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Topics:

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Ukraine – European Union

- *THEME ANALYSIS: The EU is sponsoring Russia in its war against Ukraine*



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The underestimation of the Russian threat continues to make Europe vulnerable.

European countries must respond much more quickly to new military crises. The war in Ukraine has demonstrated the necessity for the European Union, its member states, and its affiliated organizations, such as the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the Council of Europe Development Bank, to establish mechanisms to accelerate financing for infrastructure and, if needed, defense projects.

However, Brussels still seems unaware of this urgency. In 2024, EU countries imported a record 16.5 million metric tons of liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Russia, more than 10 million tons above the previous year. Beyond Hungary and Slovakia, where "pro-Russian governments" are in power, other European nations, including France, Austria, and Spain, remain dependent on Russian energy. France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium even increased their LNG imports from Russia. By the end of 2024, Russia was still supplying 18% of all imported energy resources in the EU.¹

The reluctance of some EU countries to abandon Russian gas is not due to a lack of alternatives but rather a pursuit of profit. Slovakia opposes halting gas transit through Ukraine because it generates around \$1.5 billion annually from reselling Russian gas to the West.

¹ 2024 року країни ЄС імпортували рекордні 16,5 мільйона метричних тонн скрапленого природного газу з Росії.03.01.2025. <https://tsn.ua/groshi/krayini-yes-platyat-putinu-milyardi-za-gaz-i-naftu-foreign-policy-2736777.html>

Hungary plays into Moscow's geopolitical interests in exchange for Gazprom supplying it with additional gas, allowing Hungarian traders to resell it to third countries while the government collects significant tax revenues.

According to *Foreign Policy*, exemptions in oil sanctions against Russia have enabled Slovakia and Hungary to continue receiving Russian oil through pipelines, with smaller volumes also being purchased by Belgium, Austria, and the Czech Republic. Additionally, petroleum products derived from Russian oil often reach the EU via third countries. In the first nine months of 2024, EU countries imported 12.3 million tons of petroleum products from India, China, and Turkey, at least 4.8 million tons of which originated from Russian oil.

The report emphasizes that **the "notorious pro-Russian governments" of Hungary and Slovakia are far from the only ones still relying on Russian energy.** France, Austria, and Spain also continue to pay substantial sums to Russia for energy resources. The article acknowledges that the EU, particularly Germany, has made considerable efforts to reduce its dependence on Russian energy. Imports of Russian fossil fuels have dropped by 94%, from \$16 billion per month to around \$1 billion. Coal imports have been completely halted. However, **the EU still purchases energy from Russia, directly contributing to the financing of Putin's military budget.**

The situation with liquefied natural gas (LNG) is particularly critical. In 2024, the EU imported a record 16.5 million metric tons of LNG from Russia, over 1 million tons more than in 2023. France, Spain, the Netherlands, and Belgium increased their imports of Russian LNG. By the end of 2024, **Russia still accounted for 18% of the EU's total natural gas imports.** The reluctance to abandon Russian gas is attributed not to a lack of alternatives but to the desire to profit from cheap Russian gas.

The publication also highlights exceptions in oil sanctions against Russia. ***Crude oil*** from Russia continues to flow to Hungary and Slovakia via pipelines, while Belgium, Austria, and the Czech Republic purchase smaller volumes. Additionally, petroleum products derived from Russian oil reach the EU through third countries. According to statistics, in the first nine months of 2024, EU countries imported 12.3 million tons of petroleum products from India, China, and Turkey, at least 4.8 million tons of which originated directly from Russian oil.

Another critical issue is Europe's dependence on Russian ***nuclear fuel*** and technology. Russia is one of the world's largest uranium producers, controlling 44% of global uranium enrichment capacity. Nearly 20% of the raw uranium imported to Europe comes from Russia, with an additional 23% sourced from Kazakhstan, where Rosatom holds a significant share. The absence of sanctions against Rosatom is explained by the EU's heavy reliance on Russian nuclear fuel, and the planned sanctions are expected to have minimal impact on Russia, as they cover only \$1 billion in trade.

Given the humanitarian tragedy in Ukraine and the geopolitical consequences of the war, the publication argues that Europe must accelerate the adoption of clear directives and set earlier deadlines for phasing out all Russian energy imports. This case once again underscores how European companies continue to finance Russia despite sanctions aimed at weakening its economic capabilities. In 2024, EU and G7 companies contributed around \$3 billion in profit taxes to the Russian budget. While the total revenue of European businesses operating in Russia has declined, their tax contributions remain substantial, enabling Russia to continue funding its military operations. Moreover, with the planned corporate tax increase in 2025, this "contribution" could grow even further.

The continued supply of energy resources, particularly oil and gas, plays a crucial role in sustaining Russia's economic resilience. Last year, Russia earned \$192 billion from oil and petroleum exports, while pipeline gas deliveries to Europe increased by 13%. Russian LNG

exports set a record, reaching 17.8 million tons. These shipments provide Russia with significant financial inflows, likely used to finance the war in Ukraine.²

A particularly critical factor **is the support of European companies in maintaining specialized vessels that transport Russian LNG.** Two European shipyards continue servicing Arctic tankers that deliver Russian gas to Europe despite sanctions. This assistance allows Russia to sustain high levels of gas exports and increase revenues despite international restrictions.

Europe stands at a crossroads, facing a crucial paradigm shift. Yet, it continues to operate within a postwar mindset that no longer aligns with reality. The reluctance to correct past mistakes has deepened its dependence on Russia, making the cost of European peace the sacrifice of Ukrainian lives. By sustaining trade with Russia, the EU risks the security of its own citizens. **The longer European countries delay acknowledging this reality, the more vulnerable they become, and the harsher the consequences they will face.**

When Russia attacks Ukraine's energy infrastructure or disrupts its maritime exports, the EU and its international partners must respond swiftly by reinforcing cross-border power grids and strengthening critical infrastructure, including bridges and border crossings in Central Europe. Accelerating the construction of railway lines compatible with European standards in the Baltic states—where Soviet-era rail widths persist—is another pressing necessity. In this, the EU could draw lessons from other nations that have faced similar challenges.

In 1950, the United States passed the Defense Production Act, which has since been used to accelerate military and civilian expenditures, from hypersonic missile development to green energy initiatives. More recently, Germany responded to the energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by passing legislation to fast-track the construction of LNG import terminals. The Netherlands is now following suit, while the UK experiments with a "spiral development" approach in military procurement, prioritizing speed over perfection and rapidly producing "good enough" equipment for immediate security needs.

To overcome chronic inefficiencies and bureaucracy, the EU must create its own Defense Production Act. This would enable the bloc to respond rapidly to hostile threats and better prepare for security crises. Another lesson from the Russia-Ukraine war is that rearmament, infrastructure development, and deterrence require substantial investment. The EU must streamline the reallocation of existing funds, such as Cohesion Funds for poorer member states, the Next Generation EU recovery program, and European Investment Bank loans. However, simply redirecting existing resources will not be enough—winning wars requires sustained, long-term financial commitments.

During World War II, the U.S. Lend-Lease Program provided the UK and the Soviet Union with military equipment, food, and other resources. The Soviet Union repaid its debt in 1972, while the UK made its final payment in December 2006. European countries must recognize that they are no longer in peacetime and must ensure they have the necessary resources for their own defense. Borrowing even half the amount the EU mobilized during the COVID-19 crisis could prove decisive. A long-term financial commitment of €500 billion over the next 50 or even 100 years would significantly strengthen Ukraine's defense and keep the Russian military at bay from NATO borders.

The war in Ukraine has already driven structural reforms and increased defense spending at both national and EU levels. Accelerating these measures will be critical to enhancing Europe's ability to counter emerging threats. While speed is vital, Nicu Popescu, former

² Компанії з ЄС фінансують війну в Україні: скільки мільярдів сплатили Росії у 2024 році.17.01.2024.
<https://shorturl.at/2i3Ye>

Moldovan Foreign Minister, warns that Europe must accept a harsh reality: its security challenges are likely to persist for years. Even if an armistice is reached in Ukraine—which remains unlikely—the risk of a renewed Russian attack will remain high.³

Given this, European leaders must ensure that Russia never approaches EU and NATO borders. They must guarantee that Ukraine can withstand Russian aggression for decades if necessary. Achieving lasting peace will require Ukraine's NATO membership or a military buildup so formidable that any Russian assault becomes prohibitively difficult and costly. Maintaining a strong international military presence will also be essential for deterrence.

A valuable precedent is South Korea, where the heavily fortified Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) has remained intact for 71 years, making a breach nearly impossible. The continued presence of U.S. forces in South Korea sustains stability despite the absence of a formal peace treaty.

Finally, the most enduring lesson of the Ukraine war is that the best way to restore peace is to help allies defend it. The United States aided its European allies in two world wars not because it faced a direct threat from Europe, but because it understood that allowing allies to fall would ultimately bring danger to its own doorstep. Today, that threat is already at Europe's door, and the time for the EU to act is now.

³ Три уроки війни з Росією: чому Європі потрібен власний Акт про оборонне виробництво. 09.01.2025. <https://www.eurointegration.com.ua/articles/2025/01/9/7202139/>

Foreign and Defense Policy of Ukraine

- *THEME ANALYSIS: Deal of the Century as a prototype of the future military and geopolitical alliance between Britain and Ukraine*



Source: Getty Images

The main news of January was the Agreement between Ukraine and the United Kingdom for 100 years, which is indeed an important step in the development of bilateral relations and has the potential to become the foundation for many beneficial initiatives. It introduces cooperation in several areas:

1. Security and Defense: The main achievement of the agreement is the strengthening of cooperation in the defense sector, particularly in the context of maritime security. The United Kingdom has rich experience in military maritime operations, and its support in this area can significantly enhance Ukraine's defense capabilities. Joint training, new technologies, and control over maritime communications will help Ukraine neutralize threats from Russia, including the maritime blockade often used as a pressure tool.

2. Economic Support and Reconstruction: The TIGER program opens opportunities for small and medium businesses in Ukraine, aiding their recovery, particularly in sectors such as the green economy. This also includes support for veterans and women, which can positively impact the social and economic situation in the country. New financial resources and job creation will contribute to the recovery of the economy, which is crucial for overcoming the consequences of the war and supporting social stability.

3. Technology and Science: The agreement also has great potential for the development of science and technology in Ukraine. Cooperation with British companies and research institutions will allow Ukraine to implement new innovative solutions, particularly in agrotechnology, medicine, space, and drone technology. This will help Ukraine increase its competitiveness in these fields on the global stage.

4. Humanitarian Support: Medical services and cultural ties. The joint work of British doctors and Ukrainian medical institutions will be an important contribution to saving lives. Specialized treatment of patients with burns or combat injuries will help improve medical standards in Ukraine. Partnership programs between educational institutions will also promote Ukrainian culture and strengthen ties between the countries.

5. New Grain Verification Scheme Program: Ensuring food security. As a global grain supplier, Ukraine will receive a mechanism to fight theft and illegal resale of grain from temporarily occupied territories. This will strengthen Ukraine's position in the international agricultural market and help counter Russian disinformation.

In general, the 100-year partnership formalizes the United Kingdom's commitment to supporting Ukraine's sovereignty. The agreement strengthens the hope that the West will not compromise with Russia. The strengthening of security components, particularly maritime defense, will make it more difficult for Russia to operate in maritime areas. The agreement shows the Kremlin that time is working against it as Ukraine develops long-term strategic alliances. Economic assistance will allow Ukraine to endure the prolonged pressures of war.

However, many provisions of the agreement require further clarification. For example, it is not specified which resources and technologies the United Kingdom is willing to provide to strengthen security in the Black and Azov Seas. This could leave the implementation of the agreement to the discretion of future governments. There are also no specific timeframes for the implementation of the TIGER program or mechanisms for controlling the effective use of resources. Therefore, it is important to define the scope of funding for the future. The commitments of the United Kingdom depend on the political course of the government. Although the agreement is intended for 100 years, future governments may change priorities considering global geopolitical changes or economic challenges within the United Kingdom. The expansion of assistance to Ukraine may depend on internal political factors, such as public support or economic problems.

In this case, it would be advisable to create a joint body for monitoring the implementation of the agreement. As a result, the agreement becomes an important step in strengthening the partnership between Ukraine and the United Kingdom, but its real effectiveness will depend on the clarification of measures and commitments, ensuring the stability of support over the long term, creating transparent control and monitoring mechanisms, and balancing the interests of both sides.

As political scientist Ihor Petrenko notes, the signing of this agreement will not solve all problems immediately, but at the same time, it is a powerful signal of strategic perspective for Ukraine. The United Kingdom demonstrates its readiness to remain a key partner for Kyiv, not only in the fight on the battlefield but also in the country's recovery and development.⁴

In the short term, the agreement will help Ukraine counter Russian aggression, while in the long term, it will contribute to its integration into the Western world. Thus, this visit is not just a diplomatic step, but also a confirmation that allies are ready to build a common future with Ukraine. At the same time, the United Kingdom continues to demonstrate leadership in supporting Ukraine, as it was the first country to sign a Security Agreement and now a century-long treaty. During his visit to Kyiv, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer emphasized that the cooperation between the two countries is not limited to the current war situation, but also concerns future investments and long-term relationships that will influence the next decades.

Keir Giles, the research director of the Conflict Research Center in the UK, stresses that

⁴ 100-річне партнерство з Британією. Що дає ця угода Україні?. 16.01.2025.
https://glavcom.ua/columns/igor_petrenko/100-richne-partnerstvo-z-britanijeju-shcho-daje-tsja-uhoda-ukrajini-1040797.html

Britain has always been a leader among the countries supporting Ukraine. He notes that some other coalition partners were afraid of offending Russia, which made them less willing to support Kyiv. However, it was **the UK that, at the early stages of the invasion, showed how to actively help Ukraine without fearing serious repercussions from Russia.** Pavlo Klimkin, Ukraine's former foreign minister, pointed out that although the agreement may seem symbolic due to its long-term nature, its significance lies in the fact that the United Kingdom is taking on obligations that go beyond current political realities and changes in the international situation. Klimkin emphasized the importance of implementing all aspects of the agreement, rather than focusing on individual moments, as the cooperation covers a wide range of areas—from defense and security to economy, science, and culture.⁵

Keir Giles stressed that the Agreement is not just a display of support, but part of long-term, equal relations between the two countries. He highlighted that this partnership is based not on hierarchy, but on complementarity, as the United Kingdom is just as interested in Ukraine's future as it is in its partnerships with other European states. For Ukraine, it is important that this agreement demonstrates the seriousness and sustainability of British intentions that go beyond short-term political changes. Key aspects of the agreement include the United Kingdom's commitment to providing Ukraine with military aid of no less than £3 billion annually until 2031. The UK also promises to significantly strengthen the fighter jet coalition, investing in language training for Ukrainian military personnel and helping partners increase the number of F-16s for Ukraine. The form of this assistance is not specified, as the UK does not possess these aircraft. Moreover, the British government has stated that it is exploring the possibility of supplying other NATO fighter jets, though specific details are still lacking. Additionally, there is a ***secret part of the agreement, about which little is known.***

The importance of the Agreement also lies in its duration. **A 100-year treaty is an unprecedented step in British diplomacy, as such long-term agreements are usually only made with key partners.** This is a serious political gesture and shows the United Kingdom's desire to build stable, strategic relations with Ukraine.

The agreement has already been signed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, but it still needs to be approved by the UK Parliament. The approval process is expected to be quick, as the agreement was prepared under the previous government, and support for Ukraine remains an important priority for both political parties in the UK.

In addition to the aforementioned military cooperation aspects, the Agreement also involves deepening cooperation in the areas of long-range weapons, air defense, and other defense capabilities. One of the most interesting points is the possibility of stationing British military bases in Ukraine, though this is still a theoretical option. **The joint declaration of the leaders notes that the potential deployment of defense infrastructure in Ukraine includes military bases, supply depots, and reserve equipment, which could enhance the defense capabilities of both countries in the event of a serious military threat.** At the same time, the compatibility of such an intention with Article 17 of Ukraine's Constitution, which forbids the presence of foreign military bases, remains an open question.

The Agreement also foresees closer cooperation in the defense-industrial sector. Key areas include joint production of weapons and ammunition, creation of joint defense enterprises, increasing production capacities in Ukraine, and developing innovations in this field. Additionally, within the maritime coalition, the UK has committed to supporting Ukraine in the development of its naval forces to create balanced and effective maritime capabilities.

The Agreement between Ukraine and the UK establishes **mutual security obligations,**

⁵ 100-річна угода з Британією: що передбачає історичний договір.19.01.2025.
<https://podrobnosti.ua/2494680-100-rchna-ugoda-z-britanju-scho-peredbacha-storichnij-dogovr.html>

including urgent consultations in the event of an attack by a third country on either party. These consultations should take place within 24 hours to determine the necessary actions to counter the aggression. This condition was also present in the security agreement signed a year ago, but at that time, it was one-sided and activated only in the event of a renewed Russian attack on Ukraine. Now, the agreement provides a broader interpretation, looking at various possible developments. The main goal of these consultations is to determine the scope and procedure for providing assistance, including supplying modern military equipment if necessary. Although the focus is likely on British aid to Ukraine in the event of new aggression, the Agreement, which is oriented towards the long-term, considers various possible scenarios. These points have been placed in a political declaration that is not subject to ratification, which distinguishes them from the binding provisions of the agreement.

The Agreement outlines a *significant line between Ukraine and NATO*. London acknowledges that NATO membership is the best guarantee of security for Ukraine and expresses its support for Ukraine's irreversible path to joining the Alliance. The declaration envisions reaching a consensus on this issue. To enhance Ukraine's operational compatibility with NATO, the UK commits to assisting in the modernization of Ukraine's national security, bringing it closer to Euro-Atlantic standards, and fostering the development of Ukraine's naval forces, particularly through the expansion of Ukrainian naval bases.

However, the Agreement also suggests an alternative route for Kyiv, proposing the construction of a *new regional security alliance led by London*. Europe needs a new security architecture, and in recent years, Britain has taken the lead in reforming the European security space. A year ago, Ukraine signed a bilateral security agreement with the United Kingdom, which became the first of several agreements made following discussions between President Volodymyr Zelensky and G7 leaders at the NATO summit in Vilnius. The provisions of this agreement laid the foundation for the Century-Long Partnership Agreement, which outlines the deepening of cooperation in various areas, including security. All key points from the previous agreement were carried over into the new one, although some were placed in the political declaration.

The main difference between the two agreements lies in the level of detail. The 2024 security agreement provided a broader outline of cooperation, while the century-long agreement significantly clarifies the action plan for Ukraine's NATO integration. Although the 2024 agreement described cooperation aspects in more detail, this gap was partially addressed in the political declaration, which contains the necessary specifics regarding security, defense, economic, and other sectors.

The Century-Long Partnership Agreement can be viewed as an extension and further elaboration of the bilateral security agreement, which has been actively implemented for over a year. Meanwhile, the signing of the century-long agreement signals that cooperation between Ukraine and the UK is becoming strategic in nature and has a long-term perspective. *At the same time, while Berlin and Paris are still hesitating in the inevitable process of Western reconstruction, London continues to demonstrate determination and effectiveness, paving its way to regional leadership in the new system.*



Source: Army FM

■ Changes at the front

Trend: *The main threat is centered around the encirclement of Pokrovsk. However, the pace of the Russian army's offensive is beginning to slow down.*

The operational situation in the east and south of Ukraine remains extremely difficult.

On the Kupiansk direction, Ukrainian Defense Forces repelled Russian army attacks in the areas of the settlements of Topoli, Dvorichna, Petropavlivka, Stepova Novosilka, Hlushkivka, Zahrizove, and Lozova. On the Lyman direction, the Russian army attempted to advance near Novoyehorivka, Terny, Yampolivka, Kolodyaziv, Torsk, and towards Novomykhailivka. In the Kramatorsk direction, the Russian army is conducting assault operations in the settlements of Chasiv Yar, Stupochky, and Bila Hora. On the Toretsk direction, the Russian army advanced in the areas of Toretsk and Krymske.

On the Pokrovsk direction, Ukraine is losing its positions. Ukrainian defenders are trying to halt the Russian army's offensive actions in the areas of Zeleny Pol, Yelizavetivka, Promin, Zvirivoye, Udayne, Uspenivka, Novooleksandrivka, Sribne, and Dachne. The main factors hindering Ukrainian defense are weather conditions, worsened logistics, and personnel shortages. The Defense Forces are losing control over positions around the strategically important transport hub that connects several highways leading to major cities in the eastern part of Donetsk region. Additionally, Pokrovsk is a key railway station, which adds strategic importance.

Defenders of Pokrovsk report that recently the Russian army has changed tactics, attacking flanks instead of direct frontal assaults, trying to create a pincer movement around the city. Control of high ground allows the Russians to better control Ukrainian supply routes. Dense

fog complicates the work of Ukrainian drones, enabling the Russians to strengthen their positions.

The Ukrainian command acknowledges that there are insufficient reserves to reinforce the defense, and newly formed units are facing combat readiness issues. The military hopes for positive changes following the appointment of Mykhailo Drapaty as the Commander of the Ground Forces. Moscow aims to seize as much territory as possible, particularly in light of political changes in the U.S. The Trump administration insists on negotiations for a ceasefire, and the recent freezing of aid to Ukraine has raised serious concerns among Ukrainian officials. Meanwhile, President Zelensky stated that military support continues.

On the Novopavlivsk direction, the Russian army attempted to advance towards Kostyantynopil and Rozlyv. On the Dnipro direction, Russian invaders unsuccessfully attempted to storm the positions of Ukrainian units.

■ *Military assistance*

"Farewell to Ramstein"

On January 9, 2025, the U.S. Department of Defense announced its final additional package of support to meet Ukraine's critical security and defense needs. This aid was provided within the scope of presidential authorities (PDA), meaning supplies will come directly from Pentagon stockpiles. The package includes air defense missiles AIM-7, RIM-7, AIM-9M, air-to-ground munitions, and support equipment for F-16 aircraft. Additionally, armored bridge systems, secure communications equipment, small arms and ammunition, spare parts, auxiliary equipment, services, training, and transport are included. This is the 74th tranche of weapons transferred to Ukraine from U.S. Defense Department reserves since August 2021. The U.S. continues to collaborate with around 50 allies and partners.

At a "Ramstein" meeting, a plan to support Ukraine through 2027 was agreed upon. Within the framework of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group, eight roadmaps were adopted, outlining the key objectives of the Ukrainian Defense Forces and forming the basis for medium- and long-term support for Ukraine. Minister of Defense of Ukraine, Rustem Umerov, added that they are also working to ensure Ukraine's Armed Forces are fully interoperable with NATO forces. The main areas of focus for the next few years include ensuring military aid, organizing procurements, attracting investments, and supporting the development of Ukraine's defense industry.

■ *Russia: External and internal challenges*

Trend: *Reaching a compromise between Trump and Putin on ending the Russian-Ukrainian war will mean a new redistribution of spheres of influence in Europe between Russia and the West*

The current US President, Donald Trump, has not abandoned his pre-election promises regarding the end of the Russia-Ukraine war. While his rhetoric has shifted, especially concerning the preparation process for negotiations—which may now take longer—his overall goal remains unchanged.

Oleg Ryabchuk, head of the analytical and advocacy organization "Center for Joint Actions," noted that the greatest concerns among Ukrainians, particularly about whether Ukraine would be sidelined amidst Trump's victory euphoria, have not materialized. After

Trump's inauguration, the Ukrainian issue did not fade from international attention, as could have been the case, and it remained relevant on the global stage. He pointed out recent discussions about Trump's potential plans to annex Canada, Greenland, and the Panama Canal to the US. Additionally, the unresolved conflict between Hamas and Israel was a "warning bell" that could have indicated a reduction in focus on Ukraine. However, these concerns were not realized.⁶

Regarding Trump's communication style with Putin, it is direct and confident. Trump holds a positive view of Russia and Putin, but if the Russian president refuses negotiations, Trump will be compelled to take a firm stance against Russia to achieve peace. The US administration states that Ukraine is ready for negotiations, while Russia has yet to show interest in talks, a fact that has already triggered outrage among Russian propagandists.

On one hand, the US and its allies prevented Russia from quickly achieving its objectives, which included the destruction of a sovereign and independent Ukraine through occupation and the further projection of power over Central and Eastern Europe. They managed to contain the Kremlin and delay its aggressive plans, which also created hope for stability in the region. On the other hand, Russia has not abandoned its maximalist goals and continues its war against Ukraine, despite significant losses. Given this, the Biden administration believes the war has become a strategic failure for Russia, though the Kremlin continues to declare demands that could end Ukraine's sovereignty.

This war has become a war of attrition, presenting numerous challenges for Ukraine, particularly regarding the effective conduct and resolution of the conflict. The current situation leaves an open ending for the next US administration. As former CIA director William Burns points out, the key question is how Trump's team can help Ukraine maintain pressure on Russia to achieve negotiations on terms favorable to Ukraine. For his part, NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte emphasizes that Ukraine does not have the strength to negotiate on its own terms. Therefore, NATO and its partners must do more to alter the trajectory of the conflict and help Ukraine achieve a stronger position.

In the final days of Biden's administration, his team attempted to convey to their successors that ***achieving peace simply requires continuing the policy of supporting Ukraine and exerting pressure on Russia.*** If the Trump administration successfully implements these plans, it could take credit for the outcome without drastically changing its predecessors' strategy. Trump has already done this with Israel. However, it remains to be seen whether this approach will be successful and lead to positive changes for Ukraine.

Trump and his team face a significant task in formulating policy on the Russia-Ukraine war. The primary objective is to continue supporting Ukraine to stabilize the front lines, which is critical for any potential negotiations with Russia. The Kremlin, however, does not see the value in negotiations yet, believing it can continue its offensive and push Ukrainian defenses deeper into the country. A major obstacle on this path is the skepticism of a portion of the Republican electorate, who feel the US is providing too much assistance to Ukraine. As many as 67% of Republican supporters believe that the US should reduce its level of support, making it challenging to convince this part of the electorate.

At the same time, not only must aid to Ukraine continue, but the groundwork for its long-term integration into Europe's collective defense system must also be laid. This aims to send a signal to Moscow about the high cost and risks of disrupting the new status quo. Ukraine is trying to achieve this through potential NATO membership. However, Trump and his team

⁶ На руку Україні: як Трамп окреслив свою позицію щодо завершення війни
23.01.2025.https://24tv.ua/ukrayina-ochikuvala-girshogo-vid-trampa-yak-ssha-tisnut-putina_n2735944

might be skeptical about NATO's importance to the US and the role of the organization in the current global context, which could lead to differences in approach.

One of the biggest challenges for Trump lies in his own management style. To achieve an effective peace policy, he will need to demonstrate consistency and predictability, which could be problematic given his tendency for chaotic and unpredictable decisions. Excessive chaos is not a solid foundation for long-term strategies, especially when interacting with allies and partners the US must rely on in this situation. Trump has already had conflicts with allies, which adds difficulties to building stable international relations.

Meanwhile, Trump's team, including Marco Rubio, emphasizes that resolving the conflict will likely require compromises from all sides—Ukraine, Russia, and the US. This suggests that, in their view, **the war will not end with a military victory for either side.** Therefore, **there will be a need to abandon maximalist demands and seek compromises.** However, this complicates the search for formulations that both sides can agree on, given the radically different positions of Ukraine and Russia on territorial issues and NATO status. It is clear that Ukraine will not agree to formally recognize territorial losses, though the Kremlin will insist on this. To maintain stability on the front line, the involvement of international partners to protect the new line of demarcation may be necessary.

There is also a possibility that the US may offer a moratorium on NATO expansion, which could be seen as a compromise, though it would not fully satisfy Russia. Proposals for Ukraine to adopt a neutral status or abandon its open-door policy for NATO would be significant concessions, with potentially negative global consequences, particularly in the context of the struggle for influence in Eurasia.

In principle, Trump might be willing to sacrifice Europe's geopolitical interests in exchange for Putin's agreement to end hostilities in Ukraine and abandon his strategic partnership with China. This geopolitical compromise would likely result in a new redistribution of spheres of influence in Europe between Russia and the West, possibly formalized in a bilateral Russian-American geopolitical agreement akin to a "Yalta-2." In this geopolitical configuration, Trump does not view Ukraine as a subject but rather as an object for achieving this compromise with Russia. Therefore, negotiations would primarily be conducted bilaterally between Washington and Moscow. This would effectively grant Moscow legitimacy for its territorial gains, representing a plan for Ukraine's delayed capitulation and the end of the European war. Ukraine would be required to voluntarily abandon NATO and disarm. Of course, Ukrainian President Zelensky would never agree to such terms voluntarily. To remove him from power, both Trump's team and the Kremlin have called for early presidential elections in Ukraine as a precondition for "achieving peace."

In this scenario, it seems that Ukraine would not face defeat, and Russia would not win outright. However, in reality, this amounts to a plan for Ukraine's delayed capitulation and the end of the European conflict. As seen, there are virtually no demands placed on the Kremlin in this scenario. It ensures the removal of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) as a "sanitary border" for Russia, ultimately leading to the weakening of Euro-Atlantic solidarity, the discrediting of NATO, and the restoration of Russia's geopolitical control over CEE. This would weaken Western Europe and contribute to the decline of the EU.

This "Putin-Trump Plan" could also be referred to as the "Plan for the Delayed Occupation of Ukraine." With an agreed-upon sphere of influence with Trump, Moscow envisions the division of Ukraine into three parts. The first part would officially become part of Russia (Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Crimea). The second part would consist of "pro-Russian states" that reject Euro-Atlantic integration and accept Russian military

presence. The third part would be "disputed territories" in western Ukraine, which could be divided with Poland, Hungary, and Romania, with a clear shift in their geopolitical direction from Euro-Atlantic to pro-Russian.⁷

This plan envisions dividing Ukraine into a buffer zone, which would remain under the threat of further Russian aggression. **While this scenario is highly unlikely, as neither Poland nor Romania would agree to it, it does reveal Russia's long-term aspirations, which it may seek to realize through the first Trump-Putin plan.**

⁷ Россия сделала "план разделения Украины" и может предложить его США, - СМІ КИЕВ, СРЕДА 20 НОЯБРЯ 2024 16:40 [HTTPS://WWW.RBC.UA/UKR/NEWS/ROSIYA-ZROBILA-PLAN-PODILU-UKRAYINI-I-MOZHE-1732113632.HTML](https://www.rbc.ua/ukr/news/rosiya-zrobila-plan-podilu-ukrayini-i-mozhe-1732113632.html)