

HOW WE CAN BUILD PEACE



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This is an opinion piece providing ideas on how we can resolve the Ukraine conflict and build a lasting world peace for the future. Reading time just over 10 minutes. Section 1, including subsections, shares ideas for all of us.

Section 2 is primarily for politicians and policy makers, but also contains ideas and philosophies which I regard as beneficial for all. For a quicker read you can simply read the parts most relevant to you or for ideas on systems to help ensure overall peace from now on, go straight to the 'Maintaining a lasting world peace' section.'

Disclaimer

The author is not an expert regarding the political issues discussed and has no political agenda or allegiances. This is not about saying who is right or wrong. These are just ideas shared in the sincere hope that others can build upon them to help create, in any small way, a more peaceful existence for all of us.

This is written with goodwill and kindness as a starting point but apologies if anything is wrong or unhelpful, please just take what is useful.

Section 1: Ideas for all of us

See the bigger picture, read widely & be aware of echo chambers

The Russian media is often regarded as state controlled and highly biased but I believe we all need to rise beyond our little echo chambers and propaganda on both sides to free ourselves from dangerously partisan ways of thinking. The idea of 'us and them' is divisive and even more dangerous if it's 'we're good' and 'they're bad'. When large groups of people are fed vastly differing narratives thus colouring their perceptions it limits chances of overlap in views where common ground of agreement can be found. This is one of the dangers of propaganda. Any balanced views may then be regarded as dissent within that group so the extreme narrative becomes self-perpetuating given that people wish to conform within their group.

There is a saying in Chinese that listening to both sides leads to brightness (of understanding), but prejudice leads to darkness (兼听则明，偏信则暗). It's especially important nowadays to read widely across different media sources from different countries and maybe even in different languages. I believe that raising awareness of echo-chambers, propaganda and the need to read widely needs to be part of our school education everywhere. Most teacher's workloads needs to be

made far more manageable, but this should still be included within measures to prevent radicalisation or in media studies and sociology.

Be aware of ‘controversy focus’ in the media

We should treasure and protect a free and open press this is vital in limiting the disparity in the narratives fed to different groups. But with freedom there comes responsibility and a need for reporters and news providers to be aware of cause and effect. Media coverage can cause more harm than good if there is excessive controversy focus - ‘stirring the spoon’ reporting negative things that one person or group has said about another. We seem to have become so obsessed with judgements that when a president shoots his mouth off and makes a critical comment this receives more coverage than the actual events they relate to. They know that controversy sells and so ‘sensationalist gossip’ has become so common we take it as the norm. This is especially the case in America where the political climate has become so divisive that it’s attracted so-called ‘tough-guy’ politicians who then give the media even more controversy to feed off. We need to de-escalate and tune down the rhetoric, less bar room banter from leaders. The more extreme the one side becomes the more extreme the other becomes, through our speech we can add to the snowball or through our

patience, understanding and kindness we can melt it. Peace is the result of wisdom. Sensitive careful wording from a president or leader is even more important in times such as these and if they lack the wisdom to see this then at least the media need to focus less on the crass comments and focus more on the actual situation.

Sloppy wording in the press can also create false links in impressionable minds – for example to say that a given country or government ‘feels..’ is wrong, feelings belong to individuals. Be careful of the words you choose, each is a stone thrown into the lake of human consciousness and creates ripples. We also need more compassion shown for the other side - to describe this as a battle of ‘light against dark’ is unhelpful, that’s a false and dangerous analogy. The individuals in the Russian army are also valuable unique people with every right to happiness and wellbeing. Like many, I believe they should not be in Ukraine at all, but as individuals many of them are also victims of this situation. Also please do not describe Zelensky as ‘Ukraine’s Churchill’, this by extension refers to Nazi Germany, and is not at all conducive to the de-escalation we need to see.

Recognise the value of the UN & multi-lateral cooperation

As with the Iraq war, this was done without a UN (United Nations) Security Council resolution. This is our wake up call to show us that it's unsafe to have too much power concentrated in the hands of one individual. It's also shown us that despite the farcical antics of many elections and what we call democracy, it still has value. Most of all though, it shows the immense value and security afforded by peaceful multi-lateral organisations especially the UN and the EU (European Union). Even though the UN could not stop this conflict directly they are still the only nearly all-inclusive arena for dialogue with the collective power to offer help on a large scale. I vehemently disagree with any notion that their inability to stop this conflict indicates a lack of real value. The fact that UN security council members can veto proposals means that they can stop resolutions approving military action against themselves. This prevents UN approved military engagement between security council members which is of utmost importance and provides enormous incentive for continued membership. Also the UN is a unique platform for many (nearly all) voices to be heard to add new sounds into echo chambers and de-radicalise. The vote by the UN general assembly condemning the invasion sent a clear message that is far more powerful than any message from the leaders of

any one member state. This cannot be dismissed as 'bias', as 'rhetoric' or 'western propaganda' – this was a united message with actual numbers to show the consensus.

Recognise the true heroes

Sometimes the worst can bring out the best in people, and we're seeing that every day, in the bravery of Russian anti-war protesters, Greenpeace volunteers blocking passage of oil tankers knowing that our addiction to fossil fuels is fuelling this conflict. Also in the kindness of so many millions of people who are contributing their money, time, energy, homes and much more to help. This restores hope and it this kindness and love which helps us weather such storms and sometimes collectively come out the stronger for it.

Section 2: Ideas for policymakers

Focus on restoring peace through diplomacy & reason - not weapons (for politicians)

There's no glory in war. This war needs to stop as soon as possible through diplomacy and negotiation. We need a peace agreement. Personally I agree with Germany's former policy of **not** sending weapons to the side we hope will win, such actions keep arms dealers in business, add to tensions, cost money and set a precedent for others supporting the other side to do the

same. Arming the underdog can also escalate and prolong a conflict causing more suffering and can cost many lives. Whether this situation constitutes an exception is open to debate but now that Ukraine has already been extensively armed through multiple donors, I believe governments need to shift the focus to diplomacy, negotiation, peacemaking efforts and economic tools. The immense benefit of economic integration and peaceful ways of expressing discontent through sanctions have been shown. Despite this Ukraine officials have been asking for weapons ceaselessly and often with little regard to the wider implications of this. This is not at all to blame them, they're in an extremely difficult situation. This is just a reminder that great caution is required on the part of the countries who supply those weapons. At the very least provision of weapons to Ukraine must be done on strict condition that they are to be used for **defence only** and absolutely **no** long range weapons should be provided to Ukraine. NATO thankfully and very wisely said no to Ukraine's repeated demands for a no fly zone, that would have been even more dangerous. We may be unable to stop the conflict right away but we can and must choose to **not** be militarily involved while making every other effort to help Ukraine. It's not weakness, it's wisdom and wisdom is knowing what to do and what not

to do. Compassion must be combined with wisdom to form the pillars of world peace.

Whoever helps bring about peace through diplomacy and negotiation, wherever they are from, deserves the highest recognition possible. Likewise we need more recognition of the subtle actions and words of those who pave the way to de-escalation even if this means breaking from our obsession with the sensational. I believe we should venerate peacemakers more and glorify the fighters less.

Offer a path to de-escalation and cessation of conflict (for negotiators and policy makers)

To encourage Putin to withdraw the Russian troops a concession would be required – something that can be held up to the Russian public to try to justify the invasion and allay concerns. It may seem wrong to offer concessions to an aggressor, but this conflict needs to de-escalate and stop. Russia has already paid a huge price. Any notion that the Russian regime needs to be made to suffer for its wrongdoings at the expense of overall peace is misplaced and deeply unhelpful. We're all interconnected and conflicts such as this have absolutely no place in our modern society. Justice must be served - war crimes must be investigated and those responsible held to account and sanctions can still be imposed, but our top priority must be the return to

peace. Be very wary of anyone who claims fighting is the only way to achieve this.

As of late May the Russian plan seems to be to secure the Southern and Eastern parts of Ukraine and so immediate focus should be on cessation of hostilities and on preventing further advances beyond those areas already secured. The Ukrainian government could make proposals concerning Luhansk and Donetsk regions – for example, they could receive a special status as autonomous entities within Ukraine with right of self-governance within the sovereign jurisdiction of Ukraine and assurance of equal rights and safety for all those who live in these regions¹. A compromise could see Russia maintain control for a given time in which it needs to rebuild and repair the places it occupies. However; at the time of writing the peace talks seem to have stalled and so the UN and NATO could offer a way out through some kind of concession or negotiation. Some ideas from others include a formal declaration that Ukraine will not join NATO, a promise of no further eastern NATO expansion and an agreement that any military aid to Ukraine is to be restored to the same level as it was before the conflict began. My own idea would be a vote by the general assembly as to whether the UN should have greater control over NATO. For example, an agreement and reaffirmation that all NATO military action must be in self-defence

only, such as in response to an invasion of a NATO country. Any other military action of choice by NATO must be via UN security council approval. The UN general assembly could first vote on whether a situation constitutes self-defence or action of choice. This would be conducive to greater peace by dispelling NATOphobia. NATO claims to be a defensive organisation only so such policies would simply be a reaffirmation of that. A further step would be to bring NATO entirely under the control of the security council – however; it's unrealistic to expect NATO leaders to agree to this at the present time but if and when relations improve in future this could be discussed. These are just general recommendations and the intricacies would need to be finalised, but the point is that an 'olive branch' or change in policy offered by the UN or NATO could provide a pathway to de-escalation.

Those involved in negotiations should read the “Possible Draft of a Framework Agreement on the Restoration of Peaceful Relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation”¹ by Marc Weller and see which ideas are acceptable to both sides to restart negotiations with some common ground.

Maintain a lasting world peace

We need to realise that nowadays to win a war is likely as disastrous as losing one and that war has absolutely no place in our interconnected society and modern way of life. It will be essential to raise multilateral cooperation and the UN especially will have a huge role to play in creating a truly lasting world peace. We should urgently look at and implement ideas put forward by the Dalai Lama and others about demilitarisation & World peace zones. My own view on how this could be done is shown below. This is a work in progress and an outline without details of implementation – please get in touch if you believe any parts of it require improvement or omission.

- 1. Set up a World Peace Zone formed from UN member states.** There would be greater emphasis on preventing conflict between member states with each member demilitarising together step-by-step. There would be more inclusivity, shared accountability, responsibility and transparency with a true sense of global citizenship. No incursions into any other country or contested territory would be allowed without UN Security Council approval. Any such incursions would be punishable by the UN as a whole and not by any individual country. Disputes between countries or groups, such as territorial claims, would be discussed openly, fairly and peacefully resolved through

democratic voting in the UN. For example, after hearing from both sides the UN could vote on the status of a contested territory or vote on the best way to resolve it – referendums in those places overseen by the UN may be one option.

As each member state demilitarises their military infrastructure would step-by-step come under the control of the UN. The (UN) Peacekeeping force could be quickly created through voluntary recruitment of former army personnel in member states – as is currently the case the sole purpose of the Peacekeeping force will be to **prevent** conflict. The peace and security created by the UN and the Peacekeeping force would eventually take away the need for NATO military alliances. For now rather than just working together with the UN, NATO should be governed by the more inclusive UN.

2. Disband all nuclear weapons

The current situation has made it even clearer that nuclear weapons are a tragic and dangerous idea. Allowing countries to have nuclear weapons to prevent conflict is like letting school kids carry guns to prevent fist fights. The nuclear deterrent is not supposed to mean that a nuclear power can unjustly walk all over another country while the world prays for the sanity of the leaders. Nuclear weapons need to be urgently and

systematically reduced in number, with only the UN collectively having control of the few remaining ones. They must then be phased out altogether. All nations need to agree to and abide by the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).

Incentives for compliance could include more voting power in the UN, membership rights and the lifting or imposing of sanctions or travel restrictions on citizens from those countries. The UN needs to ensure NATO nations work together with China and Russia to reduce the nuclear arsenal systematically and openly to foster better relations. It may not be easy, but this is absolutely vital, nuclear weapons are quite simply the greatest threat we face. We people are good at doing the right thing once we've exhausted the other options, the UN for example was formed in 1945. But with nuclear weapons we simply cannot let things deteriorate, learn from our mistakes and then make better policies later on. In order to even have a 'later on' we must act now with the absolute highest level of urgency and determination to completely eradicate this threat and support the work of 'Global Zero' and other organisations trying to achieve this.

Summary



Final thoughts

As the Dalai Lama has said, this needs to be the century of dialogue and world peace. Bringing about greater trust between East and West blocs will be key, this can be achieved through the UN, more constructive compassionate dialogue, through greater cooperation, through fairer more responsible media reporting in multiple languages and a greater sense of oneness and

global citizenship. Language learning is a key aspect of this - especially Arabic, English, Mandarin, and Russian and especially for diplomats, negotiators and leaders.

Many nations have recently recorded their highest ever covid rates, let's make sure our battle is against a virus and against climate change not ourselves and in so doing come together with greater trust and oneness.

Useful Links

If these ideas seem of value then please do read about and share how the UN are helping to create 'Peace, dignity & equality on a healthy planet'.

<https://www.un.org/en/about-us>

The UN also has a news service viewable in many of the World's languages <https://news.un.org/>

You can offer support via the UN Refugee Agency

https://donate.unhcr.org/int/en/ukraine-emergency#_ga=2.2591859.213436793.1648822811-964581140.1648822811

Read the various articles written by the Dalai Lama about the subject of World peace, the ideas are expressed with far more wisdom and eloquence than in the text above and are free from unnecessary intellectualisation. If you agree that these ideas and

philosophies are now of paramount importance then please do share

<https://www.dalailama.com/messages/world-peace>

References

1 Possible Draft of a Framework Agreement on the Restoration of Peaceful Relations between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, Marc Weller,

<https://www.lcil.cam.ac.uk/researchcollaborative-projects-housed-lcilukraine-peace-settlement-project/draft-settlement>

See also here

<https://opiniojuris.org/2022/03/16/possible-draft-of-a-framework-agreement-on-the-restoration-of-peaceful-relations-between-ukraine-and-the-russian-federation/>