

**Dan Hamilton: We have to adjust to a reality where we are in constant confrontation with Russia**  
*April 7, 2022, Reason (originally published in Danish)*

**“It is not only Ukraine, but also Moldova, Georgia and even Finland and Sweden. They must be able to defend themselves against Russian aggression, and at the same time they must become resistant to all the destructive influence that Russia exerts on these societies. ”**

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**How can the war end?** Unfortunately, I can not imagine it ending in the near future. The best we can hope for is an insecure ceasefire

**What is the worst that can happen?** The worst that can happen is that Putin succeeds in invading Ukraine and creates a new Russian union consisting of Belarus and Ukraine. And then the worst that can happen is the use of weapons of mass destruction.

**What is the most likely thing that will happen?** In the long run, we must adjust to constant conflicts with Russia, and therefore NATO should change its strategy to a much stronger military deterrent.

**REASON: What is the most likely scenario for the end of the war?**

**HAMILTON:** Unfortunately, I do not see an end to the war in the near future. I think the most likely scenario is a ceasefire and a subsequent process agreement. In other words, an agreement where neither party actually makes concessions, but where they form a control boundary, and at this boundary they will then continue to challenge each other. Perhaps procedures for escalating the conflict or attempts at reconciliation between them will be put in place, but I do not think the Russians will withdraw from the territories they have occupied. And at the same time, I do not think that the Ukrainian president will give parts of the country away to Russia in any agreement.

If one can enter into such a ceasefire, it will of course stop the killings, but at the same time we will probably have to get used to a long and very uncertain process in the future.

**Will that scenario mean a low-intensity war at a preliminary border somewhere in eastern Ukraine?**

It is probably very good to keep in mind that when Russia last invaded Ukraine in 2014, there was some kind of border and there was an OSCE mission that Russia said goodbye to. But despite that, there were still over 10,000 people who lost their lives during the eight years. So even a frozen conflict is not completely frozen. It continues and is an open wound, and I think we must live with that.

**So the best scenario imaginable is that they enter into some sort of ceasefire that might last. But what does the worst case scenario look like in the near future?**

The worst-case scenario is that the Russians regroup and launch a new offensive, in which we see not only Putin's determination to take over territory, but also to make use of very brutal attacks on the civilian population.

I do not know what kind of message he is trying to send, other than that he is ready to commit war crimes to achieve his goals. We see the Russians using weapons, which are much more destructive, and we see a renewed determination in trying to achieve the goal of expanding Russian territory, and a desire to go as far as one can.

It seems that they got stuck around Kyiv, but that does not mean that they can not return there. Imagine a scenario where the Russians take the southern part of the country and at the same time attack from the east, after which they go north and northwest. And / or the use of weapons of mass destruction that would clearly change the circumstances of the conflict. That would be the worst case scenario.

**Putin will not be remembered as the leader who "lost" Ukraine. This has nothing to do with NATO**

**Let's stay in the worst case scenario. So what would Putin's goal be? If we assume that his first goal was to deploy some kind of puppet government, will that still be his goal, after six weeks of war with heavy civilian casualties, or has it changed?**

It's hard to know anything about his goal. I'm one of those people who thinks he just does not want a successful democracy like his neighbor. A neighbor who was even moving away from Russia, and Putin will not be remembered as the leader who "lost" Ukraine. This has nothing to do with NATO, but it is about an idea he has, which is a mysterious version of Russian history, about a duty to protect what he calls Russkiy Mir, who are the compatriots who live without for Russia's borders. But the way he has practiced it, by punishing Ukraine, means that he is going to be in charge of rebuilding the country.

One of the reasons for the dissolution of the Soviet Union was that Russia could see that the empire and the union itself with the other countries was a burden to them. So I am not sure that Russia, with its current pariah status, is ready to take on the whole task that comes with the invasion of Ukraine. Putin's personal mission, however, seems to be to do so anyway. It is important to note that he is talking about Kazakhstan in the same way that he is talking about Ukraine. In the worst case scenario, he will also consider what he can do in Kazakhstan.

**Let us imagine that the Russians are successful in a new military offensive and are pushing the Ukrainians back to the west. Do you think that the Americans or other NATO countries will intervene in a more direct way than we have seen so far?**

It's hard to know, and it's speculation, but it's not my view that there is consensus to do so. So even if a far more violent conflict arises, I do not see that agreement emerging in NATO, and NATO has just been built as an alliance where there must be consensus to do something. From there, the question becomes whether countries will individually support Ukraine, with the risk it entails to expand the war.

I do not have a feeling that some countries are ready to do that. I think a number of Eastern European countries have a desire to do so, but they are afraid of being left alone with the Russians. Even the Poles, who may be tempted, must realize that they probably should not do so when they think it all through.

**So is the most likely future strategy of the United States and NATO a continuation of what we see now - that we send more military equipment and direct tougher sanctions against Russia?**

In the long run, the question is what kind of Central and Eastern Europe we are going to see. And the next important point will be the decisions that will be taken at the next NATO summit in Madrid in June. Here the alliance must adopt its strategic concept. What I think we are going to see - some of what some of us recommend - is that the alliance will move towards a focus on future defense of the eastern flank and deterrence by rejection.

Right now, our strategy is deterrence by reinforcement. That is to say, we have rather small forces in the eastern countries that must show that we are ready to defend ourselves. If they are attacked and run over, the plan is that we accept a loss of territory, after which we reinforce the troops and try to recapture what was lost. Taking a look at the devastation in Ukraine today is not the right strategy.

*Deterrence in case of rejection*