

# What is a possible end to the Ukraine tragedy?

The valiant resistance of Ukraine to the invading Russian army means Putin cannot have his way. It looks as if he expected little Ukrainian resistance, a drive into Kiev for his tanks and troops, followed by the rapid departure of Ukraine's elected President. Putin probably thought he could then have settled terms with the Ukrainians over their future government. He probably wanted them to rule out any future NATO membership and to recognise Russian leadership and trade patterns as some kind of friendly satellite. He may well have assumed he would rapidly consolidate a land bridge from Crimea to the eastern rebel provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk and may have wanted to create a split Ukraine with some under direct Russian rule. Instead six days on he has made far less progress militarily and is being forced into using far more force for far less effect than planned.

Putin is currently exploring a negotiated peace at the same time as pressing his ugly invasion. Maybe the talks are cynical. Maybe they are an attempt to find a less embarrassing and less damaging way out from the violent mess he has created. How should Ukraine respond, given the unprovoked aggression from Russia, the lack of any climb down so far by Putin, but also the wish to avoid more violence if that is possible?

Putin probably expects still to get more control of Ukrainian territory by military means. He has vast firepower compared to the defenders. He should however weigh the shortage of Russian troops to seize and occupy a country and population as large as Ukraine's, now that most people there are hostile to him and willing to fight for freedom. He needs to remember that wholesale destruction of cities and mass deaths of civilians will be seen by the West as war crimes, confirming his and Russia's pariah status. What would be the point of prosecuting the war with widespread death and damage, creating lasting hostility from those Ukrainians who survived and making it impossible for Russia to govern it in any acceptable modern way without the use of permanent large scale intrusive force?