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# Three scenarios for how war in Ukraine could play out

The best one for Ukraine is also the most dangerous



Mark Harris

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By Shashank Joshi: Defence editor, The Economist

NY SEASONED intelligence analyst might have scoffed

**A** had they been told in March 2022 that Ukraine would still be an independent state eight months later; that Ukraine's army would have killed or wounded 80,000 Russians; that the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet would be at the bottom of that sea; and that Ukraine's air force would still be flying. Ukraine has defied expectations. It is winning the war. But winter is coming and Russia is mobilising. Consider three scenarios for the year ahead.

In the first, Russia snatches victory from the jaws of defeat. Russia's army stabilises the front lines over the winter months, while building new battalions with freshly mobilised recruits. Meanwhile, Republicans in America block new arms packages for Ukraine, as supplies from Europe run out. Russia's defence industry is starved of semiconductors and specialised equipment, but churns out enough basic armour and

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By the spring, the new Russian units go on the attack, forcing back a Ukrainian force that is weary from months of offensive action. Russian drones continue to hammer Ukraine's energy and water infrastructure. As summer arrives, Ukraine is on the back foot. Russia captures Kryvyi Rih, a key industrial town north of

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offer of a ceasefire. Volodymyr Zelensky, Ukraine's president, has little choice but to accept. In the

months, perhaps years, that follow, Russia assiduously rearms for another attempt on Kyiv.




## **“ A Putin ultimatum: stop, or face the use of nuclear weapons**

Far more likely is a second scenario: stalemate. Russia mobilises hundreds of thousands of young men, but cannot turn them into effective fighters. All the best trainers are on the front lines. Experienced officers are dead or already deployed. The recruits are fashioned into basic light-infantry units, lacking armoured vehicles and unfit to go on the offensive—but able to fill trenches and man fortifications.

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**November 9th 2022**

 Assessed/claimed as Russian-controlled	 Assessed Russian operations*
 Claimed Ukrainian counter-attacks	

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