

**TALK! OF THE  
WEEK / DECADE**

**2023**

IN REVIEW (PART 1):

THE FAILURE TO:

**EXPECT**

**THE**

**UNEXPECTED**



As the curtain is about to be drawn marking the end of 2023, in reminiscing the major events of the year, your Editor, Jamari Mohtar, thinks three events stand out; the attrition war in Ukraine which becomes the catalyst for the growing clout of the multipolar world as seen also in the expansion of the Brics nation into Brics-10; the rapprochement engineered by China between rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia which has empowered countries in the Middle East to be more independent of their own affairs by eschewing the interference of the sole hegemon of the decaying unipolar world so that they themselves will be in a strong position to ensure peace, stability and prosperity for their own region where oil and gas are in abundance; and the spectacular military victory of Hamas over Israel on Oct 7 which has made the quest for an independent, sovereign Palestinian state the ONLY issue on the table in the Middle East conflict.

# 2023

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- If we were to summarise the major global events of 2023, they all have a seamless theme of the failure on the part of the US and its western allies to anticipate and expect the unexpected.
- Nowhere is this underscored than in the naïve statement made by the US National Security Advisor, Jack Sullivan, in which he gave a broad brush landscape of a quieter Middle East to hone in the point rather defensively that it is not so much American influence in that region is waning; rather a “quieter” Middle East under president Joe Biden has made it possible for the US to focus on other regions.
- Speaking at The Atlantic Festival on Sept 29, Sullivan rattled off a long list of positive developments in the Middle East that were allowing the Biden administration to focus on other regions and other problems.
- These developments, inter alia, include a truce was holding in Yemen (though the US has nothing to do in bringing it about), Iranian attacks against US forces had stopped, and America’s presence in Iraq was “stable.”
- The good news crescendoed with this statement: “The Middle East region is quieter today than it has been in two decades.”
- Eight days later after the speech ... boom! ... the unexpected happened in the Middle East when the Palestinian resistance fighters Hamas launched an unprecedented cross border attack on Israel, killing 1,400 people – about half of them Israeli soldiers – and taking more than 400 people, the majority being civilians as captives to be exchanged for the thousands of innocent Palestinians “rotting” in Israeli jails.
- But the year really began with the other war when the world is reeling from the “expected” incident of state terrorism in the previous December when the Nord Stream pipeline was blasted with C4 explosives.
- The event was expected in the sense that on Feb 7, 2022 just a few weeks before Russia launched its Special Military Operation (SMO) in Ukraine, Biden while standing next to German Chancellor Olaf Scholz in the East Room at the White House, told reporters that “if Russia invades, that means tanks or troops crossing the border of Ukraine again, there will be no longer Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it.”
- Asked how he could be sure, since it would be officials in Berlin, not Washington, who would make the decision, Biden told a journalist: “I promise you, we’ll be able to do it.”



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## THE FAILURE TO: **EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED**

- From the West's perspective, the bombing of Nord Stream in 2022 was expected to be some sort of a clincher that sometime early this year, Russia's foray into Ukraine will be decisively ended as the country will be deprived of massive gas revenues needed to finance the SMO.
- The conventional wisdom or rather conventional foolishness in the west seems to go along this line:
- Russia seems to be living in a world of mirage thinking that its economy won't be "in tatters" with the unprecedented slew of sanctions imposed on it when the fact of the matter is the effect of sanctions will take some time to manifest. So let's speed up the effect by cutting off mercilessly the "jugular vein" of its economy once and for all by destroying the pipeline.
- But instead the unexpected happened – it's the EU countries that are suffering economically as the sanctions boomeranged on them leading to the deindustrialisation of their economies especially Germany which is the country that hosted the Nord Stream.
- This happened because it's cheaper Russian oil and gas that have powered the economic growth of Germany and the EU economies all this while, especially the former with its huge manufacturing base heavily dependent on oil and gas.
- Now one by one, countries in the Eurozone are experiencing negative growth that will lead to a recession, judging by their latest GDP results.
- Here's a sample of reports from two global mainstream media on the gloomy pictures of the Eurozone economies:
- On Nov 14, Reuters reported: "The euro zone appears to be in the middle of another recession but worries about whether definitive growth figures (for 2023) due early next year will have a plus or minus sign in front are missing the bigger picture."
- "The good news is that the 20-nation currency union is set to avoid a deep contraction that could scar firms, households and banks for years. The bad news is that growth is hovering around zero with little out there to fuel a meaningful recovery."
- "Economic headwinds are so strong that next year will also be challenging and fading growth potential suggests the euro zone would struggle to expand much more than 1% even with a robust rebound."
- "Deep structural problems mean Europe is bound to trail most other big economic areas for years to come."
- The same gloomy tone can also be discerned in a CNN report of October 31: "The euro area economy risks falling into recession later this year after official data Tuesday showed that output shrank slightly in the third quarter."
- "Gross domestic product across the 20 countries that use the euro fell 0.1% in the July-to-September quarter compared with the previous three months, according to an initial estimate published by Eurostat, the European Union's statistics office."



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- “The dip follows a rise of only 0.2% in the April-to-June quarter and highlights the fine line between contraction and growth in the eurozone. GDP was stagnant in the final three months of 2022 and the first quarter of this year.
- “The big picture is that the eurozone is struggling. It has only grown by 0.1% over the past year, and the timeliest business surveys consistently point to activity declining at the start of [the fourth quarter],” Jack Allen-Reynolds, deputy chief eurozone economist at Capital Economics, wrote in a note.
- “The economy, he added, will “remain sluggish” whether or not the eurozone suffers a technical recession, defined as two consecutive quarters of falling GDP.”
- In contrast Russia is expected to have a growth of 3.5% for the whole of 2023 which conclusively proves that it has won the sanctions war.
- Notice there is a form of “censorship” in these two reports. The boomeranged effect on the Eurozone economies of the shock and awe sanctions on Russia is not mentioned at all.
- Ditto too the boomeranged effect on the Eurozone economies of the Nord Stream pipeline being blown up into smithereens was explicitly ignored.
- The reason for this omission is easy to grasp.
- Admitting the boomeranged effect of the shock and awe sanctions and the destruction of Nord Stream pipeline on the economies of the Eurozone countries are the two deadly sins of news reporting in the global mainstream media because that is tantamount to an admission that Russia has already won the sanctions war imposed on it by the collective west.
- This is where the global mainstream media which is singularly owned by entities in the collective west that have a strong connection with political Zionism is in cahoots with the government in the EU countries in spreading Russophobia as an important element of the proxy, hybrid war of the collective west against Russia.
- It is only recently that the reports on the Ukraine war by the global mainstream media have finally caught up with the reports by the Russian media and the independent bloggers and independent news channels proliferating on the internet.
- This is a good sign although there are still pockets of holdouts among some journalists and their senior editors in the global mainstream media who are still refusing to come to term with the inevitable victory of Russia in the war, and are bent on prolonging the war via their news reports and op-eds.
- These are the cruelest people on earth who love war like enjoying a computer war games without giving a darn to the hundreds of thousands of people (Ukrainian and Russian soldiers) that will be sacrificed in order to fulfil their lust.
- Also dangerous is the subtle implication in these omissions that the US and the collective west are not giving up on Ukraine and intend to prolong the war despite the sorry state of affairs Ukraine is in now on the battlefield, and in spite of the destructive effect of the Ukraine war on the EU economies.

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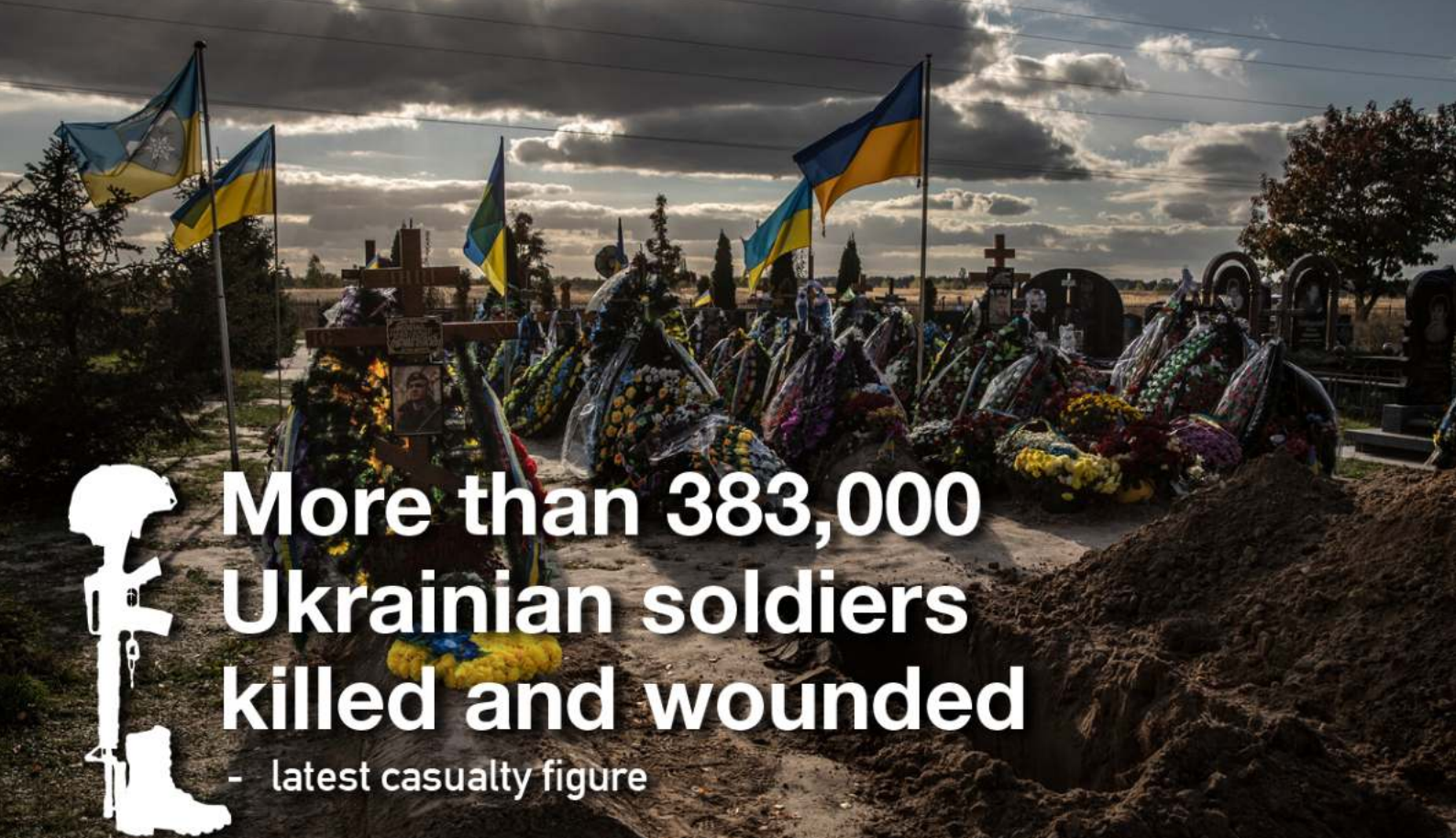
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# More than 383,000 Ukrainian soldiers killed and wounded

- latest casualty figure

- A few weeks after the commencement of hostilities in February 2022, negotiation to end the war started in March at the behest of Ukraine to which Russia agreed.
- After a few rounds of talks at Belarus and Turkiye culminating in the final round at Istanbul in May, an agreement was hammered and signed which met the satisfaction of both parties.
- However, at this point the then British PM Boris Johnson torpedoed the peace deal when he visited Kiev and instigated the comedian president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky not to agree to it and promised him the west's unlimited financial and military assistances to Ukraine "for as long as it takes" in order to ensure the strategic defeat of Russia by the US and its allies.
- It is through the courtesy of people like Johnson that the war was prolonged causing untold miseries for Ukraine when its war casualties to date has exceeded 383,000 soldiers killed and wounded, and a big chunk of its military hardware supplied by the collective west destroyed.
- The International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court should explicitly introduce a new category of war crime and crime against humanity that will convict individuals who are not directly involved in a war but play a pivotal role in sabotaging a peace deal that prolongs the war so that Johnson and his ilk could be put on trial.
- Being confident of the unlimited financial and military assistances from the collective west as promised by Johnson, Zelensky was arrogant enough to pass a law in parliament prohibiting him from negotiating with Russia as long as Vladimir Putin is the president of Russia.
- Because of this arrogance, Russia had hardened its stance not to negotiate with Ukraine and instead will only negotiate with the US, as it sees Zelensky as a mere puppet of the US.
- The only negotiation with Kiev that Russia accepts is one based on the capitulation of Ukraine.
- Had Zelensky ignored Johnson and proceeded with the peace deal, Ukraine would have lost only Crimea which is the status quo since 2014, as the fate of the two separatist republics of Donetsk and Lugansk would be a subject for future discussion.
- Despite the recent failure of the Ukrainian counter-offensive in June which has become a lost cause by September, negotiation to end the conflict is put on the back burner by the US, while the US and its allies are clamouring for an off-ramp frozen conflict as a tactical pause in order to continue the fight for another day.
- The Ukraine war is about to reach its endgame in a matter of just a few more months, with the unanimous verdict of almost all analysts, this time even those from the west who are rabidly pro-Ukraine, that Ukraine is going to lose BIG time.



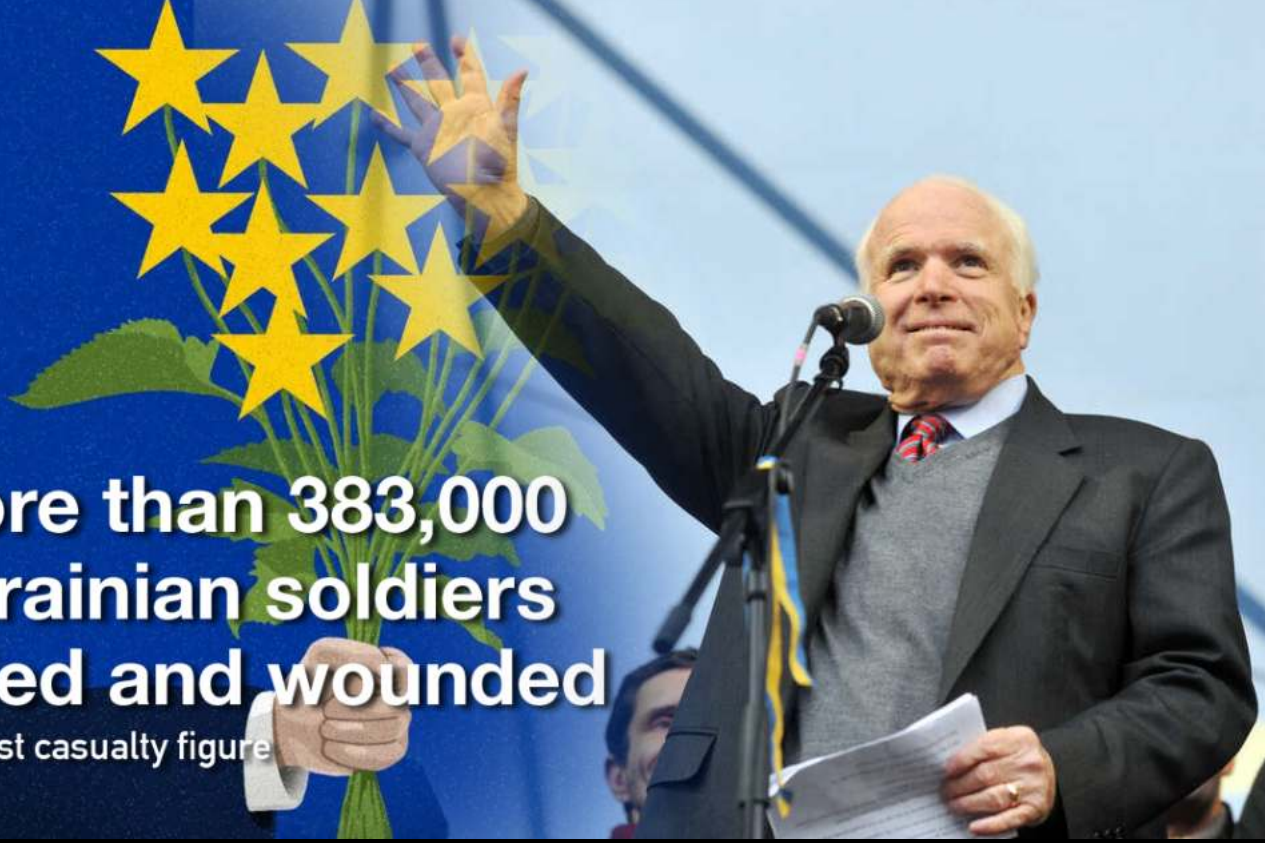
**More than 383,000  
Ukrainian soldiers  
killed and wounded**  
- latest casualty figure

- Some even say that the endgame could be sooner than expected as the war is about to end its phase of the “beginning of the end” ever since the failure of Ukrainian offensive in June and is now fast approaching the stage of the “end of the beginning”.
- The “beginning of the end” refers to a phase in which the dull ache of realisation that things are coming to an inevitable conclusion and are unlikely to end well is beating loudly in our silent heart, while “the end of the beginning” is likely to be accompanied with a great sense of anticipation for a new, dynamic phase that is just emerging.
- We are all very familiar with the term “beginning of the end”, but not “end of the beginning”. The latter phrase is reputedly coined by the pro-Zionist former prime minister of Britain, Winston Churchill, when on November 10, 1942 in a speech concerning the Second Battle of El Alamein, he said:
  - “Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.”
- To summarise, the speech was made a little over three years into the Second World War, and a year and a half after the end of the Blitz (the bombing of England by the Nazi). The “end of the beginning” was the first major victory for the Allies in the war.
- Your editor believes this is where the Russia’s Special Military Operation in Ukraine is heading today. Nobody knows when the end would be, but the situation on the ground is heralding the “end of the beginning” for sure.
- Moreover Russia has hardened further to its maximalist stance.
- With or without negotiation, it will ensure Ukraine as a state will collapse because it sees that as the only way for it to achieve the objectives of the SMO.
- These objectives are the neutrality and demilitarisation of Ukraine by not joining Nato or the EU, and its denazification to get rid of the neo-Nazi militia which has been integrated into the Ukrainian army, and is bent on the genocide of the Russian speaking people in the Donbas.
- The Ukraine war can be considered as the first war in the nascent multipolar world, as the unipolar world with its sole hegemon presiding over a very subjective rule-based world order came tumbling down.
- This was how the decaying unipolar world as represented by the US and its western allies responded to the outbreak of the war – an unprovoked invasion of Ukraine by Russia.
- And most world leaders at that time suddenly became so stupid in agreeing with this, without even questioning why would Russia be so foolish enough as to invade another country for no rhyme or reason.
- These foolish world leaders did not see the deviousness of the US and the collective west’s argument when the context of the invasion is conveniently omitted by the US and its allies.



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- latest casualty figure



- Even in a court of law, when one is charged with an offence, as Russia is purportedly charged with an offence of unprovoked aggression, a trial would ensue where all the contexts relevant to the offence are brought to the fore so that a reasonably just and proper decision on the offence can be made.
- This context is missing in the brain of most world leaders when they decided to condemn Russia for the invasion.
- The Ukraine war did not merely start for no rhyme or reason on Feb 2022 as alleged by the US bully. It started eight years before that in Feb 2014 when a democratically elected president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, was brought down by a colour revolution – the Maidan Revolution – instigated by the US.
- On December 2013, the US sent a bipartisan team of Republican Senator John McCain in company with Democratic senator Chris Murphy to work out the crowds in Ukraine, raising their emotion to a fever pitched when the former addressed the crowds by saying:
  - “Ukraine will make Europe better and Europe will make Ukraine better. We are here to support your just cause: the sovereign right of Ukraine to determine its own destiny freely and independently. And the destiny you seek lies in Europe.”
- Then, there was a recorded phone conversation leaked on Feb 4, 2014, between then US assistant secretary of state Victoria Nuland and the US ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt discussing their wishes for a Ukraine transition to an interim Government, and specifically, the roles in which they hoped to see the prominent opposition leaders of Ukraine played their part in bringing about a regime change.
  - These were clearly meddling in the internal affairs of a sovereign country in order to bring about a regime change, a favourite pastime of the US administration.
  - Shortly after Yanukovich’s overthrow, Ukraine’s eastern and southern regions erupted with pro-Russia unrest, with leaders of the Russian-speaking eastern regions of Ukraine declaring their continued loyalty to Yanukovich.
  - Whereas western Ukraine is primarily inhabited by ethnic Ukrainians, the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine comprising the oblasts of Donetsk and Luhansk (collectively known as the Donbas), Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia are heavily populated with Russian speaking people and Ukrainians of Russian descent.
  - While there is a strong affinity between the people of southern and eastern Ukraine with Russia, making them in general pro-Russia, the people in western Ukraine on the other hand, exhibits a strong affinity with the eastern European countries making them pro-West.



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# Russia's Hardening Stance

- While this divide between eastern Ukraine and western Ukraine was already there during the Soviet time, perhaps going back even to ancient time, it did not pose a big problem under a union structure with a strong central government which the Soviet Union was, as opposed to a looser, decentralised federal structure of government like the US.
- With the break-up of the Soviet Union which was anchored on Russian leadership although some Soviet leaders like Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev among others are Ukrainians, Ukraine became an independent state in 1991.
- Again this is not a big problem as the Russian Federation being the successor of Soviet Union has accepted the changing reality on the ground as a fait accompli of the break-up of an empire.
- After all they are both united by being the descendants of the ancient Eastern Slav people.
- The only problem being that historically people in western Ukraine around Lviv and the surrounding areas are the descendants of the Western Slav ancestry, which explains the dichotomy in their affiliation with Russia vis-à-vis Europe.
- This is also the basis of the hardening of Russia's recent position on negotiation.
- In one of his recent speeches, Putin sees the Russians, Belarussians and Ukrainians as three distinct people from the same stock (East Slavs) that made up a trune of the collective known as the Russian civilisation.
- These three distinct people should have never been separated. And that was why Putin was wondering on why when the Bolshevik Lenin drew up the boundary of Russia in the aftermath of the First World War, he included western Ukraine as part of Russia when the people there trace their ancestry from the West Slavs.
- This implies that a minimalist condition on the part of Russia if all the objectives of the SMO are met, is for a smaller Ukraine (the western part) to exist independently as a buffer state that is totally neutral.
- Realising the latest situation on the supremacy of the Russian military on the battlefield, the US and its western allies seem agreeable to this provided the smaller independent Ukraine state is allowed to join Nato or EU.
- This clearly contradicts one of the SMO's objectives – the neutrality of Ukraine via its demilitarisation and hence, the Russians are expected to disagree with it.
- But judging from the recent statements of the political leadership of Russia, it seems that the die has been cast.
- Because of the collective west's support for Ukraine that has prolonged the war which has also caused the death of Russian soldiers, though relatively not as many as the Ukrainian soldiers, Russia has hardened its position to a maximalist one.
- The collective west has always recognised this dichotomy between eastern and western Ukraine and exploited it to the hilt when they rejected then President Yanukovich's stance of maintaining economic cooperation with both Russia and the EU by becoming a member of both the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU or EEU).



# Russia's Hardening Stance

- The EAEU is an economic union of five post-Soviet states located in Eurasia. It has an integrated single market and is a free trade bloc that includes Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.
- It fills the northern Eurasian landmass from the borders of Eastern Europe to Western China.
- It was when the EU gave its ultimatum to Yanukovich which was in the nature of “you’re either with us or against us” that the former president of Ukraine stood firm for an economic cooperation with Russia.
- This firm stance of Yanukovich cost him the presidency when the plan to depose him via the Maidan Revolution was put into action by the neo-cons in the event of Ukraine joining the EU is rejected.
- Hence it is not a surprise that in the wake of a regime change, the new pro-west Ukrainian government brutally suppressed the separatists of eastern Ukraine by co-opting the far right neo Nazi militias to fight on its side.
- But this resulted in the regions hardening their separatist position in wanting to break away from Ukraine and form a republic of their own.
- In response to all these developments, Russia sent its army to Ukraine in Feb 2014 to protect the Russian speaking people in the Donbas from this brutal suppression which Russia saw as a genocide.
- The intervention by Russia was expected by the US and its western allies but in its arrogance the collective west thought it wouldn’t make a difference because the regime change that had happened cannot be undone.
- Moreover the west had committed a fatal flaw in perceiving that the Russian army has always been weak since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, such that it went on a binge of Nato “rampage” by co-opting many Eastern European countries that were formally part of the Soviet Union into its fold.
- This has created a European security architecture that Russia sees as an existential threat.
- But in a classic maskirovka (deception) move, Russia dealt an unexpected blow to western ego when its 2014 intervention resulted in the capture of Crimea where the Russian Black Sea Fleet is headquartered.
- In subsequent move, Crimea was annexed by Russia via a referendum.
- To this day, the arrogant west never forgive Russia for this and that’s why in the current war, the recapture of Crimea featured prominently in their battle plans and strategies to the point of becoming an obsession.
- In Part 2 of this special Year-Enders edition of Let’s Talk! we’ll take a look at events leading up to the unexpected onslaught on Israel by the Palestinian resistance Hamas on October 7.

Read more on what happened in 2023 in the Ukraine war:

[Biden vows to stop Nord Stream 2 pipeline to Europe if Russia invades Ukraine](#)

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# Russia's Hardening Stance

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IMF warns of up to 7% global GDP loss due to Ukraine conflict

Zelensky's 'peace formula' absurd – Kremlin

Ukraine conflict has exposed truth about Western military equipment – Putin

No NATO invite, no elections, failed counteroffensive: Key quotes from Zelensky's press conference

Russian leadership assesses Ukraine conflict: Key takeaways

NATO troops directly involved in Ukraine conflict – Russia

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Ukraine won't join EU soon – Irish PM

Russia estimates total Ukrainian losses

Russia has the initiative in Ukraine conflict – Putin

Ukrainians tell MP they would give up citizenship to avoid conscription

US, Germany and Ukraine oppose UN anti-Nazism resolution

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No 'magic pot' of money for Ukraine – US State Dept

Putin says Moscow can 'move forward' despite West sanctions, isolation

Putin: Ukraine war a 'great tragedy' resulting from Western desires

Ukraine must copy 1944 Nazi Germany – retired US general

Ukraine - another lost US / NATO war with no regrets

EU accession a 'symbolic victory' for Ukraine to cover up 'real fatigue'

Ukraine support at 'lowest point' as US prioritizes Israel

Zelensky's Israel trip 'up in the air', decries Gaza war takes away focus from Ukraine

It's Time to End Magical Thinking About Russia's Defeat

Reality is stronger than "magical thinking"

Russia's War Is the End of Magical Thinking



# Russia's Hardening Stance

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Regards,  
Jamari Mohtar  
Editor, Let's Talk!

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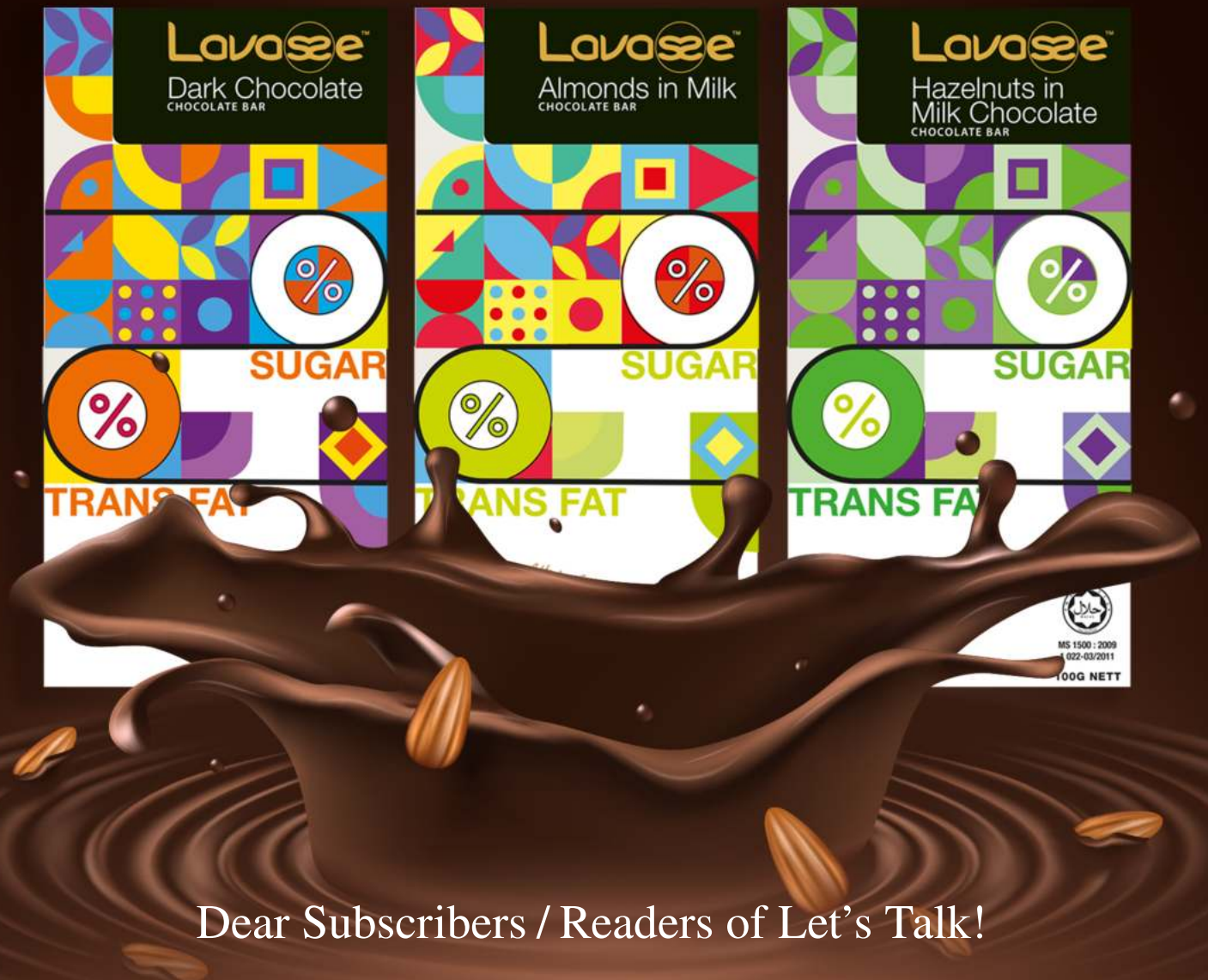
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