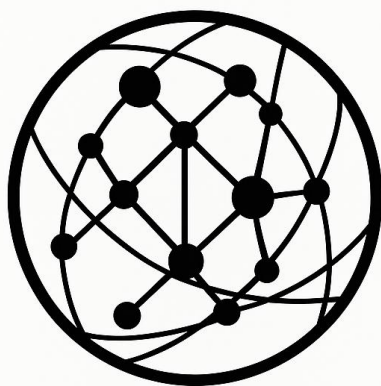


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The Reconfiguration of War Power:  
Cross-Theater Coupling, Strategic Capacity, and Asymmetric War Termination

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Key Judgments

- Cross-war connections are observable; net cross-war gains are not automatically established. Shared suppliers, licenses, ships, or expertise should be traced through receipt, conversion, effect, and feedback before claims of strategic reinforcement.
- An early Ukraine ceasefire would change the distribution and timing of demand, not switch off the Ukrainian war system. Replenishment, European deterrence, occupation risk, reconstruction, and security guarantees may absorb nominally released resources.
- The four principal cases occupy unequal proof stages: Shahed-Geran demonstrates historical industrial conversion; Ukrainian experts demonstrate deployed knowledge; PAC-3 demonstrates allocation pressure; Russian diesel shows legal permission and reported loading without confirmed U.S. receipt or net fiscal gain.
- Russia’s hypothetical conquest of Ukraine does not mechanically imply a Baltic invasion. NATO Article 5 obligations apply to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, whereas occupation costs and Russian force reconstitution are major intervening conditions.
- Limited ceasefires and prolonged confrontation can coexist. The reported Oleshky humanitarian pause and a possible year-long Iran standoff illustrate asymmetric cessation, not an established end to either conflict.

Executive Summary

The strategic problem is not whether the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East touch the same supply chains, technologies, policies, and markets. They do. The question for decision-makers is whether a change originating in one conflict actually alters what forces and institutions in another conflict can do, and when. CTCC (Cross-Theater Conflict Coupling) provides a structured test, separating shared exposure from activated transmission, delivery, conversion, functional consequence, and feedback.

The evidence recorded through 23 October 2026 points to distinct mechanisms rather than a single pattern of reciprocal support. Russian adaptation of Iranian-origin Shahed designs is historically documented industrial learning, but it does not prove new 2026 Iranian-to-Russian or Russian-to-Iranian deliveries. Ukrainian specialists have operated in Gulf states, yet their net effect on interceptions has not been independently measured. The Iran war has raised identifiable pressure within the PAC-3 and allied procurement system, but the Ukraine-specific number of missiles displaced cannot be established. U.S. licensing and a named Russian diesel tanker show progression in a commercial chain without confirming U.S. import, incremental refinery output, or additional Russian war finance.

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The new policy challenge is termination asymmetry. A local humanitarian pause, nationwide armistice, durable settlement, or Russian occupation of all Ukraine would generate radically different resource obligations. Any reduction in daily combat demand must be offset against European defense, Ukrainian recovery, Russian occupation and rearmament, existing contracts, and the time needed to move usable resources to the Iran theater. A prolonged confrontation with Iran would impose its own continuing air-defense, maritime, energy, and industrial requirements. The sign of net capacity reallocation is therefore a measured question, not an assumed peace dividend.

This brief recommends evidence-gated allocation assessment, separate stock / ownership / contract ledgers, independently monitored ceasefire implementation, time-indexed resource planning, and conditional scenario review. It does not present a probabilistic forecast, an established one-year U.S. war plan, a legally accepted 75% Ukrainian territorial settlement, or confirmed reciprocal wartime gains.

### Why This Matters

Wars do not end as neatly as they begin, nor does the reduction of fighting necessarily release the resources that sustained it. A ceasefire in one theater may reduce immediate military consumption while simultaneously increasing demands for rearmament, deterrence, reconstruction, occupation management, and security guarantees. When conflicts share industrial capacity, military technologies, energy supplies, and political institutions, these competing demands can reshape the strategic options available in other theaters.

This matters for Ukraine and the Middle East because a resource nominally freed in one conflict is not necessarily available or operationally convertible in another. The crucial questions concern legal authority, ownership, existing commitments, transfer time, recipient compatibility, and attributable effects. For policymakers, reduced battlefield activity should not be mistaken for reduced strategic pressure.

### Analytical Scope and Evidence Rules

This brief studies cross-theater conflict coupling between the Russia–Ukraine war and the U.S.–Israel–Iran conflict. It assesses whether changes in the intensity, duration, or termination of one conflict modify usable strategic capacity and constraints elsewhere, without assuming that the two theaters form a single integrated campaign.

Five domains anchor the inquiry: PAC-3/PURL air-defense allocation; Shahed–Geran industrial learning and uncertain current transfers; Ukrainian counter-drone expertise in Gulf states; sanctions-conditioned Russian diesel trade; and strategic petroleum reserves and energy buffers. The CTCC framework distinguishes shared exposure, activation, receipt, recipient conversion, functional effect, and feedback.

The scenario analysis distinguishes localized humanitarian pauses, nationwide armistices, continued confrontation, and hypothetical territorial conquest. The evidence cutoff is 23 October 2026 (U.S. Eastern Time). Conditional scenarios are not probability forecasts, and unverified transfers or military gains are not treated as established outcomes.

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1. The Policy Challenge: Separate Wars, Shared Interfaces

Two wars can compete for the same interceptor variant, draw on the same energy market, and exchange military knowledge without becoming one combined campaign. Cross-war exposure only matters operationally when it passes through an identifiable authority, physical bottleneck, transmission process, and receiving institution. A policy license is permission, not a sale; a loaded tanker is not a customs receipt; an announced missile order is not a delivered interceptor; and an expert deployment is not independent proof of improved defense.

The most serious mistake is to count flows in headline units rather than in units available for a specific military or civilian function. Financial commitments, productive capacity, certified stocks, shipping movements, operating authority, and recipient-side performance should be tracked as separate states. A resource can have nominal capacity yet remain unusable in the time window that matters.

**Decision question.** If active operations in Ukraine decline while U.S.–Iran confrontation continues, which specific capabilities become newly available for transfer, through whose approval, after what delay, and net of what new commitments?

2. The CTCC Test: From Connection to Consequence

The six evidence gates below are a practical decision checklist, not a claim that every episode follows a mechanically linear causal path. A case may stop at any gate; an unobserved event is coded NOT IDENTIFIED rather than zero (Wu, 2026).

Table 1. CTCC Evidence Gates: From Shared Interfaces to Cross-Theater Consequences

| Gate                       | Minimum observable evidence                                                                                                                                                                          | What it does NOT prove                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| G1. Shared Interface       | Documented overlap in a specific resource, supplier, production system, rule, route, stock, or form of expertise connecting two conflict theaters.                                                   | War-conditioned activation, actual transfer, or strategic interdependence with measurable consequences.                   |
| G2. Activation             | An identifiable war-conditioned decision, allocation change, policy authorization, deployment, restriction, or adjustment in operational priorities that activates a potential transmission pathway. | Completed transfer, recipient-side receipt, or effective operational uptake.                                              |
| G3. Receipt                | Dated and attributable evidence that the relevant material, personnel, technology, or information reached a specified recipient or receiving institution.                                            | Integration into the recipient's capabilities or improvement in operational performance.                                  |
| G4. Conversion             | Observable incorporation of the received input into compatible production systems, infrastructure, operational procedures, training, doctrine, or institutional arrangements.                        | A measurable net functional gain or a strategic effect attributable to the originating conflict.                          |
| G5. Functional Consequence | Evidence of a change in operationally usable capacity, production, performance, resilience, or strategic options, with the affected resource, recipient, and observation period specified.           | Attribution of that change to cross-theater transmission without a credible counterfactual comparison.                    |
| G6. Feedback               | Documented return transmission or an induced response that affects the originating theater, including changes in allocation, production, policy, capability, or adversarial adaptation.              | Net reciprocal benefit, sustained mutual reinforcement, or systemic influence inferred solely from parallel developments. |

**Note.** The six gates are claim-specific and do not imply an inevitable linear or cumulative progression. A case may reach different evidentiary stages across transmission pathways, resource classes, and observation periods. Evidence established for a historical pathway does not automatically extend to contemporary claims. Gate identification and evidence status are recorded separately, following the rules specified in Annex A.

**Source.** Author's Cross-Theater Conflict Coupling framework (Wu, 2026).

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The original manuscript’s five conditional propositions remain intact: P1, effective-bottleneck transmission; P2, policy-mediated anticipation; P3, recipient-side conversion dependence; P4, conditional substitution and migration of dependency; and P5, adversarial adaptation and feedback qualification. None is upgraded to a universally validated law merely because a prominent cross-war connection is observed (Wu, 2026).

For identification, compare the observed recipient trajectory with a plausible no-source-war-change path that is independently allowed to evolve. Pre-existing Russian drone relationships, pre-Iran-war PAC-3 production expansion, ordinary tanker rerouting, global energy shocks, and local adaptation are alternative explanations requiring explicit controls (Wu, 2026).

3. What the Evidence Actually Shows

The following scorecard is deliberately asymmetric. It summarizes the highest observable proof stage for the stated claim; it does not rank the strategic importance of the cases.

Table 2. Cross-Theater Evidence Stages and Outstanding Causal Gaps

| Pathway / claim                                   | Supported finding                                                                                                | Highest identified evidence stage                                                                                          | Outstanding causal gap                                                                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| PAC-3 / PURL allocation                           | Shared procurement requirements, constrained interceptor availability, and reported delivery uncertainty.        | G1 — Shared Interface. Iran-attributable G2 activation remains NOT_IDENTIFIED.                                             | Verified changes to Ukraine-bound allocations attributable to demand from the Iran theater, followed by recipient-side functional effects. |
| Shahed–Geran: historical industrial adaptation    | Iranian-origin technological knowledge was incorporated into Russian production and subsequent development.      | G4 — Conversion, historical pathway.                                                                                       | Quantified functional effects and their causal attribution within the relevant historical period.                                          |
| Shahed–Geran: 2026 reciprocal supply              | Established historical relationships provide a potential pathway but do not verify new bidirectional deliveries. | G1 — Historical Shared Interface. Contemporary activation and receipt remain NOT_IDENTIFIED.                               | Origin-verified 2026 production, shipment, custody, recipient conversion, and return effects.                                              |
| Ukrainian counter-drone expertise in the Gulf     | Reported personnel deployments and cooperation with several Gulf states.                                         | G3 — Receipt, reported personnel-deployment pathway. Independent verification of recipient integration remains incomplete. | Documented integration, attributable operational improvement, and reciprocal benefits to Ukraine.                                          |
| Russian diesel under U.S. sanctions authorization | OFAC authorization, reported negotiations, and a named tanker reported loaded and underway.                      | G2 — Activation, confirmed legal authorization. Reported loading does not establish G3 receipt by a U.S. buyer.            | Completed delivery, verified recipient receipt, additional worldwide exports, and attributable net fiscal or strategic benefit.            |

Table 2. Cross-Theater Evidence Stages and Outstanding Causal Gaps (Comt.)

| Pathway / claim                                 | Supported finding                                                                                                 | Highest identified evidence stage                                                                                                                                                  | Outstanding causal gap                                                                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Strategic petroleum reserves and energy buffers | Officially documented stock changes, emergency-release measures, and selected domestic petroleum-receipt records. | G1 — Shared Interface, through common energy-market exposure. Domestic stock movements are documented but do not establish cross-theater G3 receipt or G5 functional consequences. | Identification of war-conditioned cross-theater transmission, traceable resource flows, recipient-side conversion, and attributable strategic effects. |

**Note.** Evidence stages indicate the highest supported stage for each specified claim and observation period, not an overall ranking of cases. Historical Shahed–Geran conversion does not establish new reciprocal transfers in 2026; reported Ukrainian personnel deployments do not establish operational gains; and diesel export authorization and reported loading do not confirm U.S. receipt. Domestic petroleum-stock changes likewise do not establish attributable cross-theater effects. Unverified downstream consequences remain NOT\_IDENTIFIED. Gate definitions and evidence-coding rules are provided in Table 1 and Annex A.

**Source.** Author's CTCC comparative assessment (Wu, 2026), based on the case-specific evidence cited in Sections 3–4.

3.1 Air defense: shared scarcity is not proved missile displacement

Ukraine's air defense and the Middle East both impose demands on advanced interceptors, radar-related components, engineering facilities, stockpile replenishment, and procurement authorities. The Ukrainian Ministry of Defence reported in July 2026 that PURL participants had contributed approximately US\$6.7 billion and that around 95% of Patriot interceptors reaching Ukraine were routed through that mechanism (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2026). This describes a funding/procurement pathway, not a fixed proportion of global PAC-3 production or an exact share of U.S. stocks reserved for Ukraine. Separately, the Ukrainian president described additional PAC-3 deliveries as expected without dates, which supports uncertainty about the delivery schedule (Fenbert, 2026).

The Iran conflict increases the plausibility of simultaneous demand pressure, but a valid displacement estimate must match interceptor type and variant, supplier, allocation authority, delivery window, and recipient. A planned PURL procurement, a signed contract, a stockpile transfer, and an intercepted missile are separate events. The exact number of Ukraine-bound PAC-3 MSE rounds lost to Iran-related demand remains NOT IDENTIFIED by the present evidence (Fenbert, 2026; Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2026).

The case supports P1's premise that effective common bottlenecks can bind, while leaving the operational displacement magnitude open. A negative control would compare a genuinely nonbinding industrial input or a variant not shared between these deployments. An especially important time-sensitive hypothesis is that a Ukraine ceasefire might reduce immediate interception expenditure but raise European buffer-replenishment and deterrence orders, leaving global interceptor factory bottlenecks tight (Fenbert, 2026; Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2026; Wu, 2026).

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### 3.2 Shahed–Geran: historical conversion, uncertain new direction

The historical Iranian Shahed lineage, Russian local production, and subsequent variants establish meaningful industrial learning and adaptation rather than mere procurement of imported finished weapons. The distinctive difficulty is identifying the contemporary direction of physical resource flow: an Iranian-designed family assembled in Russia does not prove Iran currently manufactured any particular drone recovered in Ukraine. Conversely, a Russian production-demand gap cannot simply be labeled Iranian imports without model-specific consumption, inventories, production accounting, and component provenance (Wu, 2026).

Earlier CTCC/MCCM ledgers considered a roughly 5,800-per-month Russian Geran output estimate and missile/drone launch estimates in the 4,782–5,329 range for an earlier 2026 month. These are differently bounded estimates and cannot be subtracted to produce proven Iranian shipments. A 2026 return pathway from Iran to Russia, or Russia to Iran, requires dated manufacturing marks, production facility source, shipping and custody evidence, and functional use. Historical industrial conversion is thus much better supported than contemporaneous reciprocal replenishment (Wu, 2026).

Under an early Ukraine ceasefire, Russian production lines might be repurposed, slowed, used to replenish depleted stocks, or used to supply partners. Which outcome occurs depends on domestic procurement, sanctions, Iranian absorbing capacity, transport, and rearmament decisions. No automatic reallocation to Iran is implied.

### 3.3 Ukrainian expertise in the Gulf: deployed people, unknown performance gain

Ukraine's adaptation to Shahed and Geran raids generated portable air-defense tactics, rapid learning routines, software configurations, and organizational knowledge. On 17 March 2026 President Zelenskyy reported 201 Ukrainian specialists deployed in the Middle East, with another 34 preparing to deploy. A 20 March report counted 228 already sent to the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Jordan (Interfax-Ukraine, 2026; Reuters, 2026d). These are different reporting dates, not independent quantities to add.

The personnel deployments are stronger evidence for knowledge transmission than an announced cooperation memorandum. They do not independently establish recipient-site interception probabilities, prevented damage, or a material reciprocal Gulf-to-Ukraine return. The critical conversion tests concern integration with local radars and command systems, authority for engagement, training cycles, air-defense saturation, false positives, and operations under adversarial adaptation (Interfax-Ukraine, 2026; Reuters, 2026d).

An end or freeze of the Ukraine war may change the availability of Ukrainian instructors, technology suppliers, and operational lessons. It could increase foreign deployment capacity but reduce the live-war testing that made some of that expertise distinctive. Reciprocal payments, investment, or advanced components would need separately identified procurement evidence.

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### 3.4 Russian diesel: law, commerce, routing, and strategic behavior

On 9 October 2026, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) issued General License No. 135, authorizing transactions otherwise prohibited under 31 CFR parts 587 and 589 that relate to the sale, delivery, offloading, or importation of Russian-origin diesel, including importation into the United States, through 12:01 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on 7 April 2027 (Office of Foreign Assets Control, 2026). The license explicitly excludes debits to accounts held at U.S. financial institutions by the Central Bank of the Russian Federation, the National Wealth Fund, or the Russian Ministry of Finance. This authorization does not establish a private commercial contract, confirm physical delivery, or require discharge at a U.S. port. Nor does it demonstrate incremental Russian export revenue or realized strategic benefits.

On 18 October Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said that U.S. buyer firms had been selected and that delivery to U.S. markets might take 15–20 days after contracts were signed. Buyer identities and signed contractual terms were not publicly verified. Turkey's energy minister said Turkey could receive some fuel under the arrangement; this was a prospective third-market allocation, not observed delivery (Interfax, 2026; Reuters, 2026c).

By 23 October vessel-tracking accounts reported that Agioi Fanendes (IMO 9798375), Malta-flagged, had loaded approximately 40,000 metric tons of Russian ultra-low-sulfur diesel at Primorsk on 22 October, with an initial AIS destination of New York and an estimated 7 November arrival (Reuters, 2026a). Crucially, the vessel manager separately indicated that the tanker was proceeding for orders and that the discharge port was not confirmed (Riviera Maritime Media, 2026). The vessel had reached a named-cargo loaded/underway stage, but not a U.S.-customs received/imported stage. No public buyer, accepted discharge manifest, bank settlement, or Russian tax increment was identified. A separate Leruo (IMO 9385831) tracking episode and the previously investigated MOGIANA (IMO 9347310) must not be folded into one 40,000-ton shipment.

The presence of a tanker heading toward a potential U.S. buyer also does not establish extra Russian refinery output. Foreign sales may substitute for routes to Morocco, Turkey, Brazil, or other buyers; refineries may be constrained by drone damage, grade output, domestic diesel demand, port loading, and shipping insurance. The relevant CTCC questions are how policy authorization changes available destinations, net realized sales, and bargaining leverage, not how many tons a government announces.

Finally, proposed restraints on attacks against energy infrastructure or maritime sites are sectoral policy controls that may regulate a subsystem without ending the war. A binding agreement, a short compliance interval, and independent monitoring are required before concluding that the attacks actually stopped. This logic connects directly to the new Oleshky case but should not merge energy and humanitarian exemptions into one instrument.

### 4. Energy Buffers: Why the Stock Ledger Matters

Energy evidence offers a sharper physical audit than several military-transfer claims, but it still cannot be used as a shortcut to war-system effects. Aggregate emergency-release authorizations, national current inventories, refiners' receipts, commercial product stocks, and final exports differ by owner, unit, timing, and purpose (Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, 2026a, 2026b; International Energy Agency, 2026; U.S. Energy Information Administration, n.d.).

Table 3. Energy Buffer Measurements and Accounting Boundaries

| Observed series through cutoff   | Reported measurement                                                                               | Interpretive boundary                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| IEA collective action            | About 330 million barrels released by 15 Oct; about 100 million in remaining releases              | Collective aggregate, not additive to all national award figures (International Energy Agency, 2026)                                                                      |
| U.S. SPR stock                   | 415.442m bbl (6 Mar) to 282.683m bbl (16 Oct): net -132.759m                                       | Stock change, not a one-to-one settlement of ~133m nominal DOE awards (CK Economics, 2026; U.S. Department of Energy, 2026; U.S. Energy Information Administration, n.d.) |
| Japan state crude stocks         | 41.68 million kL (31 March 2026) to 28.99 million kL (31 July 2026); net change: -12.69 million kL | Changes in reported holdings do not uniquely identify emergency-release shipments or final recipients (Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, 2026a, 2026b, 2026).      |
| Japan July diesel output/exports | Production: 3,188,748 kL; exports: 782,311 kL                                                      | Export destinations and end use remain unidentified by these aggregate figures (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2026).                                           |

**Note.** bbl = barrels; kL = kiloliters; m = million. U.S. stock change is calculated from 6 March and 16 October observations; Japanese crude-stock change from March-end and July-end observations. These are stock changes, not uniquely attributable release or delivery volumes. Figures were inherited from the audited v6.0 synthesis.

**Sources.** International Energy Agency (2026); U.S. Energy Information Administration (n.d.); CK Economics (2026); U.S. Department of Energy (2026); Agency for Natural Resources and Energy (2026a, 2026b); Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security (2026); Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2026); Japan Customs (2026). Calculations by the author.

Japan’s accounting convention is especially instructive: reductions in some emergency reserve categories are recorded when refiners confirm receipt. This is a stronger checkpoint than a public withdrawal announcement, but still not proof of which final fuel products or consumers were supplied. In April, the difference between crude refinery throughput and current-month imports partly reflects timing and stocks; it cannot simply be relabeled public-reserve barrels. The earlier Japanese-country-export extracts remain outstanding, not zero (Agency for Natural Resources and Energy, 2026; e-Stat, 2026; Japan Customs, 2026; Japan Organization for Metals and Energy Security, 2026; Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, 2026).

For U.S. SPR exchanges, distinguish physical issues today from future contractual repayment rights and a future premium. An October hurricane acceleration overlapping an existing exchange cannot be double-counted as a second independent release. Without maintaining these separate ledgers, CTCC may infer phantom spare supply from duplicate policy announcements (CK Economics, 2026; U.S. Department of Energy, 2026; U.S. Energy Information Administration, n.d.).

5. Four Strategic Decisions Under Asymmetric War Termination

5.1 If Russia attempted complete conquest and occupation of Ukraine

This is an extreme counterfactual, not a forecast. Operational conquest, permanent control, asserted annexation, international recognition, and durable civilian governance are not interchangeable. Even a collapse of conventional defense would not establish affordable long-term control. Counterinsurgency, garrison, transport, border defense, and force repair could consume much of the resource capacity nominally no longer expended at the front.

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Ukraine is not a NATO member. Russian conquest of Ukraine alone would not automatically invoke NATO Article 5, regardless of how serious NATO members judged the threat. Member governments could intensify sanctions, provide support to remaining Ukrainian resistance, reinforce eastern deployments, build air defense, expand the defense industrial base, or negotiate containment. Their concrete choices would be political and strategically conditioned; treaty obligations concerning direct armed attacks on allies are categorically different (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949).

A subsequent Russian attack on NATO's Baltic members would not be inevitable. Although the conquest and occupation of Ukraine could alter Russia's strategic opportunities and heighten regional security concerns, geographical proximity and expanded military access alone would not determine Russia's intentions, operational capabilities, or willingness to risk direct confrontation with NATO. Any potential attack on Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania would be conditioned by multiple intervening factors, including Russia's occupation and garrison requirements, depleted military stocks, force reconstitution needs, NATO's forward defense posture, air and missile defense capabilities, European defense-industrial mobilization, anticipated allied retaliation, nuclear-escalation risks, domestic political and economic costs, and the availability of alternative coercive strategies.

The near-term alternatives may include cyber and electronic interference, political destabilization, border probes, airspace incidents, coercive threats, and limited tests of alliance response rather than an immediate full-scale invasion. An Institute for the Study of War assessment on 16 October noted Russian repositioning and some reconstitution near NATO, but assessed the conventional land threat to Finland or the Baltic states as very low while the Ukraine war continues, underscoring the distinction between observed preparations and realized near-term invasion probability (Institute for the Study of War, 2026). The counterfactual that Ukraine ceases active resistance changes that assessment's premises but not automatically its conclusion.

The Russia–NATO contact geography, potential force basing, refugee and humanitarian burdens, European logistics, western Ukraine security, Black Sea access, and political deterrence calculus could shift dramatically. Equally, Russia could be forced to allocate vast resources to occupation and suppressing resistance. This can increase immediate Russia's coercive options while reducing net deployable capacity available for Iran-related military cooperation. A larger occupied frontier can also cause NATO to accelerate regional rearmament, thereby preserving or raising interceptor and artillery demand even after the Ukraine front appears to have ended.

A true post-conquest release of Russia's capacity would require falling net Ukrainian occupation/insurgency commitments and rising free stocks or operational units deployable elsewhere. Evidence of persistent large occupation garrisons, forced pacification, equipment repair, rail-security needs, and NATO-border reinforcement would falsify a simple “freed capacity equals former Ukrainian war consumption” model. A Baltic threat assessment requires simultaneous changes in Russian formations, logistical sustainment, readiness, decision signals, NATO posture, and diplomatic conditions. Military hardware near a border alone is not a sufficient result variable.

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### 5.2 The purported “75%” settlement formula

During an interview aired on 21 October 2026, Fox News interviewer Brian Kilmeade asked whether Zelenskyy could accept freezing the conflict along current lines, leaving Ukraine in control of “75% or more” of its country. Zelenskyy answered that freezing the current line could be a practical starting point to stop the killing, while emphasizing the need for ceasefire and further arrangements (Norman-Diamond, 2026). The percentage was embedded in the interviewer's question. It is not an independently announced Ukrainian threshold accepting permanent sovereignty loss over any specified percentage.

This is not a minor semantic difference. A de facto line of military control, an armistice line, a demilitarized zone, the parties' claims of title, international recognition, and a final peace treaty are different objects. A proposal to cease firing along a current line can coexist with a continuing legal claim to the territory beyond it.

A meaningful settlement matrix must track (i) cessation scope, (ii) territorial control, (iii) legal sovereignty, (iv) security guarantees, (v) force restrictions or demilitarization, (vi) verification mechanism, (vii) sanctions relief and reinstatement triggers, (viii) reconstruction and reparations, and (ix) breach consequences. “Keep 75%” by itself says almost nothing about these important contractual features. It also does not settle NATO accession, security assistance, control over ports, or protection against later renewed offensives (Norman-Diamond, 2026).

A freeze may reduce immediate ammunition burn on the Ukrainian front but convert wartime support into enduring border defense and security-guarantee demands. It can create time for both Russia and Ukraine to replenish, train, fortify, and reconfigure systems. A ceasefire that cannot credibly deter another attack may produce rapid stockpiling rather than a genuine peace dividend. These consequences are relevant to PAC-3/PURL competition, Russia's potential exports to other partners, Iranian drone supply and technology exchange, and European industrial contracts.

### 5.3 If Ukrainian fighting declines before the Iran confrontation

An end can mean a one-city humanitarian window, regional ceasefire, nationwide armistice, formal treaty, cessation of organized high-intensity combat without a treaty, frozen dispute with active militarization, or total occupation. The resource effect differs sharply across these states. CTCC should never model all of them as a single switch from 1 (war) to 0 (peace).

United States. Some air-defense, intelligence, transport, and political attention tied to Ukraine might become available for Middle Eastern operations. But production orders, congressional appropriations, NATO deterrence missions, European stock replenishment, and strategic reserves may remain bound for years. A U.S. maritime blockade around Iran and aerial contingency operations have their own persistent inputs. Short-term ammunition reallocation and long-term order books must not be confused.

Russia. Reduced ammunition expenditure in Ukraine might facilitate reserve rebuilding, improved diesel exports, support to Iran, or new NATO-facing deployments. Yet sustaining occupation, training and repairing damaged forces, domestic fuel demand, sanctions exposure, and eastern-front deterrence may absorb much of the apparent capacity. A frozen front might enable quicker repair than a conquest requiring enormous garrison forces. The direction of net Russian help to Iran is therefore underdetermined.

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Iran. A reduction in Ukrainian combat could lower pressure on Russian drone and electronic warfare outputs, possibly allowing some components, designs, expertise or finished systems to shift toward Iran. Alternatively Russia may replenish itself, and Iranian production might face its own airstrikes, shortages, energy bottlenecks or priorities. The net direction requires observed origin–destination transfers and recipient conversion, not an assumption of reciprocal “war dividends.”

Ukraine. A cessation of heavy attacks might enable engineers and counter-drone specialists to cooperate more broadly with Gulf states, but security-guarantee implementation and domestic reconstruction may create strong competing demand for the same personnel and production facilities. Ukraine's willingness and ability to export defense expertise would depend on credible guarantees and commercial terms.

Europe and NATO. A ceasefire may loosen emergency shipment demand while driving larger standing readiness, integrated air defense, ammunition stockpiles, Baltic security, and reconstruction obligations. The same industrial capacity might remain fully committed even with fewer daily Ukrainian intercepts.

A war can end tactically and intensify the strategic competition around it. Russian annexation may increase deterrence pressure; an armistice may increase rearmament; a humanitarian ceasefire may barely affect munitions demand; and withdrawal of a supplier from one theater may only shift a procurement backlog rather than liberate stock. Consequently the cross-war supply pressure in a prolonged Iran conflict could decrease, stay constant, or increase after a Ukrainian ceasefire depending on resource class and lag.

### 5.4 Localized Oleshky restraint versus a prolonged Iran confrontation

The White House Office of the First Lady announced on 23 October that Russia and Ukraine had agreed to a localized humanitarian ceasefire in Oleshky, a Russian-occupied city across the Dnipro from Kherson, beginning 29 October 2026. The stated purposes are humanitarian aid, civilian assessment and voluntary evacuation along designated routes (The White House, 2026). Reuters separately reported Kremlin confirmation and military coordination over implementation timing (Reuters, 2026b). As of this report's cutoff the start date is future, and operational compliance cannot be assessed. The agreement is neither a verified nationwide ceasefire nor a peace treaty nor evidence that the entire Kherson front has stopped fighting.

The local instrument includes demining, civilian passage, logistics, a time window and a narrow geographic boundary. It provides a valuable miniature instance of selective subsystem restraint: parties may agree to suspend specified military activity to permit a specific humanitarian function without ending the surrounding war. A limited permission can be genuine and consequential for civilians while not measurable as a reduction in strategic ammunition demand (Reuters, 2026b; The White House, 2026).

On 23 October U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz told the Financial Times that the confrontation with Iran could still be unresolved a year from now if nuclear and maritime-security objectives were unmet. He emphasized the ability to maintain pressure and a naval blockade and said he hoped Iran would negotiate sooner (Financial Times, 2026). This statement demonstrates preparation for a prolonged confrontation and a bargaining contingency. It is not a signed 12-month operational order, an independently established forecast probability, or proof that a full-scale air war will run continuously for another year.

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The same date produced a micro-level peace mechanism in Ukraine and a macro-level prospect of long-duration pressure in the Iran theater. These developments are not logically inconsistent. They are evidence that termination is spatially, functionally and temporally divisible. Military activity can be paused in one small area while other fronts remain contested; a shipping blockade can continue without uniform kinetic intensity; and national strategic reserve policies can span both contexts.

As of the 23 October cutoff, the announced 29 October Oleshky start and any later compliance are future events. The 23 October remark by U.S. Ambassador Mike Waltz that the Iran confrontation could remain unresolved in a year is a conditional possibility, not a binding one-year campaign order. These propositions should not be converted into observed future outcomes (Financial Times, 2026; Reuters, 2026b; The White House, 2026).

6. Comparative Stress Test: Ukraine Condition × Iran Trajectory

The scenario matrix evaluates how different forms of war continuation, cessation, and escalation may alter cross-theater resource constraints. The approximately three-month and twelve-month horizons distinguish near-term operational adjustments from longer-term replenishment, industrial, and institutional commitments; they are planning assumptions rather than forecasts of conflict duration. Each scenario is defined by observable entry conditions and transition indicators, allowing reassessment as new evidence emerges. The central analytical question is not which combination produces the largest nominal reduction in military demand, but whether any resulting capacity becomes legally available, physically transferable, operationally usable, and causally attributable to a change in another theater.

Table 4. Conditional Conflict Trajectories: Ukraine Status × Iran Scenario

| Ukraine pathway                                         | I1. Iran eases within ~3 months                                                                                                                     | I2. Iran persists for ~12 months                                                                                                                             | I3. Iran materially re-escalates                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| U1. High-intensity war continues                        | Reduced Iran-related consumption may ease some shared supply pressures, while Ukrainian combat demand and NATO replenishment persist.               | Sustained concurrent demand maintains pressure on interceptors, industrial capacity, and energy markets.                                                     | Intensified Iranian operations may compound Ukrainian demand, creating simultaneous industrial, logistical, and maritime constraints.              |
| U2. Nationwide armistice                                | Lower Ukrainian frontline consumption may permit stock rebuilding, but deterrence and security commitments limit immediately transferable capacity. | Rearmament, security guarantees, and prolonged Iran-related demand may preserve shared bottlenecks despite reduced Ukrainian combat.                         | Some redeployment may become possible, but only where verified surplus capacity exceeds replenishment, deterrence, and contractual requirements.   |
| U3. Full Russian conquest and occupation (hypothetical) | Occupation requirements and NATO reinforcement may absorb resources despite reduced conventional fighting in Ukraine.                               | Prolonged occupation, Russian force reconstitution, and NATO deterrence may sustain strategic pressure; additional Iran-related transfers remain unverified. | Concurrent occupation burdens and Iranian escalation could intensify systemic constraints, without making a subsequent Baltic invasion inevitable. |

**Note.** The nine cells represent conditional assessments rather than observed outcomes, probability estimates, or quantified capacity forecasts. The scenarios distinguish formal agreements from their implementation and territorial conquest from durable political control. Resource effects are conditional on ownership, legal authorization, existing commitments, transfer feasibility, recipient-side conversion, and adjustment delays. Reduced consumption does not automatically establish transferable capacity or net strategic benefit. The hypothetical U3 pathway must not be interpreted as a forecast or as implying an inevitable Russian attack on NATO territory.

**Source.** Author's conditional scenario assessment based on the Cross-Theater Conflict Coupling framework (Wu, 2026), informed by relevant treaty provisions (European Union, 2008; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949) and the conflict developments examined in Sections 3–5.

Scenario Entry Conditions

Ukraine pathways

- **U1 — High-intensity war:** Sustained large-scale military operations, continuing frontline engagements, and substantial ammunition or air-defense consumption. Transition is indicated by independently verified nationwide cessation of major hostilities or a fundamental change in territorial control.
- **U2 — Nationwide armistice:** An agreement covering the principal military front, accompanied by observable implementation and substantial reduction in organized hostilities. Continued military readiness, stockpiling, isolated violations, and unresolved sovereignty claims do not automatically invalidate this classification. Transition indicators include sustained resumption of large-scale fighting, expansion into a durable settlement, or another material change in effective control.
- **U3 — Full Russian conquest and occupation:** A hypothetical condition in which Russia establishes effective military control over substantially all Ukrainian territory and undertakes occupation or governance responsibilities. Military control must be distinguished from international recognition, stable governance, and the elimination of resistance. Transition indicators include persistent insurgency, territorial reversals, occupation-force requirements, and changes in Russian force availability.

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### Iran trajectories

- **I1 — Easing within approximately three months:** A sustained reduction in major kinetic activity and associated military or maritime pressure within the initial planning horizon. Relevant indicators include attack frequency, interceptor consumption, naval operating requirements, shipping restrictions, and independently observed implementation of any de-escalation measures.
- **I2 — Persistence over approximately twelve months:** Continued confrontation, military readiness, maritime restrictions, or recurring hostilities across an extended planning horizon without durable conflict resolution. Indicators include sustained deployments, replenishment orders, sanctions or blockade implementation, and recurring operational expenditure. Persistence does not require uninterrupted high-intensity combat.
- **I3 — Material re-escalation:** A significant increase in the intensity or geographic scope of military operations relative to the preceding observed baseline. Indicators include renewed large-scale strikes, expanded maritime interdiction, additional force deployments, accelerated interceptor expenditure, or geographically expanded attacks. A single incident does not necessarily establish a sustained transition.

**Time Horizons and Transition Rules.** The approximately three-month and twelve-month windows are illustrative short- and extended-horizon planning intervals, not empirically estimated conflict durations or probability forecasts. Both are measured from a clearly stated scenario reference date ( $t_0$ ). Scenario assignments should be reassessed when independently observed indicators establish a material change in conflict intensity, geographic scope, implementation of ceasefire arrangements, or resource commitments. A localized humanitarian pause does not qualify as a nationwide armistice. Material Iranian re-escalation may occur within either planning horizon and supersedes the previous Iran trajectory for the affected assessment interval.

## 7. Policy Implications and Decision Options

**For U.S. and allied resource allocators.** Build a subtype-specific allocation dashboard distinguishing ceiling, obligated funds, production, accepted military inventory, export authorization, shipment, arrival, and operational use. Before claiming a Ukraine-to-Iran peace dividend, subtract NATO forward posture, stock replenishment, and previously contracted requirements. Treat shifts in expectations separately from delivered stocks.

**For Ukraine, Gulf states, and defense partnerships.** Separate reported specialist deployments from recipient integration milestones and mission metrics. Agree on narrowly defined outcomes: dates of training, compatible threat conditions, verified radar/command integration, adjusted false-alarm burden, and operational performance net of changes in attack mix. Avoid crediting a whole theater's defense improvement to one training mission.

**For energy-security authorities.** Reconcile the IEA program register, national official crude/product stocks, legal ownership, DOE awards and repayment rights, refinery throughput, export-country records, and vessel-level cargo documentation. Do not treat an initial AIS destination or a sanctions license as completed import; require unloading, customs or comparable documentary receipt.

**For negotiators and ceasefire monitors.** Specify geographic scope, protected functions, start and stop times, verification rights, demining/aid corridors, observed attacks, breach response, and escalation paths. A local humanitarian arrangement may generate substantial civilian value even without major military-resource release. Distinguish de facto line freezes from recognition of sovereignty or a durable treaty.

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For NATO and EU contingency planners. Model Russian military occupation and force regeneration alongside European forward defense rather than treating full Russian conquest as automatic liberation of deployable formations. NATO Article 5 and EU Article 42(7) significantly alter the institutional framework if a Baltic member is attacked; they do not determine a single automatic operational response or make a follow-on invasion inevitable (European Union, 2008; North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1949).

8. Indicators That Would Change the Assessment

A particularly discriminating design compares binding and nonbinding inputs after a verifiable change in Ukraine’s war status, within matched time windows and owner/legal gates. A genuine coupling account predicts product-specific, delayed, and potentially sign-changing effects rather than a uniform liberation of all stocks. A documented null outcome after passage through a nonbinding interface is informative rather than embarrassing.

Table 5. Evidence Triggers for Reassessing Cross-Theater Consequences

| Question / trigger                                        | Primary evidence to obtain                                                           | Decision-relevant revision                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Are Ukraine-bound PAC-3 rounds actually displaced?        | Same-variant original/revised schedules, batches, receipt, stock and mission records | Move from shared pressure to estimated attributable operational effect |
| Is there 2026 Iran–Russia reverse drone transfer?         | Manufacturing provenance, dated custody chain, recipient use                         | Move from historical learning to new bilateral transmission            |
| Do Gulf interceptions improve because of Ukrainian teams? | Comparable threat/intercept datasets, adoption dates, alternative practices          | Estimate conversion and function consequence                           |
| Does licensed diesel reach a U.S. buyer?                  | Contract, cargo/B/L, final port, customs receipt, payments                           | Move from permission/loading to receipt and incremental value tests    |
| Does local Oleshky pause become operational?              | Verified start, attack counts, aid delivery, evacuees, duration                      | Move from announced arrangement to localized compliance                |
| Does Ukrainian war cessation free usable resources?       | Combat consumption, occupation/rearmament orders, NATO stock replenishment           | Estimate net releasable capacity, with lags                            |

**Note.** The listed records are required observations and counterfactual checks, not data already obtained. Receipt, conversion, net effect, and feedback should be identified separately, by resource type and relevant time window.

**Source.** Author’s CTCC research design (Wu, 2026); indicators are proposed evidence requirements, not verified measurements.

9. Limitations

This brief synthesizes the source-graded CTCC v6.0 record as of 23 October 2026. Earlier M323–M332 measurements, especially Japan’s monthly stocks and diesel-country file identification, are inherited from prior project audits; the present policy adaptation is not a fresh independent verification of each original URL, cargo or military record. Several reported developments are contingent announcements whose execution occurs after the cutoff. Strategic scenarios are conditional and assign no likelihoods.

Key negative findings remain binding: no verified Ukraine-specific PAC-3 MSE displacement quantity, no demonstrated 2026 two-way Shahed–Geran cargo, no independent Gulf interception gain attributable to Ukrainian specialists, no completed verified U.S. diesel receipt, and no counterfactual net Russian war-financing increment. These are NOT IDENTIFIED, not proven absent. Neither a 75% Ukrainian territorial surrender nor a definite one-year Iran war should be inferred from the cited political remarks.

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### Conclusion

The principal consequence of cross-theater interdependence is not that separate wars automatically reinforce one another. Rather, decisions, shortages, and institutional obligations in one conflict can alter the feasible choices available in another, provided that transmission channels are activated, resources reach their intended recipients, receiving systems can convert them into usable capacity, and resulting effects can be identified against plausible alternatives.

Asymmetric war termination makes these distinctions especially important. A humanitarian pause, an armistice, and a durable settlement have different implications for ammunition consumption, replenishment, occupation, deterrence, and recovery. Reduced battlefield activity may produce deployable spare capacity, leave existing commitments unchanged, or generate new obligations that exceed the resources nominally released. The direction, magnitude, and timing of any cross-theater effect must therefore be established rather than presumed. The available cases illustrate different stages of cross-theater coupling. Historical Shahed–Geran industrial adaptation demonstrates the conversion of transferred technological knowledge into production capacity; Ukrainian deployments in the Gulf provide evidence of expertise transmission without independently establishing operational gains; PAC-3 procurement reveals pressures within shared supply systems without identifying Iran-attributable displacement; and Russian diesel illustrates how legal authorization and physical routing can advance without demonstrating completed import or additional strategic benefit. These observations establish important elements of the coupling process, but they do not constitute a direct before-and-after test of strategic capacity reallocation following war termination. Whether asymmetric termination produces net capacity gains, persistent constraints, or new dependencies therefore remains an empirically testable proposition rather than an established causal finding.

For policymakers, the appropriate unit of analysis is usable, time-indexed strategic capacity rather than the apparent number of weapons, barrels, contracts, or personnel freed by a change in war status. Decision-makers should assess resource ownership, authorization, compatibility, delivery schedules, replenishment requirements, and counterfactual additionality before reallocating commitments or forecasting strategic advantages. Future empirical tests should compare verified changes in conflict intensity or termination status with subsequent shifts in resource availability, recipient-side conversion, and attributable functional effects, while accounting for competing obligations and adjustment delays. CTCC thus conceptualizes war termination as a potential reconfiguration of constraints across theaters, not an automatic conversion of peace in one place into power in another.

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### Annex A. Measurement and Documentation Rules

**Inventory Accounting.** Physical inventories must be distinguished from procurement authorizations, contractual commitments, projected production, and verified deliveries. Stock changes and cumulative flows must be measured using consistent ownership definitions, resource categories, physical units, and observation periods.

**Net Releasable Capacity.** A reduction in military consumption does not necessarily create transferable surplus capacity. Potentially released resources must be assessed against continuing operational requirements, replenishment obligations, minimum reserve levels, existing commitments, and adjustment delays. Net changes should be evaluated against a credible counterfactual trajectory rather than inferred directly from changes in combat intensity.

**Recipient-Side Usability.** Source-side availability does not establish operational capacity in another theater. Effective transfer depends on legal authorization, transport feasibility, recipient compatibility, integration requirements, and absorption capacity. Resource delivery, functional conversion, and attributable strategic effects must be identified separately.

**Commercial Additionality.** Changes in trade destinations do not necessarily represent additional production, net exports, fiscal revenue, or strategic benefit. Incremental effects require comparison with a credible counterfactual that accounts for alternative markets, inventories, domestic demand, and logistical constraints.

**Time Coding.** Event, observation, publication, and analytical dates must be recorded separately. The CTCC/MCCM analytical day follows U.S. Eastern Time, from 12:00 to 12:00 the following day. Stocks are point-in-time measurements; production, consumption, and deliveries are interval flows.

**Evidence Coding.** Observations are classified as CONFIRMED, REPORTED, PROSPECTIVE, NOT\_IDENTIFIED, or CONTRADICTED/SUPERSEDED. Evidence status is distinct from causal identification. Each CTCC evidence gate applies to a specific claim, pathway, and observation period. Repeated reporting from a single originating source does not constitute independent corroboration.