



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on August 21, 2025

Russia and the West Gridlocked on Ukrainian Security Measures

In an unsurprising development, Russia and the West are gridlocked on the part of the working peace deal centered on postwar security provisions for Ukraine, even as U.S. President Donald Trump relentlessly pushes for agreement between the two warring nations. There are also new signs that Trump may once again be growing frustrated with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin.

Ukrainian security was the most repeated issue during Monday's meeting fest at the White House between Trump and several European leaders. "Security guarantees" was the phrase of the day. When a reporter asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky if he wants guarantees to include U.S. troops, intelligence, or equipment, he replied, "everything."



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Zelensky has maintained for as long as the war has been raging that his country is the only thing stopping Russia from rolling through the rest of Europe, a theory parroted by some European leaders yet considered fantastical by many people. The prospect of Russian westward expansion has become more unlikely over time, as the war has prompted many European countries to ramp up military capabilities and spending, including Russia's neighbor Poland as well as Germany and a slew of Nordic countries that have forged a defense coalition. Moreover, Russia has suffered enormous casualties (there is no reliable information on this front, but an aggregate of estimates suggests at least 100,000). And the invasion has weakened the Russian economy. Thousands of additional sanctions were leveled on Russia after the attack began.

Russia's Stance

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov issued a statement Thursday indicating that whatever deal the West is cooking up on the security front, it is likely not to the Kremlin's liking. He [said](#):

When now, following the Russia-US summit in Alaska, where significant progress was made along the path of defining the contours and specific parameters of the settlement, European countries followed Mr. Vladimir Zelensky to Washington and there tried to advance their own agenda, which is aimed at ensuring that security guarantees that follow the logic of isolating Russia, uniting the Western world with Ukraine in order to continue an aggressive confrontational policy, containing Russia, meaning, of course, further attempts to inflict a strategic defeat on us, of course, this cannot evoke any feelings other than complete rejection.



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A group of European leaders who've formed a "coalition of the willing" want a security agreement that includes stationing troops from various NATO nations in Ukraine to prevent future Russian aggression. (Although Germany recently showed its weak cards in this respect when Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul publicly admitted his country is stretched too thin to help out with troops in Ukraine.) The idea of soldiers from NATO nations in Ukraine is a non-starter for the Russians. Their primary stated reason for the invasion in the first place was Ukraine's pursuance of NATO membership, which would render a hostile military alliance on their doorstep. (By this line of thinking, that has already happened: several other NATO nations already border Russia, including Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Poland.)

The Istanbul Draft

In Thursday's statement, Lavrov also said the basis for Ukrainian security should be the Istanbul agreement drafted in 2022, which he dubbed "natural and relevant today." The Atlantic Council, a Washington, D.C.-based foreign-policy think tank with several CIA agents on its board of directors, characterized the Istanbul draft as ["a blueprint for the destruction of Ukraine."](#) The terms of the treaty include Ukraine permanently remaining a neutral country, meaning it couldn't join any military alliances (like NATO) or allow foreign bases within its borders.

The draft also included a security guarantee from a group of nations including the United Kingdom, China, the United States, France, and Russia. A [summary of the draft](#) says that other suggested guarantor nations included Belarus and Turkey. A criticism of this provision was that, unlike NATO's Article 5, the Istanbul treaty "provided no binding mechanisms to ensure a swift and unified response. This reliance on consultations left Ukraine's security dependent on the alignment of interests among the Guarantor States." The draft treaty also didn't specify if unanimous consent among the Guarantor States was necessary to providing military assistance.

The Istanbul draft also included demands that sanctions against Russia be lifted and that Ukraine recognize Russian as an official language. According to [some sources](#), 30 percent of Ukrainians speak Russian.

Security Guarantees

After his meeting with Putin in Alaska, Trump claimed Putin agreed to accept security guarantees for Ukraine — a curious claim from the outset — saying:

I'm optimistic that we can collectively reach an agreement to deter any future aggression against Ukraine, and actually I think there won't be. I think that's even overrated — largely overrated. But we're going to find out.

Noting the ambiguity of Trump and Putin's security conversation, a lot of Americans wanted to know if the president was considering, as part of the working security agreement, putting U.S. boots on the ground in Ukraine. On Tuesday, Trump put those concerns to bed. During a call-in to *Fox & Friends*, when asked to provide assurance that Americans won't end up defending Ukraine's border, he said, "Well, you have my assurance, and I'm president." However, that didn't mean he was suggesting complete U.S. nonintervention. He also said, "When it comes to security, they are willing to put people on the ground. We're willing to help them with things, especially, probably, if you talk about by air because nobody has stuff we have."



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Getting Tough With Putin?

On Thursday, almost a week after Trump held his chummy rendezvous with Putin, the president published [a post](#) causing many to wonder if his view toward Putin and Russia is once again hardening:

It is very hard, if not impossible, to win a war without attacking an invaders country. It's like a great team in sports that has a fantastic defense, but is not allowed to play offense. There is no chance of winning! It is like that with Ukraine and Russia. Crooked and grossly incompetent Joe Biden would not let Ukraine FIGHT BACK, only DEFEND. How did that work out? Regardless, this is a war that would have NEVER happened if I were President — ZERO CHANCE. Interesting times ahead!!! President DJT

And not long afterward, he posted the photos below.

Donald J. Trump Truth Social 08.21.25 09:45 AM EST pic.twitter.com/HVcvfDOcEp

— Fan Donald J. Trump Posts From Truth Social (@TrumpDailyPosts) [August 21, 2025](#)

Is Trump signaling that he's about to get tough with Putin? Are the posts Trump's attempt to combat media criticism that Putin outsmarted him like a fox negotiating with a hen in a barnyard deal?

This latest development reinforces how difficult it is to get these parties to agree on peace terms. The Russians want a Ukraine that poses no military threat. Ukraine, however, wants the ability to protect itself against future attacks from its neighbor — which would by nature render it a military threat.

In a statement to [The Wall Street Journal](#) on Thursday, a White House official said the president will continue to work toward bringing peace to Eastern Europe. "President Trump and his national security team continue to engage with Russian and Ukrainian officials towards a bilateral meeting to stop the killing and end the war. It is not in the national interest to further negotiate these issues publicly," the statement said.

Still Pointing Fingers

Meanwhile, the fighting continues. Recent reports says Russia fired 574 drones and 40 ballistic and cruise missiles into Ukraine overnight. According to Trump, thousands of soldiers are dying every week as these two bitter enemies, once attached at the hip, kill each other. Russia blames Ukraine for the war's continuance. It sees its demands — no NATO admittance for Ukraine, no foreign troops in the country, and the forfeit of eastern territory including the Donbas — as reasonable. Ukraine points the finger right back, although it made a step toward Russian demands recently when it signaled it would consider territorial concessions along the line of contact. Until the two informally agree on these issues, it sounds like a meeting between Putin and Zelensky is off the table.



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