

Russia Sinks into the Quagmire of the Ukraine

It appears that Russia underestimated the ability of Ukrainian forces in terms of their will and resilience to fight. Russia was mistaken in believing that Ukrainian forces won't be able to withstand the Russian attack. It was mistaken by seeing the care, caution, patience and restraint shown by Ukrainian President, in the face of Russian provocations. Ukrainian forces didn't even initially respond to Russian military attacks in Eastern Ukraine. So, Russia thought Ukraine doesn't have the ability and the will to fight and hence is not responding to Russian aggression. The Ukrainian President tried his best not to start war with Russia, whilst the shrewd Biden was trying his best to prod the Russian bear into starting a ruinous war within Europe.

Russia underestimated Ukrainian military strength. This underestimation was encouraged by Western military analysts, who began to chime that Russian forces will conquer Kyiv in days. Moreover, Russia was arrogant because of its large numbers and superior military technology. It had support in the ground in Donbas region, whilst Belarus agreed to help Moscow. All this made Putin arrogant, and made him to miscalculate Ukrainian strength, blunting his political thinking.

Russia didn't plan the war well because it expected the war to end in weeks or a few months. Russia's failure in Ukraine is being discussed in military circles, as a lesson and example of massive military logistics failure. In the early stages of the war, Ukrainian forces didn't engage Russian forces directly. Instead, they focused on targeting Russian logistics, which paralyzed Russian military operations.

Russia underestimated the response of NATO, US and Europe. It believed that Europe's energy dependence on Russian oil, and gas, gave Russia leverage over Europe. The Kremlin appears to have miscalculated the extent of NATO's military support for Ukraine. It had anticipated that the US would impose severe economic sanctions. However, it calculated that since it withstood Western sanctions, after it annexed Crimea in 2014, Russia will now be able to withstand similar sanctions. Perhaps, Russia believed it may be able to use German dependence on Russian energy, on the one hand, and French anti-Americanism, on the other hand, to drive a wedge between the US and Europe.

It seems that Putin underestimated US policy and the strength of its political thinking. Russia believed that war will give it leverage against US, which will try to save the American international order and will be forced to negotiate with Russia. Russia will then sign a new comprehensive security arrangement with the US and NATO, which will end up protecting Russian interests in Eastern Europe. It misread that Biden actually wanted to provoke and draw Russia into a quagmire in the Ukraine, whilst the US would not concede anything to Russia. The Kremlin misread that the US saw this as an opportunity to separate Russia from China, by holding down Russia in Ukraine, on the one day, and then using Russian weakness to ask for Russian cooperation against China, on the other hand. It misread that Biden wanted

to burn its rivals in the Old World in a protracted war within Europe, whilst using the Russian threat to force Europe under America's wing.

Of note, the Syrian campaign gave Russia a false sense of grandeur. It thought it is back to where Soviet Union once was, before it was caught in the bear-trap of Afghanistan. Putin aspired to both Russia and US jointly managing world affairs. So Putin thought of Russia as a major power, equal in status to the US. The US humiliation in Afghanistan, the US focus on rivalry with China, US domestic polarization and Russia's role in manipulating the 2016 US elections and Russian cyber-attacks against US private and government infrastructure, all gave Russia false confidence that it is America's equal. It perceived that the US is in decline and perhaps this is the time to exploit US weakness for Russian advantage. However, Russia was greatly overestimating its own strength, as it became stuck in the quagmire in the Ukraine.

It is clear to the Islamic Ummah that the affairs of the world are at the mercy of brutal major powers, who pursue material interests at great cost to humanity. It is the Islamic Ummah alone that will relieve the world of colonialist major powers that roam the world as beasts in the jungle, devouring the weak. The struggle of the major powers today repeats the conflict between the Persians and the Romans before Allah (swt) graced the world with the emergence of Islam as a state, governance and power. Let the Ummah return to its original situation, ruling by all that Allah (swt) has revealed and removing oppression through Jihad in the cause of Allah (swt). It is Islam alone that protects the weak and grants justice to the oppressed, whilst establishing its dominance is an obligation upon the Muslims. So let the Muslims strive to re-establish the Khilafah (Caliphate) on the method of Prophethood, of whose return the Messenger of Allah (swt) gave glad tidings, «ثُمَّ تَكُونُ خِلَافَةً عَلَىٰ مِنْهَاجِ النَّبُوَّةِ» **“Then there will be Khilafah on the method of Prophethood.”** [Narrated by Ahmed].

**Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by
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