

# Can Russia and Ukraine Still Negotiate Peace? Switzerland’s “Path to Nowhere”

By [Kester Kenn Klomegah](#)  
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*Swiss authorities’ plan to hold Peace Conference on Ukraine on June 15-16 at the Burgenstock Resort has sparked serious discussions and controversy, and moreso fraught with complications and contradictions especially over participating countries. United States, European Union members and, most likely, a few from Africa, Asia and Latin America are invited to attend. Reports confirmed that the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern has invited more than 160 delegations to the conference on Ukraine, including from the G7, G20 and BRICS countries.*

The geopolitical implications of the Russia-Ukraine crisis is quite enormous and very arguable, though. The key questions featuring in most media reports, monitored by this author, have been

- (i) Russia’s inability to attend this conference and
- (ii) how the decision arrived there will be implemented.

There are other significant implications if Russia missed out of this conference in Switzerland.

Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev has already reiterated Russia’s position relating to the forthcoming gathering. Medvedev described whatever decisions come out of the conference on Ukraine be considered “null and void” as majority of invited participating members are Western and European [members of NATO], therefore the likely to be biased in their collective decision against Russia. Medvedev stated on his X (formerly Twitter) social network account –

“Clearly, the outcome of this get-together will be null and void: peace talks are never held with just one party to the conflict.”

Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) indicated in several reports available on its website that Russia has not been invited at this point.

Russia is not going to participate in the conference on Ukraine in Switzerland, or in any other events on Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky’s “peace formula,” the Russian Foreign Ministry said.

Commenting on these plans after a meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Foreign Ministers’ Council in Astana, Kazakhstan, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov categorically noted that this conference is “a path to nowhere” and Moscow doesn’t see the West’s readiness for an honest dialogue with Zelensky’s ultimatum ‘formula’ and therefore has no relevance whatsoever.

From the latest developments, peaceful negotiations are becoming less and less likely.

Beijing, for many reasons, wants to see the military phase of the Ukraine crisis wrapped up completely, and also based on the principle of guaranteed security for Russia. Nevertheless, Chinese President Xi Jinping “clearly articulated that the Chinese side will support the convention of an international conference, which will reflect the interests of both Russia and Ukraine equally and will be based on a large number of ideas and initiatives.”

President Xi Jinping working tour to Europe largely focused on creating the environment for Chinese business to expand to the European market as United States is consistently waging trade war including raising all kinds of tariffs on Chinese enterprises.

China is always strategically looking for alternative approach and methods to push forward its aspirations of attaining an economic superpower status. China does not shout out much anti-western rhetoric. China and Russia are both members of BRICS. These couple of years, China and Russia have recorded skyline bilateral trade figures. President Vladimir Putin said that bilateral trade between the countries in 2023 increased by almost a quarter and amounted to \$227 bln. China is Russia’s main partner in the trade and economic sphere, and Russia now ranks 4th among China’s trade partners. Despite that, China seemingly has much advantage working seriously with Russia’s backyard republics and fortifying its presence in the Eurasian region.

Last year for instance, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa headed a group to present its peace initiatives. China, Russia’s closest partner, also did the same last year. Russia however described them as difficult to implement. Lavrov underestimated that of South Africa (BRICS chair in 2023), *saying that the African peace plan, which consisted of ten (10) elements, was not well-formulated on paper.* Similarly, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said

“The peace initiative proposed by African countries is very difficult to implement, difficult to compare positions.”

On the other hand and this time, speaking about China’s peace initiative, Lavrov pointed out that “it provides for the need to understand the root causes of the situation, when the West decided to use Ukraine to sabotage Russia’s legitimate interests.”

During these past several months, Lavrov has been emphasizing that “Russia can’t give up goals of special military operation in Ukraine” and adding that Russia cannot change its approaches to the conduct of the special operation as long as the West is purposefully creating threats to Russia’s security.

“The Chinese initiative envisages looking at the root causes and reaching an agreement to eliminate these causes by ensuring in practice the principle of equal and indivisible security, where the security of all participating states is equally guaranteed. It is impossible to disagree with this,” Lavrov added.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sought the approval from the Federation Council (the Upper House of Parliamentarians) and the State Duma (the Lower House of Legislators) to dispatch troops under ‘special military operation’ to de-militarize and de-nazify its neighbouring former Soviet republic of Ukraine. Putin launched a full-scale ‘special military operation’ on 22nd February 2022.

Image: Ukrainian troops prepare to fight Russian forces in Donbass (Source: Indian Punchline)



In his speech at the Russian Federation Security Council on February 21, 2022, Putin made it clear the long-standing confrontation between the Kiev officials and the people living on Eastern territory, the republics of Donbass, Donetsk and Lugansk. People in these republics were been attacked, deprived of basic amenities and their basic human rights violated. Based on those unfolding developments, and worse, the package of measures included in the Minsk Agreements were not implemented.

Then the transcript of Putin’s speech, announcing ‘special military operation’ in Ukraine established the position that it was strictly in “accordance with Article 51, part seven of the UN Charter, with the approval of the Federation Council of Russia and pursuant to the Federal Assembly, on February 22, Russia ratified treaties of friendship and mutual assistance with the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic.”

Putin was very emphatic with his words and phrases.

“I made a decision to conduct a special military operation. Its goal is to protect people who have been abused by the genocide of the Kyiv regime for eight years. And to this end, strive for *the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine*, as well as bringing to justice those who committed numerous bloody crimes against civilians, including citizens of the Russian Federation.”

But Putin invincibly stressed, at the same time, that *the plan was not to occupy Ukraine*. He said:

“Our plans do not include the occupation of Ukrainian territories. We are not going to impose anything on anyone by force. At the same time, we hear more often lately from the West that documents signed by the Soviet totalitarian regime that fixed the results of the Second World War should not be implemented.”

“It is not our plan to occupy the Ukrainian territory. At the same time, we have been hearing an increasing number of statements coming from the West that there is no need any more to abide by the documents setting forth the outcomes of World War II, as signed by the totalitarian Soviet regime. How can we respond to that?” he asked rhetorically.

Russia is constantly reclaiming its territories. Crimea and Sevastopol were taken over by Russia. Over these years, Putin has also attempted to explain that back in 2014, Russia was obliged to protect the people of Crimea and Sevastopol. The people of Crimea and Sevastopol made their choice in favour of being with their historical homeland, Russia.

Putin thinks Ukraine’s territory has been developed from Soviet times and therefore it must be part of the Russian Federation. Putin made similar statements regards border regions of Kazakhstan and also Moldova. Belarus, more or less, has come under Kremlin. Lukashenko, most often, submissively pursues directives from the Kremlin.

The entire saga of settling the Ukrainian problem is now reaching a very critical point, even BRICS unable to find an acceptable promising solution on their association’s platform. In any case, *the Russia-Ukraine crisis continues threatening global security*, largely influencing the world economy.

It has, already, visibly divided the world into two distinctive groups, “friendly or unfriendly states” – either for or against, – and as a matter of fact, some often say the Global North and Global South.

The United Nations reports categorically indicated that Russia allegedly violated international law when it invaded Ukraine’s Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk oblasts in 2014 and followed up with a much larger invasion of the entire country in late February 2022. Russia has, primarily, allegedly violated Ukraine’s territorial integrity and its political sovereignty which it attained in 1991, with other independent Soviet republics, after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

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*Kester Kenn Klomegah, who worked previously with Inter Press Service (IPS), Weekly Blitz and InDepthNews, is now a regular contributor to Global Research. He researches Eurasia, Russia, Africa and BRICS. His focused interest areas include geopolitical changes, foreign relations and economic development questions relating to Africa. As a versatile researcher, he believes that everyone deserves equal access to quality and trustworthy media reports.*

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