

Weekly Commentary 29

Putin's Peace Proposal – the end of Ukraine

Last week, there was a peace conference on Ukraine. It was held in Switzerland from 15 to 16 June. It achieved absolutely nothing. It could not even garner all the attendees to sign on the communique. 13 countries refused to put their names into the document. Countries are getting sick and tired of the western narrative that the war is all the fault of Russia, People are beginning to say, we don't have to buy into this bullshit about Russia being the bad dudes and that the Ukrainians have perhaps asked for a fight that is over their head. So they are started to say, screw it...leave us out of it... Is there another way to interpret this diplomatic disaster?

And just a day before the peace talks started, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, announced his own peace proposal in which he said Russia would stop the special military operation now being waged in Ukraine and negotiate a peace that would be similar to the Istanbul agreement that was reached in the spring of 2022. The precondition is : Kyiv must accept the facts of the situation on the ground. They have lost the war and accept the consequences. This was immediately rejected by Kyiv and the Americans, just like the Istanbul deal was torpedoed by Boris Johnson acting under instructions from Washington DC.

This is bad for all sides. Just as Istanbul would have brought about a peace in which Ukraine would be neutral and its joining NATO would be ditched, this new rejection would result in the war continuing until Ukraine gives up. Ukraine has already lost at least 500,000 men killed (Russia has casualties of 100,000 –a 5 to 1 ratio), the bloodshed will continue. And with this rejection, Putin said there would not be another chance given to Kyiv until they accept unconditional surrender.

There are many aspects to these new developments. Let's examine both events in detail.

Let's go back a bit to understand how the Swiss summit came about and why this has turned out to be such a flop. The idea was first mooted nearly 9 months ago, in the fall of 2023 and in that time since then, Kyiv and Washington tried to bring many countries to Switzerland to get their support, basically to condemn Russia rather than to talk peace (after all, Russia was not even invited). In all that time, they managed to get only the collective west, but the countries of the Global Majority sought to distance themselves from the event. I mean, even Biden did not attend this conference preferring to appear at a domestic fund raising event! China also did not attend.

A total of 160 countries were invited, but only 100 governments accepted. Some did not bother to send heads of state or foreign ministers. And at the end of the summit, only 78 countries signed on the joint communique. This is a far cry from the 141 countries that signed on the UN resolution to condemn Russia when this was tabled at the UN General Assembly back in 2022. This is an indication of the erosion of

support for the Ukrainian position, as after two years, many countries have been exposed to the facts on how the Russian bear has been provoked by the threat of NATO expansion and the war was a result of that.

Western media weighed in on this peace conference:

78 countries at Swiss conference agree Ukraine's territorial integrity must be basis of any peace

Nearly 80 countries have jointly called for the “territorial integrity” of Ukraine to be the basis for any peace agreement to end Russia’s two-year war

By Jamey Keaten | Associated Press

June 16, 2024 at 4:46 p.m. EDT

OBBÜRGEN, Switzerland — Nearly 80 countries called Sunday for the “territorial integrity” of Ukraine to be the basis for any peace agreement to end Russia’s two-year war, though some key developing nations at the Swiss conference did not join in. The way forward for diplomacy remains unclear. **(In short, nothing concrete was achieved.)**

The joint communique capped a two-day conference marked by the absence of Russia, which was not invited. Many attendees expressed hope that Russia might join in on a road map to peace in the future.

The all-out war since President Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 has killed or injured hundreds of thousands of people, unsettled markets for goods like grain and fertilizer, driven millions from their homes and carved a wedge between the West — which has sanctioned Moscow — and Russia, China and some other countries. **(As a matter of fact, there is also division among European countries on how to support Ukraine.)**

About 100 delegations, mostly Western countries, attended the conference that was billed as a first step toward peace. They included presidents and prime ministers from France, Germany, Britain, Japan, Poland, Argentina, Ecuador, Kenya and Somalia. The Holy See was also represented, and Vice President Kamala Harris spoke for the United States.

India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates — represented by foreign ministers or lower-level envoys — were among countries that did not sign the final document, which focused on issues of nuclear safety, food security and the exchange of prisoners. Brazil, an “observer,” did not sign on but Turkey did. China did not attend.

The final document signed by 78 countries said the U.N. Charter and “respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty ... can and will serve as a basis for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine.” That has been a nonstarter for Putin, who wants Ukraine to **(be neutral)** and back away from its hopes of joining the NATO military alliance. **(I mean if you just consider the main points in the communique, what is there to disagree with?? Yet, 13 countries did not support it!)**

Viola Amherd, the Swiss president, told a news conference the “great majority” of participants agreed to the final document, which “shows what diplomacy can achieve.” Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis said Switzerland would reach out to Russian authorities but did not say what the message would be.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy hailed the “first steps toward peace” at the meeting and said Ukraine was in talks with some countries, which he did not name, that had offered to host a “second peace summit.” No timetable was laid out. Zelenskyy earlier this month accused China, backed by Russia, of attempting to undermine the Swiss conference, a claim denied by Beijing.

Allies of Ukraine now face the task of trying to keep up momentum toward peace. Zelenskyy said national security advisers would meet in the future, and “there will be a specific plan” afterward.

Testifying to war fatigue and other preoccupations, only about half of U.N. member countries took part. It's a far cry from March 2022, when condemnation of Russia's invasion led to passage of a non-binding resolution at the U.N. General Assembly by 141 countries calling for Russian troops to leave Ukraine.

It wasn't clear why some developing countries attending didn't line up behind the final statement, but they may be hesitant to rankle Russia or have cultivated a middle ground between Moscow, its ally China and Western powers backing Kyiv. “Some did not sign — even though very few (13 out of 78 is not a small number)— since they are playing ‘Let's have peace based on concessions’ game, and they usually mean concessions by Ukraine, and basically accommodating Russian demands,” said Volodymyr Dubovyk, a Ukraine expert and senior fellow at Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington-based think tank. “They also like this ‘neutrality’ positioning.”

Dubovyk said the way forward for Ukraine was to receive aid — weapons and humanitarian assistance — that could improve its situation on the ground and thus give it a better negotiating position. (The country has been on alms for 2.5 years, realistically, can there be a better negotiating position than what they have today? At the rate they are going, a year from now, there will be no men left in the country and more cities will fall to the Russians.)

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Union's executive Commission, said peace won't be achieved in a single step and asserted that Putin isn't serious about ending the war.

“He is insisting on capitulation. He is insisting on ceding Ukrainian territory -- even territory that today is not occupied by him,” she said. “He is insisting on disarming Ukraine, leaving it vulnerable to future aggression. No country would ever accept these outrageous terms.” (As I remember it, those were always the objectives of the special military operation by Moscow. If Kyiv did not think they could do it to ward that off, they should have not have committed to the fight...)

Analysts suspected the conference would have little concrete impact toward ending the war because Russia, was not invited. China and Brazil have jointly sought to plot

alternative routes toward peace. (Since there is admittedly no impact, this was a failed peace initiative.)

Qatar's prime minister, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, said Saturday that his rich Gulf country hosted talks with both Ukrainian and Russian delegations on the reunification of Ukrainian children with their families. It has so far resulted in 34 children being reunited.

The Ukrainian government believes that 19,546 children have been deported or forcibly displaced, and Russian Children's Rights Commissioner Maria Lvova-Belova previously confirmed that at least 2,000 were taken from Ukrainian orphanages. In Kyiv, at a regular demonstration by relatives of soldiers captured by Russia, the response to the Swiss gathering was muted. (Later, it was discovered that the children were found in Germany!!)

"I would really like to believe that this (conference) will have an impact, but some very important countries did not sign the communique," said Yana Shyrokyh, 56, whose army serviceman son has been in captivity since 2022. "I would really like them to find powerful levers of influence on Russia."

Al Jazeera explained why at the Ukraine Peace Summit, some countries did not support the communique:

Ukraine peace summit: Why some countries refused to sign the plan

Major Global South nations cited Russia's absence or Israel's presence as reasons for not accepting the communique.

By **Al Jazeera Staff**

Published On 17 Jun 2024

About 100 delegations from countries and international organisations attended the Switzerland-hosted Summit on Peace in Ukraine last weekend, aimed at crafting a path that many participants said could pave the way to ending Russia's war on its smaller neighbour.

But while a vast majority of participants signed on to the short communique issued at the end of the summit, several key nations did not. (Is this normal for international peace conferences? I don't think so...The fact that there are so many dissenters is an indication of wide splits in the global community on the background and current state of the conflict.) The two-day diplomatic summit took place in the Burgenstock resort in Stansstad, Switzerland, and was attended by United States Vice President Kamala Harris alongside leaders from the United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan, and diplomats from many other nations.

Here is more about the Ukraine peace communique and why some countries did not sign on.

What did the Ukraine peace communique say?

The communique laid out what it said was a “common vision” on “crucial aspects”, including that (common vision when 13 out of 80 countries backed out??):

- All nuclear installations, including the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, should be safe according to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) principles and under IAEA supervision. The power plant, Europe’s largest, has been at the centre of Russia-Ukraine battles since the early days of the war, sparking concerns about the potential for a nuclear accident. (who can disagree with signing this?)
- The free flow of Ukrainian agricultural products should be allowed to interested third countries. “Global food security depends on uninterrupted manufacturing and supply of food products,” the communique said. The document described attacks on merchant ships and civilian port infrastructure in the Black Sea and Azov Sea as “unacceptable”.
- All prisoners must be exchanged and all Ukrainian civilians who have been unlawfully displaced should be returned to Ukraine. In particular, the communique said, “all deported and unlawfully displaced Ukrainian children, and all other Ukrainian civilians who were unlawfully detained, must be returned to Ukraine”. According to Ukraine, 20,000 children have been taken by Russian authorities during the war. (And later found to be safe in Germany. Again, all these “narratives” are just propaganda.)

Who signed the joint communique on Ukraine?

In all, 82 delegations (to be clear, 78 countries signed; 4 were supranational organizations so there is a bit of double counting) signed on to support the communique. Swiss President Viola Amherd told a news conference the “great majority” of participants agreed to the document (as I said, even a couple of dissenters means disagreement in a summit of this sort).

Some of these include: Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, Costa Rica, Cote d’Ivoire, the European Commission, the European Council, the European Parliament, France, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Kosovo, Latvia, Norway, Palau, Qatar, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, the UK and the US.

Which countries did not sign on?

- India, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Thailand, Indonesia and the United Arab Emirates attended the summit, represented by foreign ministers and envoys, but were among those who did not sign the joint communique.
- Brazil attended the Ukraine summit as an observer, but did not back the communique.

- Russia was not invited to the summit, which Moscow dismissed as “futile”. China also did not attend the two-day event. Pakistan, which counts China as its closest ally, was invited but chose not to attend.

Why did they not sign on?

- **India:** In a statement, Secretary (West) of India’s Ministry of External Affairs Pavan Kapoor said that New Delhi decided to avoid association with the joint communique because of Russia’s absence from the summit. He said India believes that peace in Ukraine requires bringing together “all stakeholders and a sincere and practical engagement between the two parties to the conflict”.
- **Saudi Arabia:** Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, shared similar concerns while delivering his statement at the summit. “We believe it is important that the international community encourage any step towards serious negotiations, which will require difficult compromises as part of a roadmap that leads to peace,” he said. “And here, it is essential to emphasise that any credible process will need Russia’s participation.”
- **South Africa:** South Africa’s reasons for not backing the communique were different. The country’s National Security Advisor Sydney Mufamadi wrote in a statement that “it was surprising that at this conference, Israel is present and participating”, five days after a United Nations-backed commission accused Israel of committing war crimes against Palestinians. Mufamadi questioned the legitimacy of a communique that its sponsors argued was driven by “respect for international law” when Israel has been accused by many UN officials of violating international law. South Africa has accused Israel of genocide in Gaza in a case at the International Court of Justice.

Let’s move on to the Russian peace proposal. Here is a piece from the New York Times:

Ukraine-Russia Peace Is as Elusive as Ever. But in 2022 They Were Talking.

Representatives from the warring nations held peace talks in the early weeks of the Russian invasion. They fizzled. Documents from those talks show why any new ones will face major obstacles.

By [Anton Troianovski](#), [Adam Entous](#) and [Michael Schwartz](#)
June 15, 2024

With Russia and Ukraine locked in their third year of all-out war, there is no clear path to military victory for either side. Nor are there immediate prospects for a ceasefire and an eventual peace plan, with both sides sticking to irreconcilable positions.

Yet the issues that would need to be tackled in any future peace settlement are evident, and in fact were at the center of negotiations two years ago that explored peace terms in remarkable detail.

Documents reviewed by The New York Times shed light on the points of disagreement that would have to be overcome.

The documents emerged from negotiating sessions that took place in the weeks after the start of the war, from February to April of 2022. It was the only time that Ukrainian and Russian officials are known to have engaged in direct peace talks.

The talks failed as both sides dug in on the battlefield, but not before negotiators produced multiple drafts of a treaty that was supposed to guarantee Ukraine's future security while fulfilling some of President Vladimir V. Putin's demands.

Today, even with hundreds of thousands dead and wounded, Moscow and Kyiv appear further from peace than at any other time since the full-scale invasion. On Friday, **Mr. Putin said Russia would agree to a ceasefire only if Ukraine handed over four regions the Kremlin has declared part of Russia and dropped its NATO aspirations.** It was essentially a demand for capitulation, which the Ukrainian government immediately denounced.

Ukraine's current demands — a withdrawal of all Russian forces from Ukrainian territory — also appear unrealistic given Mr. Putin's apparent resolve and his army's current advantages. This includes the Crimean Peninsula, which Mr. Putin annexed in 2014 in a swift operation that he considers central to his legacy.

But at some point, both sides could return to the negotiating table again — a scenario that is expected to be discussed as Ukraine gathers scores of countries, though not Russia, for a peace conference in Switzerland this weekend. If and when Ukraine and Russia resume direct negotiations, the issues raised in the documents produced at the start of the war, including the status of occupied Ukrainian territories and Ukraine's future security guarantees, would remain relevant.

Russia initially wanted Ukraine **to recognize Crimea as part of Russia.**

“Ukraine recognizes the Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol as an integral part (subjects) of the Russian Federation and, in this regard, shall make comprehensive changes to the national legislation.”

By April 15, both sides agreed **to exclude Crimea from their treaty — leaving it under Russian occupation but without Ukraine recognizing it.**

“Paragraph 1 of Article 2 and Articles 4, 5 and 11 of this Treaty shall not apply to Crimea and Sevastopol.”

An examination of the documents shows that the two sides clashed over issues including weapons levels, the terms of Ukraine's potential membership in the European Union, and specific Ukrainian laws on language and culture that Russia wanted repealed. Ukraine's negotiators offered to forgo NATO membership, and to accept Russian occupation of parts of their territory. But they refused to recognize Russian sovereignty over them.

Ukraine proposed **never joining NATO or other alliances.**

“Ukraine does not join any military alliances, does not deploy foreign military bases and contingents ...”

Russia demanded **that Ukraine make Russian an official language.**

“Ukraine, within 30 (thirty) days after signing this Treaty, shall remove all restrictions on the use of the Russian language in any area in accordance with Annex 2.”

Russia, stunned by the fierce resistance Ukraine was putting up, seemed open to such a deal, but eventually balked at its critical component: an arrangement binding other countries to come to Ukraine’s defense if it were ever attacked again.

At the time, little about these peace negotiations was known, and what has leaked out in the two years since has been shoehorned into wartime talking points by each side. Mr. Putin contends the West pressured Ukraine to reject a peace deal; Ukraine's Foreign Ministry says that **“if Russia wanted peace in 2022, why had it attacked Ukraine in the first place?”**

The Times is publishing the documents it obtained in full. They are treaty drafts dated March 17 and April 15, 2022, showing the two sides’ competing proposals and points of agreement; and a private “communiqué” at in-person talks in Istanbul on March 29 that summarized the proposed deal.

The documents were provided by Ukrainian, Russian and European sources, and confirmed as authentic by participants in the talks and other people close to them. Some aspects of these documents have emerged, but most of the material has not been previously disclosed.

In addition to reviewing the documents, The Times spent months interviewing more than a dozen Ukrainian, Russian and Western current and former officials and others close to the talks; they include three members of Ukraine’s negotiating team. Many spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the negotiations.

“We managed to find a very real compromise,” Oleksandr Chalyi, a member of the Ukrainian negotiating team, said at a panel discussion in Geneva last December. “We were very close in the middle of April, in the end of April, to finalize our war with some peaceful settlement.”

The Talks Begin

On Feb. 28, 2022, aides to Poland’s president met a group of senior Ukrainian officials at the border and ferried them by helicopter to a military base near Belarus. The Ukrainians then entered Belarus on their own and met a delegation of Russians led by an adviser to Mr. Putin, Vladimir Medinsky.

It was an unusual moment in the history of warfare: the start of direct talks between the invaders and the invaded, just days after Europe’s biggest war of aggression in three generations had begun.

Some of the Ukrainian negotiators who spoke to *The Times* thought that Mr. Putin had come to the table so quickly because he never expected his army to stumble so spectacularly. *(More likely, Putin was reacting to a French and German request that he showed some goodwill which was why Russia starting withdrawing troops from around Kyiv.)* But as far as they could tell, the Russians sitting across from them had little sense of how badly their troops were doing.

When Oleksii Reznikov, the Ukrainian defense minister at the time, said his side had tallied 3,000 Russian soldiers killed in action, Mr. Medinsky appeared surprised and looked over at the top Russian military official at the table.

“No, we only have 80 soldiers” killed, the military official, Aleksandr Fomin, said, Mr. Reznikov recalled.

The negotiators soon shifted to video calls, with the Ukrainians dialing in from a conference room at Mr. Zelensky’s presidential offices, Ukrainian negotiators said, or, a few times, from an underground bunker.

Ukraine made a significant concession: it was ready to become a “permanently neutral state” that would never join NATO or allow foreign forces to be based on its soil. The offer seemed to address Mr. Putin’s core grievance — that the West, in the Kremlin’s narrative, was trying to use Ukraine to destroy Russia.

An Early Draft

Though the two sides engaged in regular video sessions after meeting in Belarus, a treaty draft dated March 17 shows how far apart they remained. *The Times* reviewed an English-language version that Ukraine provided to Western governments.

Ukraine sought Russia’s assent to international “security guarantees,” by which other countries — including Ukrainian allies who would also sign the agreement — would come to its defense should it be attacked again. It wanted the treaty to apply to Ukraine’s “internationally recognized borders,” even as Russian troops were still trying to take Kyiv.

Ukraine wanted its allies **to be treaty-bound to intervene if it was attacked again, such as by...** “...closing airspace over Ukraine, providing necessary weapons, using armed forces in order to restore and subsequently maintain the security of Ukraine as a permanently neutral state.”

The Russian team wanted Ukraine and every other treaty signatory to cancel the sanctions against Moscow they had been levying since 2014 and to publicly call on other countries to do the same. Ukraine was to cede its entire eastern Donbas region and recognize Crimea as part of Russia. A seven-point list targeted Ukraine’s national identity, including a ban on naming places after Ukrainian independence fighters.

The latter demand illustrated one of Mr. Putin's stated rationales for going to war: he had described Ukraine as an artificial country that should be considered part of Russia.

Russia's treaty proposals read like a laundry list of Kremlin demands, including that Kyiv-controlled parts of eastern Ukraine be ceded to Russia's proxy "people's republics."

"Ukraine recognizes the independence of the Donetsk People's Republic and the Luhansk People's Republic within the administrative boundaries of the former Donetsk and Lugansk regions of Ukraine and, in this regard, shall introduce comprehensive changes to the national legislation."

"Ukraine shall cancel and henceforth not impose, and also shall publicly call on all states and international organizations to cancel and henceforth not impose, any and all sanctions and restrictive measures imposed since 2014 against the Russian Federation."

"Ban, with the introduction of criminal liability, the glorification and propaganda in any form of Nazism and neo-Nazism, the Nazi movement and organizations associated therewith, including holding public demonstrations and processions, construction of monuments and memorials and naming toponyms, in particular, streets, settlements and other geographical objects."

The draft included limits on the size of the Ukrainian armed forces and the number of tanks, artillery batteries, warships and combat aircraft the country could have in its arsenal. The Ukrainians were prepared to accept such caps, but sought much higher limits.

A former senior U.S. official who was briefed on the negotiations, noting how Russian forces were being repelled across northern Ukraine, said Mr. Putin seemed to be "salivating" at the deal.

American officials were alarmed at the terms. In meetings with their Ukrainian counterparts, the senior official recalled, "We quietly said, 'You understand this is unilateral disarmament, right?'"

Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times:

Leaders in Poland — early and strong supporters of Ukraine — feared that Germany or France might try to persuade the Ukrainians to accept Russia's terms, according to a European diplomat, and wanted to prevent that from happening.

To that end, when Poland's president, Andrzej Duda, met with NATO leaders in Brussels on March 24, he held up the March 17 text, said the diplomat, who was present.

"Which of you would sign it?" Mr. Duda asked his counterparts, the diplomat said.

None of the NATO leaders spoke up.

A Breakthrough in Istanbul?

A few days later, on March 29, Russia and Ukraine's representatives met at an Istanbul palace on the Bosphorus. To some, the talks felt like a breakthrough driven by Russia's battlefield struggles.

After each military setback, a member of Ukraine's negotiating team said, Mr. Putin "reduced his demands."

In Istanbul, the Russians seemed to endorse Ukraine's model of neutrality and security guarantees and put less emphasis on their territorial demands. Afterward, Mr. Medinsky, Russia's lead negotiator, said Ukraine's offer of neutrality meant it was "ready to fulfill those principal demands that Russia insisted on for all the past years."

Ukraine summarized the proposed deal in a two-page document it called the Istanbul Communiqué, which it never published. The status of Crimea was to be decided over a 10- or 15-year period, with Ukraine promising not to try to retake the peninsula by force; Mr. Zelensky and Mr. Putin would meet in person to finalize a peace treaty and strike a deal on how much Ukrainian territory Russia would continue to occupy.

Zelensky and Putin **would meet to hash out final differences, according to the discussions in Istanbul.**

"The parties consider it possible to hold a meeting on 2022 between the presidents of Ukraine and Russia with the aim to sign an agreement and/or make political decisions regarding the remaining unresolved issues."

The communiqué, provided to The Times by a Ukrainian negotiator, described a mechanism in which other countries would intervene militarily if Ukraine were attacked again — a concept that the Ukrainians pointedly designated as Article 5, a reference to the mutual defense agreement in Article 5 of the NATO treaty.

To the Ukrainians, **binding security guarantees were at the core of a potential peace deal that multiple countries would sign on to.**

"Possible guarantor states: Great Britain, China, Russia, the United States, France, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Italy, Poland, Israel."

"The Guarantor States and Ukraine agree that in the event of aggression, any armed attack on Ukraine or any military operation against Ukraine, each of the Guarantor States, after urgent and immediate consultations between them ... will provide ... assistance to Ukraine, as a permanently neutral state under attack..."

But Russian officials sent mixed signals in public on whether the Kremlin was really ready to sign onto the deal. The Russians and Ukrainians returned to hours long negotiating sessions by video call, exchanging treaty drafts via WhatsApp, negotiators said.

‘The Boss’

In early April, after Russia withdrew from the outskirts of Kyiv, images of massacred civilians in the suburb of Bucha, some with their hands tied with white cloth, shocked the world. For Ukrainians, the idea that their country could strike a compromise with Russia seemed more remote than ever.

But Mr. Zelensky, visiting Bucha on April 4, said the talks would go on, even as Russia dismissed the Bucha atrocities as a staged “provocation.”

“Colleagues, I spoke to RA,” Ukraine’s lead negotiator, Davyd Arakhamia, wrote on April 10 in a WhatsApp message to the Ukrainian team. “He spoke yesterday for an hour and a half with his boss.”

“RA” was Roman Abramovich, the Russian billionaire who played a behind-the-scenes role in the talks. His “boss,” Mr. Putin, was urging the negotiators to concentrate on the key issues and work through them quickly, Mr. Arakhamia wrote. (A member of the WhatsApp group showed that message and others to reporters for The Times.)

A spokesperson for Mr Abramovich said his role “was limited to introducing representatives from both parties to each other” and that following that initial stage, he “was not involved in the process.”

Mr. Arakhamia’s message suggested that Mr. Putin was micromanaging not only Russia’s invasion, but also its peace talks. At another point, Russia’s lead negotiator, Mr. Medinsky, interrupted a video conference by claiming that Mr. Putin was phoning him directly.

“The boss is calling,” Mr. Medinsky said, according to two Ukrainian negotiators.

Mr. Putin’s involvement and intentions during the 2022 talks were subjects of debate in Kyiv and Washington, Ukrainian and American officials said. Was he truly interested in a deal? Or was he merely trying to bog Ukraine down while his troops regrouped?

“We didn’t know if Putin was serious,” said the former senior U.S. official. “We couldn’t tell, on either side of the fence, whether these people who were talking were empowered.”

One Ukrainian negotiator said he believed the negotiations were a bluff on Mr. Putin’s part, but two others described them as serious.

On April 15, five days after Mr. Abramovich told the Ukrainians about his meeting with Mr. Putin, the Russian negotiators sent a 17-page draft treaty to their president’s desk.

Sticking Points

Similar to the month-earlier version, the April 15 draft includes text in red highlighting issues in dispute. But such markings are almost entirely absent from the treaty's first pages, where points of agreement emerged.

Negotiators agreed that Ukraine would declare itself permanently neutral, though it would be allowed to join the European Union.

Russia dropped its earlier objections to Ukraine's full-fledged E.U. membership.

“The Parties to this Treaty share the understanding that Ukraine's status as a permanently neutral state is, subject to the provisions of this Treaty, compatible with Ukraine's possible membership in the European Union.”

Much of the treaty would “not apply” to Crimea and another to-be-determined swath of Ukraine — meaning that Kyiv would accept Russian occupation of part of its territory without recognizing Russian sovereignty over it.

But crucial sticking points remained. Russia wanted the firing range of Ukraine's missiles to be limited to 25 miles, while Ukraine wanted 174 miles — enough to hit targets across Crimea. Russia still wanted Ukraine to repeal laws related to language and national identity, and to pull back Ukrainian troops as part of a cease-fire.

Russia's ceasefire proposal declared that Ukraine would need to withdraw its troops on its own territory.

“Ukraine carries out the withdrawal (return) of units of its armed forces, other armed formations, weapons and military equipment to places of permanent deployment or to places agreed upon with the Russian Federation.”

The biggest problem, however, came in Article 5. It stated that, in the event of another armed attack on Ukraine, the “guarantor states” that would sign the treaty — Great Britain, China, Russia, the United States and France — would come to Ukraine's defense.

To the Ukrainians' dismay, there was a crucial departure from what Ukrainian negotiators said was discussed in Istanbul. Russia inserted a clause saying that all guarantor states, including Russia, had to approve the response if Ukraine were attacked. In effect, Moscow could invade Ukraine again and then veto any military intervention on Ukraine's behalf — a seemingly absurd condition that Kyiv quickly identified as a dealbreaker.

Russia tried to secure a veto on Ukraine's security guarantees by inserting a clause requiring unanimous consent.

What Now?

Two years later, there are still no signs that Russia and Ukraine might return to the negotiating table. At a Swiss resort this weekend, **Mr. Zelensky will seek to persuade dignitaries from about 100 countries and organizations, including Vice President Kamala Harris, that victory remains realistic. (This is a clown trying to be president and it is ludicrous to think that Ukraine can win in this war. The Ukrainian army is**

losing men at the rate of 1500 to 2000 per day, or about 50,000 per month. If it started 2024 with half a million soldiers, it cannot last another year. And in terms of equipment, after it got \$60 billion recently, it is now asking for more money. Observers like me would say, told you so... These jokers in Kyiv are bad managers of everything. There is no end to their asks...that's why Zelenskyy is now a very unpopular figure wherever he appears. Even Biden does not like him. And it is rumoured that with his not being the legal president (his term expired at the end of May, and he has not held elections like he should.) He is going to be dumped soon enough.

To keep Ukrainians inside the country, there are now mines planted on the western border facing the rest of Europe, to prevent military aged men from fleeing to the west. On the eastern side facing Russia, where they are supposed to have built defensive fortifications, the officials are so corrupt that the money just disappeared, and nothing was built – around Kharkiv, the Russians just walked in. So, they want to win a victory?? Let's see.)

Russia is not invited, and China, its most powerful partner, opted not to attend. Mr. Zelensky has pledged to keep fighting, describing his peace plan as one in which Russia withdraws from all of Ukraine's territory, pays reparations and is punished for war crimes. (That's why this guy should be sent to the looney bin...)

"If we don't make progress this year, then we will try again next year," Mr. Zelensky privately told a European counterpart recently, according to a European diplomat who was present. "And if we don't make progress next year, we will try again the following year, and the one after that." (Independent military analysts think that Ukraine won't last another summer...)

Mr. Putin in recent months stepped up efforts to stoke Western divisions by portraying peace as having been within reach in 2022 — and saying he was prepared to restart those talks. Ukraine's leaders have dismissed Mr. Putin's statements on the subject as deception.

Mr. Putin shifted to a harder line on Friday, insisting that he would order a cease-fire and negotiate only if Ukraine withdrew from the four regions that Moscow has claimed as its own and dropped its aspirations to join NATO.

Even before Mr. Putin's latest demand, experts said it was hard to imagine going back to the kind of deal discussed in 2022. Ukraine is more determined than ever to join NATO, a message it will reinforce when leaders of the alliance meet in Washington next month. (As a matter of fact, it is widely recognized that NATO does not want Ukraine to join the membership. The country has been led up the primrose garden, and it takes a fool to think Ukraine is still the debutante at the ball.)

Instead, the more likely end to the fighting could be an uneasy truce. (Many think that there will not be a truce or the so called stalemate, which nothing more than euphemistic bullshit to justify the huge expenditures being spent to keep the war going. Ukraine has lost and has no more resources to fight on.) Marc Weller, a Cambridge international law professor who specializes in peace negotiations, said he expected leading Western countries to focus on defending Ukraine's future battle line

with Russia “rather than seek accommodation across it.” (How? If they can do it, they would have done it in 2023 during the so-called counteroffensive when they prepared for it over many months and supplied by many weapons and men. A battle is won or lost at a crucial time. That crucial time is now history.)

Here is a succinct summary of Putin’s terms of surrender for Kyiv from CNBC:

Russia’s Putin sets out conditions for peace talks with Ukraine

JUN 14 2024 7:07 AM EDT UPDATED FRI, JUN 14 2024 11:16 AM EDT

[Ruxandra Iordache](#)

KEY POINTS

- Russian state news outlet Tass reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin demands the complete withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, after which peace negotiations can begin.
- Putin added that Moscow was committed to ensuring the “unhindered and safe withdrawal” of Ukrainian forces if Kyiv agrees to such a concession.
- The Kremlin’s conditions are unlikely to receive a warm reception in Kyiv, which has repeatedly stated that it will not concede territory to Russia. (Very soon, Kyiv will concede the whole country.)

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday set out the requirements for Moscow to start peace talks with Ukraine, more than two years after the Kremlin’s full-fledged invasion of its neighbor.

According to a Google-translated Telegram update from Russian state news outlet Tass, the terms include the complete withdrawal of Ukrainian troops from the territories of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, which Russia illegally annexed within months of commencing hostilities, in September 2022. (And the frontline has kept moving westwards on a daily basis... How does this square up with the victory that Zelenskyy keeps boasting about?)

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Putin said during a meeting with the leadership of the Russian Foreign Ministry that as long as Ukraine begins a “real withdrawal of troops from these regions, and will also officially notify of the abandonment of plans to join NATO — on our part, immediately, at the same minute, an order will follow to cease fire and begin negotiations,” according to Google-translated comments carried by Tass. (Ukraine has had its chance and blew it. Nobody said the negotiations are going to be piece of cake.)

He said Moscow was committed to ensuring the “unhindered and safe withdrawal” of Ukrainian forces if Kyiv agrees to such a concession.

If the peace proposal is refused, Putin added, Moscow’s future demands will be different. (Unconditional surrender??)

Putin’s comments contrast starkly with his Ukrainian counterpart’s peace plan. Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s 10-point proposal, outlined in November 2022, demands the restoration of the country’s “territorial integrity” under the U.N. Charter. (If that was what he wanted, he should not have kept kicking the bear in the ass, ganging up with the west to taunt Russia. Now it is too late, when the angry bear is mauling Ukraine to pieces.) He has also insisted that Ukraine regain the peninsula of Crimea, which Russia annexed illegally before the current war, in February 2014.

Previous attempts at peace

Peace frameworks have so far been doomed to fail throughout the Ukraine conflict. A 12-point plan released by Russia’s ally, Beijing, on the war’s one-year anniversary also gained no momentum. China is once again pushing its own alternative diplomatic plan, Reuters reports.

Putin’s Friday proposal threatens to steal the spotlight from imminent negotiations in Switzerland, where 100 countries and organizations are set to meet over June 15-16 at the Swiss resort of Bürgenstock for the Summit on Peace in Ukraine. (They came and went, and it was a bloody waste of everybody’s time.)

Moscow, notably, was not invited — and has in the past touted the futility of third parties attempting to negotiate a resolution to the conflict without Russia’s participation. Previous summits have failed to implement a diplomatic solution to the conflict or abate hostilities on the battlefield.

It comes as Ukraine’s allies have been stepping up support in recent weeks, both financially and militarily. (Like Macron has done? Now he is going to suffer electoral defeat in his own country. Give an inch to Zelenskyy and he will ask for your entire foot.)

On Thursday, leaders of the Group of Seven nations agreed in principle to issue \$50 billion in loans for Kyiv that are backed by the profits generated by roughly 300 billion euros (\$322 billion) of Russian central bank assets frozen by the West. European Council President Charles Michel stressed that “Russia has to pay.” (And how? You are going to send troops? Your citizens don’t want to go to war...)

NATO is separately due to discuss further support for Ukraine during its upcoming summit of July 9-11. Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg expects member countries to agree a “long-term financial pledge to provide military support” for Kyiv and a “leading role” for the military alliance in providing and coordinating security assistance in the war-torn country.

Already, the U.S. and Germany have removed some restrictions on weapons they supply to Ukraine and now permit their use against targets just over the border inside Russia, exclusively for the purpose of defending Kharkiv.

Clearly, the peace proposals on both sides are not working. The war will therefore continue. This will lead to more Ukrainians dying at five times the rate of the Russians. Assuming that they had an army that was 500,000 strong after the disastrous summer counteroffensive of 2023, the rate of casualties will exhaust its manpower reserves within the next few months. Russia has many more times the population of Ukraine. So it is an uneven fight. Ukraine is continuing to lose.

As for weapons, it is never enough, and we saw this coming. These guys in Kyiv will just keep asking for more...And more. Until they exhaust all the enthusiasm that people like the French or the Americans show for giving their own weapons to Kyiv. Can anyone imagine gifts of weapons for another two years? The European parliamentary elections are indicative of the future ahead. The likes of Macron or von der Leyen may talk a good story of support, but when their populations vote them out, they will also stop talking.

Therefore this is a game which has an end point. I think that end point will be less than one year.

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Un-Influencer in a World full of Hubris

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