

POLITICS

Five Ways the Ukraine War Could End

By Benjamin LeBlanc

What happened? The war in Ukraine has reached a stalemate. After ground assaults failed to bring President Putin a quick military victory due to a stiff Ukrainian resistance coupled with a lack of morale and organization within the Russian army, Russian forces have resorted to shelling cities into rubble. Desperate to stop the aerial bombardment, President Zelensky of Ukraine has implored the West to impose a no-fly zone over Ukraine, to no avail. Amid the chaos, experts see several ways the war could end.

1. Ukraine could inflict enough losses to bring Russia to the bargaining table, allowing for a diplomatic solution to the war. Of course, Russia would repeat its demands for Ukraine to stay out of NATO and cede the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as for NATO to withdraw its troops from former Soviet Bloc countries. But Ukraine would remain a sovereign nation.

2. Putin could pursue a war of attrition, in which Russian forces would wear down Ukraine to the point of collapse, in order to put him in a better bargaining position. Judging from how Russia is currently shelling civilian targets, the prospect of a bloody, monthslong war of terror seems very likely.

3. Russia could achieve the complete takeover of Ukraine and install a puppet regime in the capital, Kyiv, in which case the U.S. and other allies would probably back a Ukrainian insurgency. The third outcome has historical precedent: the U.S. provided military aid to mujahideen fighters who liberated Afghanistan from her soviet occupiers in 1989.

4. China could come to Russia's rescue with military and economic aid. China sees Russia as a nuclear power with which it could counter the West. New York Times national security correspondent David E. Sanger explains in a recent episode of *The Daily*: "The Chinese and the Russians have [had] some common complaints about the West over the past 70 years," namely "that the West sets the global agenda... [and] runs the global financial system."

5. The following outcome is perhaps the least likely. NATO's Article 5 binds all member nations to an oath of "collective defense"; if one member is attacked, all others must retaliate. So if Russia were to even accidentally shell a NATO nation, many of which border Ukraine, Article 5 would activate and the current conflict would become a WWII scenario. This came dangerously close to happening when, on March 13, Russia shelled a military training base just 12 miles from the Polish border.



A map of the invasion of Ukraine by Russian Forces

Source: The Washington Post

Features

MOVIE AND TV REVIEWS

The Batman By Benjamin LeBlanc

2022 • Action/Adventure • PG-13

There is a growing number of people who are tired of the current state of superhero movies. Down-to-earth stories have been replaced by a ruthless formula that gives the fans exactly what they want at the expense of creativity and memorability. Thankfully, that is not the case with *The Batman*, DC's latest take on the Caped Crusader.

Many things have been changed. The batman of this movie, played by Robert Pattinson, is more melancholy and less macho than before. His emo-ness is sometimes laughable, like when we see him unmasked and with his eyes painted black like a sad clown, but it has the desired effect of humanizing someone who was portrayed as a one-note playboy in the *Dark Knight* trilogy. Pattinson's Batman feels pain and makes mistakes, the mythic aspects of his character exchanged for everyman earnestness. His love interest and partner in crime-fighting, Catwoman, played by a fierce yet tender Zoe Kravitz, serves to highlight Batman's more romantic side; she also stands on her own as a surprisingly human version of a historically feline and hypersexualized character.

There is little screen time devoted to the Batcave and gadgets like the Batmobile. Instead, that time is spent developing the characters, as well as a multilayered detective drama.

Which brings me to the next way the movie is great: the story. There's less action-filler and more mind games and sleuthing which finally see Batman fulfill his role as the World's Greatest Detective, instead of the World's Slickest Ladykiller or the World's Coolest Rich Guy. Batman's cerebral qualities are drawn out by the movie's villain, the Riddler (Paul Dano), who, like a comic book version of the Zodiac killer, elevates murder and evading the cops to an art form. The thriller-aspects of the movie—and the movie really is a thriller more than anything—are accentuated by Greg Fraser's gothic cinematography and Michael Giacchino's eerie score. It's Gotham as we've never seen it before, and it's awesome.

Looking ahead to the inevitable sequel, *The Batman* seems to lend itself well to a trilogy. The movie reveals that Gotham's ruling class and criminal element are one and the



same, but doesn't go much further (hence the movie's subtitle, "Unmask the Truth"). Yes, the Riddler is dealt with, but there are a host of other baddies who continue to steer the politics of Gotham from the shadows, most notably the Penguin (Colin Farrell). So it was nice to leave the theater knowing that the sequel wouldn't be a shameless money-making scheme. Because, frankly, that is an accomplishment in itself.