

INTERNATIONAL WEEKLY

№4 01.04.2025-30.04.2025

Topics:

- Ukraine – European Union
- Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine
- The course of the Russian-Ukrainian war

CONTENT

■ UKRAINE - EUROPEAN UNION

Theme Analysis: Can Europe help Ukraine achieve a just peace?_____3

■ FOREIGN AND DEFENSE POLICY OF UKRAINE

Theme Analysis: Trump's proposal to end the war as an 'Anschluss' for Ukraine: no territories, no security guarantees and no just and lasting peace_____8

■ THE COURSE OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

Changes at the front_____12
Military assistance_____13
Russia: External and internal challenges_____14

Ukraine – European Union

■ *THEME ANALYSIS: Can Europe help Ukraine achieve a just peace?*



Source: X

In the spring, French President Emmanuel Macron announced an initiative to possibly deploy a “deterrence force” in Ukraine. A joint delegation of France and the United Kingdom was to travel to Ukraine in the near future to discuss this proposal. According to Macron, these forces could be deployed if hostilities with Russia cease, and this is a joint initiative of Paris and London, which Ukraine supports. After the summit of the “coalition of the willing” in Paris, he noted that although there is no full agreement among the allies, unanimity is not necessary to implement the idea.

Macron clarified that the proposed mission is not intended to be a peacekeeping force on the front line and should not replace the Ukrainian army. Such a force would not necessarily include all of Ukraine's partners, as some countries do not have the capabilities, while others lack the political will. **The main goal of the mission is to prevent potential new aggression by Russia.** It was expected that during the delegation's visit to Ukraine, they would discuss possible locations for the deployment of the contingent, as well as the future of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Macron emphasized the importance of Ukraine maintaining a powerful and well-equipped army.

Against the backdrop of these statements, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova accused France and the United Kingdom of preparing military intervention under the guise of a peacekeeping mission, warning of the risk of a direct clash with NATO. At the same time, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at a press conference that Russia has no right to dictate to Ukraine what its armed forces should be like and emphasized that all the countries participating in the summit support the idea of a strong Ukrainian army. He also emphasized that it is important that the United States also adhere to this position. Zelenskyy

noted that the format of the proposed deterrence force has not yet been determined, but other partner states may join the discussion.

At the same time, statements were also made from the other side of Europe. Acting German Chancellor Olaf Scholz expressed caution about the possibility of his country's participation in such a mission. He noted that there is currently no clear vision of whether this initiative will be implemented and what form it will take. At the same time, Scholz emphasized that Germany is focused on supporting the Ukrainian army and also spoke out against easing sanctions against Russia, stressing that both Europe and the United States should speak with one voice.

Despite the perception of absolute unanimity, this approach of European countries differs significantly from Moscow's position, which is partially supported by Washington, and which envisages a gradual lifting of sanctions in exchange for limited concessions from Russia. At the same time, the United States does not have the ability to resolve these issues alone, as has already become apparent. ***The word of Europe will be key to further processes.***¹

The European signal is especially important against the backdrop of unsuccessful negotiations in Riyadh, which not only failed to produce concrete results in reducing the intensity of Russian shelling, but also showed *the ineffectiveness of the US strategy towards the Kremlin.* Without Europe's active involvement, progress in the negotiation process with Russia looks difficult. According to the agreement of the participants in the "coalition of the willing" summit, France and the United Kingdom will be the main representatives in the negotiations.

The second important factor is continued military support for the Ukrainian Defense Forces both during the war and after it ends, which will strengthen Europe's eastern security flank. The third point is investing in the Ukrainian military-industrial complex and expanding cooperation with it, in particular through the exchange of licenses. This will allow for the production of drones, missiles, artillery, and air defense systems both in Ukraine and abroad.

It also envisages the possible deployment of European deterrence forces near strategically important facilities on Ukrainian territory, which would enable operations in air, sea and land spaces. Discussions on a possible peacekeeping contingent under the auspices of the UN or OSCE, which would require Russia's approval, have been finally removed from the agenda.

At the moment, only France and the United Kingdom have clearly stated their readiness to provide troops for such a mission. The participation of other European partners is not ruled out, but the list of participating countries and the extent of their participation has not yet been officially announced.

However, this initiative is not expected to stagnate, as a joint delegation from France, the United Kingdom, and Germany is scheduled to arrive in Ukraine in the near future. The purpose of the visit was to discuss the practical aspects of strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities through European support, which is evidenced by ***on the transition of the initiative to the implementation stage.***

¹ Париж і Лондон працюють над "силами стримування" для України. 27.03.2025.
<https://www.dw.com/uk/pariz-i-london-pracuut-nad-stvorennam-sil-strimuvanna-dla-ukraini/a-72063309>

At the same time, it is important to maintain the involvement of the United States. Although there are no plans to deploy U.S. troops, providing Ukraine with intelligence, air and missile defense systems, and support for the maintenance of U.S. weapons remains critical. *The question of the so-called “backstop” support for the European contingent, i.e., remote assistance, remains open, and Washington has not yet provided a clear answer as well.*

Despite the fact that the United States is now antagonizing the pro-Ukrainian position, Europe is not going to give in. On the contrary, the dynamics show that it is moving towards strengthening its position. Thus, after winning the early Bundestag elections, German chancellor candidate *Friedrich Merz called ending Russia's war against Ukraine and achieving a just peace one of the main strategic priorities of the new government.*

The CDU/CSU bloc led by Merz won the election. The second place was taken by the right-wing populist party Alternative for Germany (AfD), which showed the best result in its history. The Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD), led by Olaf Scholz, took third place with the worst result in recent years. The Green Party and the Left Party also entered the parliament. However, the Sarah Wagenknecht Union and the Free Democrats failed to overcome the five percent threshold.

Friedrich Merz became chancellor, but the formation of the government will take place after the coalition is formed. Merz expressed hope for its formation by April 20. All major parties, including the CDU/CSU, have publicly ruled out cooperation with the AfD. The most likely scenario is a CDU coalition with the Social Democrats and possibly the Green Party. As for Ukraine, **Merz has clearly stated that he wants peace, but not on Russia's terms.** In his opinion, Ukraine's victory means restoring its territorial integrity, democracy and state sovereignty, as well as the freedom to choose political and military alliances. He emphasized that Germany should support Ukraine with all available means - diplomatic, financial, humanitarian and military. In particular, he reaffirmed his readiness to supply long-range Taurus missiles and called for an increase in European military aid.

Merz also initiated negotiations with the SPD on the creation of a new Defense Fund worth up to 200 billion euros to strengthen Germany's defense capabilities and support Ukraine. The options under consideration include establishing a new fund, expanding the existing one by €100 billion, or easing budgetary constraints (the so-called “debt brake”). In addition, Merz identified two other strategic priorities: updating the deterrence and defense strategy and increasing Germany's ability to act quickly. He also expressed doubts about the reliability of the United States as a security partner, given Donald Trump's position, and emphasized the need to create an independent European defense system. In this context, Merz suggested that France and the United Kingdom initiate the creation of a European nuclear umbrella that could replace US security guarantees.

In domestic policy, Merz is focused on restoring economic growth. In response to the recession and stagnation of recent years, he presented the Agenda 2030 plan, which aims to ensure annual GDP growth of 2%. The main provisions of the plan include tax cuts for households and businesses, a moratorium on new bureaucratic procedures, deregulation, and stimulating investment in technology, infrastructure, and education. In other words, the previously very moderate and indecisive Germany is waking up from its liturgical sleep in favor of a strong united Europe. Trump forced the United States to turn away from Europe,

but at the same time created a new powerful Europe that seeks independence and no longer needs Washington to do its bidding.²

At the same time, European leaders have been increasingly vocal about the need to strengthen support for Ukraine and to strengthen Europe's defense capabilities. They also point to signs of a change in US policy toward Ukraine and in its policy toward Russia. French President Emmanuel Macron clearly led this trend when, on the eve of the extraordinary EU summit on March 6, he emphasized that Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a direct threat to France and to the whole of Europe, and requires an immediate response. In his televised address, which was almost entirely devoted to the war in Ukraine, he stated: *«If one state in Europe can invade another with impunity, then no country can be sure of its own security. This means the end of guarantees of peace on the continent and the rule of the strong.»*. Macron called for continued support for Ukraine until it is able to negotiate a just and sustainable peace with Russia. He emphasized that peace cannot be achieved at any price - it is not about surrender or a temporary ceasefire. *"Peace cannot be the result of the fall of Ukraine. It cannot be dictated by Russia,"* the French leader emphasized.

Macron also noted that amid the suspension of U.S. military aid and the tense meeting between Presidents Zelenskyy and Trump in Washington, D.C., we can talk about a change in the U.S. position. Despite this, he said he wants to believe in the continued support of the United States, but Europe must be prepared to act without it if necessary.

Another leader is British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who recently met with Donald Trump in Washington and assured him that he is actively working to preserve the transatlantic partnership. Speaking in Parliament on March 5, he said he was doing everything possible to ensure that the United States, Europe, and Ukraine work together to achieve a lasting peace. The British Prime Minister also reiterated his country's readiness to participate in guaranteeing Ukraine's security in the event of peace. "I will not go into details, but I fully agree that in the event of peace, there should be real security guarantees for Ukraine, and the UK is ready to play its part in this," he emphasized.

Returning to Germany, where negotiations are underway to form a new government, the leaders of the leading parties have announced plans for multibillion-dollar investments in the defense sector. They called it a response to the growing threat to freedom and peace in Europe. Chancellor Friedrich Merz said that it was the latest decisions by the United States that prompted Europe to take more active action. According to him, Germany, together with its partners, should urgently increase defense capabilities, and defense funding - both national and allied - should be immediately increased. Merz emphasized that it is no longer possible to delay decision-making, especially budgetary decisions.

Turning to a foreign initiative that is important to Kyiv, last December European leaders held talks with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy about the possible deployment of Western troops on Ukrainian territory. The idea, which initially raised concerns, gradually gained support in a number of EU countries.

Preliminary developments suggest the creation of a contingent of 100 to 150 thousand troops. However, some states, such as Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands, have limited

² Європа говорить про самостійну допомогу Україні і хоче "вірити, що США з нами".06.03.2025.
<https://www.holosameryky.com/a/macron-europe/8000819.html>

capacity to deploy troops outside the country. *Poland, in turn, is taking a cautious approach, seeking to maintain a balance in its relations with Kyiv.*

Estonian Defense Minister Hanno Pevkur said that the initiative is at an early stage of discussion. According to him, before moving on to specifics, the partners must clearly understand the configuration of the possible contact line. U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hagel also expressed his position. He emphasized the importance of international supervision over compliance with the terms of the ceasefire, but warned that this requires significant military resources, which European partners are not yet ready to mobilize. As Hughes previously noted, the United States and the international community are focused on achieving peace through diplomacy.

However, the successful implementation of such a plan requires support from the United States. Without US involvement, European countries are unable to provide the necessary logistics, transportation, and air coverage on their own. Thus, on the one hand, Europe is not yet comparable to the United States in terms of materiality as an ally, but **with its awakened political will, it will stand up for Ukraine and prevent the United States from completely turning its back on it.**

Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Trump's proposal to end the war as an 'Anschluss' for Ukraine: no territories, no security guarantees and no just and lasting peace*



Source: AP

Recently, Donald Trump's administration officially abandoned further attempts to conclude a peace agreement between Ukraine and Russia, explaining that there were “no clear signs of progress.” Secretary of State Marco Rubio and special envoy Steve Witkoff left the negotiation process, effectively recognizing the failure of the so-called “seven-point plan” that included serious concessions from Kyiv. The Ukrainian authorities, including President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Vice Prime Minister Yulia Svyrydenko, have made it clear: ***Ukraine will not capitulate, will not recognize Crimea as Russian, and will not agree to maintain the current front line as the basis for peace.***

What Trump's team called a “peace initiative” is perceived in Ukraine and Europe as a cover for Russia's interests. Putin, on the eve of talks in London with representatives of the United States, Britain, France, and Germany, made a public statement about his readiness for direct talks with Ukraine, but at the same time ruled out any dialogue with Zelenskyy. The night after another statement about the desire for peace, Moscow launched a massive missile attack on Kyiv, killing at least 12 people. This once again confirmed the dubious sincerity of the Kremlin's intentions.

The West's reaction was telling. The new German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, France and the United Kingdom announced their readiness to increase the supply of long-range missiles to Ukraine, such as Taurus, SCALP and Storm Shadow. These actions were a response not only to Russia's aggression, but also to European frustration with Washington's inconsistent position. At the same time, military assistance is also growing in other areas - for example, Japan has agreed to provide Ukrainian intelligence with satellite imagery with SAR radar, which indicates that the circle of support for Ukraine outside NATO is expanding.

Trump's actions look more like an attempt to conclude a business deal favorable to the United States and Russia under the guise of peace. Steve Witkoff openly stated that such a deal would “create stability” through a commercial partnership between the US and Russia. Trump, for his part, openly wrote on social media about the expected enrichment of both countries after the agreement was reached - and irritably accused Zelensky of disrupting the process when he refused the imposed surrender. This sparked a wave of criticism, in part because Russia continued to strike civilian targets at the time and showed no willingness to compromise in good faith.

The military situation at the front also contradicts Trump's narrative. According to U.S. Gen, **Ukraine is not losing, but on the contrary, it is effectively restraining Russian offensives and inflicting deep strikes on Russian rear facilities, including ammunition depots and drone manufacturing plants.** More than 945,000 casualties among the Russian military as of April and attacks on facilities in Tatarstan and near Moscow indicate the growing capabilities of the Armed Forces even in difficult conditions.³

All this only emphasizes that Trump's offer was not aimed at a sustainable peace, but was a political and economic maneuver in his own interests. In this context, Zelensky's refusal did not look like an emotional gesture, but a strategic decision aimed at preserving Ukraine's sovereignty. Putin, in turn, took advantage of this to portray Kyiv as a party that “does not want peace,” hoping to undermine Western support. But the effect was the opposite: ***Europe has become even more united, and Ukraine has proved that it does not succumb to pressure, either from Russia or the United States, when it contradicts its national interests.***

In April 2025, U.S. President Donald Trump made another statement that caused a loud resonance in Ukraine and among NATO allies: he expressed his belief that President Volodymyr Zelensky was allegedly ready to cede Crimea to Russia for the sake of a ceasefire. Asked by journalists in Bedminster, New Jersey, whether he believed the Ukrainian leader was willing to “give up” Crimea, Trump replied categorically: “Oh, I think so,” referring to a brief discussion of the issue during a recent meeting in the Vatican. This statement came amid unofficial reports of an American peace plan, according to which Washington proposes to freeze the front line and recognize Russian control over Crimea in exchange for a cessation of hostilities.

Kyiv's reaction was sharp. Zelenskyy immediately recalled the “Crimean Declaration,” adopted during Trump's first term in 2018, in which the United States explicitly declared its non-recognition of the annexation of Crimea and its commitment to defend Ukraine's territorial integrity. This declaration was then a response to Russia's actions, which in 2014 occupied the peninsula, violating the fundamental international principle of the inadmissibility of forceful border revision.

Trump, in response to Zelensky's statement, said on his social media that it was this kind of rhetoric from the Ukrainian president that “complicates the resolution of the conflict.” These words were a continuation of his repeated attempts to present himself as the only leader capable of quickly ending the war - although the specific mechanisms of this “settlement” increasingly look like an attempt to force Kyiv to make concessions that are unacceptable both from the point of view of Ukrainian society and international law.

Russia, in turn, is actively using these signals to increase pressure on Ukraine and the international community. It formally declares its readiness for negotiations, but in reality it

³ ПОГЛЯД: Поганий день Трампа в Лондоні.25.04.2025. <https://www.kyivpost.com/uk/opinion/51473>

continues to fight and intensifies shelling of Ukrainian cities. Despite the declared annexation of four regions-Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson regions-Moscow does not have full control over any of them. At the same time, the Kremlin is demonstrating its readiness for diplomatic maneuvers, primarily to gain time rather than real peace, as evidenced by new attacks on civilian infrastructure and the rhetoric of Russian officials who have repeatedly stated that **a ceasefire on the current front line is unacceptable to Moscow.**

Against this backdrop, Trump's statements about "commercial opportunities" for the United States and Russia after the conclusion of an agreement that would provide for the actual recognition of the seized territories are perceived as a gross disregard for Ukraine's sovereignty. They also contradict the position of most European allies of the United States, who believe that any peace should be based on the principles of international law, not the dictates of the aggressor.

The idea of creating a 30-kilometer demilitarized zone in southern Ukraine, voiced by the United States, has provoked a mixed reaction in Ukrainian society and among experts. Although official Kyiv has not yet confirmed its readiness for such a step, U.S. Special Representative Keith Kellogg said on television that Ukraine allegedly has no objection to a temporary withdrawal of troops by 15 kilometers on both sides. The purpose of this step is to create a buffer zone controlled by the international coalition and to introduce a 30-day ceasefire with the possibility of extension.

However, Ukrainian analysts and military experts are skeptical. They remind that similar attempts to disengage forces during the ATO and JFO, such as in Zolote-4, not only failed to stop the war but also created additional risks for the Ukrainian military and civilians. According to Dmytro Zhmaylo of the Ukrainian Center for Security and Cooperation, the withdrawal of forces is indeed sometimes necessary for the effective use of drones and artillery. But this should be done on the terms of the Ukrainian command, not within an unprotected "gray zone" that Russia could easily use for an offensive.

The issue of control over the zone is also a concern. The Kremlin is unlikely to agree to the presence of NATO forces or Western militaries, and the participation of pro-Russian observers is unacceptable to Ukraine. The situation is further complicated by the lack of clear guarantees of accountability in case of a ceasefire violation. Experts believe that ***Russia can use the truce to regroup and strike again, as it has done many times in the past.***

At the same time, Kellogg's initiative demonstrates that the negotiation process is ongoing, and the United States is trying to find at least some technical models of de-escalation. Political analyst Volodymyr Fesenko points out that this is more an element of a diplomatic game than a real agreement. The United States and Ukraine had agreed on the idea of a short ceasefire earlier, but the issues of control, security, and international presence still remain open.

In general, most experts conclude that a demilitarized zone as a tool for a temporary ceasefire is a very risky initiative in the current environment, primarily because of the unlikelihood of fair play on the part of Russia, as Ukraine's historical experience since 2014 suggests. All of this boils down to the main question: ***is there still room for compromise that does not become a concession to the aggressor?***

The published details of the American peace initiatives discussed on April 17 in Paris indicate a consistent shift in Washington's policy toward a so-called "realistic approach" to resolving Russia's war against Ukraine. According to Bloomberg, the United States has

proposed a version of a peace agreement that actually **means freezing the conflict, keeping the occupied territories under Russian control, and, in the long run, easing sanctions against Moscow in the event of a prolonged ceasefire. At the same time, the issue of Ukraine's accession to NATO is deliberately excluded from the agenda.**

Despite the fact that these proposals are not the final version and must be agreed with Kyiv, their very essence is of deep concern both in Ukraine and among some of its European partners. In the words of high-ranking officials, we can see *attempts to balance between the “cessation of hostilities” and the recognition of a geopolitical defeat that could set a dangerous precedent for the world order.* It seems that the United States hopes for a controlled freezing of the conflict with a gradual return to diplomacy, while leaving Russia with the territories occupied as a result of aggression, which is in direct contradiction to international law.

Ukraine, for its part, has repeatedly emphasized that it will not accept peaceful scenarios that include territorial concessions. Annalena Burbock, the German Foreign Minister, also stated that there is no point in “freezing” the conflict, as it was before, as the war is ongoing and the front line is unstable. General Ben Hodges directly warns that an attempt to **Turning the Russian-Ukrainian war into a frozen conflict will only give the Kremlin time to prepare the next phase of aggression.**

Even more disturbing is the fact that some members of the Trump team, including Steve Witkoff, have publicly questioned the value of holding Ukrainian regions if they are Russian-speaking, a rhetoric that echoes Kremlin talking points and jeopardizes the basic principles of territorial integrity. At the same time, Zelenskyy's statement that a compromise will have to be sought to de-occupy some of the territories reflects an understanding of the political reality and the pressure under which the Ukrainian government is operating.

It can be assumed that the United States is testing the reaction of its allies and Kyiv, gently preparing the ground for the negotiation process. But such a scenario assumes the actual *“freezing injustice,” and therefore any concessions must be accompanied by strong security guarantees and continued support for Ukraine's sovereignty.* Otherwise, *it will not be peace, but a pause before a new war.*



Source: Army FM

■ Changes at the front

Trend: *Against the backdrop of ceasefire talks, Russia continues offensive actions in preparation for a renewed large-scale offensive campaign.*

The “thousand cuts” tactic is proving effective: the Russian forces are slowly advancing along the entire front.

Russia redeployed units of the 68th Army Corps and the 58th Combined Arms Army from Zaporizhzhia region and the Kurakhove area to the Toretsk area to eliminate the Ukrainian advance southwest of Toretsk and create a foothold for further advance on Kostiantynivka and attempts to encircle Myrnohrad and Pokrovsk.

In the Sumy direction, Russian forces advanced into the central part of Loknya in the northern Sumy region, as well as towards the eastern outskirts of Vovchansk in Kharkiv region.

In the Kupiansk direction, Russian forces made minor advances towards the northeastern outskirts of Dvorichna (northeast of Kupiansk). Russian attacks took place near Hlushkivka, Synkivka, and Stepova Novoselivka. Fighting continues in the north of the region and along the Kupiansk axis.

In the Lyman direction, there were no confirmed reports of territorial gains by Russian forces. However, Ukraine’s General Staff reported Russian attacks near Kolodiaz and in the direction of Ridkodub and Novyi Myr.

In the Toretsk direction, Russian forces advanced into the southern part of Nova Poltavka (west of Toretsk). Russian attacks are ongoing near Toretsk, Diliivka, Shcherbynivka, and Nova Poltavka, as well as near Malynivka, Krymske, Yelyzavetivka, and towards Romanivka.

In the Pokrovsk direction, Russian forces are conducting assaults with small infantry groups on motorcycles, supported by motorized equipment and drones, near Lysivka, Kotlyne, Zvirove, Novosergiivka, and Udachne.

In the Novopavlivka direction, Russian attacks continue near Novooleksandrivka, Nadiivka, Kotliarivka, and near Troitske.

In the Kurakhove direction, Russian forces advanced northwest of the settlement of Rozdolne (southwest of Kurakhove). Russian attacks also continued near Kostiantynopil, Andriivka, Bahaty, Oleksiivka, and towards Otradne.

In the Zaporizhzhia direction, there were no recorded territorial advances by Russian forces. However, Ukraine's General Staff reported Russian attacks near Stepove, Kamianske, and Shcherbaky. Russian forces are expected to attempt a breakthrough of Ukrainian defenses in the Zaporizhzhia region and to force a crossing of the Dnipro River in the Kherson region in the near future.

It is evident that Russia will continue its offensive on Ukrainian territory, and in the short term, it has several objectives. In the near future, Russian forces will likely focus on reaching the administrative borders of Luhansk and Donetsk regions to establish what they refer to as a “buffer zone” on Ukrainian territory, along the borders in Kharkiv and Sumy regions. With a high degree of probability, they will attempt to break through Ukrainian defenses in the Zaporizhzhia direction. There is also a strong likelihood that they will develop their offensive by attempting to cross a water obstacle in the Kherson region, as noted by Pavlo Palisa.⁴

■ *Military assistance*

Germany has delivered a new military aid package to Ukraine. It includes, in particular, missiles for IRIS-T air defense systems. This was reported in the updated list of supplied weapons published on the website of the German government.

Ukrainian forces will receive an additional:

- 66 mine-resistant ambush-protected (MRAP) armored vehicles,
- 4 kinetic protection vehicles,
- 3 Zuzana-2 wheeled howitzers.

The aid package also includes:

- an unspecified number of ammunition rounds for Leopard 2 tanks,
- approximately 40,000 rounds for Gepard self-propelled anti-aircraft guns,
- 27,000 rounds of 155 mm artillery ammunition,

⁴ Юлія Шевченко. Намагатимуться пробити оборону: Паліса назвав основні цілі ЗС РФ в найближчий перспективі. 13 травня 2025. <https://focus.ua/uk/voennye-novosti/705784-nastup-rf-okupanti-namagatimutsya-prorvati-oboronu-v-zaporizkiy-oblasti>

- 1,000 rounds of 122 mm artillery ammunition,
- 70 VECTOR reconnaissance UAVs and spare parts for them,
- 150 HF-1 drones,
- 20 ground-based unmanned vehicles,
- 6 Bergepanzer-2 armored recovery vehicles and spare parts,
- 4 WISENT-1 mine-clearing vehicles and spare parts,
- 2 mine-clearing ploughs,
- 41 ground-based surveillance radar stations,
- 917 RGW 90 anti-tank weapons,
- G3 assault rifles,
- 800 MK 556 assault rifles.

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *Truce as a means of ensuring Russia's continuation of the war*

Russia has repeatedly violated the ceasefires that have been reached during the 11 years of war, and this is part of its warfare strategy. Political scientist Roman Bezsmertnyi noted that for Russia, ceasefires are just a tool, not an attempt at a peaceful settlement, and they are used for rearmament, manipulation, and cover for sabotage. According to the diplomat, Russia has not adhered to any ceasefire, and even when negotiations were held, it always violated the agreements. This, he said, is a strategic part of the Russian war, and these tactics are aimed not only at strengthening military positions but also at influencing international politics, particularly the United States. Bezsmertnyi also notes that Putin uses such truce statements to mislead Western leaders, especially Donald Trump, and creates the appearance of readiness for negotiations, which in fact does not correspond to the Kremlin's real intentions.⁵

Thus, during the “Easter Truce,” the Russians were actually preparing for further offensive actions. They were conducting demining, evacuating damaged equipment, rotating troops and preparing for assaults, and supplying ammunition and equipment. Meanwhile, Russian artillery was constantly shelling Ukrainian positions, and the use of drones was recorded. Can this be called a “truce”? Hardly. Now Putin is proposing another truce for three days, but this will only allow Russian troops to prepare for a major offensive, which is planned for the end of May 2025. They will use this time to accumulate equipment, ammunition, and resources on the front lines, creating conditions for a quick attack.

This is striking against the backdrop of statements by Russian officials, including Sergei Lavrov, who emphasizes that the only item Russia is ready to discuss is the NATO issue, and that all other demands are unbreakable. It turns out that Russia does not seek peace, but only uses the truce to continue its aggression and seizure of new territories. Experts interviewed by Voice of America noted that the Kremlin's reaction to the U.S. and Ukraine's proposal for a 30-day ceasefire was predictable and consistent with Russia's typical tactics in negotiations.

⁵ "Перемир'я" - це ведення Росією війни в інший спосіб, - Безсмертний.03.05.2025.
<https://espreso.tv/viyna-z-rosiyeu-peremirya-tse-vedennya-rosiyeu-viyni-v-inshiy-sposib-bezsmertniy>

Most experts believe that the Trump administration will try to pressure Putin to agree to terms more acceptable to Ukraine.⁶

Recently, Vladimir Putin said that Russia agrees with the proposal for a 30-day ceasefire, ***“but there are certain nuances.”*** “Russia is ready for a ceasefire, but only if it leads to long-term peace and the elimination of the causes of the crisis. Russia supports the ceasefire, but there are details, in particular regarding the Kursk region,” Putin said at a press conference after his meeting with Alexander Lukashenko. Putin explained that Ukraine could use these 30 days to strengthen its position, as the Russian army is currently “advancing on almost all fronts,” he said. He also emphasized that the issue of verifying the ceasefire along the entire front line is complex and expressed his willingness to talk to Trump about this proposal.

According to Voice of America, Donald Trump hopes that Russia will make the right decision to end the war with Ukraine. At a press conference on March 13, Trump said that “very serious conversations” with Putin and others are ongoing. “Our representatives are having serious conversations with Russia. Ukraine has agreed to a cease-fire, and we hope Russia will do the same,” Trump said. Trump noted that he was receiving positive information from his representatives in Russia, although it was too early to draw conclusions before the final results. In fact, Putin's response is part of a strategy to delay negotiations with the US and Ukraine, allowing Russia to continue its attacks, said Peter Doran of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies.

“Putin shows support for a 30-day ceasefire, but insists on negotiating nuances to stall and divert attention while Russia continues to attack Ukraine,” Doran said. David Cramer, a former senior official at the US State Department, explained that the cause of the conflict is Putin's invasion of Ukraine. He also points out that Putin could end the war, but his goals are much broader. “For Putin, resolving the conflict means a change of leadership in Ukraine, recognition of the occupied territories, Ukraine's neutrality, demilitarization, and the absence of European troops. The Americans should reject these demands and continue to put pressure on Russia,” Cramer emphasized.

“Putin says he is ready for a ceasefire, but only after Russia gains control of the situation on the front,” Herbst pointed out. Expert Matthew Boyes of the Hudson Institute believes that Russia is using the tactic of “good cop, bad cop”. According to this strategy, Putin demonstrates readiness for negotiations, while his adviser rejects the proposal for a truce. In the context of political fluctuations in the U.S. administration and Russia's continuing war of attrition, it is important to realize that there are no favorable options for the development of events. It is even more difficult to determine what could make Russia stop its aggression.

The demands on Ukraine are growing, including the recognition of the currently occupied territories as “Russian”. However, even if Ukraine makes official concessions in terms of people or territories, this does not guarantee an end to the war or insure against new attacks. In addition, the so-called “truce,” which provides for “quasi-legal” territorial compromises on the part of Ukraine, is likely to lead to further degradation of international law and security. ***Such a “peace” will only be a conditional “paper shield” behind which a new war and the rule of “law of force” will be hidden.***

⁶ “Типова російська тактика”. Експерти США про позицію Путіна та подальші переговори щодо закінчення війни. 13.03.2025. <https://www.holosameryky.com/a/eksperty-pro-pozyciu-putina-ta-peregovoty-/8009848.html>

In the global context, this opens the door to new wars and territorial conflicts, and for Ukraine, to internal destabilization. For Europe, it could also mean a significant increase in security threats. A peace that is not fair and secure for us will become an example for other countries in conflict. In this case, only one rule will prevail - the rule of force. **The Ukrainian situation will be a test for Europe and international organizations on their ability to preserve themselves.**⁷

Any peace agreement that provides for the relinquishment of territories, including Crimea and Sevastopol, will not be accepted by Ukrainian society and the army. This could lead to new lines of tension and destabilize the situation in Ukraine. In addition, during a potential “truce,” Russia could try to undermine the country and turn it into a modern Georgia with an anti-European political course.

“Secure peace” means making decisions that meet the interests of society and promote Ukraine's development, European integration, and strategic choices. In positive scenarios, international security guarantees play a critical role, as without them, we will only be talking about a conditional peace that leaves the threat of new losses.⁸

If the international community agrees to recognize Crimea as Russian, it will open the door to further aggressions in Europe. The Baltic states, Poland and others could be at risk. Such a situation would have far-reaching consequences for stability in Europe and the world.

The EU and NATO are currently experiencing strategic uncertainty about how to achieve peace and ensure its guarantees. At the same time, internal political crises and economic problems are being prioritized by partners.

Western countries do not have a clear strategy for Russia's future, although its policy will have an impact not only on Ukraine but also on the situation in the region.

Predictions of Russia's imminent disintegration are unlikely, as the imperial narrative is deeply rooted in its society. Even a change in leadership does not guarantee a change in the country's political course.

Nevertheless, despite all the difficulties, Ukrainian society remains resilient and ready to fight for justice and recovery. Sociological research shows that the number of people ready for long-term resistance is twice as high as those who are not. Thus, the resilience of society is an important component of the struggle, no less important than the latest weapons. **Without international guarantees for Ukraine, the world will become a place where war will become the norm, and peace will be just a break before new disasters.**

⁸ Мир без гарантій безпеки для України – це нова війна: хто наступний?06.03.2025.
<https://www.pravda.com.ua/columns/2025/05/9/7511205/>