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Trump and Ukraine: What will day one bring?



Here it is — the first day of Donald Trump's second term as President of the United States. Whether you welcome it or not, this man is poised to either reshape the current geopolitical order or, at least, to significantly challenge it.

Starting today, his campaign promises with clear deadlines are shifting into political "intentions" with more flexible timelines. For instance, the phrase "peace in Ukraine within 24 hours" now refers to a ceasefire within the upcoming months.

Perhaps ending the war in Ukraine may not have been Trump's top priority, but it has become increasingly important to American voters. Independents favoured this even before the election, and by late 2024, most Americans supported a swift resolution.

According to recent Gallup **polls**, 50% of Americans believe the U.S. should try to reach a quick end to the war, even if that means Ukraine does not recover all of its land. Meanwhile, 48% think the U.S. should continue to help Ukraine win back the territory it lost in the war with Russia, even in a prolonged conflict.

Moreover, a slim majority of Americans believe the U.S. is doing too much to help Ukraine (37%) rather than the right amount (31%) or not enough (30%).

While Russian aggression in Ukraine may have bolstered Donald Trump's electoral support, it has never been a central priority for the United States — especially now, as California endures its most devastating **wildfires** in decades and growing concerns about the economy dominate public discourse.

Kyiv and Moscow are escalating the conflict

Donald Trump's early commitments include plans to "sign a flurry of executive orders," visit Los Angeles, where countless residents have lost their homes and even a potential **trip**

to Beijing within his first 100 days. Meanwhile, his envoy for Ukraine and Russia has had to **delay** their visit to Kyiv, pending a formal appointment.

In contrast, Trump's Middle East envoy has already travelled to Qatar and met with Prime Minister Netanyahu to reinforce the recently brokered **ceasefire** between Israel and Hamas.

Now that the Middle East ceasefire has taken effect, both Democrats and Republicans are seizing the opportunity to score political points from this long-anticipated deal.

The situation with Ukraine is far more complex. Vladimir Putin continues to hold roughly a **quarter** of the country's territory, with his forces aggressively advancing in the East.

Around nine regions face relentless daily shelling, while the destruction of Ukraine's energy infrastructure and a damaged economy have triggered severe demographic challenges.

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With negotiations on the horizon, both Kyiv and Moscow are escalating the conflict to strengthen their positions. Ukraine has attempted a second **offensive** in the Kursk region but has achieved more notable results through daily strikes on oil depots and chemical plants within Russia.

Meanwhile, Kremlin forces have made inroads into a new Ukrainian region—Dnipropetrovsk, the home region of President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Concerns are growing that Russia could fully seize Ukrainian Donbas, encompassing the Luhansk and Donetsk regions, while also making significant advances in the Kharkiv region.

Trump's praise for Putin has

diminished

Trump's team has been actively discussing a potential phone call with Vladimir Putin over the past two months. Having already met twice with Volodymyr Zelenskyy in recent months, the moment seems ripe for Trump to engage directly with the Russian leader.

During Trump's first term, several insiders openly acknowledged his sincere liking for Putin, whom Trump **described** as a "talented," "courageous," and "smart" man.

However, in recent months, Trump's praise for Putin has noticeably diminished, leaving observers to speculate whether his feelings have truly shifted or are simply being kept under wraps.

Some have even linked Trump's overtures – such as suggestions of acquiring Greenland or challenging the sovereignty of Canada and Mexico – to his affinity for Putin's autocratic style.

Donald Trump is already planning to exert pressure on Russia through sanctions

While the plausibility of these claims is questionable, they have undeniably distracted from critical global issues, including the ongoing war in Ukraine.

Either an enticing offer or a situation that leaves them with no alternative is necessary to persuade the stubborn Zelenskyy and Putin to engage in negotiations. Donald Trump is already planning to exert pressure on Russia through **sanctions**, while his leverage over Zelenskyy seems more straightforward – U.S. military aid hangs in the balance.

Trump's unpredictability

Trump's unpredictability has fuelled widespread speculation about his chosen course of action. Some experts worry he might

cut off military aid to Ukraine, while others argue he could increase arms support to assert leadership in the face of Moscow.

Donald Trump's penchant for flexibility and quick fixes makes it unlikely he would endure drawn-out negotiations lasting years.



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If Ukraine and Russia fail to reach even a minimal ceasefire agreement by the end of 2025, the 47th U.S. president's impatience with bureaucratic diplomacy could lead him to shift his attention to what he deems more urgent priorities.

Such a shift could effectively grant Vladimir Putin the freedom to pursue his agenda in Ukraine unchecked.

At the same time, outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has **said** that the new White House administration, headed by Donald Trump, has the necessary prerequisites to help Ukraine conclude a good deal to end the Russo-Ukrainian war and establish a lasting peace.

With Ukraine's resilience and Moscow's aggression shaping the battlefield, the coming months will reveal whether Trump's "art of the deal" diplomacy can navigate the biggest war in Europe since World War II.