



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on April 8, 2024

Austrian Leader Concedes the Need for Russia and Ukraine to Talk

In an [interview](#) with the French news outlet [Le Figaro](#) on April 5, Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer conceded that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict could only be addressed if Russia is present for peace talks.

Although the head of the Austrian government added that Kyiv's Western backers should continue to be in "full solidarity" with the Ukrainian regime and support it in its conflict against Russia, "it is also important to think about how the conflict could end."

Recounting his meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in April 2022, Nehammer pointed out that Kyiv and Moscow were still having direct negotiations even though the conflict was several weeks underway. "There won't be peace without the Russian Federation. The situation is hard to resolve, but reviving dialogue, in due time, will be necessary," he admitted.

At that time "there were still possibilities" for Russia and Ukraine to talk with each other directly. However, "this is not the case today as Russia is reluctant to negotiate," Nehammer claimed.

Furthermore, Nehammer [disclosed](#) that he disagreed with French President Emmanuel Macron regarding aid for Ukraine. The French leader recently divulged that he did not exclude the notion of sending NATO troops on the ground in battle-laden Ukraine.

Nehammer pointed out that while he and Macron agreed on backing Ukraine, the leaders were at loggerheads over how they could back the country and facilitate a peace process with Moscow.

"I am in favor of the precautionary principle," proclaimed Nehammer, as opposed to Macron's inclination to deterrence. The Austrian leader underscored the importance of cautious diplomacy with Russia to prevent a further deterioration of Russo-Western ties due to the Ukrainian conflict.

During the conflict's early stages, Moscow and Kyiv conducted various rounds of talks revolving around the topic of Ukrainian neutrality. While these initial talks made some progress, Kyiv subsequently backed out of them, with Moscow [arguing](#) that then-U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson jeopardized the peace process by advising Kyiv to keep on fighting Moscow. Johnson has dismissed the Russian allegations.

In an [op-ed for the Daily Mail](#), Johnson even called out American journalist Tucker Carlson for interviewing Putin. "When Tucker Carlson went to the Kremlin, he had a function well known to history.



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He was to be the stooge of the tyrant, the dictaphone to the dictator and a traitor to journalism,” Johnson penned. “In his fawning, guffawing, slack-jawed happiness at having a ‘scoop,’ he betrayed his viewers and listeners around the world.”

On its end, Moscow officially declared that it was still open to talks with Kyiv. Nonetheless, Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky signed a decree [forbidding](#) all negotiations with the current leadership in Moscow after four previous Ukrainian territories voted overwhelmingly in favor of leaving the country to join Russia in the fall of 2022.

Speaking to the press on April 4, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov [posited](#) that the [12-point initiative](#) for peace first suggested by Beijing in February 2023 entailing a call to stop all fighting and resume peace talks remained one of the more feasible options for Russia to explore with its ties vis-à-vis Ukraine and the West.

“The most important thing for us is that the Chinese document is based on an analysis of the reasons for what is happening and the need to eliminate these root causes. It is structured in logic from the general to the specific,” [Russian state news agency RIA](#) cited Lavrov as telling the press.

While admitting that Beijing’s proposal drew brickbats for being “vague,” Lavrov nevertheless maintained that the initiative “is a reasonable plan that the great Chinese civilization has put up for discussion.”

In contrast, Lavrov blasted Kyiv’s 10-point peace formula put forth by Zelensky in the fall of 2022 that essentially called for Moscow’s admittance of defeat and withdrawal of Russian troops to Ukraine’s 1991 borders. The Ukrainian proposal is effectively an “ultimatum,” Lavrov denounced.

In effect, Kyiv’s proposal demands that Ukraine recapture Crimea as well as four other former territories that followed Crimea’s move to join Russia in 2022. Moscow has repeatedly said that such a situation was not acceptable.

“However, Mr. Zelensky was recently so ‘gallant’ as to suggest that we could start from the February 2022 border. Well, there’s no harm in dreaming,” Lavrov scornfully stated. While Russia is open to talks about Ukraine, negotiations must mirror what Moscow terms as [“new realities”](#) on the ground, where Moscow has claimed four Ukrainian regions as its own.

Meanwhile, in an [interview](#) with the BBC published on April 6, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg acknowledged that Ukraine may eventually have to agree to some sort of compromise with Russia to cease hostilities, despite maintaining that the West must back Ukraine in the long term “even if we believe and hope that the war will end in the near future.”

Indicating that the ball was in Ukraine’s court to decide when and how to obtain peace with Russia, Stoltenberg stated that “at the end of the day, it has to be Ukraine that decides what kind of compromises they’re willing to do.”

Earlier this week, Stoltenberg campaigned strongly for NATO members to back Kyiv in the long term, stating that these countries should “rely less on voluntary contributions and more on NATO commitments.” “We must ensure reliable and predictable security assistance to Ukraine for the long haul,” he [said](#) before a meeting of NATO ministers last week.

Although Stoltenberg did not single out Donald Trump, he explicitly declared that the situation in Washington was concerning. “Every day of delay in the decision of the United States in providing more support to Ukraine has consequences on the battlefield,” the NATO chief stated, elaborating that Russia



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presently can “outgun” Ukraine.

“A stronger NATO role in coordinating and providing support is a way to end this war in a way where Ukraine prevails,” he added.

As per various reports, including those from left-leaning outlets like [Politico](#) and [Reuters](#), Stoltenberg tabled a five-year, €100 billion (\$107 billion) military aid package to Ukraine. The precise nuts and bolts of his proposal are currently under discussion.



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