

Putin's Plan B



Dave Lawler



The News

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Putin announces military operation, asks Ukraine military to lay down arms



Putin made a surprise statement on television to declare his intentions. (REUTERS)

Russian attacks, civilian deaths and chaos in Ukraine as war enters fourth week

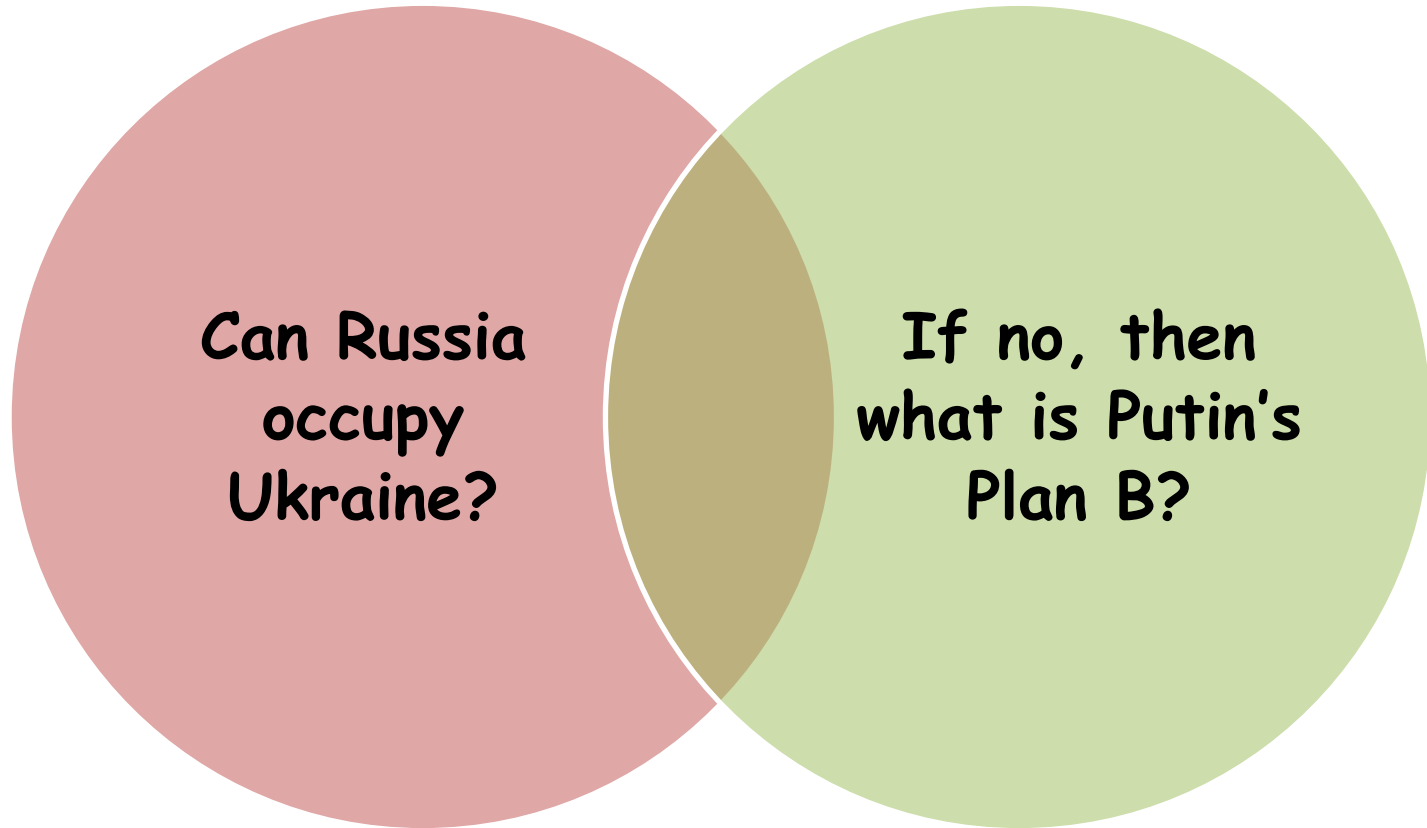
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The Big Questions



The Offensive till now

- Russian forces had planned to storm Ukraine's major cities in a matter of days. But, after nearly four weeks, they're instead bombarding those cities from a distance as Ukraine is fighting back.
- Unofficial numbers
 - It is observed that, about 9,861 Russian troops have been killed and 16,153 wounded, while 96 planes and 118 helicopters had been lost in this war.
 - The scale of Ukraine's losses is unclear. Already, over 10 million Ukrainians have fled their homes, with 3.5 million now outside of the country. Most of the eastern and northern cities' infrastructure is in shambles.

The Offensive till now

- Analysts believe that, the Russians are increasing their missiles and airstrikes because, having failed to achieve their objectives on the ground, they are "flummoxed," "frustrated" and desperate to gain some momentum.
- Russia's advance on Kyiv has been stalled for over a week, and Russian forces that had seemed poised to move on Odessa have been repulsed. The front lines are largely frozen, with Russian forces consolidating the positions they already hold.

The Offensive till now

Russian invasion of Ukraine, as of March 21

- Approximate Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory
- Nuclear power plants under attack
- City surrounded by Russian forces
- City seized



What might be PLAN B?

- Russia has continued a brutal bombardment of Mariupol in the southeastern Donbas region after Ukrainian leaders rejected a demand to surrender the besieged port city.
- Mariupol would be the biggest city to fall thus far, and taking it would free up some of Russia's forces in the south.
- The symbolic significance could be greater still, as Putin originally justified the war in part as a mission to "liberate" the Donbas.



What might be PLAN B?

- Putin's objective now, **would "no longer be to take over all of Ukraine"**.
- It would rather be to achieve a ceasefire **"on terms he can claim are a strategic victory"** by annexing the southern coast, laying siege to Kyiv and other major cities in the north, and degrading Ukraine's military and industrial capabilities.

Russian invasion of Ukraine, as of March 21

Approximate Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory ⚡ Nuclear power plants under attack ● City surrounded by Russian forces ● City seized



What might be PLAN B?

- Russia's PLAN B would be "improve their position at the negotiating table."
- Moscow is demanding that Ukraine rule out future NATO membership and give up all claims to Crimea and the Donbas "republics."
- Russia's exhausted and depleted forces will need to be reinforced and resupplied and "negotiations or a temporary ceasefire" will give them opportunity to save face because a war of attrition would be extremely difficult to win.



@rahulsai222



@rahulsai222_siq