



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on December 9, 2025

Zelensky Rejects American Peace Plan Over Land Concessions

The Trump administration's recent peace proposal for the Ukraine war appears all but dead. It barely had a chance to begin with.

On Monday, Ukrainian head of state Volodymyr Zelensky said his government won't agree to any deal that concedes territory. "We clearly don't want to give up anything," he [reportedly](#) told media members in a WhatsApp chat on Monday. "Undoubtedly, Russia insists for us to give up territories. According to the law we don't have such right. According to Ukraine's law, our constitution, international law, and to be frank, we don't have a moral right either." He acknowledged that Trump "certainly wants to end the war," but justified the refusal to concede territory, saying, "We live here, from within we see details and nuances, we perceive everything much deeper, because this is our motherland."



AP Images
Volodymyr Zelensky

President Donald Trump [said](#) in an interview with POLITICO on the same day that Zelensky is going to have to start "accepting things." He commented on the amount of territory Ukraine has lost just this year. "They lost a whole strip of seafont, big seafont. Uh, I mean, you look at the maps," he said. "I've been here for 10 months. But you go back 10 months and take a look, they lost that whole strip. It's now a bigger strip."

Russian Control

Whether the Ukrainians concede or not, as Trump touched on, the Russians already control most of the territory Ukraine refuses to formally hand over — and they will not abandon it. Based on previous comments from head of state Vladimir Putin, Russia plans to take the rest of what it wants regardless. The Ukrainian army, as brave and determined as it is, is operating with a significant manpower shortage and is losing ground and men daily. Barring intervention from other nations — which will lead to a much larger war — Ukraine will not get that territory back. Moreover, it could ultimately lose more than it would by conceding now.

Trump's plan suggests that Ukraine formally give over the entire Donbas region, as well as a large portion of the Kherson and Zaporizhzhia territories, to Russia. The Kremlin controls most, but not all, of the Donbas, as well as most of the latter territories. But it wants all of the Donbas, which means the Ukrainian forces fighting there would have to abandon the roughly 14 percent they still hold. Some analysts believe that would be unlikely as well. Ukrainian forces may outright refuse to obey orders to pull back.



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European Support

Zelensky's statements to reporters came on the same day he met with three of the most hawkish European leaders, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron, and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz. All three have consistently opposed the idea of Ukraine ceding any territory. On Monday, each [issued statements of support](#) for Ukraine without specifically mentioning territorial concessions. "The principles remain the principles that we've embraced for a very, very long time, which is that we stand with Ukraine. And that's why it's so important that we repeatedly set out the principle that matters about Ukraine are for Ukraine," Starmer said.

Macron said it was important to reach common ground and "re-engage a new phase in the best possible conditions for Ukraine, for the Europeans, and for our collective security."

Merz chimed in with his own platitudes. "We continue to stand firmly with Ukraine and to support your country, because we all know: the destiny of this country is the destiny of Europe. So that's the reason why we are here, trying to figure out what we can do. And nobody should doubt our support for Ukraine," the German chancellor said.

Ukraine continues to face Russia's aggression with exceptional courage.

It can count on our support and on our commitment for a just and lasting peace.

Our latest European and American sanctions are weakening the Russian economy: we must keep up this effort... pic.twitter.com/Wuw4ewFFX0

— Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron) [December 8, 2025](#)

In Monday's interview with POLITICO, Trump took some shots at Europe's leaders for continuing to support Ukraine in its losing campaign "until they drop."

I know the good leaders. I know the bad leaders. I know the smart ones. I know the stupid ones. You get some real stupid ones, too. But, uh, they're not doing a good job. Europe is not doing a good job in many ways.... And they're not producing. We're talking about Ukraine. They talk but they don't produce. And the war just keeps going on and on. I mean, four years now it's been going on, long before I got here.

As irrational as Ukraine's refusal to reach a peace agreement seems to the casual observer, perhaps the most reasonable suspicion is that it's holding out for outside intervention. The Ukrainians have consistently framed their fight as a bulwark keeping the Russian bear from breaking into the rest of Europe. Western European leaders have echoed this narrative as well. But no reasonable person believes Russia would be foolish enough to invade central, much less Western Europe, especially after getting bogged down in Eastern Ukraine for nearly four years.

Military Buildup

While they've been encouraging Ukraine not to concede territory and fight until they drop, European nations have been undergoing a massive military buildup. Many nations have increased their contributions to NATO significantly, as the United States has demanded, and they're running drills across the continent, including in Poland, Germany, Scandinavia, and elsewhere. Poland and Germany



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especially have been pouring lots of money and training into their militaries. Moreover, as *The Wall Street Journal* reported, the Germans have drawn up a [plan](#) for outright war with Russia. The plan, not surprisingly, includes American soldiers.

In the days following the *Journal's* report, Putin answered a reporter who asked if Russia was planning to go to war with NATO. The Russian leader said he didn't want to, but that Russia was ready to fight NATO if the Europeans insist on jumping in.

Trump Policy

The Trump administration's recently released [National Security Strategy](#) indicates the American president and his team also believe this war risks the chance of erupting into a major regional conflict. "Managing European relations with Russia will require significant U.S. diplomatic engagement, both to reestablish conditions of strategic stability across the Eurasian landmass, and to mitigate the risk of conflict between Russia and European states," the document says. Trump's people insist that most Europeans want peace, "yet that desire is not translated into policy, in large measure because of those governments' subversion of democratic processes."

The strategy also indicates that Trump's administration sympathizes with some of Russia's main complaints and viewpoints, among them those regarding NATO. The Trump administration said it wants to put an end to NATO "as a perpetually expanding alliance." Ukraine's plan to join NATO was a major trigger for Russia's invasion. And when it happened, it shouldn't have surprised anyone, because the Russians had said for many years it would not allow NATO to expand into Ukraine. The Kremlin views NATO as a hostile alliance that has repeatedly broken promises it made in the 1990s not to expand eastward past Germany.

In its strategy document, the Trump administration criticized, without naming, the very leaders who met with Zelensky on Monday. "The Trump Administration finds itself at odds with European officials who hold unrealistic expectations for the war perched in unstable minority governments, many of which trample on basic principles of democracy to suppress opposition."

The Trump administration rightly acknowledges that a quick and peaceful resolution to this war is in America's best interests. The longer it drags out, the likelier the chance of escalation. And if Europe is once again at war, what are the chances that the United States, a NATO member, won't end up shipping American men and women to die on the other side of the world?



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