



**Dimensions**  
for Strategic Studies

**Russia**

Situation Assessment

**Ukraine**



# "Russian-Ukrainian" crisis scenarios and their aftermath

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## **Dimensions** for Strategic Studies

Dimensions Centre for Strategic Studies (DCSS) is think tank, dedicated to the study of the Middle East and North Africa affairs, provides the Arab readers with a substantive insight on the region's political, economic and social issues and dynamics.

The DCSS was founded in the United Kingdom on January 2020 ,1, and is headquartered in London.

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# Preamble

The current Russian-Ukrainian crisis (2022-2021) worsened in March 2021, when Russia began mobilizing troops and military equipment near the border with Ukraine, causing an international crisis and raising concerns about a possible invasion.

Satellite images showed the movement of armored vehicles, rockets and other heavy weapons.

By December 2021, more than 100,000 troops were stationed near the Ukrainian border.<sup>1</sup>

The current crisis is linked to the long Russian-Ukrainian war, which began in 2014 and escalated in early 2021, and in December 2021, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced several demands, including Ukraine's non-adherence to NATO and a reduction in the number of NATO troops and military equipment in Eastern Europe in exchange for the withdrawal of Russian troops.<sup>2</sup>

The United States and other NATO members rejected the request and warned Russia to tighten economic sanctions in the event of an invasion of Ukraine. Bilateral security talks were held in January 2022.

Russian-Ukrainian relations intensified in late October and early November, following the first Ukrainian combat use of the Turkish "Berkdar" drone against separatist groups in Donetsk.<sup>3</sup>

The announcement of the use of the UAV appeared almost simultaneously with the news of the liberation of the village of Staromarevka on the borderline, which at that time was home to 37 citizens who had obtained Russian passports under the Russian Simplified Nationality Grant Program.

(1) Satellite images showing new Russian military buildup near Ukraine, Politico, 11/1/2021: <https://politi.co/34OePBr>

(2) Russia demands NATO retract pledge to admit Ukraine and Georgia, Financial Times, 10/12/2021: <https://on.ft.com/3JEf0hi>

(3) Ukraine plays a dangerous game with drones in Donbass-Russia's UN ambassador, Tass News Agency, 29/10/2021: <https://bit.ly/3LMJrDO>



Over the past months, the United States and other Western countries have passed forecasts of specific dates for the anticipated Russian invasion.

Such leaks were made by western officials or through leaks to large media outlets?

At the same time, Ukrainian Defense Minister Oleksiy Reznikov estimated the threat of a major escalation to be low.

According to him, despite “various hypothetical assessments and expectations” in foreign media, Kyiv has “comprehensive information” and a “realistic assessment of the situation.”

Russia itself has repeatedly rejected accusations of preparing for Ukraine's invasion at various levels.

In mid-December 2021, against the backdrop of continuing tension in the region, Russia made a number of demands to the United States and other NATO nations (drafts of a security assurances treaty and a convention on measures to ensure the security of Russia and NATO nations).

Russia's three main demands include the refusal of NATO to expand further eastward (including providing assurances that Ukraine and Georgia will not be admitted to NATO), the withdrawal of U.S. forces and weapons from Eastern Europe, and the renunciation of deployment in Europe (including Ukraine).

These requirements were discussed in the coordination of Russia, the United States, Russia, NATO, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in mid-January 2022.

The demands put forward in the West are seen as an attempt to radically revise the basic principles and structure of European security formed after the end of the Cold War, which - according to the Russian leadership - was imposed on Russia during its period of extreme weakness and does not take into account Russian national interests.

Russia also accuses NATO of violating the principle of indivisibility of security, enshrined in the Charter on European Security of 1999, and of ignoring the agreements concluded within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) after the Paris Pact of 1990.



In early February 2022, Chinese leader Xi Jinping supported Russian proposals, and Russia and China issued a joint statement opposing NATO expansion.<sup>4</sup>

Because of the threat of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, NATO has announced the expansion of its military presence in Eastern Europe.<sup>5</sup>

The United States began sending 200\$ million in additional military <sup>6</sup> aid to Ukraine and began redeploying several thousand troops to Poland and Romania.

Other NATO nations have also announced the supply of weapons to Ukraine.

Against this background, in late January and early February 2022, many States announced the evacuation of their diplomats and their families from Kyiv and invited their citizens to leave Ukraine.<sup>7</sup>

(4) Xiang Putin urge NATO to rule out expansion as Ukraine tensions rise, The Guardian, 4/2/2022: <https://bit.ly/3sYbyHw>

(5) NATO Allies send more ships, and jets to enhance deterrence and defense in Eastern Europe, NATO, 4/1/2022: <https://bit.ly/3s7Ohnv>

(6) U.S. gave 200\$ mln defense aid to Ukraine in December, Reuters, 19/1/2022: <https://reut.rs/3gYt1tY>

(7) 'It is past time to leave Ukraine': Western diplomats flee Kyiv, The Guardian, 13/2/2022: <https://bit.ly/34WptWD>



## First: Positions of active States

In order to understand the dimensions of this crisis, the positions and interests of regional actors in the crisis must be considered.

### Russian Position

Today Russia cannot include Ukraine in its economic setting, as there will be many protests and there will not be enough resources in Russia itself. For Russia, Ukraine now acts not as an asset, but as a threat. Russia's motives in the Ukrainian nation are as follows:

**First:** there is the “empire syndrome” and the desire to restore the Russian empire , proceeding from the logic of returning to agreements on the outcome of World War II.

**Second:** Technological backwardness compared to China and the United States of America in all major areas of future economic development for 6-5 years, and bridging this gap is impossible without new technologies. According to the Kremlin's logic, one of the most important factors in accessing new technologies is the aggravation of the situation and the imposition of negotiations with Russia, and the result of these negotiations will be the easing of sanctions and the transfer of certain technologies.

**Third:** Lifting the sanctions will turn Russia into an indispensable and largely monopolized location for the energy and security sectors -in part - in much of Eurasia.Hence Russia's desire to control Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (immediately after the Kazakhstan process, they were actively discussed in the Russian media).

**Fourth:** Human Resources: Russia has a shortage of human resources that it needs for future wars and for the development of its economy on the basis of regions.



**Fifth:** a willingness to persuade the West to agree on the “Ukrainian question,” for example, by implementing the Minsk accords, beginning to define its “red lines,” at least in the near future, and accepting Russia's role as an equal partner of the West in strategic stability and regional security.

## American Position

The motivation for the United States is to stay at the heart of the entire Western world system, while essentially maintaining the status quo.

The United States seeks to “freeze” relations with European allies to free resources for China. For the United States, there is no urgent need to “defeat” Russia as a state. Ukraine remains not only an area for maneuver but also an area for tendering. The worsening of relations with Germany against the backdrop of Berlin's reluctance to play in the American scenario regarding Russia is quite unexpected for the United States.

In fact, this is another front for the United States, and official Washington is not ready for it yet. Here, too, Ukraine's position is secondary.

The United States has now begun a hybrid information war with Russia based on the doctrine of the “cause of war”: whatever Russia does will be seen as a provocation. This is a great advantage for Ukraine; the entire collective West will have to respond to any Russian actions, even a minor one.

On the positive side, Joe Biden suffers from the consequences of a bad withdrawal from Afghanistan, especially since he is facing midterm elections at the end of the year, and therefore wants to market to the American voter that he has stopped a “third world war”, (and here Biden and Zelenski can receive a future Nobel Peace Prize).

The outcome of this game will also determine, in the short term, who will control the two chambers of the United States Congress.

It should be noted that the current US conflict is trying to turn into an economic victory. Rising gas and oil prices are helping the US economy now, but in the medium term, the US will try to push Russia's gas monopoly through energy resources from the US and Qatar.



## British position:

Britain is leading anti-Russian rhetoric in Europe, becoming one of the most difficult Western countries for Russia.

This is a way of finding a new role for a post-EU Britain in accordance with the concept of a “global Britain.”

Britain is strengthening its influence in the countries of Central, Eastern and Northern Europe, and seizing the opportunity to show an independent and different position from the rest of Europe, which is closer to the positions of the Baltic countries and Poland, and here the British compete with the Americans.

## Germany's Position:

Germany tends to agree with Russia on acceptable terms to avoid escalation in Ukraine and a deteriorating security situation in Europe; to avoid the threat of widespread sanctions on European banks and investors, thereby generating significant problems for German and European businesses at a time when Europe is experiencing post-crisis social and economic problems; and not to allow the US to dictate the terms of negotiations with Russia rather than Europeans, so that EU security issues are not the subject of separate US-Russian negotiations.

Accordingly, Brussels is associated with Washington's view, although, on the other hand, it is unlikely that it will ignore this issue.

The major causes are:

- The existence of the so-called unified and indivisible European security space;
- America's departure from "European affairs", including in the context of NATO cooperation;
- Fears of Russian threat and aggression against other countries.

Of course, under today's circumstances, pressure on Russia is insufficient, as no progress has been made in the negotiation process, given the fact that the Ukrainian side is implementing the Minsk Agreements; and in light of the fact that the aggressor continues to dictate its terms.





For the time being, in order to maintain unified international support for Ukraine, it is necessary to pay attention to the interests of Western partners and strengthen its diplomatic positions through internal transformations.

It is also worth distinguishing between the interests of the European Union and Washington, as they are not fully interrelated today, leading to some discord in the foreign policy discourse and an inability to strike a balance between the two positions.



## Second: Military Scenarios

The widely held scenario is that Russia is preparing to launch a military campaign against Ukraine, with the aim of breaking the deadlock in the Minsk Agreements, imposing conditions on Kyiv and its Western partners for further coexistence, and preventing the "development" of Ukraine's territory for military purposes by the United States and NATO, as well as a possible reconfiguration of its state political system and state structure. Such rumors spread quickly, causing anxiety in the political leadership of foreign countries and hidden fears, but they are very tangible on the ground.

According to Ukrainian and Western government and intelligence sources, Russia is seriously considering launching a new military offensive against Ukraine. Based on intelligence, there are four main scenarios of military crisis, including military action, energy, cyber and financial attacks, disinformation campaigns and social instability in cities.

### 1. Limited operation in the conflict areas of Donetsk and Luhansk

This process will be accompanied by information campaigns in Ukraine to destabilize the domestic political situation, introduce uncertainty into business operations, exacerbate the investment climate and intimidate business partners. Russia could also aim to destabilize the security situation on the Donbas confrontation line, and use it as a tool to influence negotiations.

In this scenario, Russia has two options: **first**, Russia recognizes the so-called "People's Republic of Donetsk" and the "People's Republic of Luhansk" as independent states, and preparations for an attack on Mariupol with the help of Russian troops; for according to the "constitutions" of these entities, their geography is the entire territory of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions



At the same time, the CSTO could be resorted to, and Russia would begin to “strengthen” the CSTO with decisions to send troops to Ukraine (though this part of the scenario so far seems risky for Russia, given that even Belarus has not yet recognized Abkhazia and Ossetia).

Indeed, on 19 January, deputies of the Communist Party submitted to the state Duma a draft appeal to president Putin with a request for formal recognition of the so-called "People's Republic of Donetsk" and the "People's Republic of Luhansk".

On 14 February, the state Duma endorsed two alternative draft resolutions for recognition, prepared by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation and United Russia.<sup>8</sup>

**Option two:** the temporarily occupied territories are merged and recognized by Russia as Ukraine's successor (President Viktor Yanukovich, who is considered by Russia as Ukraine's last “legitimate” president).

Thus, there may be attempts to lure the CSTO there, including the Russian forces, when Russia will no longer only threaten Mariupol, but the entire territory of Ukraine.

## 2. An extensive operation in a geographically risky area

These include Kharkiv, Sumi, Mariupol, Khirsun and Odesa, and the Black Sea border.

Ukraine's ports on the Black Sea may be one of the priority targets for Russia's aggressive actions.

The scenario could include Russia's attempts to destabilize different areas outside the Donbas conflict zone, but limited to intimidation or local operations without deep intervention in Ukraine.

<sup>(8)</sup> Russian Duma asks Putin to recognize Ukrainian regions as independent, DW, 15/2/2022: <https://bit.ly/3BzxjS0>

### 3. Widespread invasion of the entire Ukraine geography

The overall scenario may begin in the same way as the expansion scenario; but it will quickly escalate into large-scale military aggression in an attempt to invade Ukraine completely.

It can happen if the limited scale-up scenario does not produce quick results.

There are many variables to such a war (attack on Kharkiv, Odesa, Kyiv bombing, etc.).

However, Russia at present does not have sufficient human and material resources to maintain such a large territory (it needs at least 300,000 troops from the internal forces).

In theory, we can talk about the reality of a large-scale attack (except for psychological factors) only in one case: if the leaders of China and Russia agree to a simultaneous attack Ukraine and Taiwan, respectively.

This, however, does not seem likely yet. However, the Great War now does not solve Russia's main problems regarding order and clarity in relations with the West.

Moreover, it will create a major military crisis near Russia's borders.

Such a military conflict is unlikely to end with any clear agreement.

The war could develop into a long and slow confrontation, especially if part of the territory (for example, western Ukraine) remained under the control of the armed forces of Ukraine. Seizure of all of Ukraine is technically possible.

However, the cost will be very high, and subsequent control will become more difficult.

In the "two Ukrainian states" alternative, nationalists could be pushed to the West, but in the "one Ukraine" version, this would be impossible with all the consequences resulting from the invasion.



## 4. Optimistic scenario - attempts at internal destabilization

An optimistic scenario is possible if international action and pressure on Russia are effective and the cost of a possible Russian military invasion outweighs the potential benefits.

The optimistic scenario includes power extortion tools, cyberattacks, and informatics.

Russia is likely to use these tactics to maintain constant pressure and destabilize markets, the financial sector, and social cohesion.

In de facto, the State would collapse, and the country would enter into a political solution that could end in two ways.

The first one is to hold extraordinary elections, after which mass riots will start in 7-5 cities, where the various political forces consider the elections illegal and try to establish some semi-national republics.

The second method: The cause of the riots and unrest is the unwillingness to hold elections, and from these riots, new attempts are made to divide the country. The two scenarios -the consolidation of the occupied territories and attempts at destabilization- need to address the serious challenge that can be described as a “diplomatic trap.”

The West and Russia agree to put joint pressure on Kyiv to implement the Minsk Agreements and to establish a mechanism for strict control of their implementation with the participation of Germany and France, as a first step towards putting pressure on Ukraine.

Unfortunately, the Ukrainian leadership today is not ready to begin a dialogue with the public on possible compromises in the issues of diplomatic settlement of the crisis.

The situation has gone so far that we need to seek solutions that will allow Ukraine to emerge from this situation without losing its sovereignty and without the collective pressure of the allies on Ukraine to implement Minsk according to Kyiv terms.

## Third: The repercussions of the crisis on Ukraine

Russia uses energy as a weapon and this can lead to fluctuations in basic energy prices, power shortages, complete power outages, and damage to energy infrastructure.

Energy-dependent industries will suffer the most during peak price times and periods of limited supply.

Ukrainian companies will have to close factories or shift costs to consumers. Industries that are major consumers of natural gas and electricity will be hit hard by the sharp rise in energy prices and Russia's potential energy blackmail.

Cyberattacks also threaten government agencies, critical infrastructure, large institutions, and medium-sized government and private companies.

Cyberattacks usually begin with the human factor, when businessmen ignore the security of their devices.

Russia and its pirate proxy groups find weaknesses, exploit them and create a cascade effect. A number of companies, from the financial and banking sectors, logistics and server owners, to entire industries and critical infrastructure in the energy sector, will be affected.

Financial risks include devaluation of the currency, problems with bank deposits or partial loss of access to external financing.

Damage to the financial system is difficult to estimate; it depends on the magnitude of the possible Russian invasion.

On the positive side, Ukraine's economic foundation is stronger than it was before the 2015-2014 crisis caused by Russian aggression. The banking system has been cleared of unsustainable banks. This means that bank failures will not be systematic. Central bank reserves exceed 30\$ billion, 1.5 times more than in 2013, while the current account is running a small deficit against a %9 GDP gap in 2013.



Ukraine's ports on the Black Sea and vital infrastructure (highways and railways) are priority objectives of Russia.

Military aggression will affect borders and import and export operations.

This could push Ukrainian companies into a supply chain crisis, which would lead to shortages, and could affect export-oriented businesses in agriculture and heavy industries.

The conflict will inevitably lead to a drastic change in the approach of providing Ukraine with modern models of weapons and military equipment.

In the United States and in the West as a whole, the new situation will be considered an emergency, and no expenditure will be saved to support Ukraine's armed forces. Furthermore, in this case, all possible types of conventional weapons will be made available.

Large-scale military assistance from the West will prolong the conflict. Russia will not be able to prevent such deliveries, and the US and its allies will not engage in an open military confrontation with Moscow.

But the level of support for the Ukrainian army will increase dramatically.

All major Western actors will impose qualitatively new sanctions on Russia.

It will damage a number of Western nations and cause temporary shocks to world markets.

But in an emergency, the West will take such actions, despite their economic cost.

This will largely isolate Russia from the global financial system.

Another possible measure would be a ban on buying Russian oil, and then gas. This prohibition could be gradually increased to avoid fuel supply crises in the West itself.

But in the event of a war in Ukraine, it can be implemented.

Other, more concentrated restrictions on imports and exports will be added to the oil and gas embargo and cumulative damage to the Russian economy will be enormous.



## Fourth: The repercussions of the crisis on Russia

The war is fraught with a destabilization of the situation in Russia itself.

There is no desire in Russian society to go to war with its neighbor, even though anti-Russian rhetoric is abhorrent in Ukraine.

It is quite possible that the Russian forces will be able to inflict delicate defeats on the Ukrainian armed forces and put pressure on them in the West. But the casualties will remain in the hundreds and possibly thousands of fighters. If the conflict is likely to continue, losses will become a permanent factor.

Coupled with a potential economic crisis, these are not the best conditions for popular support.

If reunification with Crimea is enthusiastically accepted into Russian society for many reasons, a major war is unlikely to find such support.

In other words, the potential cost of war far outweighs the benefits.

War is fraught with great risks to Russia's economy, political stability and foreign policy. It does not solve the main security issues but creates many new ones.

The settlement of the conflict in eastern Ukraine is a fundamentally important issue at the moment, but we cannot speak of the world's interest even in stabilizing this highly tense situation.

The thesis that the settlement of the situation in Donbas depends to a large extent on the decisions of Moscow and Washington may be pertinent, but it is an undeniable fact. The basic important question; however, is whether Ukraine becomes a "bargaining chip" in the big game between Moscow and Washington.

Of course, Ukraine's position on territorial integrity and the response to Russian aggression is shared by the entire civilized world.

Ukraine's fatigue syndrome, therefore, is not due solely to the exhaustion of world political leaders and their unwillingness to take a proactive stance and intervene directly in the conflict.





In this case, we need to talk about domestic political processes within countries and about “rebuilding” which is linked with the gradual strengthening of regionalization trends in the context of globalization processes.

# Summary

Russian-Ukrainian relations stalled in late October and early November, and Russia began to mobilize its troops on Ukraine's borders.

A race of maneuvers on both sides of the border began, and it created a high level threat of a Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory.

The Russian demands for NATO have also risen beyond Ukraine's non-accession to the demand for the withdrawal of American troops and weapons from Eastern Europe and the renunciation of deployment in Europe. International positions on the Russian military threat to Ukraine varied.

There are different military scenarios; and according to Ukrainian and Western government and intelligence sources, Russia is seriously considering launching a new military offensive against Ukraine.


There are four main scenarios of a military crisis: - a limited operation in the conflict areas of Donetsk and Luhansk.

This operation will be accompanied by information campaigns in Ukraine to destabilize the internal situation and destabilize the security situation on the front line in Donbas, and use that as a tool to influence the negotiations; - a broad operation in the geographic risk area involving eastern and southern cities up to the borders of the Black Sea; - a large-scale invasion of the entire territory of Ukraine that may begin in the same way as the expansion scenario, but one that will quickly escalate into a large-scale military aggression in an attempt to invade Ukraine completely; - attempts to destabilize internally, including instruments of energy extortion and cyber-attacks.



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