

How can the Ukraine war end?

Let me make clear I strongly oppose the brutal Russian invasion and their resort to medieval sieges with modern bombs and artillery raining down on civilians and defenders. I do not post here the few submissions I get which slavishly follow Russian propaganda denying atrocities or blaming others for the deaths and destruction we can see from reputable media sources.

I also strongly support NATO policy to take every precaution to avoid this becoming a NATO/Russian war. Whilst NATO would overwhelm Russia there could be much larger loss of life and destruction in Ukraine and the conflict would be widened by Russia into NATO countries before they lost. NATO's aim should be to encourage settlement between the parties whilst helping Ukraine resist Russia's unprovoked aggression.

The U.K. as a leading member of NATO needs to stick with NATO policy. In the end like all wars there has to be a truce and preferably a peace settlement which can only come from talking. The U.K. will not play an important role in that as it falls to Russia and Ukraine as the combatants to decide what compromises they will make to end the fighting. It may take a neutral intermediary like Israel to help them.

Russia seems to want to gain legal title to Crimea and the bits of Donbas it already influenced. It wants to add a land corridor from Russia to Crimea. It wants Ukraine to pledge it will not join either the EU or NATO. Maybe it still wants a change of Ukrainian government. It does not look as if Russia can either easily conquer the whole country or govern significant parts of it by military occupation now it has united most Ukrainians outside Crimea and Donbas against it. Maybe Russia still thinks it can get unconditional surrender by starving and bombing people out of cities, but it still leaves it with too few troops there to keep down a population of more than 40 million.

Ukraine wants the Russian army to exit and wants to restore democratic government to the whole country. These positions are so far apart because Russia still looks as if she thinks she can at greater cost in lives and destruction claim more territory and the Ukrainians have growing confidence they can make further conquest difficult for the Russians.

There will only be a truce or peace if Russia gives up many of her imperial ambitions and if Ukraine offers Russia some way of climbing down that Putin can accept. Unpleasant though that is to the Ukraine side a lot of lives rest on it. It looks to an outside observer who does not have to do any fighting as if Ukraine will not be able to join the EU or NATO any time soon. It looks as if Crimea would in a free vote vote to be Russian. Maybe these are building blocks for a ceasefire. The EU and US involvement in removing an elected President of Ukraine in 2014 for being anti closer links with the EU triggered military responses from Russia which have just got a lot worse. Whilst President Macron seeks a ceasefire the EU issues a Council statement about Ukraine's European EU future.