



This aerial photograph shows destroyed residential buildings in the village of Bohorodychne, Donetsk region, on February 21, 2023, amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

WAR in numbers

MILITARY LOSSES

According to the latest estimates from Norway, 180,000 Russian soldiers and 100,000 Ukrainian troops have been wounded or killed in the conflict. Other Western sources estimate the war has caused 150,000 casualties on each side. In comparison, some 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed in a whole decade of fighting in Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. Ukrainian soldiers often use the term "cannon fodder" to describe the Russians sent to their death along the front line.

WAR CRIMES

UN investigators have accused Russia of committing war crimes on a "massive scale" in Ukraine — bombings, executions, torture and horrific sexual violence. Around 65,000 suspected war crimes have been reported throughout the war, the European Union's justice commissioner Didier Reynders said. Kyiv alleges Moscow has forcibly deported more than 16,000 children to Russia or areas controlled by Moscow-backed separatists. Several NGOs have condemned Ukraine, meanwhile, for violating the rights of Russian prisoners of war, but on a much smaller scale. The International Criminal Court launched an investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity last year.

CIVILIAN LOSSES



Kyiv said at least 20,000 Ukrainian civilians had been killed. In total, some 30,000 to 40,000 civilians have lost their lives nationwide in the conflict, Western sources say. The United Nations estimates that 21,000 civilians have been killed or wounded in the fighting, but said the real figure was likely much higher. Ukrainian authorities say at least 400 children have been killed. Landmines will also be a huge threat to civilians. Kyiv says 30 percent of Ukrainian territory has been contaminated. Experts warn demining could take decades.

1,500-KM FRONT LINE

The "active" front line runs north to south along 1,500 kilometres (900 miles) of territory, according to Valery Zaluzhny, the commander in chief of Ukraine's armed forces. Moscow's troops occupy almost a fifth of Ukraine, according to figures from the US-based Institute for the Study of War. But Zaluzhny said Ukrainian forces had managed to wrest back some 40 percent of territory occupied after the invasion last year.

WESTERN MILITARY AID



The West was initially reluctant to become too involved, in order to avoid any more direct confrontation between it and nuclear-armed Russia, but little by little it has acceded to most demands. By November, Kyiv's allies had pledged more than 37 billion euros (\$40 billion) in military aid, according to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy. That figure does not include the latest announcements in January that the US, Canada and several European countries will send Ukraine modern battle tanks. But President Volodymyr Zelensky's request for F-16 fighter jets has so far gone unmet.

BATTERED ECONOMY

The World Bank in October said it expected Ukraine's economy to contract by 35 percent in 2022. The Kyiv School of Economics in January estimated it would cost \$138 billion to replace all the infrastructure ravaged by war. In a country famed for its cereal and sunflower oil exports, the war has caused more than \$34 billion in economic losses in the agricultural sector, it said in November. Some 3,000 schools have been affected by the fighting, the Ukrainian government said, as well as 239 cultural sites, according to the UN cultural fund. Rebuilding Ukraine following the invasion would cost an estimated \$349 billion, a joint assessment by the Ukrainian government, the European Commission and the World Bank found in September.

MILLIONS OF REFUGEES

More than eight million Ukrainians have been forced to flee Ukraine since the war broke out, the UN refugee agency said, the largest refugee crisis in Europe since World War II. Neighbouring Poland hosts the largest share of these refugees, with more than 1.5 million of them. More than five million people have been displaced inside the country. Moscow said another five million people had sought refuge in Russia.

FIRST ANNIVERSARY OF UKRAINE WAR

How will it end?

AGENCIES

The Kremlin wanted Russia's invasion of Ukraine to yield a lightning victory, but 12 months on the war is dragging into a stalemate with neither side achieving military breakthrough nor prepared to agree a settlement based on the status quo.

The conflict has expedited the geopolitical changes already in motion. Alliances, worldviews, and energy markets have been

increasing in year two.

They say each side feels that time is on its side and settling now will be a mistake. So far, neither side has signalled any real willingness to negotiate.

The Russian side, after some recent successes in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region, may well be preparing a spring offensive, experts believe.

But Ukraine appears determined to win back lost territory, aided by US and European governments whose support for Kyiv seems to be growing.

It has even made clear its intention to win back control of the Black Sea peninsula of Crimea which Russia annexed in 2014 — an ambition that has sparked some wariness in the West.

However, the western alliance so far has been rock solid and broadly kept on their pledges of support to Kyiv.

But that doesn't mean that the war necessarily ends with a clear Russian defeat, said Liana Fix at the Council on Foreign Relations, another US think tank.

"I think the most likely scenario is Ukrainian gains leading to 'a good enough' victory," she said, followed by "continuous fighting in some territories", as Russia tries to hold on to Crimea.

Russia may have the potential to mobilise large amounts of new soldiers, but they would have to be trained, fed and supplied with equipment — tasks the Russian army has been "really bad at so far in this war", she said.

What type of arms Ukraine manages to get from its western allies will be decisive, said Dimitri Minic at the French Institute for International Relations.

Longer-range artillery, for example, "could allow the Ukrainian army to break the cycle of attack, counterattack and defence, weaken Russia's capacity to recover and obtain a decisive victory", he said.

A "strategic" win, he said, could consist of "splitting the Russian army deployment in

Ukraine in two via Zaporizhzhia", a city and region in southeastern Ukraine.

Zelensky has put forward a 10-point peace plan involving a recognition by Russia of Ukraine's territorial integrity, and a withdrawal of all its troops.

On the other hand, experts say, Russia may "temporarily" accept Ukraine's independence and even a pro-EU and pro-Nato leadership in Kyiv, but only in exchange for a recognition of Russian conquests in Ukraine.

This, however, is a red line Ukraine will never cross, they added.

Another uncertainty concerns nuclear weapons and their possible role in the next phase of the war.

Experts say President Vladimir Putin's announcement to halt cooperation with US under the New START treaty should be understood as another attempt to put pressure on Western countries.

Putin told an audience of political elites that while Russia was stepping away from participation in the treaty, it was not actually tearing the deal up.

They say the suspension does not immediately heighten the risk of nuclear war, unless something dramatic happens.

Electoral events also could have a huge influence over the future of the war, including a general election in Ukraine in October, and next year's presidential vote in the United States.

For this year, US support is assured, but congressional approval of a new aid programme for Ukraine is not a foregone conclusion, Fix said.

Some allied governments in Europe could also face voter fatigue and political opposition against the war if it drags on.

"There will be more difficulty to explain why this war continues," she added.

"We have to accept that in 2023 we need to see some major advances and victories of Ukraine."

ANNEXED TERRITORIES THE FOUR REGIONS REPRESENT ABOUT 20% OF UKRAINE



tested while Europe has experienced its largest refugee crisis since World War II.

Now, apart from Ukraine and Russia, the rest of the world is dealing with acute food shortages, skyrocketing inflation, and the possibility of a nuclear calamity.

So how will the war end?

Analysts fear the conflict sparked by Russia's invasion on February 24, 2022 will not end anytime soon, and that its intensity risks

Key stages of war

FULL-SCALE INVASION

At dawn on February 24, 2022, after repeatedly denying plans to invade Ukraine, Putin announces a "special military operation" to demilitarise and "de-Nazify" the former Soviet country. The West imposes unprecedented sanctions on Russia and progressively ramps them up. The European Union agrees to send weapons to Ukraine — a first for the bloc — and the United States greenlights billions of dollars in military aid. Russian forces make rapid gains on Ukraine's south coast, seizing the Black Sea port of Kherson, close to the Russian-occupied Crimea peninsula, and the port of Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov. Moscow's troops also attempt to encircle Kyiv.

HORROR IN BUCHA

A month into the fighting, having failed to break through to Kyiv, the Russian army withdraws from northern Ukraine to focus on the east and south. On April 2, AFP discovers the bodies of at least 20 civilians, some with their hands tied behind their backs, lying on a single street in the northwestern Kyiv suburb of Bucha. Over the following weeks, hundreds more bodies, many bearing signs of torture, are found in homes,



cellars and shallow graves across the north. Russia is accused of widespread war crimes, which it denies.

THE BATTLE FOR MARIUPOL

On April 21, Russia claims to have taken the southeastern port city of Mariupol, which has been relentlessly bombarded since the start of the war and subjected to a brutal siege. In capturing the city, Russia aims to link up rebel-held territory in the Donbas with the occupied Crimea peninsula to the south. Around 2,000 Ukrainian fighters hold out for nearly a month in the city's sprawling Azovstal

steelworks before being ordered in May by Kyiv to surrender to the Russians to save their lives. According to the Ukrainian government, 90 percent of Mariupol has been razed in the war and at least 20,000 people killed.

UKRAINE FIGHTS BACK

Over the summer, the United States and EU step up their supplies of heavy weapons to Kyiv, allowing it to stage a two-pronged fightback. In the south, Ukrainian forces launch a major offensive to retake Kherson in late August. They follow up in early September with a

lightning counter-offensive around Kharkiv in the northeast, winning back hundreds of towns and villages. With his army losing ground, Putin announces a call-up of some 300,000 reservists. Days later he formally annexes four regions of Ukraine — Donetsk, Lugansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia — after staging local referendums on joining Russia that are dismissed by Kyiv and the West as a sham. On November 9, Russia's forces suffer their greatest setback in the war when they are forced to abandon Kherson.

DARKEST WINTER

In October, Russia changes tack and turns its sights to Ukraine's energy infrastructure, which it targets with repeated barrages of missile and drone strikes. The attacks leave millions without power and heat for hours at a time in the middle of winter. Zelensky repeatedly appeals to the West to send tanks. Germany, which had been wary of escalating the conflict, finally agrees to send some of its powerful Leopard tanks, opening the way for other European countries to do so as well. Biden makes a surprise visit to Kyiv days before the first anniversary of the war and reiterates Washington's "unflinching commitment" to Ukraine's defence.

SOURCE: AFP