



By: John Sipher

Don't Expect a Ukraine Peace Deal Anytime Soon



Following a **whirlwind** of diplomacy in Alaska and Washington, President Trump emerged from meetings with Vladimir Putin, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and European leaders proclaiming that a peace deal in Ukraine was within reach.

He even suggested that the next step could be a full ceasefire and a comprehensive settlement, declaring it might “go pretty quickly.” Trump indicated he would **arrange** a meeting between Putin and Zelenskyy and establish security guarantees that included Western troops on Ukrainian territory.

But the reality on the ground—and the entrenched positions of the parties involved—suggests otherwise. If anything, the gulf between Moscow and Kyiv has only widened.

Trump’s eagerness to announce a breakthrough obscures the brutal truth: peace in Ukraine remains a distant prospect. Just days after his remarks, Moscow made clear that it would not **accept** the deployment of European troops in Ukraine and that Putin has no intention of meeting directly with his Ukrainian counterpart.

Russia has given no indication of moderating its ambitions. On the contrary, it continues to **bombard** Ukraine with waves of missiles and drones, killing civilians and destroying infrastructure.

At the negotiating table, Vladimir Putin insists that Ukraine itself is artificial, dismisses President Zelenskyy as illegitimate, and demands that Kyiv effectively surrender in order to be recognized. This is not the basis for a genuine peace process; it is the rhetoric of conquest.

Concessions that strengthen Moscow’s hand

Trump, however, appears more interested in quick wins than in serious diplomacy. He has **dropped** earlier demands for an immediate ceasefire, ruled out further sanctions, and

embraced Putin’s claim that only a “comprehensive settlement” can end the war.

These are not concessions for peace, but giveaways that strengthen Moscow’s hand. Putin left his meeting with Trump having gained more through flattery and a few hours of conversation than his army has won in years of brutal fighting.

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Trump appears to equate halting the fighting with achieving “peace.” Yet, as Putin insists, there will be no peace until the “root causes” are **addressed**—which for him means denying Ukraine the right to exist as an independent, Western-oriented state.

Three facts define the current diplomatic landscape.

First, Trump has abandoned his only real leverage—pressure through sanctions. Second, Putin has not softened his maximalist demands: full control of the Donbas, permanent Ukrainian neutrality, limits on Ukraine’s armed forces, and veto power over any Western security guarantees. Third, the most urgent task—stopping the killing through a ceasefire—has been sidelined in favor of abstract debates about borders and treaties.

All the while, Putin has demanded more territory than his military has managed to seize in three and a half years of war.

Hunger for credit—and a Nobel Peace Prize

History reminds us that not all negotiations end wars. More than 80 years after Yalta, Japan and Russia still lack a peace treaty because Tokyo has refused to cede the Kuril Islands.

The lesson is clear: peace built on territorial concessions to an aggressor is neither durable nor just. Putin's talk of "land swaps" is extortion, not diplomacy. To cede occupied territory to Russia is to subject its residents to occupation marked by executions, torture, and deportations—or to uproot them entirely. To propose this is to ask Zelenskyy to become complicit in a crime.

Trump's transactional approach—treating foreign policy like a real estate deal—ignores both history and morality. Dictators who flout the rule of law at home cannot be trusted to honor agreements abroad.

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Putin has already violated the Budapest Memorandum, the Minsk accords, and multiple arms control treaties. Any deal he signs today is likely just another piece of paper he will discard tomorrow.

Trump's insatiable **hunger** for credit—and a Nobel Peace Prize—clashes with his disinterest in mastering the details necessary to achieve peace. Previous presidents who found diplomatic success—Carter with Egypt and Israel, Clinton in Yugoslavia, Obama against bin Laden—did the hard groundwork that Trump appears unwilling to do.

Worse, Trump's vanity makes him easy prey for Putin's manipulation. Trump views diplomacy through personal relationships, confusing his own rapport with foreign leaders for international progress.

Putin sees Trump's eagerness for a Nobel Prize or a "win" not as strength, but as weakness. Meanwhile, European allies waste precious energy managing Trump's moods and avoiding his wrath instead of building a united front against Russian aggression.

Talk of imminent peace is just

talk

The hard truth is that peace in Ukraine requires more than handshakes in Washington. It requires convincing Moscow that the costs of continuing the war are unbearable.

As long as Putin believes he can outlast the West, he will press forward with his vision of a Ukraine that is either subjugated or erased altogether. The only sustainable path to peace lies in consistent Western support for Ukraine—militarily, economically, and diplomatically—so that Putin sees no alternative but withdrawal.



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A recent UK defense intelligence report noted that, at the current rate of advance, it would take Russia nearly five more years to **capture** the territory it demands, at the cost of almost two million casualties.

Until then, talk of imminent peace is just talk. Ukraine cannot and will not agree to its own dissolution, and Russia shows no sign of abandoning its imperial ambitions. Despite the headlines from Washington, the war is no closer to ending today than it was before Trump's latest summit.

As Bret Stephens **commented** recently in the New York Times, by putting the interests of what Trump calls "peace" ahead of the interests of freedom, we are all but guaranteeing that Ukraine will lose both.

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