



[Trump-Putin Summit and the Chances for Peace Without Ukraine at the Table](#)

U.S. President Donald Trump and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin are convening in Alaska this week for their first in-person meeting since Trump's return to the White House back in January. The summit, which is being held at the Elmendorf-Richardson U.S. military base in Anchorage, will be focused on trying to bring an end to the war in Ukraine, and represents the latest in a long string of diplomatic efforts aimed at doing so. However, notably, the talks will not include Ukrainian officials – a point that has garnered apprehension among leaders in Kyiv and their European allies across the continent. One of the main areas of concern is regarding the possibility that American and Russian officials may seek to dictate Ukraine's future without its participation in the high-stakes summit. As such, European leaders including Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy held a virtual meeting with Trump earlier this week in advance of the Alaskan summit, with Zelenskyy and others pressing the American president on the need to ensure that any potential peace deal does not sideline Kyiv. Zelenskyy has repeatedly rejected the idea of Ukraine ceding territory to Russia, emphasizing that it would be a betrayal of Ukrainian sovereignty and could embolden further Russian aggression.

Critics fear that prioritizing direct U.S.-Russian talks and sidelining Kyiv could lead to a settlement that heavily favors the Kremlin and disregards the interests of Ukraine and much of the rest of Europe. There is also the unease that excluding Ukraine from the negotiations legitimizes Russia's aggression and may therefore spur future conflicts. In fact, Putin has spoken about his desire to claim several territories in Ukraine such as Donetsk and Luhansk, while at the same time maintaining Russia's positions in others. All of this has propelled key European leaders – including those from Germany, France, and the United Kingdom – to stress that “the path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine,” and that Kyiv must receive “robust and credible security guarantees” to protect its sovereignty. Additionally, they have suggested that new and tougher sanctions should be imposed against Russia if Putin does not agree to a ceasefire in Ukraine at the upcoming summit in Alaska. As many have highlighted, meaningful negotiations can only take place if there is a ceasefire in effect.

There are elements surrounding the Trump-Putin summit that have fueled the sense of unpredictability regarding what could transpire as a result of the meeting. One of these is the belief amongst some that the Russian president may seek to use the enticement of financial incentives as a means of trying to sway Trump. The expected inclusion of Russian government finance officials at the summit has been interpreted as a sign that the Kremlin hopes to address economic matters as well. In the lead up to today's meeting, a Putin adviser said that there were plans to discuss what he referred to as the “huge untapped potential” in Russia-United States economic relations. The issue of sanctions will also be an area of significance. Moscow wants these to be lifted while Trump has threatened additional and tougher sanctions if a peace deal is not reached soon, however, he has done so in the past without following through – adding to the uncertainty as to where things go moving forward.

Analysts have contended it is unlikely that the Trump-Putin summit directly results in a peace agreement to end the war in Ukraine. The White House itself has even downplayed expectations for the meeting, calling it “a listening exercise for the [American] president.” Yesterday, Trump stated that his goal was not to walk away with a ceasefire agreement, but to set the table for more meetings – including one that would involve Zelenskyy. Adding to the skepticism over the potential of an imminent deal are the recent developments that have seen Russia make

new gains in eastern Ukraine – and thus observers believe that the prospect of any significant compromise from Moscow is now even more improbable. Furthermore, Russia appears to be persistent on a set of maximalist conditions to halt its hostilities in Ukraine, particularly the retainment of occupied territories. In the preceding days, Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has himself expressed that currently there is no indication whatsoever that Russia is preparing to end the war. Due to this, it remains to be seen what concrete outcomes, if any, come out of today's Trump-Putin summit in Alaska.