

How to End the War in Ukraine and Save Mankind

A common sense solution

by Larry Johnson

I know, I know. If I really had a good peace solution, wouldn't that already have been obvious and pursued?

Probably. But a good idea remains a good idea, even if spoken by the village idiot. Since nobody else has yet succeeded with a concrete proposal, there's no downside in my trying.

So here goes, with rationale to follow:

1. In exchange for an immediate cessation of all hostilities, most of the contested areas will henceforth constitute the equivalent of a new third country or UN protectorate with its own name. This includes Crimea and Russian-seized territory along the Azov Sea that provides a "land bridge" between Russia proper and Crimea. Both Russia and Ukraine would be allowed peaceful unfettered access to all of this new country or UN protectorate and allowed their own port facilities in cities on the Azov Sea.

2. This new country or UN protectorate will be neutral and demilitarized, with UN peace-keeping forces maintaining order, such as are now working in the Balkans and Africa, to remain there permanently. All Russian military forces in Ukraine will withdraw and return to Russia, except limited Russian naval facilities in Sevastopol.

3. Roughly half of the regions of Luhansk and Donetsk will be ceded to Russia. Essentially territory that is now currently occupied by Russia and its breakaway local allies in those regions and has been since 2014. But these newly acquired districts will also become demilitarized, with only a nominal number of border guards.

4. That portion of the Kherson region still occupied by the Russians will be returned to Ukraine. This area will also remain demilitarized, with only a nominal number of border guards.

5. Russia will not rebuild its armed forces to prewar levels, and NATO will draw down non-native troops from all NATO countries east of Germany. Ukraine will not apply for NATO membership until 2035 at the earliest, if ever.

6. The \$300 billion of frozen Russian assets in the West will be used to help rebuild Ukraine and help refugees return, to be administered by the EU. The Nord Stream 2 pipeline will be repaired or rebuilt. Many sanctions against Russia will be dropped immediately, others phased out if all goes according to plan. A percentage of all future Russian oil and gas sales

will go towards rebuilding Ukraine and the portion of the Donbas ceded to Russia, to continue until a certain agreed sum is reached.

7. Moneys the West earmarked for the war and its increased defense capabilities will instead go towards rebuilding Ukraine and repatriating refugees and children sent to Russia.

8. Russians who fled their country to avoid conscription will be granted full amnesty. Russians who were imprisoned for protesting the war or criticizing the government will be pardoned and released.

9. President Vladimir Putin and a limited number of his closest associates will be allowed the option of exile with guarantees for their comfort and security, including no prosecution for war crimes.

That pretty much covers it. Item #9 is essential, because neither Putin nor his successor will hesitate to sacrifice his country and much more before ever accepting his own extinction.

I realize this proposal would most likely be currently unpalatable to either side. But if attrition keeps taking the heavy tolls it has, there will inevitably come a moment of exhaustion and depletion on both sides where a deal becomes no longer optional. Or where the world blows the whistle and forces a settlement.

This plan gives each side the opportunity to declare victory, such as:

What Ukraine can say:

1. All the Russian invaders have left the territory of Ukraine, and substantial international resources will be turned to restoring normal life to the Ukrainian people.

2. Russia galvanized the West as never before, and Russia will never again try to bully neighboring countries to submit them to its will. The conditions for Russia to renew war against Ukraine will be absent.

3. Ceding the relatively small Russian-language dominated areas of Luhansk and Donetsk removes a thorn in Ukraine's side that was exacerbated in 2014 and never resolved. Those areas will be demilitarized, but admittedly their secession constitutes a price unfortunately necessary for the well-being of the overwhelming majority of Ukrainians – and the rest of mankind.

4. Russia stands at the precipice of revolution and dissolution as a result of its unprovoked aggression against a peaceful neighbor. Only 40% of the Russian Federation is ethnically Russian. Permanent loss of its biggest gas and oil customers dooms this one-horse economy

to third world status. Its sole major friend, China, is itself in the throes of decline and disintegration as well. A new Russian government, ruling over less than half of present-day Russia, will eventually have to make concessions to the West in order to survive. So the current peace treaty will soon be subject to new negotiations more favorable to Ukraine and the West. This deal will get better.

What Russia can say:

1. NATO's heavy hand in supporting Ukraine changed the special military operation into an all-out proxy war of attrition. We had 50 countries against us, led by the hegemonic United States. Yet they could not defeat us.
2. The sanctions were also unprecedented in their severity, as was the destruction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline. US Defense Secretary Austin said America's purpose in Ukraine was to bleed us dry. The war became existential for Russia. Yet we remain intact, with international acceptance of Russian Donbas territories being added to Mother Russia. We accomplished our mission.
3. We can now resume normal life as a respected superpower, with amnesty magnanimously extended by us to those who fled abroad to shirk their patriotic duty. We can now go back to building the prosperity that President Vladimir Putin has made possible since 2001.
4. Crimea and the land bridge to it remain denied to Ukraine's fascists and guarantees the safety and prosperity of our Russian citizens living there. Our navy shall continue having port facilities in Sevastopol. While Crimea+ is technically its own nation/protectorate with UN peacekeepers, it is neutral and firmly within Russia's security orbit.
5. NATO, though it expanded with Finland's and Sweden's entries, has agreed to withdraw all non-native troops from Eastern Europe. It is no longer the threat it was in 2022. In short, we won the war.

Of course, neither side would be a winner. But there would be a lot for each to like. And the rest of the world, in the meantime, will be freed from the prospects of famines and nuclear war. Ultimately, those are overriding concerns for all humanity in the long run, far more important in the bigger picture than what becomes of either Russia or Ukraine.