

# Future scenarios concerning the Russian Federation

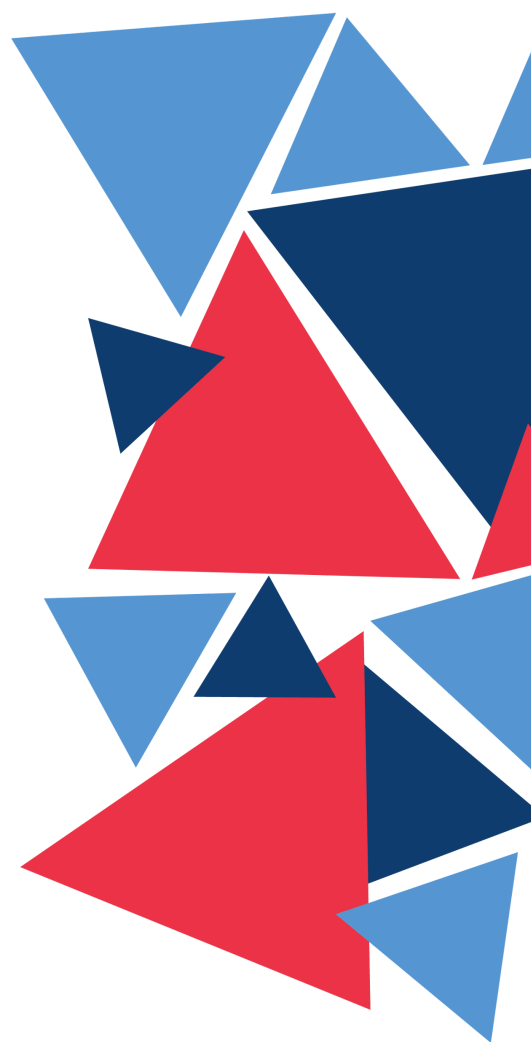
*Forecasting report*

Expert Forecasting Team  
*České priority z.ú.*

For



**Boris Nemtsov**  
**Foundation for Freedom**



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## Executive summary

Forecasters of the Czech Expert Forecasting Team (*Odborný Predikční Tým - OPT*) collaborated with the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom to produce predictions for the Impact study, which is a follow-up product to the Foresight study *Russia 2030 Futures: The View from Central and Eastern Europe*, published in September 2024. The predictions will be shared with European Union stakeholders.

The forecasting results are available below, represented by their median value:

Predictions			
Forecasters estimate a <b>12 %</b> probability that Ukraine will join the EU before 2031.			
Forecasters estimate a <b>30 %</b> probability that Ukraine and the Russian Federation will sign a comprehensive peace treaty before 2031.			
Forecasters estimate a <b>25 %</b> probability that at least a part of Belarus will be either annexed or incorporated into the Russian Federation before 2031.			
Forecasters estimate a <b>10 %</b> probability of Chechnya claiming independence before 2031.			
Forecasters estimate a <b>small probability</b> of the PRC being involved in an armed conflict of high intensity with the following countries before 2031. More precisely:			
<b>Japan - 4 %</b>	<b>India - 4 %</b>	<b>Philippines - 4 %</b>	<b>Vietnam - 3 %</b>
Selected relevant predictions from the international forecasting platform Metaculus			
The <a href="#">Metaculus</a> community currently predicts that Alexander Lukashenko will leave power approximately in the <b>first half of 2028</b> - <a href="#">source</a> .			
The <a href="#">Metaculus</a> community currently predicts that while the threat of a Chinese invasion of Taiwan is negligible by 2025, by 2030, the probability is estimated to range between 14% and 39%, with a median of 25%. - <a href="#">source</a> .			
The <a href="#">Metaculus</a> community currently predicts that Vladimir Putin will cease to be the president of the Russian Federation approximately in the <b>first half of 2029</b> - <a href="#">source</a> .			
The <a href="#">Metaculus</a> community currently predicts a 96% probability that the US will not leave NATO before 2029 - <a href="#">source</a> .			

## List of forecasting questions

- **Questions analyzed by the Expert Forecasting Team**
  - *Will Ukraine become a member state of the European Union before 2031?*
  - *Will Ukraine sign a peace agreement with the Russian Federation before 2031?*
  - *Will any part of Belarus be annexed or incorporated in any other way by the Russian Federation before 2031?*
  - *Will Chechnya claim independence from the Russian Federation before 2031?*
  - *Will China be engaged in an armed conflict of high intensity with any of the listed countries before 2031? (India, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines)*

## List of resolution criteria

*Each question has specific resolution criteria that enable the evaluation of prediction accuracy once the deadline has passed. These criteria significantly influence the estimated probabilities of the events.*

- *Will Ukraine become a member state of the European Union before 2031?*

**Resolution criteria:** For the question to be resolved positively, Ukraine's accession to the EU needs to be ratified by all EU member states. In the relevant accession criteria or membership status change before 2031, Ukraine must become a full member of the EU. The question will be resolved negatively if Ukraine does not meet the conditions for EU membership or in extreme cases, such as the dissolution of the EU.

- *Will Ukraine sign a peace agreement with the Russian Federation before 2031?*

**Resolution criteria:** The question will be resolved positively only if both countries sign an official peace treaty, that includes conditions for ending all hostilities and explicitly defines the future status of disputed territories (Donbas, Luhansk, Crimea) and other territories held by the belligerents (e.g. parts of Zaporizhia and Kherson Oblasts, parts of Kursk Oblast, ...). An armistice, even if declared across the entire war front, will not be sufficient to resolve the question positively without these additional provisions.



- *Will any part of Belarus be annexed or incorporated in any other way by the Russian Federation before 2031?*

**Resolution criteria:** The question will be resolved positively if Russia annexes either part or all of Belarus's territory OR if Belarus de facto becomes a part of Russia. This will be assessed based on the following criteria (or others, if uncertainty persists):

- 1) Sufficient evidence of Russian complete control over Belarusian security forces (e.g., Belarusian units led by Russian officers, etc.).
  - 2) Complete control over Belarusian political institutions (e.g., Russian politicians in the Belarusian parliament) or the transfer of key institutional powers to Russian institutions.
  - 3) Replacement of Belarusian identification documents (passports, ID cards, etc.) with Russian ones.
- *Will Chechnya claim independence from the Russian Federation before 2031?*

**Resolution criteria:** The question will be resolved based on reports published by Chechen institutions (e.g., [Parliament of the Chechen Republic](#)), by Ramzan Kadyrov, or his potential successor. Alternatively, we will use verified reports from [credible media](#) sources.

- *Will China be engaged in an armed conflict of high intensity with any of the listed countries before 2031? (India, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines)*

**Resolution criteria:** For the purposes of this question, a high-intensity conflict will be defined as one that is prolonged (not limited to a border skirmish), has significant impacts on the civilian population, and, most importantly, results in more than 1,000 fatalities within a single calendar year. The [Uppsala Conflict Data Program](#) will serve as the primary source for evaluating and resolving this question. If the data is not updated regularly and frequently enough, the evaluation will rely on information from credible international organizations (e.g., the UN) or verified [credible media](#) sources.



## 1. Question: Will Ukraine become a member state of the European Union before 2031?

### Key discussed points

- Forecasters mostly discussed the complexity of the EU accession process, which is difficult even for countries with arguably much more favorable positions than Ukraine's.
- Forecasters pointed out how many years it takes for countries to join the EU after sending an accession application - usually, between **8 and 12 years**.
- Forecasters also discussed the “**political courage**” of EU member states, which is necessary to advocate for lowering some of its criteria to allow Ukraine to join faster. This might be seen as a way to protect and effectively support the country against further Russian pressure. However, there was significant uncertainty about how likely the EU is to adopt such an approach.
- Forecasters also discussed the effect of the war in Ukraine, which is critical to the EU accession process. In their opinion, a country engaged in an all-out war is unlikely to be accepted into the EU. However, if at least a formal peace is achieved, the accession can very well proceed. Even if Ukraine were to lose some territory, forecasters do not anticipate this having a negative impact on the EU accession process.
- Forecasters point out that Ukraine's accession to the EU could be further complicated by the need to meet economic criteria given the severe destruction or significant damage to its economy, infrastructure, and energy sector.
- Forecasters noted similarities to the **EU accession of Cyprus**, which was also very problematic due to the unresolved division of the island. Greece played a key role in assisting Cyprus in joining the EU, even threatening to block the accession of post-communist countries. Ukraine lacks such a strong advocate, and even with strong Greek support, the EU accession of Cyprus took **approximately 14 years**.

### *Summary of the final forecast*

Forecasters estimate that there is a **12 % probability** of Ukraine joining the EU before 2031.



## 2. Question: Will Ukraine sign a comprehensive peace agreement with the Russian Federation before 2031?

### Key discussed points

- The key point of the prediction is that it demands a comprehensive peace agreement - not merely a ceasefire or armistice, but a treaty that clearly determines the status of regions such as the Donbas or Crimea. Forecasters believe that achieving such an agreement could prove way more difficult than negotiating just an armistice.
- Forecasters pointed out that Ukrainian support for continuing the war is decreasing, suggesting that over time a peace treaty, even one resulting in losing some of its territory, might be deemed acceptable.
- Forecasters are convinced that the Russian Federation is aiming to severely limit Ukraine's ability to further integrate into the Western economic and security structures. This is consistently raised as essential for Ukraine's future and the situation thus might impede the peace negotiations.
- Forecasters are convinced that significant military exhaustion of either the Russian Federation or Ukraine (beyond current levels) makes any peace agreement way more likely.
- Forecasters highlight the lack of Soviet and Russian peace agreements in the last decades. Conflicts have predominantly resulted in ceasefire agreements rather than comprehensive peace treaties (e.g. Afghanistan or Georgia wars). Russian “special military operation” holds an ambiguous status under international law.

### *Summary of the final forecast*

Forecasters estimate that there is a **30 % probability** that Ukraine and the Russian Federation will sign a comprehensive peace treaty before 2031.



### 3. Question: Will any part of Belarus be annexed or incorporated in any other way by the Russian Federation before 2031?

#### Key discussed points

- Forecasters consider a direct annexation of any part of Belarus unlikely, mostly due to the potential international reaction, which can still be quite powerful and could also alienate the Belarusian population. However, some forecasters point out that international reaction is at this stage not a major limitation for Russia.
- Forecasters consider a quiet incorporation of Belarus, allowing Belarus to maintain its formal independence, the most likely course taken by the Russian Federation. Given Belarus's existing economic and other dependencies on Russia, forecasters anticipate that Russia will further exploit these vulnerabilities.
- Forecasters believe that A. Lukashenko is attempting to play a more neutral role, which is at least partially manifested by cooperation (albeit limited) between Belarus and China.
- Forecasters suggest that further sanctions against Belarus might lead to faster and deeper embedding of Belarus into the Russian Federation.
- Forecasters assume that one of the main benefits of the incorporation of Belarus could be the assumption of control over its armed forces and manpower. Belarusian armed forces may not have any unique strengths, but they operate the same equipment as Russia and speak the same language, which immensely simplifies their integration into the Russian army. Additionally, with the takeover of Belarus, Russia would be much closer to its Kaliningrad enclave.

#### *Summary of the final forecast*

Forecasters estimate that there is a **25 % probability** that at least a part of Belarus will be either annexed or incorporated into the Russian Federation before 2031.





#### 4. Question: Will Chechnya claim independence from the Russian Federation before 2031?

##### Key discussed points

- Forecasters are convinced that this scenario is possible only in case of a coup d'état in Russia, should Russia lose in Ukraine, or in the case of another significant weakening of Russia. Alternatively, it could happen if Putin and/or Kadyrov die or lose power. Under current developments, it seems very unlikely.
- Some forecasters expect war in Ukraine to turn into a frozen conflict, which would further lower the probability of Chechnya's independence in their view.
- With virtually no international support for the independence of Chechnya, any such efforts would need to be led by the people of Chechnya. Current opposition in Chechnya is severely weakened, exhausted, and suppressed due to the policies of the Kadyrov regime.

##### *Summary of the final forecast*

Forecasters estimate that there is a 10 % **probability** of Chechnya claiming independence before 2031.



**5. Question:** Will China be engaged in an armed conflict of high intensity with any of the listed countries before 2031? (India, Japan, Vietnam, Philippines)

**Key discussed points**

- Forecasters believe that an actual high-intensity conflict will likely result from a miscalculation on either side. They suggest that China will not seek prolonged conflict but rather focus on hybrid warfare, attempting to destroy its opponent by limited military means and/ or using information or economic strategies to weaken its opponent.
- Some forecasters deem Japan to be the most likely target - not because of any actual plans, but rather because Japan is the most likely country in the region to actively engage in the conflict over Taiwan, which forecasters consider quite likely in the next 15 years. Others, however, believe that Japan's strong military, its integration into G7 and other global structures, and the presence of US forces, make it less likely for Japan to become entangled in a war with China (which would likely attempt to avoid it).
- Some forecasters mention that the US presence in the Indo-Pacific is increasing, which will in their opinion drastically lower the chances of war between listed countries and China.
- One of the forecasters strongly argued that India is the most likely to engage in a high-intensity conflict with China, mostly because of their complicated shared history and quite frequent border clashes.

*Summary of the final forecast*

Forecasters estimate that there is a small probability of the PRC being involved in an armed conflict of high intensity with the following countries before 2031. More precisely:

**Japan - 4 %**  
**India - 4 %**  
**Philippines - 4 %**  
**Vietnam - 3 %**



## About the Expert Forecasting Team

The Expert Forecasting Team (OPT) comprises several dozen of the most accurate and active forecasters from the [OPTIONS](#) and [FORPOL](#) tournaments organized by the [Czech Priorities](#) research think-tank. It provides high-quality predictions to support more effective decision-making by public institutions and private companies, enhancing their preparedness and resilience.

In collaboration with partners, OPT focuses on identifying the most relevant strategic topics that are difficult to estimate using conventional methods. It then monitors the most significant trends in these areas by addressing forecasting questions related to critical indicators.

## About Judgmental Forecasting

Forecasting is a method for deriving estimates of future developments by utilizing probabilistic reasoning and aggregating insights from a large number of experts across various fields. It is particularly effective for addressing issues that are new or lack sufficient data (e.g., societal impacts of a pandemic or new technologies) or are highly complex (e.g., geopolitics, effects of crisis measures, etc.).

## About Czech Priorities

[Czech Priorities, z.ú.](#), is a non-governmental, non-profit research organization specializing in the public sector. Our mission is to support the Czech public administration in systematically and effectively using all available evidence-based knowledge in its decision-making—also known as evidence-informed policymaking. We conduct analytical work and develop and promote innovative methods for connecting the scientific, academic, and public sectors, as well as the non-profit sector and civil society. Additionally, we focus on analyzing future trends and prioritizing measures based on rigorous cost-benefit calculations.

## Contacts

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