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POLITICAL SCIENCE ■



POLICY BRIEFING

Is a peace deal possible with Putin?

On the problems of peacemaking in the Russian war on Ukraine

Timothy Snyder

Yulia Kazdobina

Olexander Scherba

with an introduction by Luke Cooper and Mary Kaldor

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THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH
Edinburgh Law School



Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen
Institute for Human Sciences



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Background

On the 20th July 2022, Ukraine Peace-Rep hosted a private seminar discussion around the question, 'Is a peace deal possible with Putin?' This readout contains a non-verbatim summary of key points made by panellists in their presentations. The audience was a small group of experts, academics, civil society advocates and policy-makers.

Please note that the seminar discussion took place prior to the announcement of the UN-Turkey brokered food exports deal on the 22nd July 2022 and the subsequent Russian bombing of Odesa Port on the 23rd July 2022.

PeaceRep

PeaceRep (Peace and Conflict Resolution and Evidence Platform) is a multi-partner research programme rethinking peace and transition processes in light of changing global dynamics. It is led by the University of Edinburgh and funded by the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). Ukraine PeaceRep will provide evidence, insight, academic research and policy analysis to support Ukrainian sovereignty and democracy in the face of the Russian invasion. Through our partnership with Kyiv School of Economics (KSE), we work closely with researchers, educationalists and civic activists in Ukraine to ensure that policy solutions are grounded in robust evidence and are calibrated to support democratic outcomes. The Ukraine PeaceRep consortium is led by the University of Edinburgh and the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) partnering with the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies (IOS), the Institute of Human Sciences (IWM) and KSE.

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Introduction

Luke Cooper

Senior Research Fellow, Conflict and Civicness Research Group, LSE IDEAS

Mary Kaldor

Emeritus Professor of Global Governance, Director of LSE Peace-Rep and the Conflict and Civicness Research Group, LSE IDEAS

This policy briefing considers the relationship between peace and justice in any attempt at peace-making in the Russian-Ukraine War i.e., the tests that should be applied in order for any cessation of fighting in Ukraine to be considered a just end. It brings together a non-verbatim summary of presentations made by three speakers at a recent private seminar organised by the Ukraine PeaceRep (Peace and Conflict Resolution Evidence Platform) team.

Unlike a majority of the conflicts studied by PeaceRep, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has led to a classical conventional war rather than a civil war or situation of intractable violence. Whereas fragmented, intractable conflicts, which involve multiple non-state actors often using violence to extract rents from vulnerable populations, tend to predominate in the twenty-first century, the Russia-Ukraine War is a classical political and military contest. It is a war between an autocratic regime characterised by a combination of political-economic corruption (largely based on rents from fossil fuel extraction) and exclusionary identity politics (i.e., Russian ethnic nationalism), on one side, and a predominantly civic democratic state, on the other.

In principle, if the conflict retains its conventional war character, then it should, as Timothy Snyder argues in his contribution, come to an end. If, however, the Ukrainian state fragmented and public authority became dissipated there would be a danger of the conflict assuming an intractable, non-conventional character – although unlikely at the time of writing, due to the deep civic reserves the Ukrainian resistance has drawn on, we should be cognisant of this risk.

Our panel were united in their view that a peace deal – as defined above, including notions of a just end – was not possible with Putin in power.

Assuming the war retains its conventional character, then how will it end? Classical political contests resolve themselves around some form of political conclusion, armistice or settlement. The ability of each side to prosecute them successfully lies in what the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz called the trinity: (a) the army and military high command, (b) the government and (c) the people. Whether one or other side wins the classical political contest, will be determined by the complex interactions between these three elements. In the historical evolution of 'total wars', in which an entire society is mobilised around a war-economy to prosecute the conflict, 'the people' came to play a critical role. In addition, international alignments, including economic and military aid from allies, have also driven 'total wars' to their conclusion, providing a tipping point which changed the balance of forces dramatically.

In Ukraine's war of self-defence this raises some questions. On the one hand, Ukraine and its allies will not declare war on Russia itself and prosecute a total war ending in 'regime change' in Moscow. This would very likely lead to a nuclear war or conventional war on NATO territory with unimaginably bad human and environmental costs – and has been ruled out. The goals

of the Ukrainian side are rightly limited to the eviction of Russian forces from Ukraine's sovereign territory. On the other hand, if Vladimir Putin remains in power in Moscow, then what would the end of the war look like in this scenario?

In this context, we asked our panel: 'Is a peace deal with Putin possible?' In their responses, the panellists, in discussion with experts, considered what we mean by 'peace' and a 'just peace'. This, in turn, introduced a distinction between an armistice, i.e., a stop to the fighting, and a peace settlement. Whereas the former simply means a formal or informal end to the war, the latter raises issues of rights and responsibilities; e.g., transitional justice for war crimes, payment of reparations, human rights and the legitimacy of sovereign territorial claims.

Our panel were united in their view that a peace deal – as defined above, including notions of a *just end* – was not possible with Putin in power. In drawing this conclusion, they nonetheless laid out scenarios for how Ukraine could successfully prosecute a military campaign that led to an end to the war (i.e., a stop to fighting/armistice). A successful military campaign could be expected to produce some form of political shock in Moscow, forcing the regime to re-evaluate its goals. This raised the possibility that such an end could conceivably happen with Putin declaring a false 'victory'. They also argued that the basis for any peace talks between the two sides would have to involve the recognition of Ukraine's basic legitimacy as an entity – something that the extreme discourses now emanating from the Kremlin flatly refuse to do.

In addition to the summary presentations included in this policy briefing, the discussion raised two other questions requiring further analysis. First, how Ukraine could organise its economy and social infrastructure effectively to maintain its cohesion as an entity and successfully prosecute the war – and the role of international donors in supporting this. For example, Ukraine's ability to avoid a breakdown of authority (thus risking intractable violence) would be more straightforward in a situation of full employment, in which labour was directed centrally towards prosecuting the war effort using proto-planning mechanisms.

Second, there was an interesting discussion about what might be called 'humanitarian diplomacy' – talks that are taking place at all levels regarding lifting the blockade on grain exports, evacuating civilians from occupied areas, exchanges of prisoners, lifting of sieges, and so on, and how these might be conducted in ways that are optimal for individuals caught up in the war. An important issue to deciphering this element lies in whether the Russian state should be analysed as a fragmented entity and the possibilities, in this context, to negotiate at lower-order levels of military authority. These are questions we will return to in the future work of Ukraine PeaceRep.

Finally, we would like to thank the panellists and participants for their insightful contributions and for providing permission for summary statements to be included in this policy-briefing.

Yulia Kazdobina: 'For Ukraine, this is a war of self-defence'

Yulia Kazdobina

Head of the Ukrainian Foundation for Security Studies and former advisor to the Ukrainian information policy minister on Crimea, 2016 – 2019.

There are several ways to approach this broad question, I will consider some different aspects as I see it. The first is whether Putin is going to agree to a genuine peace deal voluntarily.

The answer to this is clearly no. The aggression is deliberate, well prepared in terms of propaganda and the modernisation of the Russian armed forces, but poorly calculated (in terms of the setbacks that the Russian army has encountered in the first phase of the war).

Before Putin runs out of steam, he is not going to agree to a peace deal voluntarily. The Russian goals in the war (or so-called 'Special Operation') have not been clearly outlined. But insofar as we analyse the broad collection of related statements, Putin has described it as a war against 'the West' and against NATO, even though it doesn't involve a direct attack on a NATO country. But the statement Putin made in December 2021, for example, that demanded NATO retreats to its 1997 borders illustrates the scope of Russia's appetites.

When we talk about a possible peace deal, when Putin hints towards this, he is playing mind games, because he knows thinking in terms of peaceful and conflict resolution is basically the paradigm that the West lives in. But this is a different paradigm to the one that Russia uses.

Russia is seeking to advance its political interests by any means necessary. This starts with the military means, but it also involves information, energy politics, a willingness to starve populations that are not even a party to this crisis, and to use a refugee crisis to put pressure on the European Union (in the hope that this will reduce its support for Ukraine).

So, if we talk about whether a peace deal is possible, then we can say that it is if there is some kind of common ground on which it might be based. This isn't the case here. Usually, a common ground might be values, e.g., you decide human life is valuable, that economic wellbeing is valuable, and so on, and for that reason you decide to stop fighting and start talking. But here we can see that Russia doesn't have the same values. The interest that it is pursuing – the destruction of Ukraine, the destruction of the current world order, and to impose its will on those states in its neighbourhood by force – are not views that it is possible to reconcile with.

It is not clear whether a short-term truce would help Ukraine. We need to continue to push on to try to achieve a victory. Psychologically and strategically Russian defeat in Kherson oblast would be very significant.

There is not even a common understanding of the story behind the conflict. If we go to the beginning of where this started, we can call this the hybrid occupation of the Donbas in 2014. Russia stood behind the entire so-called 'insurgency' in the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts. But it falsely presented its informal military campaign in the region as a civil war.

Depending on how this conflict is defined, it leads into different approaches to bringing the war to some kind of conclusion. This is why the Minsk peace agreements never worked; because the two sides had different and competing stories that they were operating on.

In addition, for a peace deal to work both sides have to be willing to negotiate and stop fighting. Russia has shown that it doesn't have a serious interest in ceasing the fighting. They have put their economy on a war footing. For example, see the recent decision allowing the government to direct private enterprises to work overtime and removing their freedom to turn down government contracts. They are also developing infrastructure for youth military training and seeking to construct a domestic capacity to offset the effects of sanctions. They are also communicating through propaganda that the sanctions are not a punishment for wrongdoing but a crime against Russia and creating Soviet-style patriotic youth movements.

This all indicates Russia is not going to stop any time soon.

For Ukraine, this is a war of self-defence. Prosecuting it is the only option. In the face of a deliberate and calculated aggression by a much larger and stronger state, our survival is at stake.

Another reason to stop fighting would be exhaustion at the war – but neither side is close to this point. Also, for a peace deal to take place parties should be willing to commit and take responsibility. The existence of the so-called breakaway republics allows the Russian state to evade its responsibility under the pretence that it is simply acting to protect these forces.

The resolution of this conflict in a peace deal is impossible for so long as this is the case. We already saw this in the Minsk agreements when Russia claimed to not be a party to the war.

This situation is now worse, because Putin used his recognition of these breakaway republics as independent states as a justification for the war on Ukraine. They are working to build up these republics, while at the same time seeking to completely destroy the Ukrainian economy.

This makes Ukraine more dependent on western economy for support – a reality which, in turn, is further instrumentalised by Putin, as he presents Ukraine as a client-state of the West.

Even a temporary ceasefire is also problematic in this context. A pause in fighting allows Putin to secure greater control over Ukrainian territory, consolidating Russia's position. As one of his goals in the war is the destruction of Ukrainian identity, a pause in fighting also provides further opportunity to prosecute this agenda of assimilating these areas into Russia.

Material and ideational dimensions of Russia's war on Ukraine

The other aspect of whether a pause in fighting would allow the Ukrainian side to regroup is the economic dimension of the Russian war on Ukraine. Time does not seem to be on Ukraine's side – or rather, it is not clear that Ukraine has an interest in a short-term armistice.

Russia has ruined the Ukrainian economy. Lots of foreign investor-owned enterprises have gone. The maritime export route is closed. We have the Danube river route, but that cannot make up for losing the large quantities that were moved through the Black Sea export trade.

For so long as the Russian threat is operative, businesses are unlikely to move ahead with investments in Ukraine. We have the problem that the war destroys the normal operation of business risk. It destroys our ability to develop the country. Economically, we are very dependent on Western support. Russia is calculating that its disinformation war in the West

can be successful over time, as well, for example promoting anti-refugee sentiment in Europe.

Given the accumulation of all these issues, it is not clear whether a short-term truce would help Ukraine. We need to continue to push on to try to achieve a victory. Psychologically and strategically, Russian defeat in Kherson oblast would be very significant. Lots of food is grown in this region too. It is hard to overestimate what its liberation would mean.

Putin projects a 'strongman' image but behind this intimidation is considerable insecurity and unwillingness to face a real fight. We have to push back as strongly as possible as soon as possible, to force him to reassess whether his personal power is now coming under risk.

Here the domestic narrative is important. They claim to be liberating Ukraine from Nazis. They claim to be acting out a benevolent and selfless set of actions. So, a point of weakness in this narrative could potentially lie in the lack of self-interest that it entails for Russians. They might at a certain point ask, 'why are we sacrificing all of this, why do we care about the people of Donbas?' – and this provides a point of weakness that may be exploited in the campaign against Putin's imperialism. The importance of these narrative elements is why it is wrong that sometimes in the West the war is only presented as a military balance of forces. The ideological aspect, i.e., the information and narrative war, will also play its part, too.

Olexander Scherba: 'Putin believes that he is winning'

Olexander Scherba

Ukrainian diplomat and the former Ambassador of Ukraine to Austria (2014–2021).

My answer to the question 'is a peace deal with Putin possible?' is negative. Putin has been preparing for this war for a very long time – at least two decades, since the time of the Orange Revolution. He saw bringing Ukraine back to Russia as a political legacy and the crown jewel of his presidency. It is not a coincidence that it was launched at the time of the hundred-year anniversary of the formation of the Soviet Union in 1922. He has put his case very bluntly and very clearly. He has argued that Ukrainians, Russians and Belarussians are one and the same and that he is restoring this unity.

Putin believes that he is winning. This is, in part, due to his lack of access to information that contradicts his own assumptions. It is also a feature of such leaders that he is blind to whatever contradicts his worldview. The only two constituencies that Putin recognises are himself – as the supreme leader – and what he calls 'the deep Russian people', i.e., those outside of the cities of Moscow and St Petersburg. Both these constituencies currently want the war. The Russian people have been pumped full of militarism, hate and imperialism.

Putin's ideas and worldview have prepared Russians for this for many years – such that they now live in a reality where warfare is the natural order of things. Unfortunately, there is no pressure on Putin from the Russian people. They believe that fighting against fascists and Nazis is a noble cause – and they have been told Ukraine is a fascist and Nazi entity.

Putin's ideas and worldview have prepared Russians for this for many years – such that they now live in a reality where warfare is the natural order of things.

I don't see any mounting pressure on Putin at the moment which could force him to seek any kind of peaceful resolution. Economically, Russia still has the money from gas and oil sales. Putin does not hide his personal enjoyment of the conflict, how it tortures his enemies and leverages Russian power over Europe. So, for all these reasons I do not see a Russian state that is willing to make any kind of peace – except insofar as they wanted a temporary reprieve to replenish their fighting force, in order to then resume the fighting afresh. Recent interviews and statements have again broadened their war aims. This includes the general aim for the 'de-Nazification' of Ukraine and the capture and assimilation of Kherson oblast.

From Ukraine's perspective there is also little interest in a ceasefire. They recognise that a temporary pause in fighting would be used by Putin to deepen his tentacles in the occupied areas. The army is not keen on a ceasefire and want to continue to prosecute the war. In terms of popular democratic pressure, there is little pressure on President Zelensky from the civilian population. Yes, we are suffering, but this does not mean we countenance peace at any price.

We should be clear that Ukraine can win. We have shown that once we are provided with the weapons necessary for us to win, we can do so. The consequences have not been escalation, but Ukrainian victories. This was the case with javelins that made a tremendous difference in the first stage of the war; and we are seeing it right now with the HIMARS rocket system.

This has provided Ukraine with the equipment necessary to prosecute the battle. On the other hand, if the West does not provide us with something to fight with we will, in the words of my Foreign Minister, Dmitry Kuleba, “fight with our spades”. We will never give up.

You in the West live in the reality – and thank God you do – in which everything is better than war. But we have this war right now and if we lose this war, or make concessions that Putin wants, then we know what they will do to Ukraine because it is published.

They have published it in an article of 4th April, [“What should Russia do with Ukraine?”](#), on state media platform, RIA Novosti. Please read it. It is the gulag, it is concentration camps, it is collective punishment of Ukraine, for a whole generation. So, we cannot and will not accept this.

Timothy Snyder: 'Russia will only recognize Ukraine when it is forced to do so'

Timothy Snyder

Richard C. Levin Professor of History at Yale University and a permanent fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences in Vienna where he is the founder of the Ukraine in European Dialogue programme.

I will respond to three different aspects of this question, 'is a peace deal with Putin possible?': (a) the normative, (b) the personal, i.e., Vladimir Putin himself and (c) how a historical perspective informs this.

The normative level

Normatively speaking, peace is not the same thing as a ceasefire or a truce, or even the end of the war. Peace is not an absence, but a presence.

So, if we imagine this war ending but Russia continuing to execute local Ukrainian civic leaders, to deport Ukrainians, especially women and children deemed assimilable into Russia, continue to remove Ukrainian schooling, and so on, this would not be peace. It would actually represent a comprehensive policy, which, according to the 1948 Genocide Convention, constitutes the crime of genocide. We could not call this peace.

Normatively speaking, we cannot talk about peace let alone justice on territories that the Russian state is still controlling.

It is hard to imagine the war ending and Russia controlling Ukrainian territory and not doing these things since this is what Russia has been doing up until now. More than 3m Ukrainians have been deported from occupied territories since the start of the war – and this is a terrifying number, more than 5% of the population of the entire country. This is just one item on the list of things that Russia does on occupied Ukrainian territory.

Normatively speaking, we cannot talk about peace let alone justice on territories that the Russian state is still controlling. The only way to get to something that could be regarded as justice would be for Ukraine to be recognised as a side in this conflict, as an agent and as a subject. Russia is very far away from this at the moment. The only way that we can start to move towards this is by Ukraine asserting itself on the battlefield.

Russia will only recognise Ukraine as an actor, as a subject, when it is forced to do so. This does have implications for justice. The only way that an end to the war can be considered a just end is for this to occur as a result of a Ukrainian negotiation, something that entails recognition.

The personal level

Putin as an individual thinks that he is winning. As a generic tyrant he is caught in the general problems of tyrannical rule; so, he will think that he is winning even when he is losing (as I believe that he currently is); he will have difficulty accessing objective information on

the war; and he will have difficulty separating his vision of how he would *like the world to be* and how it is *actually moving along*.

Crucially, in Putin's thinking there is a complete indifference to values. Russian casualties, for example, matter in a purely technical sense, i.e., the material impact they have on prosecuting the Russian invasion. It certainly does not matter in any way that we would treat as normal, i.e., that other human beings are being killed.

From Putin's point of view there are still two strategic weapons. First, the gas weapon against the Europeans. Second, the starvation weapon, or what I called the Hunger Plan against Africans and Asians. The idea is to starve Asians and Africans and to then use the black and brown bodies as a propaganda tool, blaming Ukraine and the West.

I do not think this analysis means that an end to the war is impossible.

I think Europe will get through the winter. I think it is possible to avert the mass starvation. It is also possible to communicate effectively who is to blame for the food crisis, undermining the propaganda value for Putin. And – lastly – I think it is possible to end the war.

The historical perspective

History tells us that wars do end. This war like other wars will end. It is not going to end because suddenly the Kremlin has a change in worldview. It will come to an end when – and if – Russia loses the war. And this happens – Russia loses the war – when Putin believes that his position is threatened. In other words, the war ends when something inside the Russian system changes, i.e., when something besides the deep Russian people and the supreme leader begins to matter. When that happens is unpredictable because it's a tyrannical, highly centralised system. But the fact that this is the case makes it brittle; things that look strong aren't necessarily strong.

So, my sense is that we can get to the end of the war but only by way of a Ukrainian victory.

In this conception, Ukrainian victory is defined by the *experience of pressure inside the Kremlin* which forces a recognition of Ukrainian agency. That won't necessarily lead to a peace agreement, though, and could even involve Putin declaring victory in some form or another.

A peace deal is not, in that sense, very likely. But the road to the end of the war lies in giving Ukrainians whatever they need to successfully prosecute it to victory.

Is there a danger of the war becoming a long-attritional slog?

In answering this question, we have a problem of temporality. The war has only been going on for 5 months. This is 5 months longer than it should have gone on and 5 months of horrible suffering. But it is still only 5 months – and the artillery-focused Donbas phase is only half this time.

In historical terms, 5 months is not a long-attritional slog – it is currently a very short war.

My concern is how we talk about these things starts to take over from the battlefield history element. If we tell ourselves, this is a long attritional slog and we can't take it anymore, then that becomes true. Or worse, if we tell ourselves that the Ukrainians can't take it anymore, then we're not listening to the Ukrainians because this is not what they're saying.

In the end, the length of the war will be determined by the technical battlefield state of the conflict. The Russians fight by using generally inaccurate artillery to destroy whatever their targets are and then try to walk in without resistance.

In general, in short-range fighting, the Ukrainians have always won. What has happened in the last few weeks is that Ukrainians have shown they can use longer range weapons in order to hinder the use of Russian artillery. And this does augur a very different stage in the war.

We are now no longer in that artillery phase, we are somewhere else. The Russians do not have anything else they can do, but their continuing use of this tactic will not be as successful as it has been in the artillery Donbas phase (i.e., the last two and a half months).

The other point I would make on this is that Russian successes in the last two and a half months have not been very significant. Their advances by historical scale are not impressive. There have been a lot of wars fought in the Steppe. This is the area where you break through, and you move very quickly – and the Russians have failed to do this. We have 2,000 years of historical record of war fighting in this part of the world. The Steppe is where you want to fight if you are on the offensive. The lack of natural barriers means that if you failed to break through in the south east of Ukraine you are being stopped by somebody, i.e., the other side in the conflict.

Long-attribitional slog is a paradigm which is inappropriate. It has the quality of taking away our agency, because we say 'it's a long attritional slog, what can we do?' When in fact there is a lot we can do. This is why, in the end, the answer to the question, 'how to save lives' is to bring the war to an end. So, there is no shortcut to providing Ukrainians with what they need to win.

If Putin faces defeat will he use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons?

There are Russian weaknesses in weapons procurement, in weapons allocation and weaknesses in morale. The Russians don't like fighting the Ukrainians. They don't mind firing weapons at them from the safety of the Caspian or Black Sea, or pushing the button on artillery pieces.

The assessment of the Western security services is that Russia will not use nuclear weapons and it is hard to see what they have to gain from their use.

They don't like to fight the Ukrainians. They get close and they fight – they get killed. There is a point at which the Russians or Putin realise they are losing – and they are able to catch-themselves before the whole system collapses. And it is at that point there is hope for an end to the war.

The word escalation has been used too carelessly in a lot of the public debate. Raising the question of nuclear weapons, both by Lukashenko and by Putin, is largely an attempt to get our attention and get ourselves feeling frightened because no one wants a nuclear war. It is noticeable that these statements have not come from the Russian military itself. It is a civilian propaganda point. The assessment of the Western security services is that Russia will not use nuclear weapons and it is hard to see what they have to gain from their use.

The escalations that are already in play are the two we have mentioned: the Hunger Plan and the gas weapon. On this question, 'what will Russia do if they lose?' The most important strategic event in this war is their defeat in the battle of Kyiv. This was a shocking moment. It was the biggest shock that could possibly have been delivered to them.

From a historical perspective, and with all due respect to Ukrainians, Kyiv is in the end not a difficult city to take. It's not a naturally defensible city, once you get out of the forests at the north. In the aftermath of the First World War, it was taken more than 10 times by multiple different armies. The failure of the Russians to take Kyiv was a shock to them. And what did they do? They pulled back. They revised their public assessment of what the war is about.

Lastly, on the psychology of all this. The psychology on the Ukrainian side is that they have to take their shot. They have won the right to make a counteroffensive. Militarily, I think this is true, but psychologically and politically they need to be supported to make the counteroffensive. And the conversation about peace will look different when we are able to make an assessment of the Kherson counteroffensive. We can't and shouldn't try to stop them from doing this.

Regardless of how well we arm them, they are going to go for this offensive. I think we should arm them well because I think taking Kherson back is our best chance for ending the war.

The character of the war and three potential scenarios

Unlike Syria and a number of other contemporary violent conflicts, this is a struggle between two states that are reasonably functional. It's a conventional war and the outcome – how it ends – is determined by the comparative exhaustion of the two sides and the perceptions of that exhaustion in the population. Ukraine has the advantage here that it can tell itself a better story about why they are fighting and why they are exhausted. Russians, by contrast, don't have a compelling story to explain their exhaustion. I don't think, in this sense, that we should assume Ukrainian politics is more brittle than Russian politics. I would say it's the other way round.

So, this question about brittleness, fragility, is an important one, but we apply it to both sides and recognise that it is a race-to-the-bottom: whichever side gets to the bottom first, loses.

My own view is that there are three scenarios relevant to the question of how the war ends:

Fall scenario. Victorious Ukrainian counter-offensive in Kherson and some kind of shock in Moscow.

Winter scenario. The counteroffensive doesn't end the war and everyone talks about the long-attribitional slog again.

Spring scenario. By early 2023 the impact of the sanctions really start to make themselves felt in the Russian economy.

This means we have to be patient in different ways as different options open up that have the potential to produce a shock in Moscow that can bring about an end to the war.

Strategies and tools for humanitarian relief: a key priority must be the refugee population

One straightforward way we can provide immediate humanitarian relief is supporting the women and children refugee population outside of Ukraine.

There is a lot we can do to assist in supporting Ukrainian culture among this population. Many Ukrainians have an anxiety that their culture could be lost to this generation if they grow up outside of their home country; how do they get access to the Ukrainian language? How do they read Ukrainian books? Their parents are often anxious to get them back to Ukraine for this reason, especially so because this is a war about national survival.

One way you can put a nation's survival at risk is by just dispersing millions of children into different school systems in other countries. Those education systems can do a great job. For example, Warsaw is doing a great job and the Ukrainian kids there are performing remarkably well, but this does not change the fact that they are, in the end, not studying in Ukrainian schools. This is also a humanitarian question – and assisting the culture and arts sector in providing support for Ukrainians overseas is straightforward and can make a big difference.

In addition, in a more tactical and strategic sense, if you get money into the pockets of the refugee population abroad, one way or another that money will find its way back into the country, and into supporting the population at home that are fighting.



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POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Conflict and Civicness Research Group
LSE IDEAS
The London School of Economics
and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2A 2AE
Email: ideas.crp@lse.ac.uk



lse.ac.uk/ideas/projects/conflict-research-programme

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