

Russo-Ukraine Matrix Game

Background

The Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the 1990s when the Russian Republic and the Ukraine became different sovereign states. As the Ukraine became more aligned with the West, and particularly after the Maidan Revolution of 2014 which saw the ousting of a pro-Russian president in Ukraine, Russia forcibly annexed the Crimea (a part of Ukraine) and supported separatists in Eastern Ukraine (particularly Luhansk and Donetsk regions) to try and also breakaway from the Ukraine. After a brief border war the region settled into a frozen conflict until February 2022, when, again suspicious of growing Ukrainian alignment with the West, Russia invaded the Ukraine, failing to take Kiev but seizing significant parts of Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson provinces. A 2023 offensive by Ukraine in Zaporizhia failed, but Russia has been making slow gains in Donetsk, although the war is costing it badly in terms of equipment and men. It is having to bring ancient war stocks into service, and buy equipment from China, Iran and North Korea. It has probably suffered over 1 million casualties, and has had to increase its drafts of conscripts. The Ukraine is heavily reliant on Western equipment and ammunition to replace its own losses and to keep pace with the Russians.

Some particular issues to be aware of:

- In order to be able to attack or regain Crimea, Ukraine first needs to remove the Russians from the Kherson and Zaporizhia provinces/oblasts. Russia has established strong defensive positions along the front lines in both provinces.
- The summer is the best time for campaigns and offensives. In Autumn/Fall and especially Spring much of Ukraine turns to mud, making ground combat difficult. Combat is possible in Winter when the ground is frozen hard but it's tough on the soldiers due to the cold.

Current Situation

The current date is: 1 September 2024.

At the start of August Ukraine launched a significant offensive into Russia, seizing over 1000 square kilometres of Russian territory in the Kursk oblast. Russia has mainly mobilised internal forces to try and defeat it, whilst maintaining pressure and gains in Donetsk. US arms and supplies which had been delayed by Congress are beginning to flow again.

Challenge/Disagreement /Crux/Dissonance

The war has gone on for over 2 years and is costing both countries dear. A US presidential election is due in November, and if Trump takes power in January 2025 then Trump says he can bring about peace in 24 hours - probably by withdrawing support to Ukraine and backing Russia in a ceasefire which consolidates

their current gains. With the current incursion into Kursk a continuing success, the next few months in the war could be vital.

Note that in the absence of a Trump victory there is no real expectation of a ceasefire in the next 6 months given the intransigence on both sides, and even with a Trump victory a ceasefire is likely to be problematic, especially if support from Europe is ramped up.

Game Turns

Each game turn represents about 1 month of real time. Ensure that all actions are representative of what could be achieved in that amount of time.

The game plays for 6 turns, September 2024 to end February 2025. The turns are:

- Turn 1, September 2024
- Turn 2, October 2024
- Turn 3, November 2024
- Turn 4, December 2024
- Turn 5, January 2025
- Turn 6, February 2025

At the start of Turn 3 (November) decide whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris has won the US Presidential election. The chances are about even. If Kamala wins the US player continues playing as normal, but Kamala Harris becomes President from Turn 5. If Trump does win then all players are likely to redouble efforts to win or make further gains before the inauguration in January. If Trump has won the election then for Turns 5 (January) and 6 (February) replace the US player with the Trump player.

Actors

In this game do not create separate player personalities. Instead base the personality of each actor on the real leader named below, based on what real information you know about them and their personalities.

The actors/players and their aims are:

- Vladimir Putin, President of Russia
 - Stay in power
 - Retain an iron grip on Russia
 - Secure as much of the Ukraine as possible
 - Keep hold of the Crimea
 - Try and get Ukraine to stop its alignment with the West
 - Keep NATO out of the war
- Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine
 - Regain all land lost to Russia since the war started in 2022, mainly in the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhia and Kherson provinces
 - Regain all land lost to Russia since 2014, mainly in Luhansk and Donetsk provinces
 - Regain the Crimea
 - Stay aligned to the West

- Only relinquish power if it will further Ukraine's cause and any successor is firmly aligned to the West
- Joe Biden, President of the USA
 - Support Ukraine through supplies and equipment against Russia
 - Do not commit US forces directly to the conflict, unless there is a clear breach of NATO Article 5
 - Try and avoid any situation which would lead to a breach of Article 5
 - Encourage regime change in Russia through covert means
- Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Union
 - Support Ukraine through supplies and equipment against Russia
 - Encourage eventual NATO and EU membership for Ukraine
 - Ensure that Poland and other EU states (E.g. Hungary) toe the EU line
 - Use economic, diplomatic and other non-military means to hurt Russia
 - Avoid a war with Russia
- Xi Jinping, President of China
 - Encourage ongoing instability in the West
 - Support Putin in his war as long as it doesn't significantly upset the status quo to China's disadvantage
 - China and a Chinese friendly Russia are ultimately more important than Putin
 - Russia must not be allowed to slip into the Western orbit

Randomise player order each turn.

If Trump wins the US Presidential election in Turn 3, then from Turn 5 replace Joe Biden as US President with Donald Trump who's objectives are:

- Keep the USA out of any war
- Gain kudos amongst his fan base by ending the war by any peaceful means
- Grow his friendship with Putin

If Trump loses the US Presidential election in Turn 3, then from Turn 5 replace Joe Biden as US President with Kamala Harris who's objective are the same as Joe Biden's

Do not forget the US Presidential election in Turn 3.