

Ukraine War: When You Are in a Hole, Stop Digging. Western Media Have Systematically Misrepresented Developments on the Battlefield.

From the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western media have systematically misrepresented developments on the battlefield

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From the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Western media have systematically misrepresented developments on the battlefield. Time and again, major media organizations, including The New York Times and The Guardian, have cited military 'experts' from NATO armies and officials from the US, British and Ukrainian governments—none of whom constitute objective sources—to support the false claim that Ukraine is either winning the war or has battled Russian forces to a standstill.

One of starkest examples of the Western media's dishonesty is the assertion that Russia was forced by Ukrainian resistance to make a humiliating retreat from Kyiv. The *Associated Press* is one of the many media organizations which advanced that narrative, [reporting](#) on April 7 that Vladimir Putin's government had “counted on a quick victory” by attempting to “storm” Ukraine's capital, but that the Russian offensive ‘failed’:

When Russian forces invaded Ukraine from the north, east and south on Feb. 24. President Vladimir Putin counted on a quick victory, similar to its 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula.

The Russian troops that pushed into Ukraine from Moscow's ally Belarus quickly reached the outskirts of Kyiv, only 75 kilometers (47 miles) south of the border, but they got bogged down facing Ukrainian defenses.

After the failed attempts to storm the capital and other big cities in the north, Russian forces tried to encircle and pummel them with artillery and airstrikes. The relentless barrages led to massive civilian casualties and damaged infrastructure, but didn't weaken Ukraine's resolve. Ukrainian forces, meanwhile, successfully used artillery and

drones against Russian convoys that stretched for dozens of kilometers (miles) along highways outside Kyiv. That created massive logistical problems for the Russians.

On March 29, Russia announced a drastic change in strategy, saying it would scale down military activities around Kyiv and Chernihiv, focusing instead on the “liberation” of Donbas.

A quick withdrawal from areas in the north and northeast followed, with forces pulling back to Belarus and Russia for rest and re-supply.

Moscow sought to put a positive spin on what Ukrainian and Western officials described as the failure of the offensive. Russia said the action in the north was intended to tie down and weaken Ukrainian forces there and prevent them from joining troops engaged in the fighting in the east.

Numerous military analysts, including former United Nations weapons inspector Scott Ritter, disagreed with the mainstream narrative of ‘the battle for Kyiv.’ They argued that Russia’s advance on Kyiv was not a genuine attempt to take the city, but a “feint” designed to tie Ukrainian forces down in and around Ukraine’s capital while other Russian forces ‘shaped the battlefield’ in the Donbas—the Russian military’s principal objective.

Among other things, Ritter [pointed out](#) that the Russian columns that had advanced on Kyiv consisted of some 40,000 troops, and that no one with half of a military brain would attempt with so few soldiers to conquer a city of three million people defended by 60,000 Ukrainian troops. According to Ritter, “the so-called ‘battle for Kyiv’ is a clear-cut example of the difference between perception and reality.”

Scott Ritter is not the only military analyst who rejected the West’s claims that Russia had lost the “battle for Kyiv” and was losing the war.

Larry C. Johnson, a veteran of the CIA and the State Department’s Office of Counter Terrorism, [argued](#) that Russian forces had reached the outskirts of the capital with extraordinary speed and that, within the first day of the conflict, Russian forces wiped out all Ukrainian Ground Radar Intercept capabilities and thereby deprived the Ukrainian Air Force of its ability to do air to air intercept.

Five weeks after Russia launched its invasion, Lt. Gen Prakash Katoch, a retired special forces officer from the Indian military, authored an article entitled “[America’s Information War is Self-Delusional](#).” In it, Katoch argued that Russia was winning the war decisively. “The West doesn’t need state media,” he wrote, “it has corporations that own both the state and the media; much more potent and dangerous who together are blowing Biden’s trumpet.”

Seven weeks after Russia launched its invasion, Jacques Baud, a former colonel of the Swiss General Staff and an ex-member of the Swiss Strategic Intelligence, [wrote](#) “the idea that Russia is trying to take over Kiev, the capital, to eliminate Zelensky, comes typically from the West—that is what they did in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, and what they wanted to do in Syria with the help of the Islamic State. But Vladimir Putin never intended to shoot or topple Zelensky. Instead, Russia seeks to keep him in power by pushing him to negotiate, by surrounding Kiev... From an operational point of view, the Russian offensive was an example of its kind: in six days, the Russians seized a territory as large as the United Kingdom, with a

speed of advance greater than what the Wehrmacht had achieved in 1940.”

These and other voices of dissent were systematically excluded from Western mainstream discourse about the state of the Ukraine war.

Then, a strange thing happened.

In early April, Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, blurted out the truth.

As [reported](#) by NBC on April 6, 2022:

Just this week, national security adviser Jake Sullivan stood at the White House podium and read out what officials said was more declassified intelligence, asserting that Russia’s pullout from areas around Kyiv wasn’t a retreat but a strategic redeployment that signals a significant assault on eastern and southern Ukraine, one that US officials believe could be a protracted and bloody fight.

Remarkably, however, the Western mainstream media have largely ignored Sullivan’s admission that “Russia’s pullout from areas around Kyiv wasn’t a retreat but a strategic redeployment.” Supposedly reputable news organizations have continued to peddle the nonsense that Russia’s military attempted to conquer Kyiv and was forced to retreat by Ukrainian resistance.

As recently as June 9, *The Guardian* [published an analysis](#) of the battle for Sievierodonetsk (a battle which Ukraine has essentially lost) in which the authors asserted that “Russia changed its invasion plan in April after its botched attempt to seize the major cities of Kyiv, Kharkiv and Odesa.”

So determined are Western mainstream media to peddle the Ukraine-is-winning fantasy that, even when Western officials tell the truth about the war, the media often ignore them.

Afghanistan veterans get a taste of their own medicine

Shortly after Russia’s invasion began, Western media trembled with excitement upon learning that the renowned Canadian sniper known as ‘Wali,’ a veteran of Canada’s failed mission in Afghanistan, had gone to Ukraine to kill Russians.

According to various reports, Wali is the “[best sniper in the world](#),” “[can provide up to 40 deaths per day](#)” and holds “[the record for the longest sniper kill in history: 3.5 kilometers](#).”

Perhaps it’s just my pacifist sensibilities, but I don’t believe that a soldier who kills ‘up to 40 persons a day’ in an unjust war is a hero. Whatever the legality of Wali’s killing sprees may have been, I tend to view such ‘heroes’ as mass murderers.

Nonetheless, the Western media’s love affair with Wali became so intense that, in March of this year, the Norman Brigade (the international combatants’ brigade of which Wali was a member) [issued a statement](#) noting that media attention around Wali was starting to endanger their mission in Ukraine.

Whether or not you approve of Wali’s (alleged) military exploits, Wali himself [admits](#) that he in fact does not hold the world record for the longest-range kill. He also admits that “the

adrenaline rush” plays a role in his decision to serve in war zones. “I think a lot of military folks are like that,” he added.

To a considerable degree, Wali’s mystique is hype. That became abundantly clear when Wali and his Canadian teammate in Ukraine revealed to the media what they had experienced there.

On May 6, CBC published an [extensive interview](#) of “Shadow,” a former Canadian soldier from Sherbrooke who accompanied Wali in Ukraine. After serving on the eastern Ukrainian front with Wali, Shadow had withdrawn to the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, where he elected to confine himself to humanitarian work. He told the CBC that he would not return to the eastern front because it was “just hell” and he had had “too many close calls” there. As explained by the CBC:

The last two months for Shadow have been a mad kaleidoscope of firefights and near-misses—nothing like the somewhat tame life he experienced over a dozen years in a Canadian uniform.

His first time in combat—ever—saw him thrown into the pitched battle for Irpin, a once-pleasant tree-lined community 20 kilometres west of Kyiv that proved to be the high-water mark for the Russian advance on the capital.

Shadow was tasked with assisting Wali by carrying ammunition and watching his friend’s back. During one Russian assault, the two men were blown out of their sniper’s nest by a shell.

“We got hit by a tank,” Shadow said. “He shelled the building and missed us by, like, three metres. After that, we started to get more small arms fire, and then we got out of the building, and then after that ... a huge firefight.

“I haven’t ... that was my first firefight. The Russians, they were like 50 metres from us, bullets flying everywhere, everywhere. We couldn’t do anything, and they actually tried to surround us.”

According to Shadow, the sniper’s nest was situated in an “[apartment building](#)” which he and Wali had entered for the purpose of targeting Russian soldiers. By using that building to fire upon Russians, Wali and Shadow turned it into a legitimate military target. Shadow does not explain to the CBC journalist (nor does the CBC journalist ask) whether he and Wali took adequate steps to ensure that there were no civilians sheltering in that building before they turned it into a military target.

Later, in the Donbas region in eastern Ukraine, Wali and Shadow narrowly escaped with their lives while attempting, unsuccessfully, to target a Russian tank. Their two Ukrainian colleagues were not so lucky: they were killed by a shell fired from a Russian tank after they ignored Wali’s advice and emerged from their trench to smoke a cigarette.

Some days after Shadow’s interview by the CBC, Wali himself was [interviewed](#) by the right wing, pro-war *National Post*. According to the *Post*, Wali described his experience of the Ukraine war as a “terrible disappointment.” “It was pretty much close calls every week,” he said, adding that his hunting for enemy tanks was often hampered by “the overwhelming Russian forces” he faced.

Tellingly, Wali confessed to the *Post* that, “if I had all the means I had in Afghanistan, it would be slaughter all day long ... it would be easy.” (Who would have imagined that the “slaughter” of human beings could be “easy”?)

Other international combatants in Ukraine have recounted similarly daunting experiences. Former British soldier Aidan Aslin, who was [captured](#) in Mariupol last month, [told the British press](#) about having to cope with a lack of food, no ammunition and relentless artillery bombardment. Ben Grant, a former British Royal Marine and veteran of Afghanistan, [told The Telegraph](#) that the fighting in Ukraine was worse than any he had previously experienced.

After Wali and Shadow revealed their experiences to the world, CIA veteran Larry Johnson offered this [scathing assessment](#) of the Afghan war veterans who had gone to fight in Ukraine:

Watch [this video](#). Afghanistan, US infantry take small arms fire from the building in front of them, call in an airstrike, a bullet appears to strike the ground in the camera field at 2:26, bomb hits at 2:32, Now watch [this video](#). Afghanistan, US infantry in a hollow, some gunfire but pretty relaxed, call in the air force, A-10s arrive at 3:34 and make several passes, loud cheers. There are plenty more videos like this from NATO’s recent wars. Take fire, sit still, call in the air force to blast whoever is shooting at you (collateral damage? Who cares? [Blow up the whole building and everybody in it](#)).

No doubt “Shadow” and “Wali” and the rest of them, remembering their experience in a NATO war, expected to be on the giving end. Instead they found themselves on the receiving end. In their interviews, they describe two front-line experiences in Ukraine. In the first they are setting up a sniper position in an apartment building (not using [civilians as a shield](#), I hope) when they’re knocked out by a tank round. Never saw it coming. In the next story “Wali” learns how to use a Javelin anti-tank missile and the two set off to go tank-hunting. They find two Ukrainian soldiers in a trench and “Shadow” gets in the trench while “Wali” goes off to look at the Russian tank. The two Ukrainians get out to have a smoke—BANG!—when “Shadow” recovers consciousness, one of the Ukrainians is dead and the other dying. The two Canadians apparently decide that that’s enough for them. They never actually saw a Russian through their sniper scope.

What’s going on in Eastern Ukraine right now is something like the two Afghanistan videos but the other way around and on a much larger scale. The Russians inch forward, if they meet resistance, they plaster it with artillery. Inch forward, repeat. It’s slow but it’s destroying the Ukrainian Armed Forces (it’s destruction of the enemy’s fighting power, not territorial gain, that wins wars. Just ask NATO—capture Kabul in six weeks, leave twenty years later in defeat). The daily briefings given by the Russian Defense Ministry mention hundreds of artillery fire missions every day. Ukrainian prisoners speak of continuous artillery fire. “The god of war” Stalin (or was it Suvorov?) called it. [Here](#) is the result of this relentless shelling.

The Western volunteers have no idea and neither do the cable TV “experts.” No one in NATO knows what it’s like to be on the receiving end (“Shadow” and “Wali” and some others know now, however, but it doesn’t look as if they want to re-live the experience).

And that’s one of the reasons why Western coverage of the war is so off-track - the TV

“experts” can only process what’s happening through their NATO-made spectacles. As I explained recently in an article entitled “[NATO is a multi-trillion-dollar fraud](#),” there is a world of difference between fighting the Taliban and fighting a large modern army. The Taliban relied almost entirely on small arms and improvised explosive devices—and yet NATO militaries, which collectively spend over US\$1 trillion per year, were unable to defeat the Taliban in twenty years of warfare in which NATO militaries and their Afghan army proxy employed a vast array of [sophisticated weaponry](#).

Russia’s military, by contrast, is ranked as the world’s [second most powerful military](#). It possesses a vast arsenal, including hypersonic cruise missiles, highly accurate artillery systems, more than 12,000 tanks and nearly 800 fighter jets.

In the Ukraine war, we are witnessing the collective astonishment of Afghanistan war veterans who have spoken proudly of their military exploits in that poor and devastated country, but who have never had to wage war against a large, sophisticated and modern army.

Reality is catching up with the West

Recently, the triumphalist tone of Western discourse about the Ukraine war has become more muted. The disparity between the reality on the ground and the West’s semi-fictional narrative of the war has simply become too obvious. Accordingly, NATO states and the Western mainstream media have begun to prepare the public for Ukraine’s looming defeat.

□Exclusive: Ukraine forces 'outgunned up to 40 to one' by Russian forces
<https://t.co/tvG4tl6bfp>

— The Independent (@Independent) [June 9, 2022](#)

Last week, reports appeared in the British press about an assessment of the war that has been compiled by Western and Ukrainian intelligence services. The assessment is grim, to put it mildly. According to [The Independent](#):

Ukrainian troops are suffering massive losses as they are outgunned 20 to one in artillery and 40 to one in ammunition by Russian forces, according to new intelligence painting a bleak picture of the conflict on the frontline.

A report by Ukrainian and Western intelligence officials also reveals that the Ukrainians are facing huge difficulties responding to Russians shelling with their artillery restricted to a range of 25 kilometres, while the enemy can strike from 12 times that distance.

For the first time since the war began, there is now concern over desertion. The report, seen by The Independent, says the worsening situation in the Donbas, with up to a hundred soldiers being killed a day, is having “a seriously demoralising effect on Ukrainian forces as well as a very real material effect; cases of desertion are growing every week.”

Not only is Russia winning decisively on the battlefield, but arguably, it is winning the economic war as well.

Recently, Wolfgang Münchau, the former co-editor of *Financial Times Deutschland* and the director of Eurointelligence, published a commentary entitled "[Are sanctions making Russia richer?](#)" Münchau wrote:

Three months on, it's time to ask: are the sanctions working?

The answer from the Bank of Russia's balance of payment data for January to April isn't reassuring. It showed that the sanctions are emphatically not working, at least not in the way that they were intended. Russia's current account surplus (roughly speaking: exports minus imports) jumped to an all-time high at \$96 billion—almost four times the same period last year. The total balance of goods and services shows an even wider gap: \$106 billion, treble that of last year.

At this rate, Russia's current account surplus could hit \$250 billion. So the extra money being banked by Russia is almost the same amount as the \$300 billion of central bank assets and foreign currency reserves that were frozen by the West after the invasion.

Sensing that NATO is about to suffer a humiliating defeat—and make no mistake, NATO *is* at war with Russia—some notable figures from the Western political establishment have begun to argue for negotiations with Russia and for major Ukrainian concessions, in order to secure peace.

In late May, former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger [told a stunned audience at Davos](#) that Ukraine should accept giving up part of its territory to reach a peace deal with Russia and end the war immediately.

On June 6, in a [rare public speech](#), Greece's former Conservative Prime Minister Constantine Karamanlis cautioned that a long Ukraine war risked pitting the West against an anti-Western coalition and that "such a convergence... would be an enormous challenge for the West and would portend tectonic changing in the currently acceptable rules of the game and unfathomable consequences." Karamanlis said the EU should take the initiative to conclude the war in Ukraine the soon as possible.

Then, on June 11, Edward Luttwak, a US military strategist and former presidential advisor, gave an [extensive interview](#) on the Ukraine war to *Radio Free Europe* in which Luttwak argued that Ukraine's government should agree to a plebiscite on independence in Luhansk and Donetsk.

Yes, Ukraine has a right to resist Russia's invasion, but should it exercise that right?

I, too, believe that Ukraine's government should negotiate with Russia, and that it should make major concessions in order to secure peace for its people.

In recent weeks, when I have expressed that view publicly, I've sometimes been met with indignant protestations that Ukraine has a right to resist Russia's invasion.

I readily agree that resistance is Ukraine's right, but having the right to resist does not necessarily mean that resistance is prudent or humane.

Ukraine's military is suffering massive losses. The wounded and the family members of the dead will be an enormous burden for Ukrainian society to bear in the years ahead. With

each day the war goes on, that burden will increase, as will the deterioration in Ukraine's devastated economy and the destruction of vital Ukrainian infrastructure. Meanwhile, Russia's military continues to expand its control over the Donbas, and could eventually move on Odessa and permanently deprive Ukraine of access to the Black Sea.

As for the warmongers who reflexively proclaim '[send more weapons](#),' we have no good reason to believe that the transfer of yet more NATO weaponry to Ukraine will carry its forces to victory. The billions of dollars worth of weaponry that NATO states have delivered thus far have not halted the Russian advance, nor have they mitigated the Ukrainian losses to any material degree. Moreover, in twenty years of warfare in Afghanistan, NATO repeatedly employed much of its most sophisticated weaponry, and yet its forces were unable to defeat an adversary that was far less formidable than Russia's military.

The delivery of more NATO weaponry is unlikely to alter the final outcome of this war, but it may well prolong this war, with disastrous consequences for all of Ukraine and, potentially, for the world.

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Featured image: A Ukrainian soldier carries a Javelin anti-tank missile through a trench in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. Photo courtesy the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine/[Facebook](#).

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