



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on December 16, 2025

Is Europe Working Toward Peace or a Wider War?

There's a flurry of activity in Europe. Some of it *appears* to be attempts at peace in Ukraine. But there are also signs suggesting something else is going on. What is really happening?

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov told ABC News on Monday that he was "very much confident" that the two warring nations were "on the precipice" of a peace deal. This aligns with other reports that say the two sides are "90 percent" of the way to an agreement.

This is not the first time we've heard upbeat rhetoric like this. A litany of meetings and "productive" talks since President Donald Trump's second inauguration have ginned up similar optimistic talk and hopes of peace, only to come to naught and be followed by intense fighting.

In this case, Ryabkov is talking about the latest version of the Trump administration's peace agreement, which has been revised several times since news of its draft broke in late November. The plan, which originally included 28 points, has been whittled down considerably, and it's been bounced back and forth between Washington, D.C., Moscow, and a small coalition of highly influential Western European leaders. The latest meetings have been held in Berlin.

Ryabkov [said](#) the chance of peace depends on whether the decision-makers on the other side "recognize the inevitable outcome of our success." There has been no sign this has happened. Ukraine and the Europeans are behaving as if Kiev is not losing the war; as if it has leverage to make demands that it has been unable to defend on the battlefield. Trump is irked about this. He told POLITICO last week that Zelensky had to start "accepting things." He also criticized European leaders, who have been whispering into Zelensky's ear to keep fighting "until they drop."

NATO and Territory

There are two core issues at the center of peace negotiations: Ukraine's ambitions to join NATO and land concessions. Regarding the former, Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky said Sunday before his meeting in Berlin that he was ready "to drop his country's bid to join NATO in exchange for Western security guarantees," [according](#) to reports. But only if the West offers "a set of [security] guarantees similar to those offered to the alliance members." This is a loaded condition, and reports suggest the United States is working on fulfilling this demand. The Americans are reportedly tweaking the plan to include U.S.-backed protections; measures that would require Senate backing, [according](#) to a *Wall Street Journal* report of the deal.

As for territorial concessions, Zelensky, as he has before, "rejected the U.S. push for ceding territory to



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Russia.”

The Kremlin wants the entire Donbas region and most of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia. Russia controls most, but not all, of those areas. Ukraine refuses to officially cede *any* territory, and does not seem open to the Trump administration’s idea of turning those areas, or part of them, into demilitarized buffer zones. “I do not consider this fair, because who will manage this economic zone?” Zelensky recently [said](#).

The Europeans, unlike the Americans, have consistently urged Ukraine not to budge on territory. Ryabkov was asked about this. Why is Russia asking for more territory than it’s been able to take control of?

Ryabkov said that all these regions held referendums in which the people voted to join the Russian federation. This is verifiably true. Yet the Western version of this narrative is that those results cannot be trusted, because the process was overseen by the Russians. It would be more surprising if this part of the world ever hosted any fair elections. Nevertheless, it’s not implausible that a region filled with Russian-speaking Ukrainians, many of whom consider themselves Russians, would want to leave a country that has become openly hostile to Russia and the Russian language and culture.

Escalation Escalator

Meanwhile, there’s been a deluge of mainstream reports over the last few days that smell like pre-programming for escalation.

Last week, NATO chief Mark Rutte [told](#) allies to prepare for another world war. He said Russia would target Europe next, within approximately five years. He said the Kremlin was seeking to rebuild the Soviet empire.

On Sunday, CBS’s *60 Minutes* published a report on how Germany is preparing for war with Russia after the media company was [invited](#) by the German military to do so. “The war in Ukraine has shaken Germany’s sense of security,” a voiceover [says](#). Germany has had a 23-percent increase in military enlistments. *60 Minutes* shows footage of German soldiers running drills to develop skills they would need “to defend their position against an enemy assault.” The major in charge provides comments to *60 Minutes* making clear that the war in Ukraine is spurring this activity.

The report also features the biggest arms contractor in Germany, Rheinmetall, which is also the fastest growing defense company in Europe, according to its CEO. Rheinmetall is a “pillar of NATO rearmament,” the report says. The company is building or expanding 13 weapons factories across Europe.

On Monday, the *Journal* chimed in, too. “European security officials now regularly broadcast a message nearly unimaginable a decade ago: Get ready for conflict with Russia,” the lede [reads](#). “Rarely a week goes by now without a European government, military or security chief making a grim speech warning the public that they are headed toward a potential war with Russia.” The report cites German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, who floated the idea that once Russia rolls through Ukraine, Putin “won’t stop.”

And on Tuesday, the U.K.’s *Independent* published a [report](#) in which British chief of defense Sir Richard Knighton said that “Russia is a growing threat to the UK and the nation’s ‘sons and daughters’ must be ready to fight in the event of an attack.” The report also cites the new head of MI6, Blaise Metreweli, who said that Russia has “aggressive, expansionist and revisionist” ambitions.



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The message from the Europeans is clear: Once it's done with Ukraine, Russia is going to roll through Europe.

Putin, for what it's worth, has said Russia has no such ambitions. And given that it's taken the Russians nearly four years to grind out a fifth of Ukraine, it makes little sense for the Europeans to believe Putin foolish enough to go any further west.

Crumbling World Order

What is this really about?

Perhaps Germany Defense Minister Boris Pistorius revealed the true reason. He [told 60 Minutes](#), "There's not only the war against Ukraine, this is a war against rules-based international order."

"Rules-based international order" is code for the U.S.- and Europe-led New World Order. Pistorius went on to recycle another frequent point made by the Europeans. He said Putin is longing for a "renaissance of the Soviet empire. He wants to be the dominant power in Europe, and he wants to be the third of three world powers like China and the U.S."

Putin may very well want to be a dominant power, but the ship toward Soviet reunification sailed away long ago. Romania, Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, among others, have already joined NATO. Attacking any of them would indeed trigger a justified NATO response.

War Narrative

It's very possible the Europeans, realizing the window to break Russia is closing, are creating the narrative to justify an attack. As we have mentioned in previous reports, this war appears to have been intentionally provoked by the West's ever-expanding NATO policy and a Western-backed color revolution in Ukraine designed to topple the Russian-friendly regime and exchange it for a pro-Western one. The Trump administration appears to agree that NATO expansion provoked the Russians, evidenced by statement in its strategy plan. Representative Thomas Massie (R-Ky.) acknowledged this is as well in the text for his bill to get the United States out of NATO.

It appears that Putin, who has expressed sympathy for global governance, has instead — for whatever reason — become a target instead of an ally. Whether that's because he no longer favors globalism or if it's because he doesn't want to be a "junior partner" in such an order is anyone's guess. But it seems as though we're watching two sides vying for two different outcomes. The Americans appear to be genuine in their attempt to mediate peace; the Western Europeans are stoking the flames of war.



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