

Russia-Ukraine War: Possible Solutions to the Conflict



More than a **month and a half** into the **conflict** between **Russia** and **Ukraine**, **Mr Matthew Richards** from the **Social Sciences Department** at the [Tec de Monterrey Hidalgo Campus](#), shares with [CONECTA](#) the **possible solutions to the war**.

"What can lead to a rapid and peaceful solution is a situation in which the two nations can go to their people and say, 'We won'," Richards asserts.

For **Zelensky**, **Ukraine's president**, he can clearly say 'I won' if the **Russians** leave his territory.

Putin could **claim victory** in the **Russian media** in **three ways**: first, by **maintaining eastern Ukraine**, the **Donetsk** and **Luhansk provinces** of the **Donbas region**, or making it part of the **Russian Federation**, as he did with **Crimea**.



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Two other ways "To win for the Russians would be the overthrow or resignation of Zelensky, or a firm commitment from Ukraine that it would never belong to NATO or the European Union," Richards explains.

But the **conflict** could also **end** in **several other ways**.

The **war** would **end** if **Ukraine's defences** were **no longer effective** and **Russia** were to **fully occupy Ukrainian territory**.

Also possible is a **Ukrainian victory over Russia**, in which the **Russian army and population** are **expelled from Ukrainian territory** in their entirety. This would only **happen** if the **West** continues to **supply arms and ammunition** to **Ukraine**.

But the ongoing **supply of arms** would more **likely result** in a **protracted conflict** and a **military stalemate**.

Russia has the upper hand in negotiations, because it controls territory.

This scenario of a **lengthy war**, would mean a **Russian Vietnam** or **Afghanistan**, where the **wasting of blood** and **treasure** would **greatly weaken Russia's global economic and military influence**.

Based on **recent images and news reports**, he says, it is clear on the one hand that **Ukraine** has **successfully resisted** the **Russian invasion**, but on the other, we can **perceive** that **Russia** seems to **have no intention** of **stopping the war**.

"We have all been surprised by how Ukraine has defended its territory," he says. Moreover, **Russia** has **given up** its goal of **overthrowing** the **Ukrainian government**; the **Russian army** has already **retreated** from the **area around Kiev**.

Russia's aims now **appear** to be to **keep** the **eastern part of Ukraine** and to **stifle Ukrainian exports** by **occupying** the **south of the country**, where its **seaports** are located.

We have all been surprised by how Ukraine has defended its territory.

Division of territory

Richards explains that if the **conflict continues** for a **significant period of time**, a **division of Ukraine's territory**, similar to the **case of the two Koreas** or of **Cyprus and Turkey**, with their **extensive demilitarized zones**, is **feasible**.

"The Donbas region could become a kind of 'Eastern Ukraine' that has more in common with the Russian state than Ukraine," Richards says. *"The new country would be a 'buffer state' between Russia and the rest of a more pro-European Ukraine."*



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Negotiations

Richards makes clear that **Russia** has the **upper hand in negotiations**, because it **controls territory**.

By **destroying several cities** and **blockading southern Ukraine** to **affect its economy** by **stopping its exports**, **Russia gains more power** in the **negotiations**, he says.

"A peace may be negotiated and formalized in a treaty, we should never say never, but the goals of the two sides are not compatible."

For Matthew, the **main factor** in **finding a solution** is **goodwill** on **both sides**, but **unfortunately** on the **part of the Russian president** and based on his **track record**, anything that looks like losing is **not an option**.

"There have been some incredible moments in history where antagonism has ended unexpectedly, such as Anwar Sadat and Israel, the Good Friday agreements in Northern Ireland, and Rwanda, but sadly a conflict can carry on for years," he says.

But the goals of the two sides are not compatible.

Unlikely results

Richards says there are **two further possible outcomes** that are **not feasible** and can be **ruled out**:

Firstly, there are those who think that there **will be** some **sort of coup d'état** within **Russia** to **overthrow President Vladimir Putin**.

The other possibility is that the **conflict** between **Ukraine and Russia** will **escalate** into a **larger-scale conflict involving more nations**. He sees **both** these **possibilities** as **unlikely**.



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Consequences

Whatever solution is **reached**, there **will continue** to be **repercussions against Russia**.

"We are seeing leaders in the West speaking out in increasingly more vigorous tones against Putin," says Matthew. "Yet they continue to buy Russian natural gas."

Therefore, **Europe** will **have to re-evaluate** how it **imports** or **generates** its **energy**, to **not rely on natural gas** from **Russia**, he asserts.

Reconfiguring power

"What we are also seeing is a reconfiguration in global power," Richards adds.

"We can see, as some internationalists have long predicted, the decline of a unipolar world. It is a multipolar world that the United States cannot control."

If the conflict continues for a significant period of time, a division of Ukraine's territory is feasible.

Ukrainians at the end of the conflict

According to Richards, **Ukraine** will **undergo** a **considerable drop in population, depending** on the **duration of the war**. Many of the **refugees** who have **fled Ukraine** will **not return** to the country **after the end of the conflict, especially** if they **settle well** in the **countries that have received them**.

Furthermore, in the aftermath of the conflict, **Ukraine** will be **heavily damaged**, with several **parts of its territory destroyed**. "*The destruction of cities like Mariupol is similar to what was seen in Chechnya,*" he says.

"It's clear that given the global media spotlight on the war, the international community will definitely help in the reconstruction of Ukraine," he concludes.

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