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# How to Bring an End to the War in Ukraine and its Ramifications on European Security

**TACAN İLDEM**  
Ambassador (R), Chairman of EDAM



## Introduction

The war that Russia started in Ukraine, which has turned the rules and principles underlying European security upside down, will soon complete its third year. Putin's expectation when he embarked upon this war was that Ukraine would quickly bow to this *fait accompli*, like what happened in Georgia in 2008, and a pro-Russian administration would come to power in Kyiv. Not only did this expectation not come true, but Ukraine, under the leadership of Zelenskyy, has so far demonstrated resilience and resistance challenging Russia on the battlefield and prevent it from achieving the expected result politically. Although some Ukrainian military gains that could cast a shadow over Russia's claim to be a 'superpower' can be mentioned, Ukraine, with the support of Western countries, has not achieved its goal of restoring sovereignty over Russian-occupied territories in the meantime. Ukraine has recently established military control over limited Russian territory in the Kursk region, albeit recently ceding part of it to Russia. Although Ukraine has begun using US tactical missile systems (ATACAMs) to hit targets deep inside Russia for defensive purposes after being authorised by the US former President Biden, it has not reached a stage that would turn the situation on the ground to its advantage. Russia's mobilisation of its own resources in terms of supply chain, as well as its efforts to procure weapons and necessary items from China, North Korea and Iran, and its use of soldiers sent by North Korea on the front lines to gain military superiority have been noteworthy. Russia has been careful not to escalate the war effort in the face of Ukraine's use of long-range tactical missiles against targets on its territory, probably with the assumption that such an escalation might lead to a hardening of Trump's possible stance while assuming office. Thus, it seems that Putin sufficed by destroying Ukraine's critical infrastructure, including its energy distribution centres, which it has targeted in recent months. In the meantime, we are witnessing that ideas regarding bringing an end to the war with a ceasefire in the first stage and enabling a peace agreement later are beginning to come to the fore more often than before.

## How might efforts to end the war in Ukraine proceed?

First, it must be recalled that it was Russia that invaded and annexed Crimea, which belonged to Ukraine, in 2014. Russia once again occupied Ukrainian territory in February 2022, thus repeatedly violating the territorial integrity of an independent and sovereign country. With such an illegal and illegitimate attack, Russia has acted contrary to its commitments to respect independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and not to use force or threaten to use force, which are contained in the fundamental documents on which European security is based. It should be recalled that at the time Russia invaded Crimea, Ukraine had no intention of becoming a member of NATO. According to its Constitution, Ukraine was in a permanent neutrality status, which meant that it did not seek to join any military alliance. The political and economic orientation towards the European Union membership was then the main issue on the agenda. Ukraine removed the 'permanent neutrality' requirement in the Constitution in December 2014<sup>1</sup> following the annexation of Crimea and added the NATO membership goal to its Constitution in 2019<sup>2</sup>. On the other hand, Putin's reading of history, which he previously elaborated in his speech in 2005 to the extent that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was a catastrophe of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was a precursor to his decision to start the war in Ukraine under the banner of 'special military operation'. This reading of history, essentially a continuation of his manifesto article titled 'Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians' written in 2021<sup>3</sup>, displayed a flawed and dangerous mindset that some countries (what he meant was Ukraine) cannot exercise their sovereignty alone. In other words, countries like Russia should be more sovereign, and countries like Ukraine should be less sovereign.

The parameters of a ceasefire to be reached between Russia and Ukraine and a peace treaty to be agreed upon through negotiations can be enumerated as follows: (a) It is clear that territorial concessions, which can be seen as the fundamental criterion for ending such a war of attrition, will not be easy for either side given the fact that the absolute winner of the ongoing war is not clearly evident; (b) Therefore, it may be aimed to grant a 'temporary status' to the Ukrainian

<sup>1</sup> BBC News, "Ukraine Crisis: Timeline," December 13, 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-30587924>.

<sup>2</sup> "Ukraine enshrines aspiration to join EU, NATO in its constitution," The Brussels Times, December 23, 2022, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/53597/ukraine-enshrines-aspiration-to-join-eu-nato-in-its-constitution>.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Putin, "'Article by Vladimir Putin' On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians'", July, 2021, <https://www.legal-tools.org/doc/tt382m/pdf>.

territories under Russian occupation at the first stage until the parties agree on the conditions that will ensure a permanent peace; (c) It will be important that such a status does not lead to the creation of a new 'frozen' or 'protracted' conflict. Likewise, it may be considered to deploy an UN-mandated 'deterrent force' on the line of contact between Ukraine and the lands that will be accorded with such a 'temporary status' which will be a subject to lengthy negotiations. It would be important to ensure that this force acts as a tripwire that will trigger those states that will grant a 'security guarantee' to Ukraine to use their forces to cease any future aggression or hostility; (d) The international community will also need to continue its policy of non-recognition of the Ukrainian territories occupied and annexed by Russia as part of Russia; (e) It would be appropriate to expand the narrow-scope of the format envisaged for the Minsk negotiation process<sup>4</sup> following the annexation of Crimea in a way that reflects the will of the international community. This enlarged format may allow the participation of stakeholders who can contribute to the process (including Türkiye with its facilitating role); (f) At this point, the question of how the security guarantee to Ukraine could be provided comes to mind. It was seen that the guarantees provided by the parties to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum<sup>5</sup> did not produce the expected preventive results for Ukraine in the annexation of Crimea in 2014, and during the second invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022 and throughout the ongoing war. Therefore, although it is not a preferable method for individual countries to provide bilateral and multilateral security guarantees, it would not be wrong to assume that this path will have to be followed in the period until Ukraine is accepted as a member of NATO. As opposed to the established procedure, the 'Membership Action Plan (MAP)' that a country expecting to become a member of NATO must fulfil, has no longer been one of the conditions sought for Ukraine<sup>6</sup>. It will not be easy for Ukraine's membership to be realised soon. There is no consensus on this issue among Allies yet. However, if the difficult and complicated negotiations on the territorial issue remained unresolved at the time of a decision to accept Ukraine into NATO, it may be necessary to make a new political assessment regarding whether the rule that 'candidates whose territory is partly in dispute cannot be accepted as members to the Alliance' would be applicable to the Ukrainian case. In this way, it may be deemed

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Lohsen and Pierre Morcos, "Understanding the Normandy Format and Its Relation to the Current Standoff with Russia," Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), 9 February 2022, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-normandy-format-and-its-relation-current-standoff-russia>.

<sup>5</sup> The security guarantee that was given to Ukraine by the US, Russia and the UK.

<sup>6</sup> Jim Gramone, "Leaders Agree to Expedite Ukraine's NATO Membership", U.S. Department of Defense, July, 2023, <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/article/3455199/leaders-agree-to-expedite-ukraines-nato-membership/#:~:text=Finally%2C%20leaders%20reaffirmed%20that%20Ukraine.%2C%22%20the%20secretary%20general%20said.>

appropriate to deprive Russia from using its *droit de regard* to prevent NATO membership of aspiring States by its creation of a 'protracted conflict' and exploiting it when circumstances require.

### The relevance of ending the war in Ukraine to the European security architecture

It will not be enough to attain ceasefire and peace agreement that will end the war in Ukraine within an abstract framework limited to Ukraine. In fact, the proposals that Russia presented to the US and NATO in December 2021<sup>7</sup> that coincided with the massive military buildup it carried out on the Ukrainian border testified to the fact that the issue was not limited to Ukraine. Of course, these proposals, which were not possible to accept by either the US or NATO, that pushed the boundaries of reason too far, essentially included issues concerning the broad framework on which the dysfunctional European security architecture was based. Therefore, the relevance of the issue to European security should never be overlooked in the search for a possible ceasefire and peace agreement. In other words, it is possible to claim that Ukraine's security, Europe's stability and Russia's relations with the continent and its own defined hinterland are intertwined.

In a parallel format to the peace negotiations on Ukraine, it is necessary to examine how the arms control and confidence and security-building measures (CSBM), which are the foundations of the European security architecture, and which are now dysfunctional, can be improved and agreed upon. There are past instruments that have been valid, such as the Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE)<sup>8</sup> and the Open Skies Treaties<sup>9</sup> with their legally binding provisions, as well as the Vienna Document<sup>10</sup>, which contains a series of politically binding CSBMs which could inspire ideas for a new European security architecture. Indeed, the Vienna Document, the CFE and the Open Skies Treaty were viewed by the OSCE as "an interlocking and mutually reinforcing network

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<sup>7</sup> Tacan İldem, Sinan Ülgen, and Dr. Can Kasapoğlu, "Ukrayna Krizine Diplomatik Çözüm Arayışları ve Türkiye," EDAM, January 21, 2022, <https://edam.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/220121-Ukrayna.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE)", November , 1990. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/9/14087.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, "Treaty on Open Skies", March , 1992. <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/5/14127.pdf>.

<sup>10</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Vienna Document 2011 on Confidence- and Security-Building Measures, 2011, <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/a/4/86597.pdf>.

of arms control obligations and commitments that together increase predictability, transparency and military stability, and reduce the risk of a major conflict in Europe.” In trying to envision a plausible vision for any future security arrangement for Europe, the military drivers of a potential Russia-NATO conflict include military activities or exercises in strategically sensitive locations; enhanced readiness; force build-up; violation of airspace or maritime borders (or perceived violation); proximity of forces or capabilities; deployment locations of long-range offensive weapons and threats to sensitive communication/connection lines. Innovative conventional arms control measures can address these factors, increase warning and decision-making time, make surprise attacks more difficult and reduce general tension. In this context, it would undoubtedly be useful to take measures to reduce the risk of conflict due to any misunderstanding or miscalculation.

While determining new restrictive measures for any future conventional arms control regime for Europe, maintaining those numerical limitations contained in the CFE Treaty in the categories of weapons would not be enough, since technological advancement in weapons systems could have diminished the sole importance of such numerical limitations. Therefore, emerging and disruptive technologies, AI being *primus inter pares*, and their impact on the future arms control regime should be part of the reflection and negotiation process. There is no doubt that in the future, when conditions are ripe, the negotiation and signing of a new treaty for intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe would strengthen security and stability on the continent.

If Russia continues to pursue its aggressive behaviour, driven by its interpretation of history and the challenge posed by its revisionist approach that has overturned the rules-based international order, it will not be possible to establish a new European security architecture that includes Russia. Although both NATO and the EU, considering recent experience, see Russia as one of the main sources of threat, as reflected in their strategy documents, the West should not make the mistake of excluding Russia from any security arrangement forever. The realities dictated by geography and history require the West to have a long-term goal of ensuring that Russia returns to the security order supported by the fundamental principles enshrined in the UN Charter and the founding documents of the OSCE. This will, of course, depend on the new security environment that will emerge in the post-war period in Ukraine and on how Russia chooses to act.

## The possible effects of Trump's re-election on the process

One could recall that during the presidential campaign, President Trump stated that no such war would have occurred during his presidency and that he would end this war in a very short time if elected. At the most recent NATO Washington Summit, the allies established a mechanism<sup>11</sup> to ensure coordination of military equipment and training efforts to be provided to Ukraine in a way that would also ensure long-term predictability. Accordingly, they announced a commitment<sup>12</sup> to provide long-term security assistance to Ukraine to help defeat Russian aggression. Within the framework of this commitment, a minimum of 40 billion euros in financing and providing sustainable security assistance are foreseen in 2025. The type of engagement that the Trump Administration will enter into with the warring parties, Russia in particular, in the upcoming period have become a matter of curiosity and concern for the relevant circles. Such an engagement may have consequences on the policies pursued so far by NATO, which has made a series of decisions over the years in terms of boosting its deterrence and defence, and the EU, which has taken political and economic measures against Russian aggression, especially with its sanctions policy.

Time will show whether President Trump would favour an international order based on the principles and rules that are still in place and will be reconfirmed in the context of arrangements that will end the war with Russia in Ukraine. Yet it is still a big question mark whether he would instead prefer an understanding that considers the dynamics of 'realpolitik' regarding the spheres of influence of the dominant powers. Naturally, the fact that Trump, even before taking office, has once again voiced the idea of the purchase of the Greenland island under Danish sovereignty by the US, that Canada, the US's northern neighbour and ally, could become the US's 51st state, and that the US could take over control of the Panama Canal harkens back to Russia's 'near abroad' policy that was harshly criticised by the West. These are all examples giving the clue that he may be open to negotiations guided by the dynamics of realpolitik. On the other hand, the stated positions of those individuals who will serve Trump in his team on foreign affairs, security and defence, suggest that the new administration will act with a vision that can be qualified as

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<sup>11</sup> NATO, "Relations with Ukraine", October, 2024, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_37750.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_37750.htm).

<sup>12</sup> "Press Conference", 10 July, 2024 <https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/227417.htm?selectedLocale=en>.

'peace through strength'. President Trump, two days after taking office, threatened massive tariffs and sanctions on Russian products if Vladimir Putin fails to make a deal to end the war in Ukraine<sup>13</sup>. It is not yet known what kind of ideas Trump will come up with to end the war. However, it is hoped that just for the sake of ending the war no precedence will be created that will encourage Russia to repeat its aggressive stance against Ukraine or any other country when it sees circumstances opportune. Although Trump revised his claim that he could "end the ongoing war in Ukraine in 24 hours" during his election campaign to a relatively more realistic one by mentioning a six-month period, it would not be wrong to predict that he will seek an engagement with Putin soon after having assumed office. It is necessary to hope that the new US Administration will quickly realise the necessity to consult with Allies, given that the situation in Ukraine directly concerns European security. It would be timely and appropriate for NATO Secretary General Rutte to contact Trump and his team as soon as possible and to lead the way in holding an extraordinary summit meeting with Trump at NATO Headquarters in Brussels, for example, in February, without waiting for the NATO Summit that was scheduled to be held in the Netherlands in June.

It cannot be ignored that there is a danger that any step that Trump may take without consulting his allies will lead to divisions within the Alliance and disagreements with the EU. One could expect this to trigger concrete projects, re-prioritisation of the 'strategic autonomy' discourses within the EU. Naturally, the pivot of US administrations to the Asia-Pacific region, starting with Obama's presidency, is an irreversible reality. It will be important for European allies to increase their pledge to allocate enough funds to defence spending (a share of 2 percent of GDP is now accepted as a minimum contribution (it will not be surprising if Trump presses for an increase to 4-5 percent in the new term), allocate a greater share to research and development, and give strength and momentum to joint efforts that prioritise innovation and emerging disruptive technologies in the defence industry. On the other hand, the EU should also adopt an inclusive approach that will include non-EU allies such as Türkiye, which is part of its *acquis* and a requirement of its partnership with NATO, in initiatives such as the European Defence Fund (EDF) and Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO).

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<sup>13</sup> Ketrin Jochecová, "Trump Tells Putin to End Ukraine War or Face More Sanctions," Politico, January 22, 2025, [https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-threaten-vladimir-putin-ukraine-war-tariff-sanction/?utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=alert&utm\\_campaign=Trump%20tells%20Putin%20to%20end%20Ukraine%20war%20or%20face%20more%20sanctions](https://www.politico.eu/article/donald-trump-threaten-vladimir-putin-ukraine-war-tariff-sanction/?utm_source=email&utm_medium=alert&utm_campaign=Trump%20tells%20Putin%20to%20end%20Ukraine%20war%20or%20face%20more%20sanctions).



## Conclusion

2025 marks the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Final Act, which underpins the European security architecture. In efforts to end the war in Ukraine, as mentioned above, while determining the arms control and CSBMs on which the new security architecture will be based, it will be important not to call into question the basic principles recorded in the Helsinki Final Act to renegotiation. Among these principles, respecting the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of states, refraining from the threat or use of force, the inviolability of internationally recognised borders and the right of each state to choose its own security arrangements, whether or not it is a member of a military alliance, should be determined as an 'indispensable' goal to preserve commitments. It would be correct to interpret the 'strategic autonomy' of European countries as a 'strategic responsibility' that will help European countries to 'stand on their own feet' in order to meet the requirements of the continent's security and defence (with a comprehensive approach based on the understanding that Europe is bigger than the EU), and to raise their profile, especially by developing military capabilities. It is also more important than ever to preserve the transatlantic bond that holds the US and its European allies together and not to decouple it.



Ekonomi ve Dış Politika  
Araştırmalar Merkezi

edam

Hare sokak No.16 Akatlar / İstanbul

T. +90 (212) 352 18 54  
F. +90 (212) 351 54 65

info@edam.org.tr

   // edam.org.tr