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Awaiting China's Ukraine Peace Plan



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At the recently concluded Munich Security Conference, Wang Yi, China's top diplomat, proved the skunk at the party, interrupting the Western cheerleading for more and more war "for as long as it takes" by announcing that on February 24, the first anniversary of the Russian invasion, China will announce a [peace plan](#) for Ukraine which will underscore the need to uphold the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and the UN charter while also respecting Russia's legitimate security interests.

A peace plan based on these announced principles might include all or most of the following elements:

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1. An immediate ceasefire-in-place and freeze on the introduction of further weaponry into the war zone by either side.
2. Ukrainian acceptance of a status of permanent military neutrality.
3. A European Union commitment to an accelerated process leading to EU membership for Ukraine.
4. A prompt withdrawal of all Russian and Russian-allied forces from all Ukrainian territory outside the territory of the four eastern and southern oblasts/regions which, since the referendums and annexations of September 2022, have been considered to be Russian territory by Russia but which Ukraine still considers to be Ukrainian territory (the “Contested Regions”).
5. A formal renunciation by Russia of any territorial claims or ambitions regarding internationally recognized Ukrainian territory other than Crimea and the Contested Regions.
6. Ukrainian acceptance that Crimea will remain part of Russia.
7. New referendums, organized and supervised by the UN or another agreed international organization, to permit the people of the four Contested Regions to choose freely and with ample time for reflection whether they prefer to be part of Ukraine or part of Russia, such referendums to be held far enough in the future after the acceptance of negotiated peace terms to permit all those who have left the contested regions since February 24, 2022, and wish to return and vote in the new referendums to do so — a reality-based attempt to reconcile the difficult-to-reconcile [international law principles](#) of the territorial integrity of states and the self-determination of peoples.
8. Commitments by both Ukraine and Russia to accept the results of the new internationally-organized referendums.

A peace plan along such lines, if proposed by any potential peacemaker, would be warmly welcomed by the Global South, which has resolutely resisted the black-and-white narrative regarding the current war which the West has been seeking, unsuccessfully, to impose upon it.

Since China is unlikely to propose any peace plan which it knows would be dismissed by Russia, it is likely that whatever peace plan China proposes will be accepted by Russia subject to a few negotiable reservations and additions.

If Russia were to do so, would the USA/NATO and Ukraine refuse to engage in serious peace negotiations, as they refused to do when Russia proposed its two mutual security treaties in late 2021, and continue to insist on perpetuating “for as long as it takes” the

deaths and destruction in Ukraine and the significant collateral damage being inflicted on the rest of the world and particularly on the peoples of the Global South?

To cite the ancient Chinese curse, we are living in interesting times. However, the promise of a serious peace plan proposed by a major power offers a welcome ray of hope.

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