

IDR

Romanian Diplomatic Institute



The Long Road from War to Peace: The Russo-Ukrainian War After Three Years

George Vișan

Policy Paper no. 41/2025



MINISTERUL AFACERILOR EXTERNE



The Long Road from War to Peace: The Russo-Ukrainian War After Three Years

George Vișan

Expert

Romanian Diplomatic Institute

ABSTRACT: This paper looks at the current peace proposals put forward for the peaceful resolution of the Russo-Ukrainian war and the positions of the actors involved in the current peace process, from a Romanian perspective. The actors taken into consideration for their positions regarding the war and the peace process are the United States of America, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the EU, People's Republic of China, and Romania. The paper includes references to the latest developments regarding the future of the negotiation process. The cut-off point for this analysis is February 24, 2025. The main argument of this paper is a peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine is still far away and remains a challenging policy objective given the power relations and diverging interests of the actors involved. Furthermore, A peace process that does not include all the relevant actors involved, will not be viewed as legitimate and will not lead to a lasting peace between the two countries.

KEYWORDS: Russo-Ukrainian war, peace negotiations, Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Russian aggression in Ukraine.



INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched an unprovoked and illegal large-scale invasion of its neighbor Ukraine. Since that day three years of continuous warfare have passed. We are now entering the fourth year. For the first time in three years, glimpses of a potential peace deal between Russia and Ukraine can be discerned.

However, a peace settlement is still far away and remains a challenging policy objective given the power relations and diverging interests of the actors involved. Rushing the process will neither provide for a lasting peace in Ukraine, nor contribute to the security of the continent. A peace process that does not include all the relevant actors involved, will not be viewed as legitimate and will not lead to a lasting peace between Ukraine and Russia.

The aim of this paper is to look at the current peace proposals put forward for the peaceful resolution of the Russo-Ukrainian war and the positions of the actors involved in the current peace process, from a Romanian perspective. The actors taken into consideration for their positions regarding the war and the peace process are the United States of America, Ukraine, the Russian Federation, the EU, People's Republic of China, and Romania. The paper includes references to the latest developments regarding the future of the negotiation process. The cut-off point for this analysis is February 24, 2025, and consequently does not take into consideration subsequent events that happened after this date.

PEACE PLANS

Almost as soon as the large-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2022, peace plans were put forward. Some of these plans were put forward by the Ukrainians themselves, other were put forward by the Russian side, either directly or through proxies, and by third parties: China, Brazil, and a number of African countries.

Ukraine put forward two peace plans, which are complementary. The first is the *Ukraine's Peace Formula*, presented by president Volodymyr Zelensky in September 2022 at the UN General Assembly and at the G20 Bali Summit, Indonesia ([President of Ukraine, November 15, 2022](#)). Ukraine's Peace Formula had initially five points that were expanded to ten at the G20 summit. These ten points span a gamut of issues but the most important are



restoration of Ukraine's borders, cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of Russian forces from Ukrainian territory, security guarantees for Kyiv and the resolution of the conflict by an international peace conference with a legally binding international treaty. Other important issues covered by the Peace Formula: punishing those responsible for war crimes, the release of prisoners of war and return of deported children, environmental issues, nuclear safety, food security and energy security.

The Peace Formula was followed in 2024 by *Victory for Ukraine Plan*, which is complementary and better articulates the Ukrainian position in terms of security. The Victory Plan has main points and three classified annexes ([President of Ukraine, October 16, 2024](#)). Ukraine would like to become a NATO member, defense of the country by delivering of weapons systems that can hit targets deep in Russian territory, deterrence of further Russian aggression by deploying Western conventional weapons system on Ukrainian territory, participation of Western countries in the Ukrainian economy's strategic sectors, including natural and mineral resources and finally deployment of experienced Ukrainian military units in Western Europe in place of certain US contingents. The Victory Plan emphasized Ukraine's capability as a security provider for its partners. The inclusion of economic incentives in this plan had the role of showing Kyiv's willingness to share the burden of its defense as well as gratitude for the aid received. Economic incentives would also quell the voices of those critical of aiding Ukraine in Western countries.

Contacts between Ukrainian and Russian negotiators occurred as soon as February 28, 2022, with Belarussian mediation, but no agreements were reached. More substantive diplomatic contacts between Russia and Ukraine took place in March 2022-April 2022 via Turkey. These peace efforts are relevant for two reasons, they occurred during one of the most intense phases of the invasion of Ukraine and they allow us to understand Russia's wartime aims and potential positions during future peace negotiations.

The 2022 negotiations show that Russia sought to create a neutral Ukraine, with a weak military ([New York Times, June 15, 2024](#)). Furthermore, Kyiv would have had to accept territorial losses which included Crimea and parts of Eastern Ukraine, territory not under Russian military control. Although Russia accepted in principle the idea of international guarantees for Ukraine, it wanted to have an effective veto over their activation. Furthermore, Moscow objected to the idea of a no-fly zone imposed by the guarantor powers or for them supplying weapons to Kyiv. Ukraine would also be forced to accept changes to its constitution



regarding its internal politics, in order to “denazify” as well to allow the Russian language to become one of the official languages of the country. The talks collapsed because the conditions imposed on Kyiv were too onerous, the Russian initial offensive was stopped and because the brutality of Russian armed forces in Ukraine had stiffened the will to resist of the Ukrainian citizens.

In February 2023, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China released a 12 point peace plan ([China Daily, February 25-26, 2023](#)). The “12 points” combined the position of China regarding the Russo-Ukrainian War with the idea of a peace plan, which was rather generic and indeterminate. The document mixed criticism of “Cold War mentality”, or of unilateral sanctions, a veiled reference to Western sanctions regimes with some concrete proposals, such as resumption of peace talks, nuclear safety, reducing strategic risks, facilitating grain exports or promoting post-conflict reconstruction. Probably the most important part of the document had to do with “reducing strategic risks”, a subtle warning to Russia against nuclear escalation.

In May 2024, China and Brazil put forward another peace plan ([Gov.br, May 23, 2024](#)). The six-point document is, as the previous “12 points”, too general and does not articulate a clear vision of how to settle the Russo-Ukrainian war. It is more a generic set of principles for starting a conflict resolution process rather than a serious peace proposal. As the “12 points” document it warns against nuclear escalation and calls for direct negotiations between Ukraine and Russia.

In June 2023, a group of African countries led by South Africa put forward a 10-point peace plan for the resolution of the conflict. The initiative was led by South African president Cyril Ramaphosa and includes leaders from Senegal, Egypt, Republic of Congo, Uganda, Zambia, and the Comoros ([The Kyiv Independent, June 16, 2023](#)). The group of African leaders visited both Kyiv and Moscow where they met presidents Volodymyr Zelenski and Vladimir Putin. Beyond the African leaders visit to both belligerents to present the initiative, the document is useful for recognizing the need for security guarantees and for highlighting the war’s impact on Africa. Vladimir Putin rejected the African initiative, calling it misguided, especially when it came to restoring Ukraine’s internationally recognized borders ([Reuters, June 18, 2023](#)).



Peace proposals and plans have been put forward by Brazil's president, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (2023), Indonesia (2023) and Mexico (2022), but these demarches either did not get too much traction or were rejected outright by Russia or Ukraine.

AIMS, INTERESTS, COSTS, AND POSITIONS

The United States of America

The US is in the enviable position to dictate peace to both Russia and Ukraine. Washington has leverage over both Moscow and Kyiv. President's Trump leverage over Vladimir Putin consists of financial and economic sanctions. After more than three years of continuous warfare and sanctions have taken a toll on Russia's economy ([Prokopenko, 2024](#); [DeVore & Mertens, 2024](#)). US president Donald Trump has been clear that he intends to use economic tools to bring Russia to the negotiating table, by employing the energy card ([The Guardian, January 22, 2025](#)). US is in the position to lower the price of oil on the international market below \$60 a barrel which will have devastating consequences for the Russian economy ([Bloomberg, February 6, 2025](#); [Ukrainska Pravda, January 25, 2025](#)). Furthermore, in European and US banks and financial institutions more than 300 billion dollars of Russian financial assets are blocked. Washington can hurt Russia militarily via Ukraine by continuously provisioning Kyiv with military aid.

US leverage over Ukraine consists in its latter dependence of American military aid in order to survive the Russian invasion. Without US weapons and intelligence, Ukraine's position becomes untenable in the long run. In early 2024, when the Congress stopped the financing of US aid to Ukraine, it affected Kyiv's ability to defend effectively against continuous Russian aggression.

The costs of US involvement in the war are minimum, as there is basically no direct involvement. There are no US troops on the ground in Ukraine, there are no American military casualties as a result of this conflict and most of the aid provided actually to Kyiv represents direct and indirect investments in the US defense industry ([CSIS, April 18, 2024](#); [Washington Post, November 29, 2023](#)). The weapons used by Ukraine in its own defense against Russia's aggression came from the US arsenals which are refilled by orders made to American weapons



manufacturers. Furthermore, most of the economic and humanitarian aid is provided by the EU and European states. Ukrainian refugees seek shelter in Moldova, Romania, Poland, and Germany, not in the United States.

Ukraine has proven to be resilient in the face of Russian aggression. Compared to other states that the US supported directly in the past (South Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq) it has a functioning government which is considerate legitimate, even by those that are now living in Russian occupied territory. Consequently, Washington is not called to do nation-building in Kyiv as it tried to achieve in Afghanistan and in post-invasion Iraq.

If Ukraine loses the war with Russia or it is perceived to have lost the war, there will be wide ranging consequences for the perception of US power in the international system. Such a development will encourage US rivals and competitors across the board and will have deleterious impact on its alliances. A similar outcome should be expected if there is a perception that the US is abandoning the Ukrainian cause.

Russia is a persistent and existential threat to the United States of America through its large nuclear arsenal, revisionist and revanchist foreign and defense policies. Furthermore, the Kremlin has been promoting ideologies and beliefs that challenge those promoted by America. The war against Ukraine has severely affected Russia's military capability and economy, making it dependent on China and North Korea. Although Moscow has begun to resent its dependence on China, its resentment for the United States and the West goes much deeper.

Ukraine

After three years of conflict, Ukraine continues to resist the Russian invasion. Moreover, in these three years of war it has managed to mount four offensives, out of which three were quite successful (Kharkiv Counteroffensive 2022, Kherson Counteroffensive 2022, Summer 2023 Counteroffensive and Kursk Offensive 2024). For Ukraine the war represents a matter of life and death – Russia has called into question the very existence of the Ukrainian state and nation. Ukrainians have faced down and fought (with the aid of the Western allies) an enemy which is superior in firepower, manpower and possesses the largest nuclear arsenal in the world. Furthermore, in these three years Ukraine has documented a shocking number of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Russia's armed forces against Ukrainian military personnel and civilian population.



According to open source intelligence, Ukraine lost in three years of war 7,898 pieces of military equipment ([Oryxspioenkop.com, February 22, 2024](#)). President Volodymyr Zelensky stated that at least 46,000 Ukrainian soldiers have lost their lives in defense of their country and 380,000 soldiers wounded in action. ([The Independent, February 18, 2025](#)). US projections for Ukrainian losses are much higher, but not excessive however (Ibid.), showing the difficulties of estimating losses during an active conflict. The UN has documented over 12,000 civilians killed in Ukraine and more than 27,000 wounded ([UN, December 20, 2024](#)). Ukraine claims that nearly 20,000 children have been deported from the occupied territories in Russia proper ([The Jerusalem Post, December 31, 2024](#)) and wants them returned to their families or to the care of the authorities. The cost of war for Ukraine has been tremendous in human and material resources.

In 2024, Ukrainian forces invaded Russian territory and at present occupies parts of the Kursk Oblast in Russia proper. Ukraine has been conducting military operations on Russian territory for more than 6 months. Despite being denied Western sophisticated long-range weapons, out of fear of “escalation”, Kyiv has been able to hit targets deep inside the Russian Federation with home grown weapons systems, exposing the latter’s vulnerabilities and affecting its military potential. In the Black Sea, Ukraine managed to break the Russian naval blockade through ingenuity and daring, managing to force a numerical superior enemy, the Black Sea Fleet, on the defensive.

Ukraine’s position revolves around three main interests: territorial integrity – recovery of all territories lost since 2014, security guarantees that in the future there is not going to be another aggression and punishment for those responsible for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Ukraine’s negotiating position is quite strong at present. Its armed forces are intact and continue fighting. Kyiv still enjoys strong international support which it uses to offset military and economic losses and controls for over six months, part of Russia’s territory. Military force is always an asset in case of peace settlement. In three years of war Ukraine has provided security to its neighbors and supporters by taking on and causing casualties and losses to the army of a revisionist state, which called into question the world order. Moreover, it has provided its supporters and allies with valuable intelligence concerning Russian warfare methods and military equipment. In security terms, Ukraine is an asset for Europe and the United States, even more so for its direct neighbors, which do not want to share a border with



the Russian Federation at the end of this conflict. Kyiv is a security provider for EU and NATO countries without being part of these two organizations, confronting Russia's revisionist claims on the continent.

Another important leverage which Ukraine enjoys in a potential negotiation is its narrative. Russia is the aggressor and has invaded Ukraine unprovoked. Russia is in breach of the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act (1975). The Kremlin is the one that is committing war crime and crimes against humanity on Ukrainian territory and has called into question the very existence of the Ukrainian state. The victimhood narrative, which is backed up by incontrovertible evidence, it is an important diplomatic tool for Kyiv. Any sort of agreement to end the conflict must recognize the aggressor status of the Russian Federation and victim status of Ukraine. Recognition of the victimhood narrative ensures a place at the negotiating table for Ukraine and it is a source of political and judicial legitimacy for any lasting peace.

The economic importance of Ukraine for the world economy cannot be ignored. The Black Sea blockade has shown the importance of Ukraine as a source of cheap foodstuffs and grain for North Africa, parts of the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa. A free and sovereign Ukraine can continue to be an alternative source of badly needed foodstuffs especially for the countries that have been receiving aid through UN World Food Programme. Ukraine has been open about its willingness to let other countries invest and exploit its natural resources, be they hydrocarbons or mineral resources (rare earths). In this particular instance, US or European investments in these strategic economic sectors should not be viewed as exploitative.

However, Ukraine is also facing some serious challenges and vulnerabilities as a result of three years of continuous war. One of these vulnerabilities is the dependence of foreign military aid and economic aid. Without these two major assets, Ukraine's resistance would not have been so fierce and so long. The quantity and quality of this aid is vulnerable to internal political developments inside the countries' providing it. Another vulnerability of the Ukrainian position is military in nature and has to do with recruitment for its armed forces. Ukraine has been one of the Eastern European countries that have experienced a sharp demographic decline in the past 35 years, a feature inherited from the defunct USSR. Years of economic decline which impacted mortality rates and birthrates, migration and a conflict that has been going for the past decade, have greatly affected the demographics of Ukraine and as such Kyiv has hesitated to lower the age of conscription to 18 years old. Ukraine's partners



have demanded more than once Ukraine to fully mobilize, but Kyiv postpones this decision for political and strategic reasons ([RBC-Ukraine, December 19, 2024](#)).

Ukraine position is fully maximalist – survival of the state within its internationally recognized borders, security guarantees and punishment for the aggressor. This maximalist approach is offset by its status as a security provider for EU and NATO countries, well-grounded victimhood narrative and better flexibility. However, although Kyiv have shown that it is militarily viable and can inflict serious losses on Russian forces, it has not inflicted a decisive defeat upon Russia and it is dependent on military, economic and humanitarian aid from informal partners. These represents a structural weakness for Kyiv’s position in any negotiation. Ukrainian control of Russian territory represents an asset, but it is unclear if it could lead to the liberation of all territories under Russian occupation or that this asset could be maintained until the start of the negotiations.

The Russian Federation

Despite making territorial gains, after three years of war Russia has not achieved its political and military objectives. The Ukrainian state is still standing and fighting back effectively against the invasion and routinely striking deep in Russian territory with long range weapons systems. In more than three years the armed forces of the Russian Federation have not been able to decisively defeat a much smaller Ukrainian armed forces, though it nevertheless, it probably caused heavy casualties.

What Vladimir Putin and his *siloviki* have called the “Ukrainian-nazi regime in Kyiv” is still standing. Volodymyr Zelensky is still president of Ukraine and the pro-Western and democratically minded elites that have come to power following the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2013) are still leading the country. Continuous, brutal and merciless warfare have erased any sort of illusion of what the future for Ukraine might look if it ever becomes part of Russia again. Vladimir Putin’s 2022 large scale invasion has helped forge a distinct Ukrainian national identity.

One of the main objectives of the large-scale invasion of 2022, the neutralization of Ukraine is no longer feasible. By 2022 most Ukrainians supported their country becoming a member of NATO. Ukraine’s military achievements against Russia in three years of war are the country’s strongest argument to become a member of the Alliance. Moreover, the

aggression of 2022 has transformed Kyiv's relationship with the West, becoming alongside with Chișinău, a candidate for EU membership. Before 2022, such an outcome was considered a political longshot. A potential Ukrainian accession to NATO represents a very effective leverage to use against Russia in the negotiation process for settling the conflict.

Despite not achieving in three years of war Ukraine's "demilitarization", "denazification" and "neutralization", Russia continues to push for these objectives. Furthermore, Kremlin pushes for recognition of territorial annexation of Ukrainian lands, which may include the entire eastern part of the country, its coastline up to the mouths of the Danube and recognition for the annexation of Crimea in 2014 ([Boyse, 2024](#); [The Moscow Times, February 24, 2025](#)). In a larger settlement of the conflict, Kremlin may wish to impose its demands on US and NATO from December 2021 ([Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, December 17, 2021](#)), regarding the status of forces deployed on the Eastern Flank. The war against Ukraine was never a regional affair but aimed at challenging the international status quo, the undermining and elimination of the rules based international order.

Fundamentally, Russia's position remains rigid and maximalist, demanding in practice for the capitulation of Ukraine. Moscow will bet on this rigidity in order to achieve the aims of the war against Ukraine. Its main leverages in the potential negotiations are the willingness to use force and continue the hostilities against Kyiv, as well as taking advantage of the "Ukraine-fatigue" phenomenon in West. Of these two leverages, continuing the hostilities is the most important one for Kremlin, because it ensures that peace negotiations, even feigned ones, would always be viewed in a positive light by the international community.

However, the main vulnerabilities of the Russian position are the lack of decisive military achievements on the battlefield (i.e. the destruction of Ukrainian armed forces, conquest of important urban and industrial centers) and a vulnerable and overheating wartime economy ([Atlantic Council, October 31, 2024](#); [Reuters, December 19, 2024](#)). Furthermore, its losses on the battlefield are significant, with at least 20.000 pieces of military equipment destroyed, captured, abandoned or damaged in three years of combat ([Oryxspioenkop.com, February 24, 2022](#)).

A settlement or just an armistice are outcomes acceptable to Russia. An armistice would give the Kremlin time to re-organize its forces and to gather strength for a new push against Ukraine. A settlement without clear military and political guarantees outcome any would be considered by the Kremlin as temporary.



European Union

EU's position is not unenviable, but it does have a number of leverages. For Europe, deterring further Russian aggression and maintaining a stable political architecture on the continent represents paramount interests. Ukraine's existence as an independent and sovereign nation within Europe is another significant interest. Maintaining the transatlantic link represents another major interest and a priority for America's European allies.

Over Russia the EU has three leverages that can be used effectively: the sanctions regime, the Russian assets frozen in European banks and financial institutions and its continuous military and economic support for Ukraine. Over Kyiv, Brussels holds two major leverages, one over the aid offered since 2022 and the other is represented by Ukraine's wish to become a member of the EU. The larger issue of European security architecture represents an important political lever that gives an edge for EU's position. Any sort of agreement that involves the security of the continent must involve EU member states as well as NATO allies present at the negotiating table, otherwise it will not be viewed as legitimate. The legitimacy card is significant for without it no peace settlement can endure.

European aid (EU, United Kingdom, and Norway) provided to Ukraine should be enough to ensure representation at the negotiating table. In practice, EU together with Norway and UK provided Kyiv of \$166 billion and pledged \$34.5 billion more until 2030 ([ISW, February 21, 2025](#)). This is more than the aid provided by the United States, which pledged \$183 billion and delivered even less (Ibid.).

However, compared to Russia and the United States of America, EU is not a unitary actor. Member states such as Hungary or Slovakia are critical of the aid offered to Ukraine and want the sanctions against Russia lifted. Kremlin can take advantage of these divisions and use them in order to impair the development of a consensus.

Europe's position is affected by three major trends at present: an adversarial US administration in Washington DC, which is poised to start a trade war with the EU ([Ruge, 2025](#)), European nations not spending enough on defense and the surge of populist political forces in many key member states. Despite EU economy being exponentially larger than that of the Russian Federation, its members have spent less on defense in 2024 than Russia did. The defense spending issue affects not just military balance between Russia and European states,



but the transatlantic relationship. For many years European underinvestment in defense has been a bone of contention between the US and its European allies. The Trump Administration is probably the most vocal of all the US presidential administrations regarding the issue of defense spending in Europe and has been quite adamant about European states “paying their fair share”.

The surge of populist and extreme-right parties in European represents a boon for Russian foreign and security policy on the continent. It is likely effects are two-fold: on one hand it represents an opportunity for Russian active measures campaigns to interfere with internal political processes, and on the other hand it raises the opportunity of electoral turnovers that can have a major impact on foreign policy. Once in government, Russia-friendly political forces will up-turn policies that have been in place since 2022 and even 2014.

Overall EU is in a good position for participating in a potential negotiated settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. However, its negotiating potential is affected by structural factors and circumstantial developments.

Romania

Romania will not be directly involved in the peace process, but indirectly as a member of the European Union and of NATO. Nevertheless, Romania has a number of interests that need to be satisfied by any negotiated settlement of Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Bucharest, as Kyiv’s neighbor with which it shares the longest border is in a good position to influence the negotiations over a potential peace settlement or accord.

First and foremost is the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. The territories under Russian control, including Crimea must be returned. This is a matter of principle as well as a matter of regional and international security. If a potential settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war does not include a return of the territories annexed by Russia since 2014, then peace will not be secured. For example, if Russia gets to keep Crimea, it will allow Moscow to threaten the entire basin of the Black Sea and to project power in the Mediterranean Sea. Moreover, it opens the possibility that all borders in Europe can be redrawn through force without too much fear of punishment.

Second, in any negotiations Ukraine and European nations must be involved from day one. Ukraine is the victim of the aggression and as such should be represented. Most of the aid



that has written Kyiv's defense has come from Europe, therefore European interests must be represented at the table.

Any agreement should recognize that Russia is the aggressor and as such it is responsible for reparations, while the planners and instigators of the invasion of Ukraine should face justice. The perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity must be pursued and condemned.

Ukraine must become a member of NATO and the open-door policy should be maintained. Again, this is a matter of principle as well as a matter of necessity, as it will ensure the long-term security of the continent. Accepting the Kremlin's demand to keep Ukraine out of NATO as well as the explanation for the conflict that it was somehow caused by the Alliance enlarging "too close" to Russia's borders, will affect the sovereignty of all its members and confirm the Russian point of view that Kyiv is not a fully-fledged member of the international system. A "neutral" Ukraine will not add to European security, it will subtract from it. In the same vein, Kyiv's plans for becoming a member of the European Union should not be interfered with.

Any sort of peace settlement must include security guarantees for Ukraine as well as for the R. Moldova. These guarantees should be both political and juridical in scope. Such a move will consolidate the security in the Black Sea region. Accepting a truce or a negotiated settlement that does not include substantive security guarantees will create the largest frozen conflict in Europe. An independent and sovereign Ukraine represents the best security guarantee for R. Moldova.

Freedom of navigation in the Black Sea must be restored. Demining operations must begin as soon as the peace agreement is signed. The effort and cost of this task should be the responsibility of the aggressor. NATO warships should be allowed to enter the Black Sea as soon as possible in order to monitor the implementation pace of the peace settlement in the maritime domain. Such a naval presence will be in accordance with the Montreux Convention.

People's Republic of China

Beijing is not directly involved in the Russo-Ukrainian war however, China has put forward two peace plans, one by itself and another alongside Brazil. Furthermore, it has supported politically, diplomatically and economically Russia in its war against Ukraine ([U.S.](#)



– [China Economic and Security Review Commission, December 12, 2024](#); [Voice of America, September 18, 2024](#)). Although it has not directly provided military aid to Russia as Iran and North Korea (DPRK) did, it has provided economic support to the Kremlin ([Neuer Zürcher Zeitung, May 23, 2024](#); [Reuters, February 12, 2025](#); [Reuters, September 24, 2024](#)). China and Russia have concluded a no limit partnership, but this is not an alliance between Moscow and Beijing ([Blackwill & Fontaine, 2024](#)). It is an agreement that signals that their interests on certain issues are aligned.

For China, the Russo-Ukrainian war is relevant from a strategic and political point of view. At the strategic level, Russia's aggression against Ukraine can have a significant impact on the world order in general and on European security in particular. China will try to position itself in the most advantageous position regarding the eventual cessation of hostilities and the peace process. A peace that is perceived to drive a wedge between the US and Europe will benefit China. Beijing will benefit a lot from a peace settlement that appears to favor Russia over Ukraine, such a development having a disproportionate on European security and international order. Furthermore, the strategic outcome of the Russo-Ukrainian war will be felt in the Indo-Pacific region, especially in case of the Taiwan and South China Sea issues.

At the political level, China is mainly interested in the dynamics between the United States and its allies in Europe. Beijing will try to exploit any differences and dissensions that will develop between Washington and its European allies and use them to increase its influence in Eurasia. Furthermore, it will use Washington's behavior towards its allies in Europe to anticipate US behavior in South China Sea and Asia-Pacific and weaponize it.

Russia's so called "special military operation" in Ukraine offers valuable military lessons for China's growing military. Beyond the operational, tactical, and technological aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian war it serves as a free lesson regarding inter-state war in the twenty-first century, especially how a modern society reacts to a foreign invasion. Russia's military performance in Ukraine along with its gradual isolation from the international market through the sanctions regime have made Moscow more pliable to Chinese demands. The war has also increased China's influence in the Global South, as Western interest and aid gravitated away towards Ukraine.

MID-FEBRUARY 2025: THE FALSE START OF THE PEACE PROCESS

The second week of February 2025 represented, for a lack of a better term, the false start of the negotiations process to settle Russo-Ukrainian war. The phone call between president Trump and Vladimir Putin on February 12 represents that false start. Although it represents an error, because it allows Putin to be viewed as a respectable and equal partner, it is an error that can be fixed. However, there are a number of other errors that will be difficult to fix, and the Russian side is going to exploit them. The first has to do with the fact that president first called the aggressor, Vladimir Putin, rather than the victim of the aggression, Ukraine, and president Volodymyr Zelensky. The optics of the Trump-Putin call are therefore negative and may suggest that peace would be imposed on Ukraine rather than negotiated and Kyiv may not be allowed to sit at the negotiating table. Although the damage has been somewhat mitigated by a subsequent call between president Trump and president Zelensky, the length and timing of the call with Vladimir Putin are not encouraging.

At the Munich Security Conference, general Keith Kellogg stated that president Trump wants to keep the actors involved in the negotiations limited ([DW, February 16, 2025](#)), reinforcing the perception that the White House envisages an arrangement between US and Russia in order to settle the war. America's European allies will not be part of the negotiations process, but their views will be heard. This represents an unfortunate opening position on Washington's part given that the European security architecture is the stake of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Moreover, considering Russia's preference for bilateral arrangements, having more stakeholders in the room is a competitive advantage for the United States. As a positive takeaway, during a bilateral meeting on the margins of the Munich Security Conference, US Vice-President J. D. Vance gave assurances to president Zelensky that Ukraine will take part in the negotiations for the resolution of the conflict ([Ukrinform.net, February 23, 2025](#)).

The third error is the self-imposed 100-day deadline concerning the settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war. By setting up this arbitrary deadline, it encourages Russia to be extremely inflexible at the negotiating table and offsets US advantages as mediator. Moreover, an accelerated "peace schedule" will increase in the short term the intensity of the fighting between the two combatants, which will try to better position themselves on the battlefield for the future negotiations.

The fourth is the treatment of Ukraine by the Trump Administration concerning its natural resources. Although Kyiv has signaled a willingness to allow US companies to extract its natural resources after the conflict was settled, the issue of American access to Ukrainian

rare earths has been mishandled. President's Trump statements on the subject and the visit of the US Secretary of the Treasury Scott Bessent to Kyiv who presented to president Zelensky a draft agreement concerning access to Ukraine's mineral resources ([Reuters, February 14, 2025](#)) created the perception that Washington's main interest in settling the conflict is commercial, rather than strategic. President Trump considers access to Ukraine's natural resources a repayment for US military aid ([Fox News, February 16, 2025](#)). The president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky declined to sign the agreement, citing a lack of connection between economic concessions and security guarantees. ([Financial Times, February 15, 2025](#)).

The fifth error made at the opening of the peace process between Ukraine and Russia has to do with guaranteeing the putative settlement. The official position of the administration has been that US troops will not be deployed in Ukraine to enforce the settlement of the conflict and act as peacekeepers. That burden shall fall on European allies and, according to Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, the peacekeeping force will not be covered by Article 5 of the Washington Treaty (NATO Treaty) ([US DoD, February 12, 2025](#)). However, if the Europeans are not to be involved in the peace negotiations, why would they accept the role of peacekeepers, especially without US guarantees and backing? The US position of involving the participation of EU and/or NATO allies in the peace negotiations is likely to change, as suggested by statements made by John Coale, president's Trump deputy envoy for Ukraine: "Where do the Ukrainians and Europeans fit into all of this? At this point we do not know," Coale said, adding that "you have to have the Europeans involved." ([Reuters, February 14, 2025](#)).

The greatest errors made by the Trump Administration have to do with the public statement made by Secretary Hegseth regarding the impossibility of returning Ukraine to the borders before 2014 and its membership into NATO: "We want, like you, a sovereign and prosperous Ukraine. But we must start by recognizing that returning to Ukraine's pre-2014 borders is an unrealistic objective." ([US DoD, February 12](#)). Returning Ukraine to its internationally recognized borders is one of the main objectives of Kyiv's resistance and giving up on that aim will seriously affect the security of Europe, not just of the Ukrainian state. Concurrently, the chief of the Pentagon stated that Ukraine's membership in NATO: "...the United States does not believe that NATO membership for Ukraine is a realistic outcome of a negotiated settlement." (Ibid.).



Such a statement from a US official represents a major concession to Russia, without anything of substance in exchange. Deputy envoy for Ukraine John Coale had to walk back Secretary's Hegseth statement: "Right now, that is still on the table," said John Coale, President Donald Trump's deputy Ukraine envoy, when asked whether the U.S. had ruled out possible NATO membership for Ukraine.' ([Reuters, February 14, 2025](#)). Furthermore, John Coale walked back the previous statement of Secretary Hegseth regarding returning Ukraine to its pre-2014 international recognized borders: "Speaking in an interview with Reuters in Munich, he added that a possible return to Ukraine's pre-2014 lines was also still on the table." (Ibid.).

Diplomatic custom concerning the mediation of conflict holds that the mediator of the conflict guarantees the peace, politically and militarily. American absence from the mechanism of implementation of the peace process comes in direct contradiction with the Trump's Administration objective of a lasting settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Buck-passing the enforcement of the peace to its European allies will be interpreted in Kremlin as American disinterest and weakness. Consequently, it will incentivize the Kremlin not to abide by any peace accord and re-launch its aggression at a later date.

Meanwhile, there seems to be a serious disconnect between the representatives of the Trump Administration which has a deleterious impact on strategic communications. Besides the mixed signals sent by Secretary Pete Hegseth and John Coale, general Kellogg contradicted the chief of Pentagon's assertion that the US will not be involved in guaranteeing or enforcing the potential peace accord, by saying that if Russia does not respect the settlement, president Trump will use force to bring Putin in line ([The Times and The Sunday Times YouTube Channel, February 15, 2025](#)). Moreover, Keith Kellogg's assertion that the formulation of the American peace plan was paused in order to have consultations with the allies in Europe ([The Telegraph, February 10, 2025](#)) is somewhat contradicted by the Trump-Putin phone call and the statements made by US representatives in Europe between February 12 and February 15. If president Trump would have consulted with some of its European allies (France, UK at least, if not Germany) or with Ukraine, prior to making the phone call to Vladimir Putin, the optics of the entire event would have been entirely different.

Finally, at the operational level there is no special representative with full powers to negotiate with Russia and Ukraine, as well as with other countries. General Kellogg and Steve Witkoff are not negotiators, they are simply emissaries in charge of setting up a negotiation

framework and come up with a peace plan. Keith Kellogg is in charge of the US-Ukrainian-Europe line, while Steve Witkoff is in charge of US-Russia line ([Ukrainska Pravda, February 15, 2025](#)). In Munich, General Kellogg was adamant about his role in the process and underscored that the final word on any arrangement lies with the White House ([RFE, February 6, 2025](#); [CNBC, February 15, 2025](#)). The main negotiator and mediator for the US is president Donald Trump. Consequently, he will own both the benefits as well as the costs of the settlement.

The US seems to have the will to propose a negotiated settlement of the Russo-Ukrainian war, but the road to peace is not very clear.

RIYADH US-RUSSIA MEETING

Following the telephone call between presidents Trump and Putin a meeting between US and Russian negotiations teams took place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on February 18, 2025 ([Associated Press, February 19, 2025](#)). The US delegation was led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and consisted of Steve Witkoff, special envoy for Middle East and Russia, and national security adviser Michael Waltz. The Russian delegation was led by foreign minister Sergey Lavrov and consisted of Yury Ushakov, foreign policy aide to president Vladimir Putin and Kiril Dimitriev, a Russian businessman who in the past has had dealings with president Donald Trump. Two other Russian diplomats were part of the delegation, Vladimir Proskuryakov and Dmitry Balakyn ([Moscow Times, February 18, 2025](#)).

The US and Russia agreed to appoint negotiations teams “to begin working on a path to ending the conflict in Ukraine as soon as possible in a way that is enduring, sustainable, and acceptable to all sides” ([Department of State, February 18, 2025](#)). Furthermore, the two sides agreed to work together “to address irritants to our bilateral relationship with the objective of taking steps necessary to normalize the operation of our respective diplomatic missions” (Ibid.). Washington and Moscow further agreed to “lay the groundwork for future cooperation on matters of mutual geopolitical interest and historic economic and investment opportunities which will emerge from a successful end to the conflict in Ukraine” (Ibid.). A potential meeting between presidents Trump and Putin is also in the works ([Associated Press, February 22, 2025](#)).

The meeting between the two delegations was poorly received by US allies, especially the outcomes regarding the normalizations of bilateral diplomatic relations and future political



cooperation between US and Russia. The optics of the meeting was that Europe and Ukraine were ignored. Worse still, it seems that despite the gravity of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, the US is ready to normalize bilateral relations with the Kremlin, without preconditions. Unfortunately, it seems that the US has doubled down on previous negotiations mistakes and errors.

The principle of not discussing Ukraine issues in the absence of Ukrainian representatives seems to be abandoned by the US negotiating team. Moreover, it is unclear what Washington obtained in exchange for normalization of diplomatic relations, including a return to previous level of representation. Washington's opening positions towards Russia have been too generous, Moscow offering nothing of substance in return for American diplomatic generosity. The return to the status quo ante in terms of diplomatic representation should have necessitated a consequential concession on the Russian side, for example at least a temporary truce, followed by a troop withdrawal. Of more concern is the potential bilateral future cooperation between Russia and the United States, which did not take into consideration either European interests or Ukrainian ones.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During wartime, states negotiate a cessation of hostilities when the costs of continuing combat operations outweigh the benefits. A peaceful resolution is therefore more convenient in terms of costs. Unfortunately, in the case of Russo-Ukrainian war we are not in a situation where the costs of the war outweigh the price of peace. At present, the costs of a negotiated settlement far outweigh the costs of war. Russia is not interested right now in a negotiated settlement, a fact signaled by its unwillingness to compromise and maximalist position.

The United States, despite having significant leverages over both belligerents, does not seem to have a coherent plan to end the war. It will likely take more than one hundred days to settle the conflict, and it is in the interest of the United States, Europe, and Ukraine that the hostilities should continue. Continuation of hostilities will put pressure on the Kremlin, exhausting its military potential further and forcing it to seriously consider negotiations. Russia would be much more pliable as its economy tanks under the pressure of sanctions and the costs of war. Moreover, faced with economic troubles at home and military setbacks on the front, Moscow will be forced to make significant concessions at the negotiating table. Paradoxically,



continuation of hostilities in the short term will have a positive outcome in the near future, forcing Russia to take the negotiations seriously.

- The peace process between Ukraine and Russia should not be rushed. No artificial deadlines should be imposed for the sake of internal politics. Any deadline, one day or 100 days, will be used against the actor which sets it by one of the parties involved in the conflict or even by both;
- No agreement about Ukraine should be reached without Ukraine's presence and consent. Although it is very difficult right now to return to this principle, it is still possible;
- The Russian Federation is the aggressor and as such any peace agreement must recognize this quality. In practice this means reparations for Ukraine, reconstruction, and the punishment of those responsible for the invasion as well as crimes against humanity and war crimes;
- The potential peace process should be as inclusive as possible. In the case of the Russo-Ukrainian war European security and international order are at stake. More actors at the negotiating table represents an advantage, allowing for more pressure to be placed on Moscow. EU and Ukraine must be represented;
- Restoring Ukraine to its borders before 2014 represents an achievable diplomatic objective. Russia should withdraw its troops from the territories it currently occupies. Crimea is not just a piece of Ukrainian territory. It is significant for the security of the entire Black Sea region. Since 2008, Crimea has been the starting point or cause for all of Russia's interventions and military aggressions against its neighbors and in the Eastern Mediterranean;
- Ukraine should receive substantive security guarantees from the West in order to avoid a repetition of the invasion. Any sort of security guarantees offered to Ukraine, should be offered to R. Moldova, which faces the same threats;
- If peace keeping troops or a stabilization force is agreed, this force should contain troops from Europe and the United States. If no troops from the United States are deployed, at least air defense assets, intelligence assets and/or naval assets should be deployed in support of this force. No troops outside Europe should be deployed for stabilizing or peacekeeping purposes in Ukraine;

- Ukraine's eventual NATO membership should not be taken off the table. It is an effective bargaining tool with Russia. In many respects it is much “cheaper” to have Ukraine in the Alliance than to come up with separate security guarantees and mechanisms just for Kyiv;
- The question of Ukraine's natural resource should have been handled differently and with much more discretion by the Trump Administration;
- Any peace agreement reached should not be perceived as rewarding Russia for its aggression in any sort of way.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- AFP. 2025. “Russia Will End Ukraine War Only on Its Terms, Lavrov Says”. *The Moscow Times*, February 24. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/24/russia-will-end-ukraine-war-only-on-its-terms-lavrov-says-a88140>.
- Akimova, Yuliia & Oleniak, Liliana. 2024. “USA pressing, Ukraine opposing: Will mobilization age be lowered to 18 and whether it makes sense”. RBC-Ukraine, December 19. <https://newsukraine.rbc.ua/analytics/usa-pressing-ukraine-opposing-will-mobilization-1734599199.html>.
- Banco, Erin. 2025. “NATO membership for Ukraine not off the table, US official says”. *Reuters*, February 14. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/nato-membership-ukraine-not-off-table-us-official-says-2025-02-13/>.
- Barnes, Joe. 2025. “Trump envoy pauses Ukraine peace plan to hold talks with Nato allies”. *The Independent*, February 10. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/world-news/2025/02/10/trump-envoy-pauses-ukraine-peace-plan-talks-nato-allies/>.
- Blackwill, Robert D. & Fontaine, Richard. “No Limits? The China-Russia Relationship and U.S. Foreign Policy”. Council on Foreign Relations, December 2024. <https://www.cfr.org/report/no-limits-china-russia-relationship-and-us-foreign-policy>.
- Bryanski, Gleb & Soldatkin, Vladimir. 2024. “Putin urges 'balanced' central bank rate decision for overheating economy”. *Reuters*, December 19. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/putin-says-russias-economy-is-overheating-inflation-is-worrying-2024-12-19/>.

- Boyse, Matthew. 2024. "Operation Odesa: Russia Wants the Entire Ukrainian Black Sea Coast". Hudson Institute, March 21. <https://www.hudson.org/defense-strategy/operation-odesa-russia-wants-entire-ukrainian-black-sea-coast-matthew-boyse>.
- China Daily*. 2023. "China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis". February 25-26. <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/pdf/2023/20230225.pdf>.
- Ching, Nike. 2024. "US official: China's support for Russia's war effort in Ukraine 'comes from very top'". *Voice of America*, September 18. <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-official-china-s-support-for-russia-s-war-effort-in-ukraine-comes-from-very-top/7789660.html>.
- Croft, Alex. 2025. "More than 46,000 Ukrainian troops killed defending against Russian invasion, says Zelensky". *The Independent*, February 18. <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/europe/ukrainian-soldiers-killed-russia-putin-zelensky-b2699903.html>.
- DeVore, Marc R. & Mertens, Alexander. 2024. "Russia's War Economy Is Hitting Its Limits". *Foreign Policy*, November 14. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2024/11/14/russia-war-putin-economy-weapons-production-labor-shortage-demographics/>.
- Fornusek, Martin. 2023. "South African president presents 10-step peace plan in Kyiv". *The Kyiv Independent*, June 16. <https://kyivindependent.com/south-africas-president-presents-10-step-peace-plan-in-kyiv/>.
- Garvey, Ned. 2025. "Explainer: Who's Who at the U.S. – Russia Talks in Riyadh". *The Moscow Times*, February 18. <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/02/18/explainer-whos-who-at-the-us-russia-talks-in-riyadh-a88063>.
- Gilchrist, Karen. 2024. "'I'm on Trump time:' Kellogg says Russia-Ukraine peace plan could come in days or weeks". *CNBC*, February 15. <https://www.cNBC.com/2025/02/15/kellogg-says-russia-ukraine-peace-plan-could-come-in-days-or-weeks.html>.
- Gov.br. 2024. "Brazil and China present joint proposal for peace negotiations with the participation of Russia and Ukraine". May 23. <https://www.gov.br/planalto/en/latest-news/2024/05/brazil-and-china-present-joint-proposal-for-peace-negotiations-with-the-participation-of-russia-and-ukraine>.

- Hoffman, Elizabeth, Aldisert, Audrey, Cook, Cynthia, Sanders, Gregory, & Vakharia, Shivani. 2024. "How Supporting Ukraine Is Revitalizing the U.S. Defense Industrial Base". *CSIS*, April 18. <https://www.csis.org/analysis/how-supporting-ukraine-revitalizing-us-defense-industrial-base>.
- ISW Press. 2025. "Ukraine Fact Sheet, February 21, 2025". Institute for the Study of War. <https://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/ukraine-fact-sheet-february-21-2025>.
- Lee, Matthew & Litvinova, Dasha. 2025. "Russia and US agree to work toward ending Ukraine war in a remarkable diplomatic shift". Associated Press, February 19. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-riyadh-talks-trump-putin-rubio-0c3beebfef5839e9d509ff58239a6bc5>.
- Mertens, Alexander. 2024. "Russia's economy is overheating but Putin cannot change course". *Atlantic Council*, October 31. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/russias-economy-is-overheating-but-putin-cannot-change-course/>.
- Miller, Christopher, Schwarz, Felicia & Foy, Henry. 2025. "Ukraine rejects Trump bid to take rights to half its mineral reserves". *Financial Time*, February 15. <https://www.ft.com/content/b08b7258-7ae0-4bae-9499-e6d3183d5894>.
- Mon, Julia & Büchenbacher, Katrin. "How China is helping Russia build weapons for the war in Ukraine". *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, May, 23. <https://www.nzz.ch/english/china-is-helping-russia-build-weapons-used-in-ukraine-ld.1831332>.
- Müller, Marco. 2025. "US Special Envoy to Ukraine: No clear answers for Ukrainians". *Deutsche Welle*, February 16. <https://www.dw.com/en/at-msc-panel-us-special-envoy-to-ukraine-had-no-clear-answers-for-ukrainians/a-71631516>.
- Neifakh, Veronica. 2024. "Stolen lives: Inside Russia's abduction of Ukrainian children". *The Jerusalem Post*, December 31. <https://www.jpost.com/international/internationalrussia-ukraine-war/article-835511>.
- Oryx. 2022. "Attack On Europe: Documenting Ukrainian Equipment Losses During The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine". *Oryxspioenkop.com*, February 24. <https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-ukrainian.html>.
- Oryx. 2022. "Attack On Europe: Documenting Russian Equipment Losses During The Russian Invasion Of Ukraine". *Orixspioenkop.com*, February 24.

<https://www.oryxspioenkop.com/2022/02/attack-on-europe-documenting-equipment.html>.

Pavlyuk, Oleh & Olynyk, Tatiana. 2025. "Trump to demand lower oil prices to end war in Ukraine". *Ukrainska Pravda*, January 23.

<https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/01/23/7495000/>.

Payne, Julia. 2024. "Ukraine says China is key route for foreign tech in Russian weapons". *Reuters*, September 24. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-says-china-is-key-route-foreign-tech-russian-weapons-2024-09-24/>.

President of Ukraine. 2022 "Ukraine has always been a leader in peacemaking efforts; if Russia wants to end this war, let it prove it with actions - speech by the President of Ukraine at the G20 Summit." <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/ukrayina-zavzhdi-bula-liderom-mirotvorchih-zusil-yaksho-rosi-79141>.

President of Ukraine. 2024. "Victory Plan Consists of Five Points and Three Secret Annexes". <https://www.president.gov.ua/en/news/plan-peremogi-skladayetsya-z-pyati-punktiv-i-troh-tayemnih-d-93857>.

Prokopenko, Alexandra. 2024. "Russia's Economic Gamble: The Hidden Costs of War-Driven Growth". *Carnegie Politika*, December 20.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/russia-eurasia/politika/2024/12/russia-economy-difficulties?lang=en>.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty's Ukrainian Service. 2025. "Kellogg Rejects Reports He Will Reveal Trump's Ukraine Peace Plan In Munich". February 6.

<https://www.rferl.org/a/trump-envoy-keith-kellogg-speaks-munich-security-conference-ukraine-war/33304662.html>.

Reuters. 2023. "Putin rebuts key elements of African peace plan for Ukraine". June 18.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/african-leaders-arrive-ukraine-talks-with-russias-putin-2023-06-17/>.

Ruge, Majda. 2025. "Facing Trump's tariff war: A defensive blueprint for the EU". ECFR, February 19. <https://ecfr.eu/article/facing-trumps-tariff-war-a-defensive-blueprint-for-the-eu/>.

Sauer, Pjotr. 2025. "Trump threatens Putin with taxes, tariffs and sanctions over Ukraine war." *The Guardian*, January 22. <https://www.theguardian.com/us->

[news/2025/jan/22/trump-threatens-putin-with-taxes-tariffs-and-sanctions-over-ukraine-war.](#)

Shalal, Andrea & Ward, Jasper. “US Treasury's Bessent says Americans will see value in Ukraine for them”. *Reuters*, February 14. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-treasurys-bessent-says-americans-will-see-value-ukraine-them-2025-02-14/>.

Sidorenko, Serhiy & Mazurenko, Alona. 2025. “Trump's special Ukraine envoy explains division of roles in US negotiations to end war”. *Ukrainska Pravda*, February 15. <https://www.pravda.com.ua/eng/news/2025/02/15/7498498/>.

Sytas, Andrius. “China aids Russian drone production with smuggled Western parts, says Estonia”. *Reuters*, February 12. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china-aids-russian-drone-production-with-smuggled-western-parts-says-estonia-2025-02-12/>.

Thiessen, Marc A. 2023. “Ukraine aid’s best-kept secret: Most of the money stays in the USA”. *The Washington Post*, November 29. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/11/29/ukraine-military-aid-american-economy-boost/>.

The Associated Press. 2025. “Trump-Putin summit preparations are underway, Russia says”. February 22. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-trump-putin-talks-89e19bc56677064f6f9a6d6e03de7362>.

The Times & The Sunday Times YouTube Channel. 2025. “General Kellogg debates plan for Ukraine in Munich”. February 15. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0bMpwLfgCt8&t=2363s>.

Troianowski, Anton & Schwirtz, Michael. 2024. “The Sticking Points That Kept Russia and Ukraine Apart”. *The New York Times*, June 15. <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2024/06/15/world/europe/ukraine-russia-peace-negotiations.html>.

Wittels, Jack. 2025. “Russian Oil Falls Back Below \$60 Price Cap as US Sanctions Bite”. *Bloomberg*, February 6. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-02-06/russian-oil-falls-back-below-60-price-cap-as-us-sanctions-bite>.

United Nations. “UN Disarmament Chief Calls Out ‘Unacceptable Levels’ of Civilian Fatalities in Ukraine, as Security Council Debates Western Arms Supplies to Kyiv, Moscow’s Ongoing Attacks”. Security Council, SC/15952, December 20, 2024. <https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15952.doc.htm>.



- Wallace, Danielle. 2025. “National security advisor says Putin, Zelenskyy agree 'only President Trump could get them to the table'”. *Fox News*, February 16. <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/national-security-advisor-says-putin-zelenskyy-agree-only-president-trump-could-get-them-to-table>.
- Ukrinform. 2025. “Ukraine receives U.S. assurances on principles necessary to end war – Stefanishyna”. February 18. <https://www.ukrinform.net/rubric-politics/3961500-ukraine-receives-us-assurances-on-principles-necessary-to-end-war-stefanishyna.html>.
- U.S. – China Economic and Security Review Commission. 2024. “China’s Position on Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine”. December 31. <https://www.uscc.gov/research/chinas-position-russias-invasion-ukraine>.
- U.S. Department of Defense. 2025. “Opening Remarks by Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth at Ukraine Defense Contact Group (As Delivered)”. February 12. <https://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech/Article/4064113/opening-remarks-by-secretary-of-defense-pete-hegseth-at-ukraine-defense-contact/>.
- U.S. Department of State. 2025. “Secretary Rubio’s Meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov”. February 18. <https://www.state.gov/secretary-rubios-meeting-with-russian-foreign-minister-lavrov/>.

IDR

Institutul Diplomatic Român

Our mission. The Romanian Diplomatic Institute (RDI) has the mission to make a substantial contribution to increasing the quality of Romanian diplomacy through training, further education, research, the development of critical and strategic thinking and international networking. A good foreign policy serves as a beneficial domestic policy.

Guiding principles: human resource development, professionalism, respect and dialogue, and responsibility for the community.

Based on the founding legal attributions of the RDI, the further development of the Institute is carried out, according to the needs identified in the MFA, along the following four directions:

- Training and further education of diplomats and other trainees;
- Deepening the research and expertise dimension on regional and functional issues;
- Operating the RDI as a think-tank of the MFA;
- Integration of the RDI into an international network of similar relevant institutes.

Author: George Vișan is an expert at the Romanian Diplomatic Institute – Department of Expert Analysis.

RDI Policy Paper series

ISSN 2285-8938

ISSN-L 2285-8938

Cover photo:

https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/ed/Ambassador_Brink_visited_Borodyanka%2C_Ukraine%2C_June_4%2C_2022_%2852136230620%29.jpg

The Romanian Diplomatic Institute

<https://www.idr.ro/en/> | secretariat@idr.ro

Primăverii 17, sector 1, Bucharest, 011972