

## **THE WAR IN UKRAINE COMPLETES 100 DAYS**

**Rosendo Fraga**

**Director of CARI's Foreign Relations and Armed Forces Committee**

After one hundred days of the war in Ukraine, the balance shows that it has taken place in three stages. The first was dominated by the Russian failure to achieve rapid military success by seizing the capital and establishing a pro-Russian Ukrainian government. This strategy had as reference 2014, where Ukraine's lack of military reaction to defend Crimea was evident, and its inability to quell the pro-Russian secessionist attempt in Donbass. This first month was the moment in which Washington and Brussels bet on the fall of Putin, displaced from his own circle. The Ukrainian resistance was surprising as well as the leadership of President Volodimir Zelensky, who rejected the US offer to install a Ukrainian government-in-exile in Warsaw or London to lead the resistance. In the second stage, the situation was characterized by the regrouping of forces by Putin and dropping the search for regime change in Ukraine, in the concentration of military efforts in the Ukrainian east and south, with the aim of achieving independence of Donbass and control of the Ukrainian sea coast, with a corridor under its control from Crimea to Transnistria. At this stage, NATO organized the supply of weapons and military equipment to Ukraine, assuming that its victory was possible. In the third month, the situation was characterized by the Russian counterattack that materialized in the gradual advance in the two directions that it had assumed and the domination of the coasts of the Azov and Black seas - with the exception of the city-port of Odessa -, and the successful advance in the Donbass.

The next stage in analytical terms corresponds to the fourth month of the conflict that began on May 24, characterized by the probable Russian victory in obtaining the objectives set after the first defeat. After 100 days of war, President Zelensky acknowledged that Ukraine had already lost 20% of its territory and was suffering from the deaths of between 60 and 100 soldiers per day and had 400 to 500 wounded soldiers. If this trend continues, the situation may become untenable for Ukraine in a few months. The war seems to have recovered its initially planned rhythm. On January 24 - just a month before the invasion - Joe Biden, Boris Johnson and Stoltenberg publicly stated that if the

invasion took place, Russia would be subjected to unprecedented economic and financial isolation, a cut off in access to science and technology, and an "asymmetric war" in Ukraine, giving Chechnya as an example ("Greater Chechnya" for Johnson). That is, a prolonged war that would "bleed Russia dry". The situation was not different from this forecast when the 100 days of war were completed. In turn, the expectation that Russia would carry out the war based on recent experiences such as that of Chechnya and Syria, has been fulfilled in the last two months. The fencing and siege of Ukrainian cities (as in the case of Mariupol and others) have many points of contact with the heavy shelling and artillery in Grozny, the Chechen capital, which was taken after being devastated, and the siege and taking of Aleppo, the main city of Syria, which took the Russian army 4 years. From this perspective, the course the war has taken is not so surprising.

In the fifth month of war that begins on June 24, the relevant event will be the NATO summit to be held in Madrid on June 29 and 30. It will be crucial in determining whether the strategy of Washington and Brussels continues to pursue the dismantling of Russian military capacity as its main objective. As Biden expressed on several occasions and the head of the Pentagon, General Austin, confirmed, this implies a prolonged war, an increase in military assistance to Ukraine and assuming that this decision implies an increase in the economic cost of the war (with the increase of energy and oil prices) and the possibility of increasing the divisions that emerge within NATO. Germany and France, on the one hand, move towards an agreement that ends the war, and the United States and the United Kingdom, on the other, pursue the objective of nullifying Moscow's military capacity. The timely warnings made by Henry Kissinger at the Davos Forum acquire renewed validity in this scenario. In addition, the entry of Finland and Sweden into the Western alliance, which is perhaps the central operational point to be resolved at this Summit, continues to be held back by the veto of Turkey, the only Muslim country in NATO and which has the second armed force of the western alliance in terms of troops, after the United States. At the same time, Erdogan has launched a military offensive in Syria against Kurdish militias, while demanding that Helsinki and Stockholm confront his support for Kurdish exiles.

In conclusion: one hundred days after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, it has developed in three stages: the Russian offensive on Kyiv, which failed; the

regrouping of the Moscow forces, and their counteroffensive; in the fourth, the Russian success in completing the independence of Donbass and the seizure of the entire Ukrainian coast on the Azov and Black seas is foreseen. Lastly, going forward, the war scenarios do not differ substantially from those imagined at the end of January, and the NATO Summit taking place in Madrid will test Western cohesion in the future.