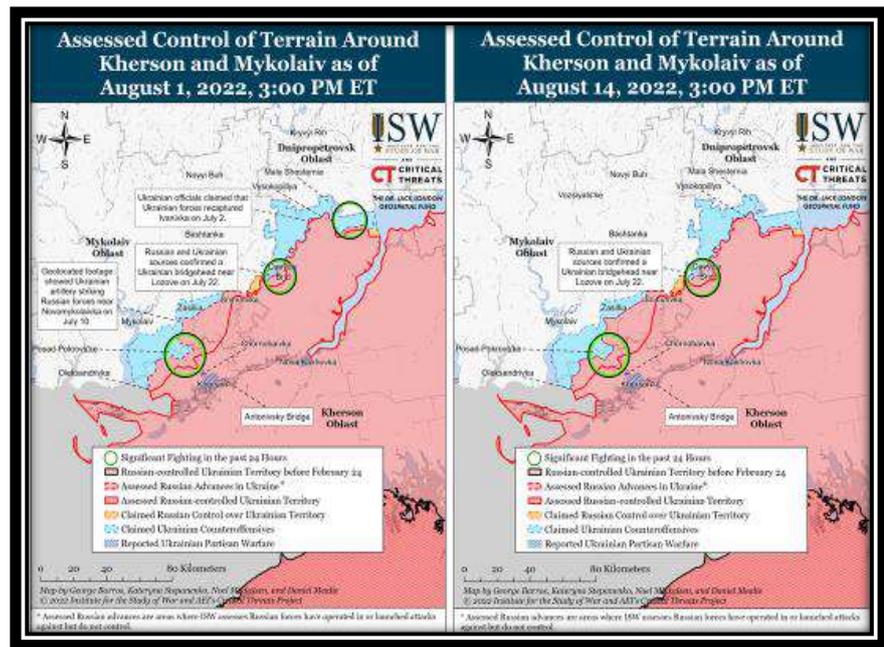
The New Naval Doctrine of Russia - Key Highlights

Ukraine Conflict Update 16-31 Jul 2022

During the last fortnight, the overall battlefield has remained largely unchanged. Russian eastern offensive seems to have run out of steam with its inability to move beyond Luhansk, while Ukraine has been nibbling away at their positions in the Kharkiv and Kherson Oblasts.

Ukraine’s much-vaunted offensive operation in southern Kherson province has remained limited to HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) attack towards softening Russian defences and destroying bridges to Kherson city to isolate the Russian forces west of the Dnieper River and deny Russian forces the opportunity to advance with their equipment. The Ukrainian offensive has not moved beyond these preparatory actions.

In the meantime, anticipating a southern offensive, Russia has withdrawn forces



from Izyum on the eastern front and reinforced Kherson. From the estimated strength of 13 battalion tactical groups (BTGs) in the Kherson province in late July, Russian Forces in the area are now estimated to be 25-30. Even though Ukrainian officials claim that Kherson would be liberated by the end of the year, it appears that Ukraine is struggling to assemble forces to achieve the required numerical advantage to mount an all-out offensive operation against a well-entrenched adversary. Some experts have also argued that the much-hyped Ukrainian counter-offensive could even be a feint, drawing Russians towards Kherson and opening up gaps in the Russian line elsewhere that might be exploited.

In the last fortnight, the most striking feature in this defence dominant war of attrition has been the demonstrable vulnerability of ammunition dumps, command posts, air defence units and now airfields. The strike against the Saki air base in Crimea, on 10 August 2022, was an enormous blow to Russian capabilities – with at least nine and possibly as many as 27 aircraft and helicopters



destroyed along with airport facilities and ammunition. This was the first such incident to take place in Crimea since Russia's current invasion of Ukraine began in February. The base is over 140 miles from the closest front line and Kyiv has, officially, refused to confirm or deny that Ukrainians were involved.

Exactly what caused the explosions at the base remains

a source of speculation and Ukraine, if it were responsible, might never officially disclose its methods. A missile could have caused the damage, but Ukraine is not known to have ready access to missiles with that kind of range. Experts point to a range of likely possibilities, including the use of drones, covert forces or partisan saboteurs.

The Intensifying battle in Southern Ukraine has once again raised concern about the safety of the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant (ZNPP). In the early days of the war in March 2022, Russian troops seized control of the plant after a fierce battle that included shrapnel hitting the containment structure of Reactor No. 1. The resulting fire was quickly extinguished and further damage was averted.

Yet, the repeated shelling of the sprawling ZNPP, in the last 10 days, has roused widespread fears. Russia has reportedly used territory around the nuclear power station as a staging ground for attacks on Ukrainian positions. The artillery duels around the power plant stirred the alarm of a radiation risk far beyond Ukraine. Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General of IAEA has informed Security Council about the situation around ZNPP being 'very alarming'. The preliminary assessment of IAEA experts indicates that there is no immediate threat to nuclear safety as a result of the shelling or other military actions. However, "this could change at any moment," Mr Grossi cautioned. While both countries has agreed to a visit by IAEA experts to ZNPP, Russia has imposed conditions, saying routing any mission through Ukraine's capital was too dangerous.

Pelosi Visit to Taiwan – Tracking Geopolitical Aftershocks

As U.S. Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi travelled to Taiwan on August 2-3, China responded with forceful and coercive military, economic, and diplomatic measures. China considered Ms Pelosi's visit as a "manic, irresponsible and highly irrational" act which seems to have usher in a dangerous new era of

hostility between China and America. China's reaction to Ms. Pelosi's visit — the first by a speaker in 25 years — was designed to menace Taiwan, and warn American allies in Asia about supporting Taiwan. Geopolitical tremors of this visit are still unfolding.

China dismissed the US's argument that Pelosi did not represent the executive branch and that the President has no authority over the Congress. It brushed aside the precedent of Newt Gingrich's visit, stating that that happened when the situation was normal. It was convinced Pelosi's visit was a deliberate provocation and yet another calculated instance of the US's undermining One-China policy in coordination with the 'separatist' ruling Democratic Progressive Party.

After the visit, Beijing retaliated by conducting a five-day military exercise that practically surrounded Taiwan. Beijing fired five missiles into waters that are part of Japan's exclusive economic zone, a warning to Japan and the United States about coming to the aid of Taiwan in the event of a conflict. Last week, China wrapped up 72 hours of live-fire exercises that encircled Taiwan and that simulated a blockade of the island. China's air force continues to fly military aircraft on a daily basis across the median line of Taiwan's Strait.



The military exercise was calibrated to echo, yet surpass, those that China conducted during the previous Taiwan crisis, in 1995-96, after the island's then-president visited America. The six areas marked out for live fire were closer to the island than they were back then, and at some points came within 12 nautical miles (22km) of Taiwan's shores, overlapping what it claims as territorial waters and airspace. The unprecedented display of military capability appear to be part of larger Chinese deterrence and signalling efforts to demonstrate its resolve to enforce its One China Principle. In addition, Beijing aims to use the exercises to establish a new status quo in the Taiwan Strait by erasing the notion of the median line that divides the strait.

On August 10, 2022, China published a white paper titled "The Taiwan Question and China's Reunification in the New Era." The white paper sought to convey that despite the escalation of military force against Taiwan, Beijing remains committed to peaceful unification and "one country, two systems". At the same time, it also reflects Beijing's toughened positions against Taiwan and it no longer

contains guarantees that Taiwan can maintain its democracy or military post-unification. The new white paper specifies “use of force would be the last resort taken under compelling circumstances.” This sentence was an addition that was not in the 2000 Taiwan white paper or the 2005 Anti-Secession Law. In addition, the 2022 white paper is missing a host of key items earlier under the framework of ‘one country two systems’.

So far China’s response appears calibrated to advertise its profound displeasure and newfound capabilities, while stopping well short of war. Yet these are probably just the opening salvos. In the meantime, Undeterred by the Chinese reaction, another US parliamentary delegation, led by Senator Ed Markey, reached Taipei on August 14. In response, China has launched a fresh round of military exercises. In the short-term, such instances of tense face-offs are likely to continue and need constant monitoring.

The New Naval Doctrine of Russia - Key Highlights

The Russian Maritime Doctrine, signed into decree by President Putin on 31st July, is the third iteration and supersedes the previous edition issued in 2015. It is the first major policy articulation since Russia’s special military operations in Ukraine, and the document reflects the sharp aggravation of Russia’s relations with the countries of the West.

Doubling Russia’s National Interests from seven to 14, additions include the intention to develop as a great maritime power, the safety of strategically important pipelines, guaranteed access to global shipping routes, development of the Russian Arctic as a strategic resource base and the Northern Sea Route (NSR) as a national transport corridor. The key challenges and threats, as per the doctrine, are the confrontation with the United States and its allies (including



NATO members), which are striving to limit Russia’s access to ocean resources and maritime transport routes, and making territorial claims against Russia.

The new version has prioritised the world’s maritime areas as ‘Vital, Important and other’ based on Russia’s national interests. The Arctic, the Northern Sea

Route, the Sea of Okhotsk and the Russian sector of the Caspian Sea have been identified as the vital area. The list of important areas for ensuring national

interests is also noteworthy; these include the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea, the Baltic and Kuril straits, the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, as well as sea transit areas which are vital to world maritime transport interests. The 2022 edition of the Naval Doctrine has lowered the Atlantic region to third place.

In the Mediterranean basin, an emphasis was placed on strengthening Russia's partnership with Syria, expanding Russia's naval presence in the region, as well as developing relations with the states of the Middle East and North Africa, including the development of military-technical cooperation. The documents also hint at the creation of new logistics centres.

In the Indian Ocean, the document highlights the need to maintain a Russian naval presence in the Persian Gulf for SLOC security including the fight against piracy. India has been upgraded from "friendly ties" to "strategic partnership" and has been identified as a priority for the development of relations

The new Naval doctrine is supplemented by two parts that were absent in the 2015 edition — "Mobilisation preparation and mobilisation readiness" and "Procedure for using the instruments of the national maritime policy to protect the national interests of the Russian Federation in the World Ocean". The part on mobilisation indicates the likelihood of Russian flagged merchant vessels being designated as 'state-owned vessels' during a crisis. The part about the "Procedure for the use of ..." contains provisions on the possibility of using military force in 'vital and important areas' identified in the document. The document highlights the likelihood of conflict in the Arctic due to increased foreign naval presence and attempts to weaken Russia's control over the NSR.

The new Naval Doctrine is strikingly different from the 2015 edition. In the context of worsening international tensions, the establishment of concrete and systematic "red lines" at the level of strategic planning documents seems correct and necessary. At the same time, the Naval Doctrine has become more ambitious and involves enhancing Russian economic engagement and naval presence in various oceans across the globe which would require significant investments, and, importantly, a consistent state policy. Only time will tell 'how and to what extent' Russia will be able to implement this expansive Naval Doctrine.