

Carsten Sander CHRISTENSEN¹
Denmark

END OF THE CONFLICT IN THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR (2014-2025) AND ITS CONSEQUENCES AND SCENARIOS

***Abstract:** After the end of the Cold War, Ukraine has long played an important, and sometimes overlooked role in the global security order. The still ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war actually began in February 2014. Following Ukraine’s Revolution of Dignity, Russia annexed Crimea (27,000 km²) from Ukraine and supported pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (around 50,000 km²) – in the so-called Donbas War. In the years 2014-2022, there were occasional military skirmishes in both of the last-mentioned regions, which also included naval incidents and cyberwarfare. On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a so-called full-scale invasion also named a special military operation on Ukrainian area. In the last two years, several hundred thousands of civilians and soldiers on both sides are dead. Thereby it is the biggest military conflict in Europe in the last eighty years - with the most severe refugee crisis, in recent times. In 2025, Ukraine is on the front lines of a renewed great-power rivalry that many experts say will dominate international relations in the decades ahead. After Donald Trump (R) was elected US-President, on November 5 2024; a historic turning point of European security could be in sight. In this article, however, we will analyze the consequences and the scenarios of an end of the Russo-Ukrainian war. And on what conditions and outcomes a possible peace will be concluded?*

Keywords: *Ukraine, Vladimir Putin, Russia, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Crimea, Donald Trump, Donbas, China, Black Sea, Zaporizjzja, USA, North Korea*

Introduction

After almost three years of a full-scale war and eight years war-like conditions in parts of eastern Ukraine, in the war between Russia and Ukraine,

¹ Carsten Sander Christensen, PhD, email: arroyoinfancia74@gmail.com

there are four outcomes: Russian victory, Ukrainian victory, Frozen war/long war and enforced peace. Regardless of which scenario emerges, the Ukrainian-Russian region will be set back 15-20 years in development compared to the regions surrounding the two countries and especially in comparison with some of the world's largest growth areas China and India. Traumatic sociological, economic and impacts of this war will be inescapable for one of the most important areas in the Euro-Asian region. But in a worse and larger context, the so-called balance of power will be affected in a negative direction for the West, since the Russian-Ukrainian war is a war in the Western Hemisphere area. Vladimir Putin's tactic of acting within the auspices of the BRICS countries can be considered a springboard to return to the Western Hemisphere. Among other things, Putin threatened to pull Russia into the Asian Football Confederation. But it didn't come to anything anyway.

Around 145 million Russians live inside the Russian area, Some of the world's largest reserves of natural deposits of fossil fuels, minerals and other important resources for future development are found in Russia, not least because of the huge country's strategic importance in Euro-Asia. A rule of thumb is that the nation that rule the vast Euro-Asian hinterland, will be one of the most important players in the political and economic development in the area. And if the Russians are thrown into the arms of the Asian part of the area, China will quickly become one of main players. A little like the Chinese presence in the Arctic area, where China has no land². The presence of North Korean troops is also an evidence of that fact³.

However, regardless of which of the abovementioned four scenarios emerge, the far-reaching and traumatic sociological, economic and political impacts of the war, especially in the Ukrainian/Russian, will be inescapable. Other problems could get even worse for Ukraine, when martial law in a future Ukraine is lifted, the big question is whether the country will be able to maintain sufficient unity and resolve to strengthen its institutions and economy to allow it to recover and defend against a future Russian attack. Furthermore, new scenarios will emerge on the domestic political level. Whether Volodymyr Zelensky will win a election is a little doubtful (Winston Churchill also lost his election after WW2), and new political players, including other Ukrainian military veterans and representatives of parliamentary and presidential elections

² S. Bradley, *Ukraine War: Who's winning?*, "The Week UK", November 27, 2024, <https://theweek.com/news/world-news/europe/961821/who-is-winning-the-war-in-ukraine> (20.12.2024).

³ S. Kullab, *Thousands of North Korean troops in Russia. What does that mean for the war with Ukraine?*, "AP News", October 31, 2024, <<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-north-korea-war-735ab717dcf92a718adcb68bfbddc653>> (20.12.2024).

that are required by Ukraine's constitution. In other words, the country could experience political instability⁴.

Four scenarios in general

The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has had devastating consequences for both nations and the wider world. Rooted in historical tensions, geopolitical interests, and cultural divisions, the war has reshaped the global order and caused immense human suffering. While predicting the exact trajectory of this conflict is challenging, several potential pathways could lead to its resolution. This article explores key scenarios and strategies that could bring about an end to the war, focusing on diplomacy, military outcomes, internal political changes, and the role of the international community⁵.

Diplomatic Negotiations and Peace Agreements

One of the most plausible ways to end the conflict is through diplomatic negotiations resulting in a comprehensive peace agreement. This would require both sides to engage in meaningful dialogue mediated by international actors such as the United Nations, the European Union, or neutral countries like Turkey or Switzerland. Key elements of such negotiations could include⁶:

- Territorial Compromises: Discussions about the status of contested regions like Crimea and the Donbas.
- Security Guarantees: Agreements ensuring Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity while addressing Russia's security concerns, such as NATO expansion.
- Economic Reparations: Compensation for war damages and rebuilding efforts in Ukraine.
- Demilitarization Zones: The establishment of buffer zones to prevent future escalations.

While diplomacy offers a peaceful resolution, it is contingent on the willingness of both sides to make concessions – a prospect that remains elusive given the entrenched positions of Russia and Ukraine⁷.

⁴ S. Bradley, *op. cit.*

⁵ T. Paffenholz, A. Bramble, P. Poppelreuter, N. Ross, *Negotiating an End to the war in Ukraine: Ideas and Options to Prepare for and Design a negotiation process*, Report 2023, pp. 3-4.

⁶ Ch. Stückelberger, *Ukraine-Russia: Twelve Proposals Towards Negotiated Peace*, p. 6, <<https://www.fpablovi.org/images/Actualidad/firma/Ukraine-Russia.pdf>> (18.08.2024).

⁷ I. Ijgyarto, S. Seremet, *After Twenty-Seven Months of War, Ukraine needs Peace*, MKI Report 2024, p. 9, <https://hiia.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MKI-Report_After-Twenty-Seven-Months-of-War-Ukraine-Needs-Peace.pdf> (20.12.2024).

Military Outcomes

Another scenario involves a decisive military outcome, either through a Ukrainian victory, a Russian victory, or a prolonged stalemate.

- Ukrainian Victory: With continued Western military and economic support, Ukraine could reclaim occupied territories and force Russia to withdraw. This outcome, while possible, would likely require years of sustained conflict and significant resources⁸.
- Russian Victory: Conversely, a Russian victory could result from overwhelming military force or internal collapse within Ukraine. However, this outcome seems increasingly unlikely given Russia's logistical challenges and growing international isolation⁹.
- Stalemate: A prolonged stalemate, where neither side achieves a decisive victory, could pressure both parties into negotiations. This scenario risks becoming a "frozen conflict" similar to other post-Soviet disputes, such as in Transnistria or Abkhazia.

Internal Political Changes

Political shifts within Russia or Ukraine could dramatically alter the course of the war. In Russia, a change in leadership or public discontent with the war – fueled by economic sanctions and military losses – could lead to a withdrawal or a re-evaluation of its strategy¹⁰.

Conversely, political instability in Ukraine could weaken its ability to resist Russian aggression, potentially forcing concessions.

Economic Pressure and Sanctions

International sanctions have severely impacted Russia's economy, targeting key sectors such as energy, finance, and technology. Over time, these measures could erode Russia's capacity to sustain the war, incentivizing a negotiated settlement. Simultaneously, continued economic support for Ukraine will be crucial in maintaining its resilience against Russian aggression¹¹.

⁸ F. Farrell, *How will the Russia-Ukraine War end? The good, the bad and the ugly scenarios*, "Kyiv Independent", December 13, 2024, <<https://kyivindependent.com/how-will-russia-war-in-ukraine-end/>> (20.12.2024).

⁹ G. Gressel, *Ukraine's Survival: Three Scenarios for the war in 2024*, European Council on Foreign Relations, January 31, 2024, <<https://ecfr.eu/article/ukraines-survival-three-scenarios-for-the-war-in-2024/>> (20.12.2024).

¹⁰ T. Paffenholz, A. Bramble, P. Poppelreuter, N. Ross, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-40.

¹¹ Ch. Stückelberger, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

Mediation by Third Parties

Neutral or influential third parties could play a pivotal role in mediating an end to the conflict. Countries like China, India, or Turkey, which have maintained relationships with both Russia and the West, could leverage their positions to broker a ceasefire or peace deal. Such mediation would require addressing the core grievances of both sides while ensuring a sustainable and enforceable agreement.

Role of International Institutions

International institutions such as the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and NATO could contribute to conflict resolution by¹²:

- Deploying Peacekeeping Forces: Ensuring compliance with ceasefires and protecting civilians.
- Facilitating Reconstruction: Coordinating global efforts to rebuild war-torn areas.
- Enforcing Accountability: Pursuing justice for war crimes and human rights violations through international courts.

Grassroots and Civil Society Efforts

While often overlooked, grassroots movements and civil society organizations in both countries can foster reconciliation and dialogue. Initiatives promoting cross-border understanding, cultural exchange, and humanitarian aid can lay the groundwork for long-term peace.

Despite these potential pathways, several challenges complicate efforts to end the war:

- Mistrust: Deep-seated mistrust between Russia and Ukraine undermines negotiations.
- Geopolitical Rivalries: The conflict's broader implications for global power dynamics make it difficult to isolate from international politics.
- Domestic Pressures: Both governments face internal pressures to maintain strong positions, limiting their flexibility.
- Humanitarian Crisis: The ongoing suffering of civilians exacerbates tensions and fuels animosities.

¹² *President Zelensky Peace Formula - Ukraine's Peace Formula Philosophy*, <https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/19/53/32af8d644e6cae41791548fc82ae2d8e_1691483767.pdf> (20.12.2024).

The Russian-Ukrainian war has reshaped the geopolitical landscape, highlighting the fragility of international norms and the devastating consequences of unresolved conflicts. While the road to peace is fraught with challenges, it is not unattainable. A combination of diplomatic efforts, international pressure, and grassroots initiatives could pave the way for a resolution that respects Ukraine's sovereignty, addresses Russia's concerns, and promotes lasting stability in the region. The stakes are high, but so is the potential for a future where peace prevails over conflict¹³.

Russian victory

A scenario that is the Russians' ultimate goal. A goal that, according to Vladimir Putin, will be achieved when the Ukrainian provinces of Luhansk, Donetsk, the Crimean peninsula and parts of the Zaporizhzhya region are incorporated in the state of Russia. Today Russia controls 20% of the total area of Ukraine. Russian terms of surrender (neutrality, demilitarization, distance to EU and NATO at all levels and a pro-Russian government) and of course recognition of territorial losses, maybe all the Ukrainian coast to the Black Sea, will only be possible, if there is no interference from the West¹⁴. That means a withdrawal of Western support for Ukraine and furthermore a complete Ukrainian military collapse. But if that happens, it will certainly throw large parts of the Ukrainian population into the arms of the Russians and a high risk of de-centralized insurgencies in the territories annexed by Russia and prolonged instability in the rest of the country. A withdrawal of Western support for Ukraine is, therefore, only theoretical¹⁵.

Theoretically, this could force power into a 'pragmatic' government in Kiev, prepared to accept significant territorial concessions to save Ukraine from further bloodshed and destruction. However, it would create a high risk of decentralized uprisings in the territories annexed by Russia and prolonged instability in the rest of the country¹⁶.

¹³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴ M. Episkopos, *What a Russian 'victory' would look like*, Responsible Statecraft - quincyinst.org, May 6, 2024, <<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/russia-ukraine-war/>> (18.10.2024).

¹⁵ Gressel G., *Ukraine's Survival: Three Scenarios for the war in 2024*, European Council on Foreign Relations, January 31, 2024, <<https://ecfr.eu/article/ukraines-survival-three-scenarios-for-the-war-in-2024/>> (18.10.2024).

¹⁶ Y. Yakymenko (ed.), *Ukraine from war to peace and recovery*, Razumkov Centre, Kyiv September 2024, p. 5.

Political Perspective

A Russian victory could reshape the geopolitical landscape, particularly in Eastern Europe. Russia might:

- Strengthen its sphere of influence: Successfully annexed territories, such as those in the Donbas region, would solidify Russia's control in Eastern Ukraine. This could establish a precedent for future territorial ambitions and bolster Russia's claims as a dominant regional power¹⁷.
- Undermine Western alliance's: A victory could reveal divisions within NATO and the EU over how to handle Russian aggression, potentially weakening their collective stance against Moscow. This might embolden Russia to challenge other security agreements¹⁸.
- Bolster domestic legitimacy: The Kremlin could use a victory as a propaganda tool to rally national pride and justify the war effort, solidifying President Vladimir Putin's hold on power¹⁹.

Military Perspective

- Demonstration of Russian military prowess: A win would reinforce Russia's image as a capable military force despite setbacks earlier in the war, demonstrating resilience and adaptability²⁰.
- Strategic gains: Consolidation of territories in Eastern Ukraine would provide strategic depth and valuable resources, including access to critical ports and industries in the region.
- Shift in military doctrine: Lessons learned from the conflict may lead to reforms in Russian military strategies, equipment modernization, and tactics.

Economic Perspective:

- Access to resources: Gaining control over Ukraine's resource-rich regions, such as coal mines, agricultural lands, and natural gas reserves, could enhance Russia's economic self-sufficiency.
- Sanction resilience: If Russia successfully withstands Western sanctions during and after the war, it could signal the emergence of a more

¹⁷ J. Lough, *Four Scenarios for the End of the War in Ukraine*, Chatham House 2024, <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/10/four-scenarios-end-war-ukraine>> (20.11.2024).

¹⁸ F. Farrell, *op. cit.*

¹⁹ S. Bradley, *op. cit.*

²⁰ M. Episkopos, *op. cit.*

sanction-proof economy, potentially setting an example for other sanctioned states.

- Reintegration of economic assets: A victory might allow Russia to integrate critical Ukrainian infrastructure, such as ports and energy facilities, boosting its economic capabilities.

Global Impact:

- Challenge to the rules-based order: A Russian victory would mark a significant challenge to the international norms established after World War II, particularly regarding sovereignty and territorial integrity.
- Inspiration for other powers: Other nations with territorial disputes might view Russia's success as a model, potentially destabilizing other regions.
- Shifts in global alliances: Countries aligned with Russia, such as China and Iran, might be emboldened, while Western nations could face difficulties maintaining unified opposition to authoritarian regimes.

Risks and Uncertainties:

Even in victory, Russia might face:

- Long-term insurgencies: Continued resistance from Ukrainians in occupied regions could strain Russian military and economic resources.
- Isolation: A prolonged conflict and territorial gains might cement Russia's pariah status internationally, leading to further diplomatic and economic isolation.
- Economic stagnation: Despite resource gains, long-term sanctions and brain drain could hamper Russia's broader economic prospects²¹.

Ukrainian victory

A change in Western policy leading to allies providing the weapons and military support that would enable Ukraine to force the Russian army back to at least the demarcation line by February 23, 2022. A Russian retreat, especially if its hold on Crimea were jeopardized, could have dramatic political consequences within Russia itself, perhaps leading to a period of instability followed by radical reforms and eventual normalization of ties with the West.²² A longer period of Russian introspection would enable Ukraine to implement deep reforms and accelerate the Europeanization of state institutions, leading to

²¹ M. Episkopos, *op. cit.*

²² G. Gressel, *op. cit.*

a realistic prospect of joining the EU and improving its overall security situation, perhaps with the possibility of rapid integration into NATO²³.

Political Perspective

A Ukrainian victory would have profound implications for both Ukraine and the broader international order:

- Strengthened sovereignty: A victory would reaffirm Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, sending a powerful message against aggression and imperial ambitions.
- Enhanced national identity: Success on the battlefield could unite Ukrainians further, bolstering national pride and solidarity across political and cultural divides.
- Democratic legitimacy: Ukraine's ability to resist and win could enhance its credibility as a democratic nation, increasing its appeal for EU and NATO membership.

Military Perspective:

- Ukrainian military prominence: A victory would solidify Ukraine's status as a highly capable military force, demonstrating the effectiveness of its leadership, strategy, and adaptability.
- Innovation in warfare: The use of modern tactics, Western technology, and local ingenuity could become a blueprint for asymmetric warfare globally.
- Deterrence for future aggression: Defeating Russia would send a strong deterrent message to potential aggressors, showcasing the consequences of violating international norms.

Economic Perspective:

- Post-war reconstruction: Victory would likely unlock significant international aid for rebuilding infrastructure, reviving industries, and stabilizing the economy, with organizations like the EU, IMF, and World Bank contributing.
- Energy independence: A win could allow Ukraine to secure and develop its energy resources, reducing reliance on Russian supplies and boosting regional energy security²⁴.

²³ *President Zelensky Peace Formula ...*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Y. Yakymenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 12-13

- Integration with Western markets: Economic reforms tied to victory and reconstruction could fast-track Ukraine’s integration into European and global markets²⁵.

Global Impact:

- Reinforcement of international norms: A Ukrainian victory would bolster the principle of territorial integrity, showing that military aggression cannot succeed.
- Strengthened Western alliance’s: Success would validate NATO’s and the EU’s support, reinforcing the value of collective security and international cooperation.
- Weakened autocracies: Russia’s defeat could undermine confidence in authoritarian regimes, while boosting democratic movements worldwide.

Russia’s Decline:

A Ukrainian victory could have significant repercussions for Russia:

- Political instability: Defeat might weaken President Vladimir Putin’s grip on power, potentially leading to internal political strife or regime change.
- Economic downturn: Losses in the war, compounded by prolonged sanctions, could lead to economic stagnation and diminished global influence.
- Military discreditation: Failure in Ukraine could expose vulnerabilities in Russia’s military, damaging its reputation and reducing its ability to project power internationally.

Risks and Challenges:

Even with victory, Ukraine may face challenges:

- Long-term security concerns: Russia might regroup and attempt future aggression, requiring Ukraine to maintain a strong defense posture.
- Economic strain: Reconstruction will be costly and time-intensive, and managing international loans and aid could present governance challenges.
- Social healing: Post-war recovery will involve addressing the psychological and physical toll on citizens, refugees, and displaced communities.

²⁵ J. Lough, *op. cit.*

Frozen war/long war

A ceasefire that would stabilize the front line and allow both sides to regroup and rebuild their depleted forces in preparation for further fighting. There would be no agreement on Ukraine's future military status or the size of its armed forces. Ukraine would remain formally committed to the goal of full restoration of its 1991 borders.

Political Perspective:

- De facto borders without recognition: A frozen conflict could solidify a status quo where territories under Russian or Ukrainian control remain contested but are not officially recognized internationally. This mirrors past conflicts, such as in Transnistria, Abkhazia, or South Ossetia.
- Challenges to sovereignty: Ukraine would struggle with the loss or contested status of occupied territories, leading to ongoing political tension and incomplete sovereignty.
- Continued Russian influence: A frozen conflict could allow Russia to maintain leverage over Ukraine and disrupt its path toward EU or NATO membership by keeping instability at its borders.

Military Perspective:

- Ceasefire without resolution: A frozen conflict could involve entrenched frontlines with sporadic skirmishes and no active offensives, similar to the Korean Peninsula's situation after the armistice.
- Militarization of borders: Both sides would likely continue heavy militarization along the conflict zones, leading to constant readiness for renewed hostilities.
- Insurgent activity: Ukrainian partisan resistance in occupied territories or potential unrest in contested areas could lead to low-intensity violence, prolonging instability.

Economic Perspective:

- Limited economic recovery: A frozen conflict would hamper Ukraine's full economic revival, as uncertainty over its borders and security would deter foreign investment and economic integration.
- Sanctions stalemate: Western sanctions on Russia would likely persist, while Moscow's counter-sanctions and economic realignments would continue, further entrenching global economic divisions.

- Reconstruction challenges: Ukraine’s reconstruction efforts might be constrained by uncertainty in conflict zones, leading to uneven development and prolonged reliance on international aid²⁶.

Global Impact:

- Geopolitical stalemate: A frozen conflict would reflect the limits of both Western and Russian ambitions, leaving the international community divided over how to proceed diplomatically.
- Prolonged instability: The region would remain a flashpoint, with potential for renewed escalations impacting neighboring countries and international energy and trade routes.
- Normalization of frozen conflicts: The situation could set a precedent for other conflicts where aggressors seek to achieve partial territorial gains without full resolution, undermining international norms.

Social and Humanitarian Perspective:

- Prolonged displacement: Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) might face difficulty returning home, particularly to regions under Russian control or near contested borders.
- Psychological toll: A frozen conflict could perpetuate a sense of uncertainty and trauma for affected populations, hindering long-term reconciliation and rebuilding.
- Divided communities: Families and communities separated by new frontlines might face difficulties reconnecting, leading to generational divides.

Risks and Opportunities:

Risks:

- Unresolved tensions: Without a clear resolution, both sides could perceive the frozen state as temporary, preparing for future escalations.
- Undermined trust in diplomacy: A frozen conflict might signal the failure of international mediation efforts, reducing trust in diplomatic solutions globally.
- Erosion of governance: Prolonged conflict without resolution could weaken state capacity in contested areas.

Opportunities:

²⁶ J. Lough, *op. cit.*

- Space for diplomacy: A ceasefire could create breathing room for long-term negotiations, confidence-building measures, and eventual conflict resolution.
- Stabilization of daily life: A halt to active fighting could reduce civilian casualties and enable limited economic and social recovery in affected regions.

Long war

A conflict of attrition that allows each side to exhaust the other. Ukraine would continue to fight and try to rebuild at the same time, while incurring ever greater human losses on the battlefield and in migration.

Political Perspective:

- Endurance over resolution: Both Russia and Ukraine might adopt strategies focused on outlasting the other rather than pursuing a decisive victory, entrenching their positions.
- Erosion of political stability: Prolonged conflict could strain leadership in both nations, potentially leading to political instability. In Russia, economic hardships or battlefield losses might weaken Putin’s regime. In Ukraine, war fatigue could test public support for the government.
- Normalization of conflict: The war might become a background feature of the geopolitical landscape, with limited international urgency to resolve it as other global crises emerge.

Military Perspective:

- War of attrition: A long war could see both sides suffering significant losses in manpower, equipment, and resources, with incremental gains and losses along entrenched frontlines.
- Evolution of tactics: Both sides would likely adapt their strategies over time, incorporating new technologies, intelligence, and alliances to gain an advantage.
- Mobilization cycles: Sustained conflict could lead to repeated waves of mobilization, affecting civilians and economies as governments struggle to replenish depleted forces.
- Proxy warfare: External actors might increase their involvement, turning Ukraine into a testing ground for new weapons and strategies by NATO countries, Russia, and other global powers.

Economic Perspective:

- Economic stagnation: Prolonged warfare would devastate Ukraine's economy, delaying reconstruction and exacerbating poverty. Russia would also face deepening sanctions, resource strains, and economic isolation.
- Global economic disruptions: Prolonged instability could continue to affect global energy markets, food supplies (Ukraine's grain exports), and trade routes, leading to inflation and economic hardship in other regions.
- War economies: Both nations might shift toward "war economies," where resources are prioritized for military needs over civilian development, entrenching hardship for ordinary citizens.

Social and Humanitarian Perspective:

- Prolonged displacement: Millions of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) could face years without stable homes, creating long-term social and humanitarian crises.
- Generational impact: Children in both countries would grow up in the shadow of war, affecting education, mental health, and future prospects.
- Civilian casualties and destruction: A long war would likely lead to sustained high levels of civilian suffering, with entire towns and cities becoming uninhabitable due to continued shelling and fighting.
- Polarization and hatred: A protracted conflict could deepen animosities between Ukrainians and Russians, making reconciliation and peacebuilding more difficult even after the war ends.

Global Impact:

- Extended geopolitical tensions: NATO and Russia would remain in a prolonged state of confrontation, potentially escalating into direct clashes or further destabilizing other regions, such as the Arctic, the Middle East, or the South Caucasus.
- War fatigue in the West: Over time, Western nations might struggle to maintain unified support for Ukraine, especially if public opinion shifts due to economic pressures or competing priorities.
- Strengthened autocratic alliances: Russia might deepen ties with countries like China, Iran, and North Korea to counter Western sanctions and secure military and economic support, leading to a more polarized global order.

Environmental Perspective:

- Environmental degradation: Prolonged war would cause severe ecological damage, including destroyed farmlands, polluted waterways, and devastated ecosystems, particularly in heavily contested regions.
- Energy infrastructure destruction: Repeated attacks on pipelines, power plants, and other infrastructure could create long-lasting energy shortages and environmental hazards.

Risks and Opportunities:

Risks:

- Escalation beyond Ukraine: A long war increases the risk of the conflict spilling over into other regions, particularly NATO territories or post-Soviet states like Moldova or Georgia.
- Global crisis convergence: A prolonged conflict could exacerbate other global challenges, such as climate change, pandemics, or economic instability, overwhelming international institutions.
- Prolonged suffering: The longer the war continues, the harder it will be to rebuild trust, reconcile, and heal the social fabric of the affected regions.

Opportunities:

- Innovations in defense and resilience: Prolonged war could drive advancements in military technology and civilian resilience, offering future applications for other conflicts or disasters.
- Shift in global alliances: Over time, new alliances and partnerships might emerge as countries reassess their strategic interests in light of the protracted war.

Enforced peace

The elements of this peace must be elements which engage the confidence and satisfy the principles of the American governments, elements in accordance with their political faith and with the practical convictions which the people of America have once for all embraced and undertaken to defend²⁷. The terms of the immediate peace agreed upon will determine whether it is a peace for which such a guarantee can be secured. The question on which the future peace and politics of the whole world depend is this: Is the present war a struggle for a just and secure peace, or only for a new balance of power? If it is only a

²⁷ *Trump urges Putin to avoid escalation in Ukraine war, report says*, France24, November 11, 2024, <https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20241111-trump-putin-ukraine> (20.11.2024).

struggle for a new balance of power, who will guarantee, who can guarantee the stable equilibrium of the new arrangement?²⁸

Political Perspective:

- Transactional diplomacy: True to Trump's negotiation style, an enforced peace would likely focus on striking a deal that prioritizes immediate cessation of hostilities over long-term resolution of underlying issues. He might frame the deal as a win-win compromise, regardless of its durability.
- U.S.-centric framing: Trump could emphasize his role as the "deal-maker" to bolster his domestic and global image, using the peace agreement to showcase U.S. leadership and his personal effectiveness in resolving global conflicts.
- Neutrality on principles: The agreement might sideline complex issues like sovereignty and territorial integrity in favor of pragmatic concessions to both sides, such as autonomy for contested regions or economic incentives.
- Tensions with NATO and allies: A Trump-led peace process could strain relations with NATO and EU allies if they perceive the deal as undermining Ukraine's sovereignty or rewarding Russian aggression.

Military Perspective:

- Ceasefire as a focal point: Trump would likely prioritize a ceasefire to stop active fighting immediately, framing it as a first step toward stability²⁹.
- Demilitarized zones: The agreement might include the creation of demilitarized zones or peacekeeping forces, possibly involving countries perceived as neutral to both Russia and Ukraine.
- Focus on cost-cutting: Trump's approach could aim to reduce U.S. military aid to Ukraine by emphasizing the need for a "self-sufficient" Ukraine and greater burden-sharing by European allies³⁰.

Economic Perspective:

- Economic incentives for compliance: Trump could offer or broker economic incentives, such as lifting certain sanctions on Russia or

²⁸ S. F. Santos, *Trump ally says Ukraine focus must be peace, not territory*, BBC News, November 9, 2024, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czxrwr078v7o>> (20.11.2024).

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

³⁰ S. F. Santos, *op. cit.*

providing reconstruction aid to Ukraine, tied to adherence to the peace deal.

- Energy diplomacy: The agreement might include provisions related to energy, such as reopening gas pipelines, restoring Ukraine’s energy infrastructure, or allowing Russia to maintain certain energy exports under monitored conditions.
- Trade-offs for Western support: Trump might push European nations to finance more of Ukraine’s reconstruction and security to lessen the financial burden on the U.S.

Global Impact:

- Reshaped global alliances: Trump’s peace initiative could shift global alliances, as countries adjust to his unorthodox approach and its implications. For instance:
 - Russia might gain partial legitimacy if the deal includes formal recognition of annexed territories.
 - Ukraine could face reduced Western support if the deal appears to compromise its sovereignty.
 - China and other global powers might use this scenario to test U.S. resolve in other areas, like Taiwan.
- Potential new precedent: An enforced peace by Trump could set a controversial precedent where aggressors are partially rewarded to secure short-term stability³¹.

Social and Humanitarian Perspective:

- Unresolved grievances: A peace deal focused on expedience might fail to address deeper issues like displaced populations, war crimes, or the reintegration of occupied territories, leaving lingering resentment.
- Humanitarian aid as a bargaining chip: Trump might advocate for increased international humanitarian aid as a visible benefit of the peace deal, framing it as a success while leaving long-term reconciliation to local governments.

Risks, Challenges and Opportunities:

³¹ Thompson Reuters, *Source says Trump advice Putin not to escalate Ukraine war, Kremlin denies conversation*, CBC.CA, November 11, 2024, <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/trump-putin-phone-call-ukraine-1.7380033>> (20.11.2024).

Risks:

- Undermined international norms: By brokering a deal that compromises on sovereignty or territorial integrity, Trump could weaken global norms against aggression, emboldening other authoritarian regimes.
- Fragile agreement: A deal driven by Trump's emphasis on speed and optics might lack the institutional or multilateral support needed to ensure its durability, risking a relapse into conflict.
- Polarization within Ukraine: Concessions, such as granting autonomy to contested regions or allowing Russian influence to persist, could divide Ukrainian society and weaken its government.

Challenges:

- Securing buy-in: Trump's approach might face skepticism or resistance from both Kyiv and Moscow, particularly if the terms are seen as favoring one side or failing to address key demands.
- Maintaining U.S. credibility: NATO allies and other global actors might question the U.S.'s commitment to Ukraine and international norms, especially if Trump prioritizes a deal over principle.

Opportunities:

- Immediate halt to hostilities: Even if imperfect, an enforced peace could save lives and reduce civilian suffering by stopping active fighting.
- Pathway to long-term negotiations: A ceasefire or interim agreement could create space for more comprehensive peace talks in the future.
- Showcase of U.S. leadership: If successful, Trump could frame the deal as a landmark achievement, potentially improving U.S. influence in other global conflicts³².

Conclusion

The almost 12-year war-like situation in Ukraine has fundamentally changed the country. And within the last three years, Russian society has also begun to change fundamentally. The region will be marked by the events for many decades, regardless of what form of peace, which of four scenarios will be realized or a continued long war will take effect. In the last three years, an additional dimension has emerged in the violent conflict: a global perspective on a future world community with Western countries on one side and Russia, China, partly India and other BRICS countries on the other. This means that a possible end to the war will have consequences for the entire world and not only Ukraine and Russia.

³² *Ibidem.*

How could Ukraine's security be guaranteed?

Ukraine is demanding to be brought into NATO. But neither Donald Trump nor other NATO nations has expressed a desire for it; and Vladimir Putin would do everything in his power to block it. One other possibility is for a demilitarised zone, preserved by peacekeeping troops. It has been reported that Donald Trump would call on EU and British troops to enforce a buffer zone between the Russian and Ukrainian armies. This would be expensive and possibly dangerous for those nations, and Russia might well be implacably opposed. Alternatively, some have proposed the "Israel model": Ukraine remains formally outside NATO but is plentifully supplied with weapons and diplomatic support by the US and the West.

Is peace possible in the near future?

This depends on a series of complex interlocking issues: essentially, the tolerance of both sides for continued fighting, and the extent of Western support. And in a longer perspective of the rest of the world's attitude to the events. The two warring countries did come close to reaching a deal before, in Istanbul, weeks after the war began. It was proposed then that Ukraine would give up its NATO ambitions and commit to neutrality, but would have security guarantees from Western nations. The talks fell apart, for reasons that are disputed, with key issues still undecided. Negotiations under Donald Trump's auspices could be difficult for Ukraine, because the country shall focus on peace and not on territory.

Who will loose first?

Ukraine's weaknesses are clear: it is outmanned and outgunned, and facing a renewed onslaught on its eastern front despite the massive losses it has inflicted on the invading Russians. Its energy grid is pulverised daily. President Volodymyr Zelensky is unwilling to mobilise more troops by lowering the age for military service from 25 to 18, though the US urged him to do so last month. But the pressures on Russia are considerable, too. Casualty figures are hard to verify, but Ukraine estimates that 200,000 Russian soldiers have been killed and 600,000 more wounded (compared to 50,000 Ukrainian dead and 370,000 wounded). Although there is practically no internal opposition to Putin, the war is not popular: independent polling suggests 49% of Russians support withdrawing troops even if it means not achieving stated military goals. Perhaps the most pressing issue, though, is the economy. The official inflation rate has reached 8.5%, even though the central bank has raised its main interest rate to 21%. Prices of staples are going up by more than 20% per year. The

government is expected to raise rates again this month, and is spending its savings.

Will the US government succeed in bringing about rapid peace in the region?

To end the war immediately is possible but may have unintended effects in Ukraine, in Russia and in the rest of the world. The US has spent more than \$120bn in aid to Ukraine since the war began in February 2022, making it by some distance the largest donor. However, domestic support for arming Ukraine appears to have waned, particularly among Republicans, and isolationism is prevalent in the Maga movement. The war in Ukraine is by no means a top topic in the United States or Canada for that matter. Domestic political issues may become so serious that the war in Ukraine must be put on hold by the American administration and the president. After the election, Donald Trump Jr reposted a meme warning President Volodymyr Zelenskyy: "You're 38 days from losing your allowance". Trump's own position, though, has been fluid. He has presented no plan, and has not said how he would bridge the gap between apparently irreconcilable Russian and Ukrainian positions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

1. Bradley S., *Ukraine War: Who's winning?*, The Week UK, November 27, 2024, <<https://theweek.com/news/world-news/europe/961821/who-is-winning-the-war-in-ukraine>>
2. Episkopos M., *What a Russian 'victory' would look like*, Responsible Statecraft - quincyinst.org, May 6, 2024, <<https://responsiblestatecraft.org/russia-ukraine-war/>>
3. Farrell F., *How will the Russia-Ukraine War end? The good, the bad and the ugly scenarios*, "Kyiv Independent", December 13, 2024, <<https://kyivindependent.com/how-will-russia-war-in-ukraine-end/>>
4. Gressel G., *Ukraine's Survival: Three Scenarios for the war in 2024*, European Council on Foreign Relations, January 31, 2024, <<https://ecfr.eu/article/ukraines-survival-three-scenarios-for-the-war-in-2024/>>
5. Ijgyarto I., Seremet S., *After Twenty-Seven Months of War, Ukraine needs Peace*, MKI Report - 2024, <https://hiia.hu/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/MKI-Report_After-Twenty-Seven-Months-of-War-Ukraine-Needs-Peace.pdf>
6. Kullab S., *Thousands of North Korean troops in Russia. What does that mean for the war with Ukraine?*, "AP News", October 31, 2024,

- <<https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-north-korea-war-735ab717dcf92a718adcb68bfbdcc653>>
7. Lough J., *Four Scenarios for the End of the War in Ukraine*, Chatham House 2024, <<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2024/10/four-scenarios-end-war-ukraine>>
 8. Paffenholz T., Bramble A., Poppelreuter P., Ross N., *Negotiating an End to the war in Ukraine: Ideas and Options to Prepare for and Design a negotiation process*, Report 2023
 9. *President Zelensky Peace Formula - Ukraine's Peace Formula Philosophy*, <https://www.president.gov.ua/storage/j-files-storage/01/19/53/32af8d644e6cae41791548fc82ae2d8e_1691483767.pdf>
 10. Santos S. F., *Trump ally says Ukraine focus must be peace, not territory*, "BBC News", November 9, 2024, <<https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/czxrwr078v7o>>
 11. Stückelberger Ch., *Ukraine-Russia: Twelve Proposals Towards Negotiated Peace*, <<https://www.fpablovi.org/images/Actualidad/firma/Ukraine-Russia.pdf>>
 12. Thompson Reuters, *Source says Trump advice Putin not to escalate Ukraine war, Kremlin denies conversation*, CBC.CA, November 11, 2024, <<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/trump-putin-phone-call-ukraine-1.7380033>>
 13. *Trump urges Putin to avoid escalation in Ukraine war, report says*, "France24", November 11, 2024, <<https://www.france24.com/en/europe/20241111-trump-putin-ukraine>>
 14. Yakymenko Y. (ed.), *Ukraine from war to peace and recovery*, Razumkov Centre, Kyiv, September 2024