

FEBRUARY 2023



As we approach the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine it's time to take stock on what has been an epochal year.

Even 18 months ago, a land war in Europe seemed inconceivable but today we live with its unresolved consequences.

Albany Associates has had a lot to say with in-house commentary and pieces published in the mainstream and academic press.

Trying to capture the really big themes out of all that is no easy task, but, boiling it down to its barest essentials, this is what we think are the top three:

History repeating itself

The character of war changes as new weapons, techniques and tactics come into play, but the nature of war, as the contest of political wills mediated by military violence, remains the same. So maybe it's no surprise that we might feel we've been here before. A war that started with an over-ambitious grab for the enemy's capital city, followed by a brief period of movement before settling down to protracted attrition is about where we are today in Ukraine.

This is remarkably and improbably similar to the circumstances of early Spring 1918 where the potentially decisive German (for which read Russian) offensive kicked off on the 21st of March.

Intense combat followed before the Allied (for which read Ukrainian) counter offensive gained real traction at the Battle of Amiens on the 8th of August, which opened the way to the defeat of Wilhelmine Germany (for which read Putin's Russia). Whether either side can find its Amiens Moment might decide 2023, and the war.

Whether either side can find its Amiens Moment might decide 2023, and the war. Albany chair, Robert Fry, explored this further in this piece for [The Article](#).

We live in an echo chamber too

The standard accusation is that Vladimir Putin lives in an echo chamber where he only receives the sycophantic but self-interested advice of his intimate circle, an assorted crew of kleptocrats and war criminals. In contrast, NATO is open and solid (notwithstanding German economic self-interest masquerading as penitence for the sins of the 20th Century and a French sulk as the European strategic centre of gravity moves East) and confident in the legitimacy of a Just War.

Unfortunately, just about nobody else shares that view. For much of the Global South this is private European grief and little to do with them.

Albany thought pieces surrounding the War in Ukraine

[The Holodomor: Combatting genocide denial through StratCom](#)

[Winter is Coming: The Kremlin's disinformation strategy for winter](#)

[Hell Hath No Fury: Gender dynamics in the Ukraine conflict](#)

[Factchecking Putin's September address to the nation](#)

[Ukraine's independent media in wartime](#)

[The Kremlin's disinformation on food shortages](#)

[Who are the 'Wagner Group'?](#)

[The use of humour in Ukraine's strategic communications](#)

[The Kremlin's fascism narrative](#)

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As much of the Middle East and South/Central Asia hedges its bets and wrings cut price energy deals out of Russia, so a substantial part of Sub-Saharan Africa sees the legacy of colonialism in the behaviour of the West; meanwhile, Latin America has more pressing domestic concerns. Convinced of our own strategic rectitude – alternatively stated, occupying our own echo chamber - we indulge in the fantasy that world opinion is with us, and it's not.

Albany co-founder, Simon Haselock, examined this in his article for RUSI '[Breaking out of the Bubble: Communicating Ukraine's Story in Africa.](#)'

Lead Albany researcher, Joe Morley-Davies, approached it from a different angle in his piece for The Article '[Rebranding our Strategic Rivals in Russia and China: strategy, not semantics.](#)'

What is 'it'?

As part of the recent exchange of Presidential rhetoric, Joe Biden reassured Ukraine that America and the West was with them for "as long as it takes". That's great, but what is the it that he's committing to?

The West has armed Ukraine well enough to avoid defeat but not well enough to facilitate victory; on current form, Ukraine will find its Amiens Moment elusive. In turn, that looks like a recipe for a long, drawn-out conflict that is likely to end with mutual exhaustion – until both sides reconstitute and start round two. The dilemma is perfectly illustrated by the conduct of Western debate which is all about how many Leopard tanks to ship or how much F-16 training to provide.

This is a debate about the means of strategy and not the ends and perfectly inverts the process of conventional analysis. A coherent strategy must proceed with a definition of the desired outcome (the ends and Joe Biden's it) from which is then derived the means and ways to achieve it. This comes with its own dangers and ends that prescribe the defeat of Russia and its eviction from Ukrainian sovereign territory carry a clear risk of escalation. But at least that is sentient strategic choice rather than just hoping for the best.

Robert Fry tries to square the circle of politics and war in his article '[War: no longer politics by other means – Clausewitz, Fukuyama and Ukraine.](#)'

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There's no telling where we'll be in a year from now and perhaps the only constant is that – wherever that is - Albany Associates will have a view on how we got there.



#standwithukraine

**#Слава Україні!,
(Sláva Ukrayíni!)**