



Zelensky Rejects Trump's Ukraine Proposal

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Glenn Greenwald (GG): This war, even though we don't talk about it anymore, and I don't mean we specifically on the show, sometimes we do, but I mean we collectively, we as a country, it is just kind of a war that goes on, people are dying still every day, people are being bombed, people are chased with drones, there are all kinds of missiles being launched continuously. The dangers of escalation continue to unfold. And I have to say, the Trump administration, despite my many critiques of much of what they're doing, deserves a lot of credit because they really are following through in a very aggressive way in an attempt to bring about an end to this war diplomatically. And the reality of the war, whether people like it or not, is that Russia is winning the war. Russia has been dominating the war and Ukraine has far more of a reason to end the war than Russia does. And of course, whatever diplomatic solution, whatever diplomacy resolution is achieved will be more favourable to Russia than it is to Ukraine. And yet, we're already seeing people accusing Trump of being some sort of surrender, having surrendered to the Russians or capitulated to the Russian because the proposals that they're talking about, which are the only ones that have any chance of ending the war, have terms that are favourable to Russia in them; for the obvious reason that Russia is winning and Russia would never accept terms not favourable to it. And it seems as though many of the terms that Zelensky is going to end up having to accept are ones he's refusing to accept and Trump's frustration with Ukraine is growing and growing and we'll see where that ends up leading.

First of all, here from CNN earlier today: *Trump administration is ready to recognise the Russian control of Crimea as part of a framework to end the Ukraine war, sources say.* Now, as you might recall, Crimea, had for centuries been part of Russia. It ended up being part of Ukraine through a series of complicated transactions that Putin has said many times he regards as an error. And in 2014, when the United States government with Victoria Nuland and John McCain and Chris Murphy, the whole gang went over and helped overthrow the democratically elected government in Kiev that was more leaning toward Moscow than to the EU and that was the reason we overthrew them and instead installed a much more pro-EU, pro-US government, in response to having the EU and the US so now dominant inside

Ukraine on the other side of the Russian border that they were even changing the government, the Russians took Crimea, an extremely geostrategically important spot, it's what gives them access to the Black Sea. And the reality is that the people of Crimea, nobody doubts this, overwhelmingly, I'm talking about 90%, identify as Russian, not as Ukrainian. They are far more loyal to the Russians, they want to be governed by Moscow and not by Kyiv. And there's no possibility that the Russians will ever give back Crimea, especially with NATO so involved in Ukraine. And so what the Trump administration is doing is simply saying that we, the United States, will recognise that Crimea is part of Russia. Not that the Ukrainians have to, not that the Europeans have to, just that we the Americans will. Because the reality is that Crimea is never going back to Ukraine. And yet that's something Zelensky refuses to accept. Quote, "Crimea, southern Ukraine, has been under Russian occupation since it was illegally annexed in 2014. Four other Ukrainian regions – Donetsk and Luhansk in the east, and then two others in the south – have been partially occupied by Russia since its full-scale invasion in 2022. Zelensky said the time that the territories would, quote, 'probably be one of the most sensitive and difficult issues in peace negotiations', adding that, quote, 'for us, the red line is the recognition of the Ukrainian temporarily occupied territories as Russian. We will not go for it'."

I have news for Zelensky: Russia is occupying and controlling Ukraine and those other provinces in Eastern Ukraine, whether he likes it or not. He may wish there was a fantasy world where Ukraine was going to control it, but there is no world in which that will ever happen. And so obviously the Americans are trying to work within the Russian reality and the Ukrainian reality when you try and negotiate a war. And Steve Witkoff, by all accounts, has been doing an excellent job of genuinely trying to foster an end to this war. And what he has been saying and others have been saying is that you need to understand things from the Russian perspective and the Ukrainian perspective to understand what's possible in a deal, which is basic diplomacy. The Biden administration would not even talk to Russia. The EU won't even talk to Russia. So the Trump administration is doing so in a way that will advance this diplomacy. According to Financial Times, also today: *Vladimir Putin offers to halt Ukraine invasion along the current front line*. "US floats recognition of Russian annexation of Crimea as peace plan efforts continue". Quote, "The Russian president told Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy, during a meeting in St. Petersburg this month that Moscow could relinquish its claims to areas of four partly occupied Ukrainian regions that remain under Kyiv's control, three of the people said. The US have since floated ideas for a possible settlement that includes Washington recognising Russian ownership of Ukraine's Crimean peninsula, the people added, as well as at least acknowledging the Kremlin's de facto control over the parts of the four regions it currently holds. The proposal is the first formal indication Putin has given since the war's early months three years ago that Russia could step back from its maximalist demands to end the invasion".

This has always been the obvious outline of some kind of resolution we've been talking about in this show for three years now. The real Russian objective was never to take over all of Ukraine. That might have been their view at the very beginning. I even doubt that. Their concern was with these eastern provinces of Ukraine where the majority of people, the vast

majority of the people are Russian speaking and ethnic Russian. And the perception was, correctly, that the Kyiv government had become increasingly brutalising and abusive of their rights, had disregarded their cultural history and their religious traditions. And that was why there was a low-grade civil war, basically a war for independence going back to 2014, between these eastern provinces, these provinces in eastern Ukraine and Kyiv. And the Russians, on top of wanting to preserve and protect the rights of the people who live there, also want that as a buffer zone. So if they have these four provinces, it's not as easy for NATO to go up to the Russian border. And that was always the solution. NATO doesn't go into Ukraine and Crimea stays with Russia. And these four provinces have some sort of semi-autonomous or autonomous status, depending on what they want in a referendum, or join Russia and become part of Russia. And that gives the Russians the buffer zone and the security that they need that Ukraine won't be in NATO as well, and then Ukraine gets some sort of ambiguous security guarantee from some combination of Europe and the US. This is what the kind of negotiation looked like at the beginning of the war back in March and April of 2022 when the two sides were very close to negotiating an agreement that could have averted this war and that was when Boris Johnson and Victoria Nuland swept in and told Zelensky, that under no circumstances can he agree to that resolution, and they will promise to give him all the money and weapons he needs to fight the Russians until the very end, and those are the people who have all this blood on their hands.

Now, it is always strange that Zelensky is in this position where he depends upon the United States, depends upon the Trump administration to fund his war effort, to give him the weapons he needs to even be able to stay competitive in this war. And when that happens, when you're dependent, kind of a vassal state, and that state tells you, Look, we're not gonna continue to support this war, here's an agreement that we think is fair for you, and you keep telling that country, we don't want this, we're now gonna accept this, as Trump told Zelensky in the White House, you don't have that many cards to play. And yet Zelensky continues to act as though he's the one dictating the terms.

Here from the Wall Street Journal earlier today: *Ukraine's Zelensky Pushes Back on a U.S. Peace Plan*. "The Ukrainian president said his country would never recognise Russian control of Crimea, a key Russian demand". Quote, "'Ukraine will not legally recognise the occupation of Crimea', Zelensky said at a press conference here on Tuesday. 'There's nothing to talk about here. This is against our constitution'. Zelensky's dismissal upends Trump's latest gambit to halt the war in Ukraine – now in its fourth year – and casts new uncertainty on the future of the relationship between have in Washington, which Trump has made conditional on a quick deal. Zelensky said Russia should agree to a ceasefire before further talks to demonstrate, quote, 'serious steps and not childishness'."

The Russians have always said they're never going to agree to a ceasefire without a full deal being in place that would just allow the Ukrainians to rearm. And the only way to meaningfully end this war is to have an actual resolution that will end the war, as opposed to just freezing the conflict. Now, when Zelensky said, and if you see the video of him saying it, he's very kind of arrogant about it, he is very definitive about it, he's saying: "Look, we're not

ever going to accept that Crimea belongs to Russia". And note that the peace plan put forward by the Trump administration didn't even require Ukraine to acknowledge that Crimea belongs to Russia, who cares if Ukraine acknowledges that or not. That's still the reality, whether Ukraine accepts it or not. The peace plan was that the United States would recognise Crimea as being Russian, but the defiance of Zelensky yet again, when he depends upon the Trump administration of the United States and the American taxpayer to fund his war, was something that, to put mildly did not sit well with Trump and he had one of those reactions he's had to Zelensky in the past. This is what he posted on Truth Social earlier today: "Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky is boasting on the front page of the Wall Street Journal that, quote, 'Ukraine will not legally recognise the occupation of Crimea, there's nothing to talk about here'. This statement is very harmful to the peace negotiations with Russia in that Crimea was lost years ago under the auspices of President Barack Hussein Obama. And it is not even a point of discussion. Nobody is asking Zelensky to recognise Crimea as Russian territory, but if he wants Crimea, why didn't they fight for it eleven years ago when it was handed over to Russia without a shot being fired? The area also houses, for many years before, quote, 'the Obama handover', many Russian submarine bases. It's inflammatory statements like Zelensky's that makes it so difficult to settle this war. He has nothing to boast about. The situation for Ukraine is dire. He can have peace or he can fight for another three years before losing the whole country. I have nothing to do with Russia, but have much to do with wanting to save on average 5,000 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers a week who are dying for no reason whatsoever. The statement made by Zelensky today will do nothing but prolong the, quote, 'killing field' and nobody wants that. We are very close to a deal but the man with, quote, 'no cards to play' should now finally get it done. I look forward to being able to help Ukraine and Russia get out of this complete and total mess that would never have started if I were president".

Again, it is true that the United States, independent of who you think is right or wrong or what you think the right outcome is, has a very strong interest in ending this war. We're paying for the war. Not all of it, the Europeans are paying for a lot of it as well. Our stockpiles are being depleted, especially when we also have to feed the Israelis arms and now we're using a tonne of arms ourselves to bomb Yemen. We have this rapidly depleting stockpile. And the American government should have, as its primary concern, the interests of the American people in the United States. And it has never been in the interest of the American people, and I have said this from the very start, to fight a war with Russia, even a proxy war over who rules various provinces of Eastern Ukraine. Whether they stay under the governance of Kiev, whether they end up autonomous or semi-autonomous, whether they end up with Moscow, what most of the people prefer, what impact does that have on the American people, on their material well-being at all? And the Trump administration seems to be reaching the end of the rope in terms of their willingness to allow Zelensky to act as though he has equal leverage in any of this when he clearly doesn't.

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