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Negotiations under fire: the struggle to end the war in Ukraine



Ukraine, Russia, and the United States are entering another round of intense negotiations aimed at ending the war. Donald Trump's recent **conversations** — first with Vladimir Putin, **followed** by a meeting with Volodymyr Zelenskyy — have introduced fresh developments.

The Washington Post **reported** that Putin allegedly "suggested he would be willing to surrender parts of two other regions of Ukraine he has partly conquered, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, in exchange for full control of Donetsk," according to unnamed American officials.

However, my sources indicate that this was not the case — unfortunately for Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Donald Trump himself **announced** that the two countries should halt "where they are," a position Zelenskyy publicly endorsed after the meeting.

This means Putin must agree to another compromise - not to take all of the Donbas. Will he?

Ukraine presses for action as aid declines

Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues to demand intensified pressure on Russia, as the EU **prepares** its 19th sanctions package and the US **urges** India to halt Russian oil purchases.

Yet military aid to Ukraine has **plummeted** by 43%, and Tomahawk missiles **remain** unavailable — deemed by the US too risky, a potential escalation rather than a path to ending the war (at least, for now).

"The war continues only because Moscow does not want it to end," Zelenskyy wrote on Sunday, accusing Russia of "manipulating, dragging out negotiations, terrorising our people with airstrikes, and intensifying assaults along the front line."

Russian forces are advancing — slowly but steadily — in Ukraine's Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhia regions

He said the war is not over only because Russia does not want it to end. The Kremlin's military onslaught rages on unabated. In the past week alone, Russia unleashed over 3,270 strike drones, 1,370 guided aerial bombs, and nearly 50 missiles of various types against Ukraine.

Meanwhile, Russian forces are advancing — slowly but steadily — in Ukraine's Donetsk, Dnipropetrovsk, and Zaporizhzhia regions.

A meeting without Zelenskyy

Although media attention fixates on shelling and potential territorial concessions, the leaders' stances remain unchanged.

President Zelenskyy continues to advocate for a ceasefire — which Putin flatly **rejects**, saying this stage is not needed for a long-lasting peace — and the deep animosity between them was underscored by both Trump during **negotiations** and Zelenskyy in his post-White House speech.

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This signals Putin's ongoing refusal to recognise Zelenskyy as an equal: he has repeatedly **insisted** that Ukraine hold elections and claims readiness to **negotiate** with the Ukrainian parliamentary head, but not Zelenskyy himself.

Consequently, the Budapest **meeting** — slated for two or more weeks from now — should be bilateral, involving only Trump and Putin, with Zelenskyy briefed afterward.

Meanwhile, Zelenskyy still told Trump he was ready to join both leaders and insisted on the ceasefire during the talks:

“And they (negotiations) should take place in silence, not under missiles and drones,” the president added.

Relying on verbal warnings to exert pressure

My sources confirm that Zelenskyy **remains** resolute on NATO membership. While Trump has **sidelined** the issue, it remains a cornerstone of security guarantees for Zelenskyy.



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A major misconception persists regarding the Tomahawk missiles that President Zelenskyy sought during his White House visit. Kyiv **believes** these missiles would significantly pressure the Kremlin, potentially compelling Putin to engage in negotiations.

However, Putin has **warned** Trump that providing these missiles would strain relations with the White House and **escalate** tensions.

Trump, **striving** to balance relations with both leaders, has neither approved nor denied Zelenskyy's request. It appears the White House is relying on verbal warnings to exert pressure, hoping to avoid further escalation.

Europe's role in this round of negotiations

remains limited. The primary initiative is supporting Ukraine through the PURL programme, through which Europe reimburses the U.S. for weapons supplied to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, individual countries provide their own military aid packages. Although this aid has significantly decreased and European leaders did not attend the meeting between Trump and Zelenskyy this time, they **held** a joint call with the Ukrainian leader afterward and continue to stress the critical importance of unity in supporting Ukraine's struggle.

Poland, one of the first NATO and EU countries bordering Ukraine, has been particularly **vocal** on this matter.

Many caution that, given Ukraine's donor-dependent and war-strained economy, its options in upcoming negotiations may be limited.

With President Trump's new firm diplomatic stance toward Russia, Kyiv could find it increasingly difficult to maintain the same level of influence in talks that will shape the country's path forward.