

The Maritime Domain of the Russian-Ukrainian War:

Implications, Considerations and Lessons for Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy

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Outline

- Sea Power: Purpose and Strategies
- Ukraine's Seapower Strategy
- Russia's Seapower Strategy
- Phases of the Maritime Conflict
- General Observations
- Caveats
- Implications, considerations and lessons for Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy

Sea Power: Purpose and Strategies

- Seapower:
 - Military power developed to operate in/from the sea
 - Informs military strategy – the threat or use of violence to achieve policy objectives (Gray)
 - “the capacity to influence the behavior of other people or things by what one does at or from the sea” (Till)
 - Sea as a medium; importance in what it connects. **Sea Lanes of Communication** (Corbett)
 - Use/denial goals vs occupation goals
 - Degrees of control (Till; Corbett) > Command of the Sea (Mahan)
- Strategies:
 - **Sea Control** - secure one’s use of the sea for own purposes and deny the opponent such an ability
 - **Sea Denial** – Denying the use of the sea for one’s opponent without trying to secure the use of the sea for one’s own purposes
 - Primary difference is the objectives it aims to achieve; success determined by achieving objective, not comparing asset losses

Ukraine

*Considerations
underpinning/informing/guiding
Seapower Strategy*

Grand Strategic Objective

- Remain an independent actor able to choose its political, economic and security future
- Avoid being vulnerable to perpetual predation

Grand Strategy

- Expel Russian influence & presence in country; whole of society resistance; military counter-attack
- Ascertain Western support and eventual inclusion in economic-security pacts

Maritime Domain Goals

- Inhibit Russian navy ability to directly support land operations
- Neutralize Russian naval threat to seaborne commerce; striking country

Force Disposition

- Small fleet of fast attack craft
- mine laying capabilities
- land-based anti-ship cruise missiles
- Air assets (including UAVs)
- Western transfers of ASCMs/USVs/patrol craft

Seapower Strategy: *Sea Denial*

- Too weak to contest for control
- Force Russian Navy away from coastline
- Demonstrate resolve even while outmatched

Grand Strategic Objective

- Subordination of Ukraine to Russian geo-strategic preferences
- Foreign acquiescence of a Sphere of Influence in its 'near-abroad'

Grand Strategy

- Military invasion to establish puppet regime, full take-over, cleave off more territories
- Ensure Ukraine remains in a state of perpetual predation via a 'frozen conflict' if unable to complete its invasion

Maritime Domain Goals

- Destroy Ukraine as a maritime state
- Creation of land-bridge of Russian/pro-Russian centres along Ukrainian coast
- Remain predominant regional seapower; prevent further NATO-ization in Black Sea

Force Disposition

- Modern frigates
- Kilo-class submarines
- Amphibious/landing ships
- Air assets; air defence units
- Naval infantry

Russia

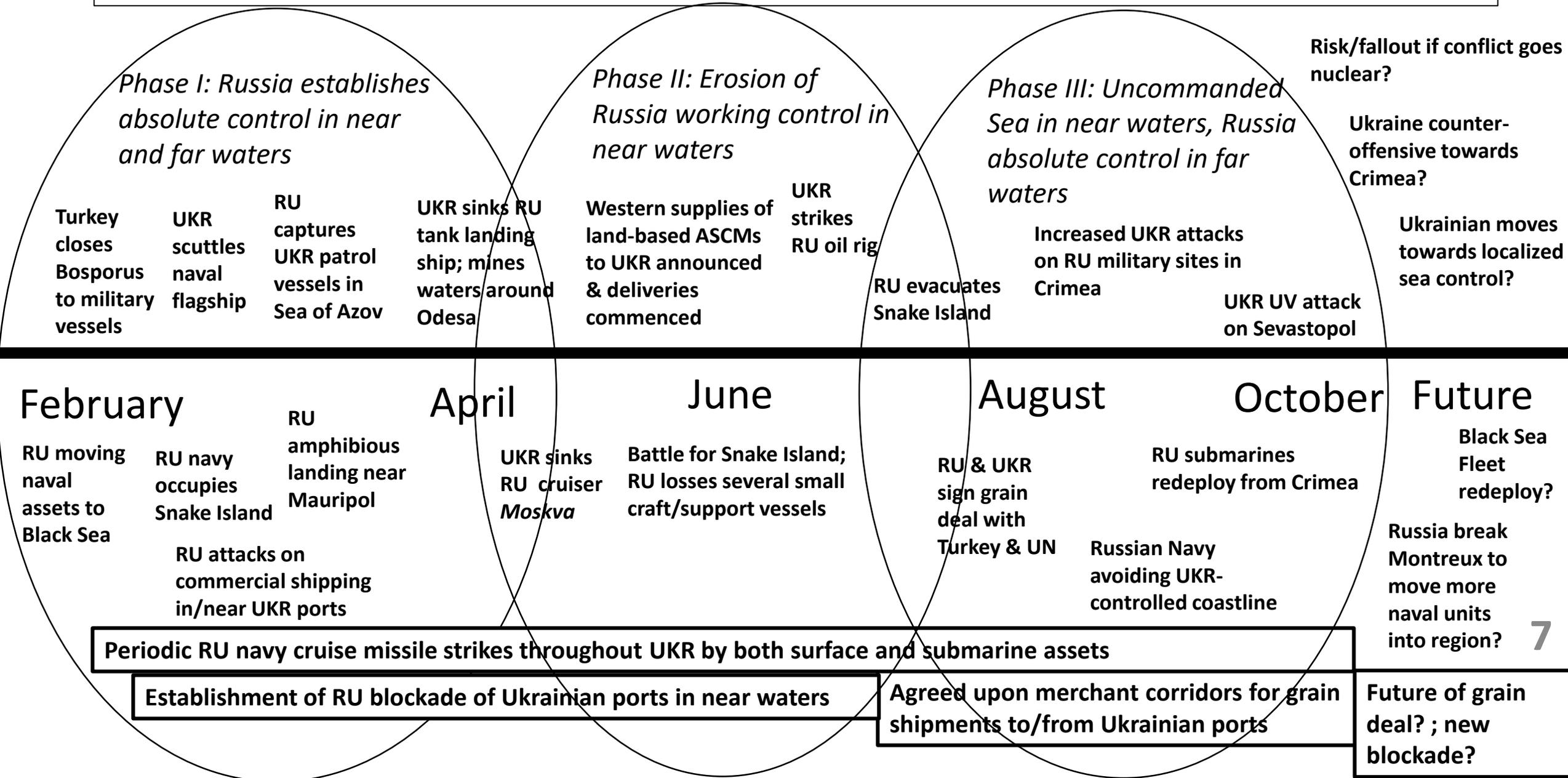
*Considerations
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Seapower Strategy*

Seapower Strategy: *Sea Control*

- Establish control in near and far waters
- Support operations on land; blockade Ukrainian ports/commerce; strike throughout Ukraine
- Deter foreign civilian and military shipping from area



Phases of Maritime Conflict During 2022 Russian-Ukrainian War



General Observations

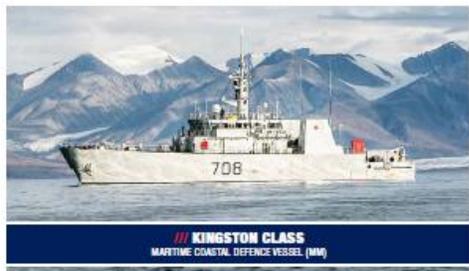
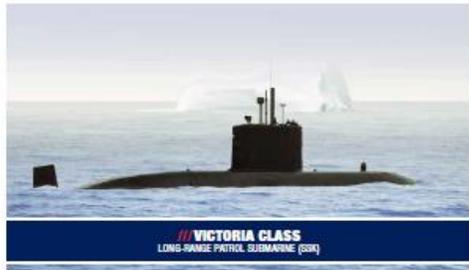
- Ukraine
 - Increasing effectiveness of the sea denial strategy
 - But have lost much of its maritime geography and industry; navy destroyed
 - Unable to challenge RU sea control in far waters from the sea (something to think about for future UKR fleet designs)
 - Possibility of future attacks on Sevastopol, including from the sea
 - Attempt to gain localized sea control along coastline?
- Russia
 - Navy increasingly operating from a self-preservation mentality
 - 'Kalibrization' of their purpose in the war
 - Continue operations from/at far waters, retain predatory/blockading capability
 - Questionable ability/usefulness to assist in defending against any UKR drives towards Crimea/Sea of Asov coastline?
 - Black Sea as possible demonstration site of nuclear weapons (Black Sea Fleet not nuclear armed)

Caveats

- Idiosyncrasies of the conflict
 - Nature of the maritime geography (enclosed sea)
 - Nature of belligerents (UKR small, weak seapower; RU large, somewhat weak seapower)
 - Importance of SLOCs in overall conflict (not primary vector of conflict; centrality of land-based supply lines)
- Avoid declarations of new and/or ending of military eras, strategies or platforms
 - Many issues not new, but part of long-emerging trends
 - Lessons/parallels in seapower history and RCN specific history
- Some issues specific to RCN and some more broadly with respect to the West
 - Some based on personal experiences; unofficial conversation with former colleagues

Implications, Considerations and Lessons for Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN)

- Canada as a maritime state
- The RCN
 - Forces: modest-sized fleet of blue water and coastal water assets; undergoing large scale recapitalization
 - Operations: domestic and international; sovereign/control operations, regional presence operations; UN-sanctioned; allied commitments
 - Strategy: Expeditionary mindset, working in conjunction with allies/partners in providing public goods globally and preparing for conflict/contingencies



Implications, Considerations and Lessons for Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy

- *Strategy*

- Primacy bias in Western seapower thinking/strategy – unrealistic, dangerous, undesirable?
- Studying competitive states – what do they think (including about us)?
- Technology ≠ strategy
- Prioritization of China and Russia as competitive powers of concern
- Institutionalize seapower studies

- *Operations*

- Networked-centric warfare ('inter-operability') in ever crowded, contested littorals
- Symmetric *and* asymmetric threats
- Operating in environments where one does not have air-sea supremacy and does not intend to fight for it
- Protection of civilian commerce, mine detection/clearing, presence operations in Black Sea; maritime critical infrastructure

Implications, Considerations and Lessons for Canada and the Royal Canadian Navy

- *Assets*
 - 'Canadianization' v. 'Allianceization' of naval assets
 - Submarines (no replacement for *Victoria*-class currently)
 - Uncrewed systems (in service, but doctrinal and organizational issues; force protection against such platforms)
 - Mine clearance/disposal (no replacement for *Kingston*-class but clearance diving capability)
 - Shipbuilding capacity & basing
 - Dealing with losses
- *Training*
 - Damage Control (mentality, not just technical competencies)
 - OPSEC in OSINT world (using it and protecting against it)
 - Involved in rebuilding of the Ukrainian Navy? (UK taking the lead)
 - Facilitating training/operations of others (similar to WWII type arrangements?)

Conclusion

- Think about possibility of conflict & how to respond, what 'asks' will be made of Canada in this more great power rivalry-oriented world
- More focus on warfare/conflict spectrum, along with continued diplomatic and constabulary duties and functions
- Seapower – new, additional capabilities or best utilize what already exists?
- Not being caught flat-footed; having options in using seapower and how this contributes to national interests