**Sad status of the war in Ukraine**

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Five weeks ago, I thought that the Russian invasion of Ukraine was not going to happen. Four weeks ago, it was a fact, and I thought it would be a short attack, more like a manifestation to show what could happen if Ukraine did not succumb to certain Russian demands. Now, the war has raged for a month, and many observers and military and political experts say that the war cannot be won, but that it might go on for long, flattening cities and towns, killing soldiers and civilian, driving people to flee their homes to become internally displaced and refugees abroad. At the end, much of Ukraine will be a destroyed land physically. Yet, the people seem united under President Volodymyr Zelensky’s leadership, refusing to give in to the Russians, and ninety percent are believed to be behind the stern resistance.
Yet, at the end, Ukraine could be divided into two (or more) countries. The east and south, including Crimea, and part of the north, could become Russian controlled, as republics or integrated into Russia. The rest of the land, the central and western parts could be what would be left of the real Ukraine, but still with more than three-thirds of the territory. And even that new Ukraine would have to accept to be neutral towards Europe and USA, staying alliance-free and demilitarised, meaning giving up close cooperation with Europe, indeed not think of possible NATO membership. In other words, it would be under the thumb of Russia, well, at least as long as the current Russian leaders are in power, and probably after that, too. Russia has never been democratic, not during the Soviet time, not before and not after. It is said that if Ukraine would harbour democratic dreams and Western ideals, and became successful in implementing a system that would challenge Russia’s authoritarian system, Russia would also hinder that. This is a sad scenario. Yet, Ukraine would not lose its soul; it would lose riches, but stand on principles.
As a pacifist, I would urge Ukraine soonest to begin concrete talks and negotiations with its powerful invaders, in order to reduce further deaths and killings, displacement and human suffering. It is not being cowards; it is being practical and realistic, making the best out of a terrible situation. In the longer term, things can improve through peaceful means, indeed through prayers and diligent step-by-step work over time. Besides, people, organisations, and states must cooperate even if they disagree on certain issues.
In my home region, Scandinavia, there are no less than five countries with a total of just about 25 million people. The countries cooperate closely, as close as any can cooperate without being one state. The Low Countries, too, often disagree on issues, yet, they manage to sort out political and economic disagreements through talks, within and between their lands. In the UK, there are still some frictions between England, being biggest, and the other countries, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and the Republic of Ireland. Most things are solved amicably, but the island of Ireland should by now have been united and embraced peace and tolerance, but it is probably just a matter of time before that can happen. But people can cooperate even across country borders and sub-regions. In our time, we should not look upon the nation state in a too orthodox way. Natural migration of people has led to many European countries becoming more open and inclusive, such as in my home country, Norway, where close to twenty percent are immigrants, many from far away, and now tens of thousands of Ukraine refugees come. I believe newcomers have made the country stronger, more innovative, and better to live in. Naturally, there are challenges, too, but in sum it has been positive, and it has all happened in a couple of generations since the 1960s.
All wars are terrible, and indeed the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine, with high death tolls and injuries of civilians and soldiers, and destruction of infrastructure, even whole towns and cities. In some cases, people have no safe escape routes, staying where they are, with little water, food, medicines, shelter, and so on, fearing more attacks from air and ground. On top of it all, the Russian invasion comes from a country with people who are their brothers, sisters, and cousins. It has been reported that sometimes the soldiers are hesitant to attack as ruthlessly as they are ordered to do; alas, those cases must be rare if the TV pictures of the destruction tell the truth. Up to 10 million of Ukraine’s 45 million people have become displaced since the war started, over 3.5 million have fled the country, and the others are internally displaced, and the numbers keep growing. But as is common when manmade and natural disasters happen, most people remain at home, without means to escape. It is a sad fact that Eastern Ukraine, Donetsk and Luhansk, and nearby areas, has been in a war-like conflict for over eight years, where separatist groups are seeking autonomy. Russia has declared two independent republics, under its control.
Ukraine is not a small country; its population is close to one-third of Russia’s population of about 145 million. Hence, it is not all that easy for Russia win a war in Ukraine, in spite of its advanced military capability. The war is costly to both countries, and it will take many years to rebuild Ukraine once the war has ended. Because of the cost of the war and the massive sanctions by the West, it will also take time for Russia to recover. I hope the West doesn’t go too far in humiliating Russia; if it does, Russia may become more unpredictable than before and perhaps threaten more countries in its sphere of influence.
Until now, there has been limited outcome of the peace talks between Ukraine and Russia. Again, as a pacifist, I would remind everyone that all wars are terrible; this one as bad as any. Hence, I underline that we should rather focus on peaceful resistance, not on military resistance. Still, I am impressed by the Ukraine resistance, but I question if it is right to fight militarily, with high losses of people, both soldiers and civilians. We mourn all loss of human life, also the Russian occupiers; all life is sacred. We must question if it is right to fight evil with evil, especially if the war drags out and the losses of lives continue to be high, and also creating huge numbers of displaced people, and also major physical destruction of Ukraine’s infrastructure. I am also saddened by the way most NATO countries want to increase their military budgets. They should rather develop systems of peaceful resistance and develop new ways of bilateral and international cooperation, also with Russia. Evil should not be fought by evil, but by good. Then we would be on the right track, worthy of people in Europe and the whole world in our time.