



By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

From Alaska to Washington – Europe won't let Trump decide alone



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's **meeting** with Donald Trump in the White House comes just a few days after Trump hosted Vladimir Putin in Alaska.

The meeting with the Russian leader **ended** without an agreement but with symbolism that showed Putin as a respected dialogue partner.

For him, it was a message **aimed** primarily at an internal audience and the oligarchs in Moscow – that Russia and its president have weight and **influence**. Trump has, indeed, re-established Putin's status as a global actor.

Ukraine remained in the background in Alaska, which further increased nervousness in Kyiv and European capitals.

This is precisely why Zelenskyy is not travelling to Washington alone. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will be **travelling** with him.

The delegation's composition clearly **demonstrates** Europe's desire to participate in discussions about Ukraine's future and avoid the risk of Trump and Putin tailoring the parameters of a peace agreement themselves.

The European leaders did not decide to take this step for reasons of protocol but out of fear of **repeating** the "ambush" that Zelenskyy had previously experienced in the Oval Office.

Back then, the US president tried to publicly pressure him into making unfavourable concessions, which ended in failure and visible diplomatic tensions.

Now the aim is to set limits in advance and prevent any attempt to impose a solution outside of the framework of international law from the outset.

Principles that no future agreement can violate

Reports from several world media outlets reveal the contours of what Trump has in mind. He has already told Zelenskyy that Putin **wants** full control over the Donbass.

At the same time, he emphasised that Ukraine "must decide for itself what it wants to do with its territory."

This classic formula allows the US president to distance himself from the responsibility of defending Ukraine's borders, thereby shifting the burden onto Kyiv.

Zelenskyy categorically **rejected** any idea of a surrender of the Donbass. This is his basic red line and position, which is in line with the position of the European allies.

Europe is insisting that principles be laid down in Washington that no future agreement can violate

The problem is that Trump is behaving more and more openly like a mediator seeking a "grand deal" rather than an ally protecting principles. After Alaska, it is clear that he is willing to **talk** about a political agreement before a ceasefire.

This suits Russia because it allows it to dictate terms from a position of power while the war continues. Europe and Ukraine believe that such an approach rewards aggression and renders international law meaningless.

That is why Europe is **insisting** that principles be laid down in Washington that no future agreement can violate.

No recognition of annexations, no legalisation of conquests

What are these principles? First of all, there is no recognition of annexations. There is no legalisation for territorial conquests. The security guarantees for Ukraine must not remain at the level of non-binding papers but must include real military and industrial

support.

Russia cannot count on the lifting of sanctions as long as it holds the occupied territories and does not show measurable and verifiable steps towards withdrawal and compliance with international law.

Trump views the entire process through the prism of domestic politics

Finally, humanitarian issues—such as the return of abducted children and the exchange of prisoners—must be part of the package and not become side issues.

Trump views the entire process through the prism of domestic politics. For him, reaching an agreement, even a limited one, would be political capital to consolidate his authority at home and prove that he can bring 'peace' where the previous administration failed. That is why he wants the image and the story about peace.

However, a quick agreement on Ukraine's territorial concessions would also bring him serious risks. Firstly, it would fragment the transatlantic front and weaken allies' trust in the US.

At the same time, it would provide Moscow a propaganda triumph – proof that its persistence in the war has paid off and that the West is prepared to give in.

Europe's own support format for Kyiv

Three scenarios are considered possible in Washington.

The first, most likely, is "photo-op plus". The leaders take photos; the joint document speaks of "progress," and the **continuation** of talks on 22 August in a trilateral format with Putin is announced but without concrete commitments.

The second scenario is "hard pressure", in which Trump puts a draft on the table that includes the Donbas and expects Zelensky's approval. The Ukrainian president refuses, the meeting ends tensely, and the Europeans then organise their own support format for Kyiv.

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A third option is a "framework without geography"—an "agreement on humanitarian and security issues that leaves the difficult territorial issues for later.

However, the announced trilateral summit on 22 August remains more an ambition of the White House than a realistic prospect. Neither Moscow nor Kyiv are currently showing any willingness to enter into territorial negotiations under the American umbrella. If the meeting takes place, it will be more of a stage show than serious negotiations.

No 'peace' formulation that normalises aggression

Europe is therefore already preparing a plan B. Industrial capacities for ammunition, air defence and drones will be strengthened regardless of the outcome of the talks in Washington.

At the same time, work is underway on a legal framework that provides for the use of proceeds from frozen Russian assets to finance Ukrainian defence and reconstruction.



Europe is not prepared to be sidelined again and will continue to work with Ukraine to build a dam against one-sided and bad agreements

Ultimately, the political message remains the same: borders will not be changed by force, and no "peace" formulation that normalises aggression can stand.

Basically, Europe enters the room only to leave it with clearly defined limits. Trump will try to present himself as a peacemaker and bring home the "deal" narrative. Putin will continue to demand maximum concessions.

Zelenskyy will stick to his red lines, and the Europeans will insist on framework conditions that guarantee that peace, when it comes, will not be a reward for the aggressor but a sustainable solution for Ukraine and the entire continent.

This is the realistic framework for the forthcoming meeting at the White House. There is no quick solution, no easy agreement.

But there are clear signs that Europe is not prepared to be sidelined again and will continue to work with Ukraine to build a dam against one-sided and bad agreements.

That is precisely the message that will echo around the world from Washington – that the war in Ukraine is not a question of the will of the two leaders but of the survival of the international order.