

Russia Ukraine Is there any alternative to peace? Quora.com Sept 22 2023

I would like to suggest a potential plan for ending the war between Russia and Ukraine, based on two historical realities.

The first part of the Williams Plan is to acknowledge that Crimea and the eastern provinces of Ukraine were historically part of Russia for many centuries. Ever since the emergence of the Russian government (from the Tzars to the Soviet Union and once again today), there has been a strong Russian desire to take and retain control of these areas. Putin is only acting like a Tzar of the past. All of them consider having an ice-free outlet to be crucial for Russia's survival. It is sort of similar to the push in early American history for the USA to expand westward, to have an outlet on the Pacific. The United States had a western push, very similar to the Russian push to the south. I am not saying either of these "manifest destiny" pushes are right or moral, but only that they are a major factor which cannot be ignored. Since its independence, Ukraine has had the misfortune for part of its territory to be extremely important for the Russian economy and the Russian psyche.

The second historical reality of the Williams Plan is to remember that, at the end of World War II in 1945, the boundaries of Poland were redrawn, moving the entire country further west, taking over part of eastern Germany, pushing out the German residents and replacing them with Polish settlers. The motivation for this geographical change was not due to the wishes of the Polish people, but because Soviet dictator Josef Stalin wanted to gain more territory for the Soviet Union, as far to the west as possible. The USSR and the USA essentially imposed on Poland a geographically modified relocation. The borders of Poland were redrawn so that the border of Russia could be moved westward. That border awarded to the USSR in 1945 is reflected in the boundary of what is now the nation of Belarus. Belarus has no ancient connection to that land, which was formerly part of Poland.

These two historical precedents cannot be ignored, but can possibly be the basis for a lasting peace in Ukraine. Here is my suggestion for such a plan. I invite feedback, critique, and additional ideas to be suggested as part of the Williams Plan:

1. An immediate ceasefire, with each side holding onto their present locations.
2. Ukraine agrees to cede the territory presently occupied by Russian forces, including all of Crimea and its easternmost provinces, to be annexed to Russia, in acknowledgement of Russia's historical occupation of that area.

3. In offering its regret for the extensive damage that Russian military operations have caused to Ukraine's people, to its infrastructure and to the property of Ukrainian citizens, Russia agrees to negotiate the ceding of TWICE the square mileage of territory that Ukraine gave up, to be taken from the southwestern part of Belarus, such that it is geographically compactly connected to the northwestern part of Ukraine. Russia is responsible for negotiating with the government of Belarus, to give up its control over that ceded section of its present boundaries. What provisions Russia will make to Belarus to persuade its government to give up its southwestern territory, such as providing monetary payments and/or land cessions from the eastern border of Russia, is to be a separate matter between those two governments. Obviously, Russia will have to make an attractive offer to the present residents of southwestern Belarus to get them to agree to give up this section of their land. The Williams Plan, thus, is contingent upon an agreement between Russia and Belarus so that Ukraine can peacefully take over that new territory.
4. When Ukraine takes over administration of its newly awarded territory in southwestern Belarus, Ukraine can decide who among the present residents of that area it will admit to equal citizenship. Citizens of any part of Belarus can apply for Ukrainian citizenship and those who are in the Ukrainian-annexed sector may remain on their present landholdings, or they should be free to relocate themselves to another location, in Belarus, in Russia, or in another nation that may agree to accept them as immigrants. All of this will need to be decided by negotiations between Russia and Belarus. Russia might, for example, make a negotiation with Belarus, for Belarus to be annexed as a province of Russia. That is all up to the separate agreement that Russia and Belarus may decide for themselves.
5. Once Russia and Ukraine have agreed to these first four parts of the Williams Plan, the member nations of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) will admit that the expansion of NATO into eastern Europe was a mistake, and an unnecessary provocation to the Russian people, in making them feel that NATO was making a deliberate attempt to surround and stifle Russia. Many Russians worried that NATO's nearness, right on the border of Russia, would be a possible cause of a large war between Russia and the West. Therefore, the members of NATO would under the Williams Plan vote to restrict NATO membership solely to those nations directly bordering the Atlantic Ocean (including the section known as the North Sea). Thus, NATO members would be Canada, United States, Iceland, Norway, United Kingdom, Ireland, Danmark, Deutschland, Nederland,

Belgium, France, Espana, Portugal, and maybe Sweden. NATO would more accurately represent its geographical name as the nations of the "North Atlantic."

6. Once NATO has restricted its membership and has withdrawn its military forces out of eastern Europe, the nations of eastern Europe would establish their own mutual defense network with a name perhaps like Eastern Europe Defense Alliance (EEDA). This EEDA would, under the Williams Plan, include the nations of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, Albania, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia, and Croatia. Other nations that might choose to join the EEDA include Sweden, Belarus, Austria, Liechtenstein, Italy, and Slovenia. However, these nations might choose to have a neutrality policy, such as Sweden and Switzerland have followed.
7. Once all this has been accomplished, Russia will make a formal apology to all the people of Ukraine who have been harmed by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Russia will renounce military aggression, and promise not to invade its neighbors. Subject to negotiations, this might involve payments to individuals whose property was damaged, those who lost relatives due to Russian bombings, and to those who were injured by Russian weaponry.
8. Once these payments are made to the satisfaction of the Ukrainian government, Ukraine will apologize for its attempts to join NATO and for its aggressive attitude toward Russia. For true reconciliation to occur, the basic approach of the Williams Plan is that people on all sides should apologize for their unfair treatment to their antagonists, and should pledge to live in peace with all their neighbors.

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What is the best way for peace between Russia and Ukraine to happen?