

HISTORY OF NEGOTIATIONS AND PEACE TALKS BETWEEN RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THESE COUNTRIES

Tomasz BĄK

University of Law and Administration, Rzeszów, Poland

tbak@wsiz.edu.pl

Abstract: *In the article on negotiations and peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, the author presents the history of actions taken by these countries in the years 2022-2025 to end the ongoing war between them. It is important to chronologically describe the attempts to initially bring about a ceasefire and, consequently, a lasting peace. The author used primarily press materials due to the lack of books on the subject. The topic described is so current and constantly changing that there is no specific, final summary. Due to the fact that the talks and negotiations are still ongoing, the author suggests that another article be written in the future as a continuation of the current one. The author also presented the involvement of international organizations such as NATO, the EU and the UN, as well as individual European countries and the United States. The role of Poland in the peaceful resolution of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine was also not omitted. In summary, the author expresses hope that the issue of ending the war is only a matter of weeks or at most a few months.*

Keywords: war, Russia, Ukraine, negotiations, peace agreement

1. Introduction

A full-scale war began in Ukraine, which destabilized the Eastern European region, caused thousands of casualties, and a humanitarian crisis. It contributed to a crisis in international relations and a shift in Western European policy towards Russia. The most important areas of conflict are the Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula, which was annexed by Russia in 2014. The international community, including NATO, the European Union, Poland, the United Kingdom, France, Turkey, and China, have repeatedly called for the parties to the conflict to take action to promote peace and end the war.

All initiatives aimed at ending the war were met with the hope of the international community that this bloodiest conflict since the end of World War II would end quickly. There is no doubt that the fundamental and key action that can be

taken in this direction is peace talks between Ukraine and Russia. Therefore, the world awaits with great hope the results of talks between the parties to the conflict initiated and led by the United States, which began after the election of US President Donald Trump. These tripartite negotiations are an important element in the effort to restore peace in the region [1].

2. History of negotiations and peace talks between Russia and Ukraine

The conflict, which has been ongoing since 2022, is causing huge population losses, infrastructure destruction, and destabilization of Eastern Europe. It also has a fundamental impact on the entire security architecture in Europe. The armed operations have not only affected the geopolitical situation, but have also complicated relations between world powers and other countries in the economic, social, and cultural spheres.

Society's fatigue with the situation, as well as growing pressure from the international community, have led to the creation of an initiative for peace talks involving Ukraine, Russia, and the United States, which are taking place in Saudi Arabia. The choice of this country as the venue for the talks is not accidental. This country has repeatedly engaged in international dialogue for peace and is currently playing an increasingly important role in the international arena as a mediator in conflicts, offering a neutral territory for negotiations. It has considerable experience in organizing such meetings at the highest diplomatic and political levels. The United States is represented by key officials of the American administration. The delegation is led by Secretary of State Marco Rubio, along with National Security Advisor Mike Waltz, responsible for the country's strategic security. They are also accompanied by Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff, whose experience in the region is invaluable to the Middle East talks.

Russia is represented by an experienced diplomat, Sergei Lavrov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. The delegation also includes Yuri Ushakov, adviser to President Vladimir Putin on foreign policy.

Delegation is composed of high-ranking officials, including the head of the presidential cabinet, Andriy Yermak. The delegation also includes the Minister of Foreign Affairs Andriy Sybiha, and Defense Minister Rustem Umyrov.

The participation of such high-ranking representatives in the peace talks is no surprise, because the rank and importance of these talks is high, because their effect is to achieve a lasting agreement. Achieving satisfactory results will not be easy due to serious discrepancies and differences of opinion. An important condition for achieving success is to consider the interests of all parties involved in the conflict and to ensure that all decisions are acceptable to both the international

community and the citizens of the countries directly affected by the conflict.

The growing role of Saudi Arabia as host of the negotiations has already been mentioned. This role is underlined by the personal involvement of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince and prime minister.

President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky expressed the need to engage Ukraine in the negotiation process at the international forum, as the country most interested in ending the war. The Russian side, with President Vladimir Putin, fully agreed that the Americans would be negotiators, but they emphasized that the ceasefire should lead to lasting peace and the elimination of the causes of the conflict.

Despite significant differences in approach regarding the final effects of the conflict and the post-war architecture, the talks held in Riyadh are a milestone towards ending the war in Ukraine. The negotiations that have begun give hope of reaching an agreement that will bring stability and peace to the region.

In early February 2025, the first meeting of the US and Russian delegations took place in Riyadh, lasting nearly 5 hours. The purpose of this meeting was primarily to assess the climate for starting the peace process. The fact that both sides expressed their readiness to resume cooperation and start peace negotiations is promising for the future.

The following month, the peace talks continued and were held in another Saudi city - Jeddah. This time, the US and Ukrainian delegations met there to discuss the possibilities of ending the conflict. The meeting was exceptionally long, lasting over eight hours. However, it brought concrete results in establishing the expectations of the Ukrainian side this time regarding the results of the negotiations with Russia. It should be emphasized that this was the first meeting at such a high level since the tensions between the presidents of the US and Ukraine.

The negotiations are focused primarily on the fundamental issues that are aimed at achieving lasting peace and stability. The first and most important topic is the establishment of a ceasefire, which would provide the basis and create the right climate for continuing further negotiations. A 30-day suspension of hostilities was proposed. Ukraine accepted this proposal without hesitation, but Russia was not comfortable with such a variant. Therefore, it did not agree to this proposal and set its own conditions.

The most difficult issues to resolve are of course the issue of Crimea, Donetsk and Luhansk, namely the issue of who these areas will belong to after the end of hostilities. The American side believes that Ukraine should accept the demands of the Russian president to recognize these territories as part of Russia in exchange for a ceasefire. However, this raises concerns in the international community and may have far-reaching consequences for Ukraine's sovereignty. Ukrainians themselves are also not satisfied with this approach to the matter.

However, an absolutely unacceptable condition for Russia is Ukraine's possible membership in NATO. According to the Russian side, this would pose a threat to Russian security. Therefore, Moscow demands that Kiev abandon its aspirations to join the North Atlantic Alliance and maintain its status as a neutral state.

Another contentious issue is the post-war control of key critical infrastructure facilities, such as power plants, including the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant. This point will certainly be negotiated for a long time due to the need to have facilities that are crucial to the energy security of the region.

In addition to issues directly related to the conflict, the talks also cover the topic of normalization of international relations. Despite the recent breakdown of proper diplomatic relations between Russia and Ukraine, the United States and the countries of the European Union, the

negotiations should aim to restore dialogue and cooperation in various areas, which would significantly affect the stabilization of the situation in the international arena.

Despite significant differences on fundamental issues relating to ending the conflict, the peace talks between Ukraine, Russia and the US constitute a significant step towards ending the conflict.

The reaction to the negotiations was diverse in the international arena. Many countries, including Poland, France, Great Britain, Germany, and China, responded to the peace initiative, emphasizing their positions and expectations. International organizations such as NATO and the European Union also expressed their opinions on the subject.

The will of France and Poland unequivocally confirmed the will for Ukraine to play a central role in any future peace negotiations on the ongoing conflict and to be absolutely not left out. Western Europe must play an important role in this process. He stressed the need for Europe to be involved in security talks, in close cooperation with the United States, in order to protect European interests.

The UK has expressed its readiness to send troops to Ukraine for as long as necessary, emphasizing its firm support for Kiev. The British side has declared its readiness to engage in the Ukrainian problem for many years.

German authorities have resumed dialogue with Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time in two years, although this has been met with criticism from Ukraine.

China maintains its neutral position on the conflict, calling for dialogue and a peaceful resolution. Beijing has stressed the importance of respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states, calling for negotiations as the only path to lasting peace. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council, China is playing an important role in international efforts to resolve the conflict.

NATO and the European Union have supported Ukraine on its sovereignty from

the very beginning of the conflict, while approaching talks with Russia with caution. NATO's new Secretary General, Mark Rutte, believes it is essential to strengthen Ukraine before peace talks begin, to ensure that negotiations begin from a position of strength, not weakness [2].

However, the history of negotiations does not begin in 2025. In fact, both sides already tried to negotiate in the first days of the war, in 2022.

Already on February 28, 2022, just four days after the Russian Federation began its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the aggressor's forces occupied some cities on the coast of the Sea of Azov, approached the Zaporozhye nuclear power plant and the city of Mariupol, and led an offensive towards Kiev. While hostilities were in full swing, Ukrainian and Russian negotiators sat down for the first attempts at an agreement to end the conflict.

as the meeting place for the delegation. The delegation meeting was to take place without preconditions on the Ukrainian-Belarusian border, near the Pripjat River. The Ukrainian side called on the Russians to immediately ceasefire and withdraw their forces from Ukrainian territory. Moscow did not specify its goal to be achieved in the negotiations. Neither Zelensky nor Putin participated in the talks personally.

The actual face-to-face meetings of both delegations took place three times, but then they were moved to the Internet on March 14. At the same time, alleged atrocities against the population of Hostoml, Irpin and Bucha took place, which was supposed to influence the course of negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in the future.

And so it was, and after the Russians were forced out of the Kiev region, some of the starkest photographic and video evidence of Russian brutality in Ukraine emerged, which had a negative impact on the early negotiations process.

As a result of the illegal occupation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporozhye and Kherson, announced by Putin a few months later, the Ukrainian authorities

imposed a ban on direct negotiations with Putin, which is still in force [3].

It should be confirmed that the negotiations lasting from February to April 2022 were the only time Ukrainian and Russian officials held direct peace talks. Unfortunately, their talks ended in failure, mainly since neither side wanted to give in and change its demands. However, the fundamental issues that differentiated the parties, such as Crimea and Ukraine's potential membership in the European Union and NATO, did not change throughout the subsequent months of the war.

For this reason, Ukrainian negotiators in 2022 proposed to abandon NATO membership and accept Russian occupation of some territories. At the same time, they did not recognize Russia's sovereignty over them. Kyiv also allegedly proposed that Ukraine would never join NATO or other alliances. The Russians put forward demands to recognize Russian as an official language. Ultimately, the failure of the negotiations was determined by Russia's opposition to the agreement, which would oblige other countries to defend Ukraine in the event of a renewed invasion.

If it weren't for the stubbornness of the conflicting parties and the total divergence of the results, the war in Ukraine could have lasted only a few weeks. Both sides were very close to ending the war and achieving peace. The Russian president was supposed to quickly agree to peace talks, because the defeat of his army in the first days of the attack had changed his belief in a lightning victory.

The Polish authorities played an important role in the peace negotiations, fearing that Germany or France might try to convince Ukrainians to accept Russia's terms, which they wanted to prevent. In March 2022, President Andrzej Duda met with NATO leaders in Brussels and presented them with a draft agreement between Ukraine and Russia. To end the war, on April 15, 2022, the conditions agreed upon by the

parties were established in a 17-page draft agreement. Russia demanded that Ukraine remain neutral, reduce the number of soldiers, weapons, equipment and aircraft, and that the territories already occupied remain with Russia.[4] The two heads of state, Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky, were supposed to meet to agree on several aspects for the signing of a final agreement. Unfortunately, the meeting between the two did not take place.

In the draft of a possible future agreement, Ukraine agreed never to acquire nuclear weapons in any way or to agree to their deployment on its territory. It also confirmed that it would not provide its military infrastructure, including airports and seaports, to any other country. In addition, Kiev would refrain from conducting military exercises with the participation of foreign armies. At the same time, the draft does not contain any contraindications to membership in the European Union.

In return, Russia promised not to attack Ukraine again. It also agreed that the five permanent members of the UN Security Council could provide Ukraine with comprehensive security guarantees. Article 5 of the draft agreed on a mechanism resembling NATO's aid provisions.

In the event of any armed attack on Ukraine, the guarantor states would be obliged to

provide support to Kiev within three days in the scope of its right to self-defense enshrined in the UN Charter. The treaty had to be ratified by each signatory state in accordance with international law [5].

Security guarantees would require the consent of the United States, China, Great Britain and France in the second phase. At the request of the parties, it was also intended to include Belarus and Turkey in the process.

The port of Sevastopol and Crimea were to be excluded from the security guarantees, which would have meant the loss of control over the peninsula by Kiev.

Russia's readiness to withdraw from Ukraine did not mean that it would also withdraw from Crimea and that part of Donbas that was to be excluded from the security guarantees. Under these conditions, the Ukrainian side partially agreed to Russia's demands for demilitarization, and Moscow demanded that the Ukrainian army be reduced to 85,000 soldiers (now about one million), while Ukraine's proposal was to maintain 250,000 soldiers. During the same discussions, there were disagreements over the amount of military equipment. Russia demanded a reduction in the number of tanks to 342, while Kiev wanted to keep it at 800.



Ukraine-Russia peace talks in Istanbul (March 29, 2022)

Source: <https://www.moviesonline.ca/the-unknown-behind-the-scenes-of-negotiations-between-russia-and-ukraine-moscow-and-kiev-were-ready-to-make-concessions/>

The text of the joint communiqué agreed in April 2022 was still being modified and was to be the basis for a peace treaty. It did not include such important issues as the course of the border or the withdrawal of Russians from occupied Ukrainian territories [6].

By late April, the negotiations had collapsed, with four main factors contributing to the collapse.

First, the Americans and their allies did not believe in the prospect of a diplomatic path emerging from Istanbul. Regarding the negotiations, the US did not believe in their success, moreover, the Ukrainians did not consult with Washington on the issue of security guarantees during the discussions with the Russians. The future treaty was to stipulate that the US would be one of the guarantors of security and, if necessary, would have to go to war with Russia. The West did not engage in the process of the Istanbul negotiations but increased military aid to Kiev and increased pressure on Russia, including through a constantly tightening system of sanctions.

Secondly, a factor that contributed to the abandonment of the negotiations was the discovery of Russian war crimes in Bucha and Irpin.

Third, after the Russians withdrew from Kiev, the Ukrainian authorities gained confidence that with Western help they would be able to tip the scales of victory in their favor. Ukraine also stated that a precondition for any treaty must be a Russian withdrawal from Donbas.

Fourth, the negotiators tried to design an ambitious peace treaty, instead of first negotiating the terms of a ceasefire, the course of the border, and humanitarian corridors.

But let's get back to the current peace talks and negotiations. Russia is primarily seeking to remove Zelensky, hoping that his eventual successor will be more willing to make territorial concessions.

Russian diplomacy is focused on discrediting Zelensky in Trump's eyes so that Washington can put pressure on Ukraine and its authorities to hold presidential elections. According to the Russian scenario, Zelensky could lose the election [5].

Currently, the Russian authorities are trying to gain the support of China and India for their plan. The Russians definitely do not want a ceasefire, even in exchange for a possible agreement with Donald Trump, fearing that any concession will be perceived as a victory for Zelensky. However, it must be remembered that the longer Russia drags out the peace talks on Ukraine, the more it risks losing the favor of US President Donald Trump.

The Russians foresee two possible scenarios for achieving their goals. The first is the capitulation of the authorities in Ukraine, which would lead to the renewal of the Ukrainian state under the influence of Russia, which in practice would transform the country into a satellite state resembling Belarus [7].

The second solution involves Russia strengthening its control over the four occupied regions of Ukraine, while limiting Ukraine's political and military independence.

Recently, the talks have focused on the technical aspects of a possible limited ceasefire. It would include a halt to attacks on energy infrastructure and shipping in the Black Sea. Ukraine agrees and declares its readiness for a ceasefire, but the Kremlin demands specific concessions first.

On March 13, Vladimir Putin rejected the terms of the 30-day ceasefire proposed by the United States (in airspace, the Black Sea, and the entire front line), previously approved by Ukraine [9]. This confirms our belief that Russia is playing an unfair game and will probably intensify military operations, constantly demanding that the United States withhold military and intelligence aid to Ukraine. Russian forces

have the initiative on the front, and their priority will be to regain full control of the Kursk region. The Russian side will most likely prolong the talks, while trying to force the United States and Ukraine to make additional concessions [8].

Russia intends to achieve its war goals with full determination, namely the complete subordination of Ukraine through a change of government, its withdrawal from NATO membership and the weakening of its self-defense capabilities. Russia does not want to accept the American-Ukrainian proposal to introduce a ceasefire before the proper part of the peace talks begins.

According to Russia, the conditions proposed by the US are unfavorable because they give Ukrainian forces time to regroup and strengthen. However, this opinion is not supported by the facts regarding the situation on the front, where Russian troops have the initiative. One of Russia's priorities in the coming weeks will be to regain full control over the Kursk region, where a Ukrainian offensive operation has been ongoing since August 2024.

Russia is conditioned to the ceasefire by suspending Western military aid to Ukraine (including arms deliveries,

training, and intelligence support). Such actions would weaken Ukraine's ability to defend itself and increase Russia's advantage. The temporary suspension of U.S. arms deliveries, intelligence, and reconnaissance data has already had a negative effect, and has led to increased missile and drone attacks on targets in Ukraine and has allowed Russia to seize Sudja. The conditions proposed by Russia would give it disproportionately greater benefits, so it is likely that Ukraine will not accept them.

It is expected, however, that the Russian side will prolong the negotiations on ending the war, questioning individual elements of the US-Ukrainian proposal, such as the ceasefire control and verification measures. At the same time, it will probably intensify military operations, seeking to drive Ukrainian forces out of Kursk Oblast. Russia will try to force additional concessions from the US and Ukraine. These may include, for example, partial lifting of sanctions, a renewed suspension of military and intelligence aid to Ukraine, the withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from Kursk Oblast, or recognition of Russia's sovereignty over occupied Ukrainian territories.



Source: <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/negocjacje-usa-z-rosja-w-sprawie-zakonczenia-wojny-na-ukrainie>

Since the beginning of the negotiations, Russia's chances of achieving its main goals for Ukraine have increased. The strategic goal remains to permanently block Ukraine's path to NATO (neutralization). It seems that even the United States has recognized Ukraine's membership in the Alliance as unrealistic for many reasons, including the lack of European unity on this issue and the military weakness of European allies. Russia will seek to have NATO withdraw from its 2008 declaration that Ukraine and Georgia should be future members of the Alliance.

Russia also has a chance to achieve its goal of changing the government in Ukraine.

This would increase the chances of Russia achieving its next long-term goals: demilitarization of Ukraine, recognition of its annexation of Crimea and four other regions, and political subordination of Ukraine. Even if the US does not agree to demilitarization of Ukraine during the negotiations, it may withdraw from providing it with further military support.

Trump administration could meet Russian demands after a ceasefire, for example by reducing the US military presence in the Western Balkans, which would be convenient and would increase Russia's ability to exert influence in the region. Any reduction in military presence in Europe and a halt to Biden's decision to deploy long-range systems in Germany would lead to a weakening of the credibility of the US guarantee. As a result, Russia would be more likely to threaten escalation against NATO to cause divisions in the alliance.

According to experts, the way the US is conducting the negotiations is not the best because it creates a risk that Ukraine and its European partners will have difficulty accepting the negotiated agreement. It would also create a strategic threat to Europe, because European countries would have limited possibilities to provide guarantees to Ukraine without increasing the risk of direct confrontation with Russia.

Some European countries have announced their readiness to send troops to Ukraine, as this would likely be an attempt to pressure the US administration to include Europe in the negotiations and consider its security interests. The creation of such a mission will require coordinated actions by European countries and the US. There is a chance that the agreement between Ukraine and the US on access to raw materials will change Trump's attitude towards Ukraine and his approach to negotiations with Russia. On Tuesday, May 6, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that Russia is proposing direct talks with Ukraine without preconditions. According to Lavrov, "the Ukrainian armed forces are retreating, so Kiev has begun to demand an immediate ceasefire." Russia is in favor of starting direct talks with Ukraine without preconditions, the Russian Foreign Minister said, as quoted by TASS.

Earlier on Monday, May 5, the Kremlin announced that "for humanitarian reasons, during the days of the celebration of the 80th anniversary of the Victory, from midnight on May 7-8 to midnight on May 10-11, the Russian side is declaring a ceasefire." During this period, all military operations are to be suspended. However, the communiqué stated that "in the event of a violation of the ceasefire by Kiev, Russian troops will provide an appropriate and effective response." However, the actual ceasefire did not take place.

3. Conclusions

Certainly, the coming weeks and maybe months will bring new concepts of a ceasefire, the exchange of prisoners and ending this terrible war. Therefore, this article will certainly be continued by the author, so that after the war ends and peace is established, it will be possible to familiarize oneself with the history of negotiations and ending the Russian-Ukrainian conflict based on the literature of these articles. I hope this will happen as soon as possible.

References

- [1] Wiak K., “Rozmowy pokojowe Ukraina - Rosja - USA. Co warto wiedzieć?” 18 march 2025, <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/rozmowy-pokornego-ukraina-rosja-usa-co-warto-wiedziec-7136455796673120a>
- [2] AP News, Rzeczpospolita, Business Insider Polska, TVN24, Onet, Le Monde, Interia, Huffington Post, Polish Radio, Welt.de, Natemat.pl.
- [3] <https://pl.euronews.com/2025/02/06/peace-talks-ukraine-and-russia-tried-to-negotiate-but-it-didn't-work>
- [4] “Details of peace agreement Ukraine and Russia could sign in April 2022 revealed”, In: ESPRESO, 27 April, 2024 Saturday, 16:50, available at: <https://global.espreso.tv/russia-ukraine-war-die-welt-details-of-peace-agreement-that-ukraine-and-russia-could-sign-in-april-2022-published>
- [5] *Ukraine Today.org*, available at: <https://ukrainetoday.org/die-welt-publishes-peace-deal-ukraine-and-russia-could-have-signed-in-april-2022/6>
<https://www.lankatimes.com/unknown-information-behind-the-scenes-of-negotiations-between-russia-and-ukraine-moscow-and-kiev-were-ready-to-make-concessions/>
- [6] “Nieznane kulisy negocjacji Rosji i Ukrainy. Moskwa i Kijów były gotowe na duże ustępstwa”, <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/swiat/nieznane-kulisy-negocjacji-rossji-i-ukrainy-moskwa-i-kijow-byly-readowe-na-ustepstwa/vdkr6c5>
- [7] <https://wiadomosci.wp.pl/putin-just-bid-what-the-russians-wanted-to-do-with-zelenskim-7141098971048800a>
- [8] *The Moscow Times*, <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/>
- [9] Polski Instytut Spraw Medzy,, PISM, <https://www.pism.pl/publikacje/reakcja-rossji-na-propozycje-zawieszenia-broni-na-ukrainie>