

An Immediate Unconditional Ceasefire in Ukraine would be Bad Policy

By Don Sutherland

In recent days, there seems to have been an increase among those making appearances on TV programs to seek a rapid ceasefire in Ukraine. Absent from their discussion was the withdrawal of Russian forces from all of Ukraine that they occupied in 2014 and 2022.

This omission is material and deeply problematic. First, it would potentially leave Russian forces in place in territories seized during the most recent Russian invasion; Second, Russian occupation would give it greater leverage to extract terms in its favor, including territorial claims. That would violate the UN Charter which declares, "All Members shall refrain in their international relations from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state..." Third, the outcome would further undermine confidence in international agreements. Russia's 2014 and 2022 attacks on Ukraine have already left the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 in shambles. Fourth, Russia would gain respite and regain the position to launch a future assault on Ukraine. Fifth, a 21st century model of Appeasement would provide new incentives to Russia to use force to impose its demands on smaller nations and their peoples.

In 1938, Anne O'Hare McCormick reported in *The New York Times*, that Czechoslovakia "has been offered up as a whole burnt-offering on the altar of peace. She is the sacrifice." McCormick continued, "Hitler marches with the consent of the architects of the system he has destroyed." Were Ukraine pressed to seek a dishonorable ceasefire that could only lead to a dishonorable "peace," Putin would have smashed the liberal rules-based world order with the consent of some of its key architects. Then, national sovereignty, territorial integrity, and diplomatic agreements would mean nothing. Only naked power and the will of those who possess it would matter.

That would be a dark and dangerous world. It would be geopolitically unstable and much less prosperous. Democracy would find itself under renewed pressure from ruthless authoritarian regimes. That uncertain and dismal future can and should be avoided.

Ukrainian victory, restoration of its territorial integrity, and respect for its full sovereign freedom hold the key to averting a bad future. Those are the starting point for any peace terms. Peace at any price is only a guarantee of the absence of peace.