



# The Russian Invasion of Ukraine:

## A Crisis Management Simulation

**A Wikistrat and Alexander Hamilton Society Simulation**  
March 2022

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## Background

On February 24, Russia initiated a full-scale invasion of Ukraine by land, sea, and air. It was the biggest attack by one state against another in Europe since World War II and a confirmation of the West's worst fears.

In this online simulation, the participants were asked to take part in analyzing how a potential escalation scenario could develop and impact the security environment in Europe.

The opening scenario of this simulation was a full occupation of Ukraine by Russia. This strategic "worst case" initial scenario was later developed according to the evaluations made by the experts.

## Methodology

In order to explore how the international community will be impacted and respond to the new security environment resulting from the Russian invasion and the potential occupation of Ukraine, Wikistrat ran an online simulation from March 14 to 23. For this purpose, a crowd of 43 experts were organized into six teams, each representing a different actor (Russia, USA, China, Germany, Sweden, and Finland). They gave assessments in two different scenarios, one taking place in 2022, and the other in 2023.

# Simulation Overview

## The goals of the simulation were to:

- Educate and provide AHS alumni with a skillset to help them engage in policy making, sharpening their critical thinking and analytic skills.
- Explore how six different actors (Russia, USA, China, Germany, Sweden, and Finland) will be impacted by and respond to the new security environment resulting from the Russian invasion and the potential occupation of Ukraine.

For this purpose, the simulation was divided into three different phases:



PHASE I:

### SCENARIO 1: The New Normal: Russia's Occupation of Ukraine

March 14-16

The participants worked collaboratively to develop policy proposals for their governments regarding the first scenario.



PHASE II:

### SCENARIO 2: A Russian Spring?

March 18-21

Scenario 2 was built on the expert's policy proposals shared during Phase I. The participants worked collaboratively to develop policy proposals regarding the second scenario.



PHASE III:

### Lessons Learned

March 22-23

The participants voted



# The Crowd

 **43**  
experts

## Division of experts by: Geographical Location

	United States	<b>33</b>		
	Greece	<b>2</b>		
	Canada	<b>1</b>		
	China	<b>1</b>		
	India	<b>1</b>		
	Luxembourg	<b>1</b>		
	Singapore	<b>1</b>		Taiwan <b>1</b>
	Switzerland	<b>1</b>		UK <b>1</b>



 **22**

THE  
**Alexander Hamilton** **21**  
SOCIETY

## Division of experts by: Expertise

	Non-Profit Organizations	<b>26</b>
	Academic Institutions	<b>8</b>
	Private Sector	<b>7</b>
	Public Sector	<b>2</b>

## The Analysis

The simulation was conducted in collaboration with the Alexander Hamilton Society, which participated with 21 out of the 43 participants. The other experts were subject matter experts in geopolitics, energy, Asian studies, and Eurasian studies. Each participant had a designed official to roleplay within one of six different teams (Russia, USA, China, Germany, Sweden, and Finland). However, they were not asked to write as the figure they were embodying, but instead provide their own assessments.

**The experts were asked to provide policy options based on a template of questions on two different scenarios.**

### Scenario I:

Our experts proposed different policies that could be implemented in their countries if Ukraine was invaded by Russia.



### Scenario II:

This was based on the main assessments from Scenario 1. It takes place in 2023 and considers a possible "Russian spring" where Putin's influence is challenged by the population, mainly in Belarus. Meanwhile, Russian solutions for Ukraine are being discussed with China.



# Strategic Takeaways

## **How can the US win the war without being in it?**

Experts believe that the US should capitalize on this conflict to reinforce NATO and its alliance network over the globe. The US should also encourage diplomatic solutions and win the information war.

## **Russia should maintain pressure on the West while seeking support in other regions**

Russia should mainly rely on China to survive the Western sanctions and also create a strong alliance, in economic and military aspects. With economic and diplomatic leverages, Russia could achieve all its strategic goals.

## **Opposite pathways for Finland**

Our experts believe that Finland should maintain its neutrality but increase its military activity, cooperating with NATO. The country should also end its energy dependence on Russia and invest in clean energy.

## **Avoid the domino effect in Sweden**

Sweden should not join NATO to keep strategic autonomy. Jointly with Finland, Sweden should increase its military activity and defend a totally independent post-war Ukraine.

## **Germany's tightrope**

Germany's options are limited. Its energy dependence on Russia must stop. The transition must be gradual since Russia is a key commercial partner. Germany should also take the lead on the EU agenda for peace and security.

## **Capitalizing on the conflict**

China could capitalize on the West's non-intervention policy to move forward with their interests such as Taiwan and its influence in the region. Since Ukraine is a key partner, China could mediate the conflict and rebuild the country.



# Insights

# United States

**Ukraine as the West's chance to bloom.** Under Scenario I, most of our experts believe that the US has to strengthen NATO. Deployments of troops and advanced weapons systems should be used by the Western network of international alliances. Focusing on the Middle East and the Pacific Rim, the West could weaken Russia's regional and global agenda. A stronger NATO is a safer and more cohesive Europe, both politically and militarily. It is also a deterrent against further aggressions and hostile actions in Eastern Europe. Lastly, one should note that a stronger and expanded Western and Western-friendly community fulfills the important goal of spreading democracy globally.

**Weakening Putin without hitting Moscow.** Under Scenario I, the crowd is of the opinion that the West should exert much more pressure over Russia's key allies, notably the PRC and Iran. It should be more active internationally in order to increase the number of countries fighting along the Western bloc both economically and diplomatically. Such pressure could take several forms. China, for instance, might be pressured by using Taiwan (the threat to give it full diplomatic recognition), whereas Iran fears new sanctions. The international call has the potential to strengthen the West's negotiating power over Ukraine. It should also weaken Russia by threatening its strategic partners with harsh sanctions. In the end, an isolated Russia is also a weakened China; that's why it is fundamental not to forget the latter.

**Diplomacy never dies.** Under Scenario II, the majority believes that once Russia is surrounded and weakened enough, the negotiating table should be opened and a way out should be offered to Putin. At this point, there would be very good chances to broker a Western-friendly and China-unfriendly deal with the Russian president. At the same time, he shouldn't be left to regain control over the country and the Russians. To this end, the West should back dialogue with Putin while backing regime change-aiming pro-democracy movements within the country. In the event of a positive outcome, the West should keep alive the pro-Putin/anti-Putin dichotomy within the country so as to associate the anti-Putin movement with democracy.

# Russia

**The solution to any problem is China.** Under Scenario I, the participants believe that the Russian establishment favorably sees the improvement of relations with China, whose support is essential to sustain the sanctions-hit economy and to achieve other goals, from military cooperation to diplomacy. In such a scenario, Moscow and Beijing would strengthen the military dimension of their strategic partnership via arms sales and joint exercises, against the background of expanded trade.

**Russia is far from isolated.** Under Scenario I, participants suggest that Russia has several ways out besides China, and it is likely to follow them. First, Russia has a number of key partners, including India and Arab powers – like Syria and the EAU – which are waiting to exploit the situation to their own advantage. Second, Putin will ask his advisors to find creative ways to circumvent the Western-staged sanctions-regime. Focusing on Middle East and betting on new markets, like Africa, could pave the way for decoupling from the West's sanctions.

**Victory is everything, but negotiation is fundamental.** Under Scenario I, a minority of participants believe that Russia would better pursue its goal(s) – partition of Ukraine, no to further NATO expansion – only by opening talks with the Ukrainian government. The talks would be in the interest of both Russia and the West. Russia could prepare several offers: a partition of Ukraine between East and West, a coalition government, permanent Russian military bases, or membership in a Russian-led economic bloc. The concessions for the West could be the security of the Baltic states and the agreement that it won't continue to advance in Europe.

**Swiss dreams, real fears.** Under Scenario II, the crowd is of the opinion that Russia is very likely to accept a Swiss solution for Ukraine, namely full demilitarization and no adhesion to NATO and EU. In the same agreement, Russia is to require the official transfer under its own sovereignty of a series of Ukrainian territories, from Crimea to Zaporizhzhya, where its presence would act as a deterrent against further “anti-Russian” policies. Simultaneously, Russia should open secret talks with the US and try to improve economic relations with the EU so as to mitigate the tremendous impact of the sanctions regime.

# Finland

**NATO or neutrality? That's the question.** Under Scenario I, the crowd believes that Finland would better preserve its security and defend its sovereignty by maintaining its decades-long neutrality policy. However, the Ukraine war has changed the ruling elite's perspective. It has shown that Russia is willing to bring the conflict to Europe, which is why Finland should expand military cooperation with NATO so as to avoid appearing as neutral as weak. In more detail, Finland is called to increase the number of joint military exercises of all kinds (naval, land, and air), to ask for NATO presence before its coasts, to buy advanced weapons systems like the Iron Dome, and to invest much more in defense and resilience.

**Don't forget energy independence.** Under Scenario I, the majority is of the opinion that Finland is called to speed up the process of energy emancipation from Russia if it does want to raise its security. The country has the money, the know-how, and the natural resources to achieve energy security and replace Russian gas with solar, wind, and other renewable sources, and it should start such a process as soon as possible.

**Weapons of mass migrations.** Under Scenario I, a minority raised an interesting topic: hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Russians have been relocating to Finland since the war began. The fear is that behind this process may lie some Kremlin's hidden agenda aimed at weaponizing the ever-growing Russian community in the distant future. Conversely, the situation is risky even in the absence of foreign plans: if the government fails to integrate the newcomers, ghettoisation and emargination may well be exploited by Russia to carry out destabilizing plans against Finland.

**Take advantage of the chaos.** Under Scenario II, the crowd would support the rise of anti-Putin protests by offering the rioters some kind of assistance, like cyber-preparation, to circumvent the state-led repression in order to bring down the hostile regime. It is more than important to keep such assistance secret, otherwise it would backfire and it give Russia reasons to act provocatively against Finland.

# Sweden

**NATO is not the solution.** Under Scenario I, the majority agrees that adherence to NATO wouldn't improve the country's ability to protect itself and its citizens, but would only limit its strategic autonomy. The country is already part of the EU, it has strong ties with NATO and the US, and it would better pursue its goal by keeping things unchanged. In short, Sweden should choose to remain neutral while simultaneously increasing coordination with Finland and NATO.

**Ukraine is not Switzerland.** Under Scenario II, participants believe that China's Swiss solution for Ukraine (de-demilitarisation, neutrality, recognition of Crimea as Russian) is simply unacceptable, as it would be a victory for Russia – which has somehow already won since the West chose not to directly intervene in the conflict – and that Sweden should act in cooperation and coordination with the EU regarding the country's post-war status. In more detail,, Sweden and other EU countries should design a comprehensive post-war package to rebuild Ukraine and to help it recover as soon as possible.

**Sweden and Finland, a common destiny.** Under Scenario I, the crowd is of the opinion that Sweden should set up an advanced partnership with Finland as a deterrent against Russian aggression and to send a signal: neutrality doesn't mean weakness. The two countries, apart from expanding military and defense cooperation, should also define a common strategy concerning NATO: if one ever joins it, the other follows.

# Germany

**The long road to energy independence.** Under Scenario I, the participants endorse the country's energy emancipation from Russia through diversification and exploitation of domestic resources, which is the starting point in making Germany independent politically and economically, but they suggest designing such a path intelligently and disassociating the two countries moderately and gradually. Russia isn't a mere oil gas provider, being the source of other critically important natural resources like palladium and nickel, and a harsh decoupling would only backfire against Germany, whose economic strength stems from the access to cheap energy sources.

**For a new EU leadership.** Under Scenario II, the majority of participants believe that Germany is called to take the lead on the EU agenda for peace and security. The country should improve relations with the US and be open to endorsing new NATO enlargements – the attention is on Finland and Sweden – without forgetting the importance of a healthy relationship with China, which can act as a broker with Russia.

**Don't leave Ukrainians alone.** Under Scenario I, the crowd believe that Germany should keep its borders open to Ukrainian refugees and keep supporting the anti-Russian resistance, against the background of wider and stronger efforts to make the EU a diplomatic powerhouse and a source of security in and outside Ukraine.

**Germany's future is not (in) Russia.** Under Scenario II, the crowd is of the opinion that the country is called to dramatically reduce its reliance on Russia by seeking out new energy and trade partners all over the world, from South America to the Middle East, with which to replace the imports of energy products and other Russian-made goods. Germany should start cooperation projects with critical energy producers-exporters like Azerbaijan, Egypt, Iran, Mozambique, and Nigeria.

# China

**Taiwan and the coming (info) war.** Under Scenario I, a minority of participants raised an interesting topic: China is likely to capitalize on the West's non-intervention policy to launch an information war aimed at Taiwan. China can spread confusion, fear, and mistrust among Taiwanese, hopefully to convince them that the US is not going to help them if a war breaks out.

**Use the Ukraine war to infiltrate Russia.** Under Scenario I, a minority of participants suggested that China can use economic relief and military cooperation to increase its control over Russia. As for the second field, China, by buying weapons and expanding ties, would have the chance to infiltrate Russia's competitive defense industry and steal useful secrets from it.

**Russia, not Ukraine, is the final objective.** Under Scenario II, the crowd believe that China-backed Swiss format is the best solution for all parties: Ukraine will be rebuilt by Chinese firms, Russia can retain some control over the country, China gains both economically (Ukraine is a key-part of the Belt and Road Initiative) and politically (a poorer, unstable and isolated Russia will become increasingly dependent on China).

**The beginning of a new era.** Under Scenario II, the participants believe that China's mediation might pave the way for a new diplomatic era, with China at its center. By helping settle the conflict, China would indirectly address Western interests, thus improving its relationship with the USA and the EU, but the overall consequences could potentially be felt on a global scale.



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### A Wikistrat Crowdsourced Simulation

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For more information on Wikistrat's crowdsourced solutions and systems, contact: [info@wikistrat.com](mailto:info@wikistrat.com)

