



DISCUSSION PAPER

# LINES AND LANES

EXPLORING EUROPE'S ROLE IN  
SECURING JUST AND LASTING PEACE  
IN UKRAINE

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## **UKRAINE'S AGRICULTURE: NOT A THREAT TO THE EU**

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## Introduction

Since the beginning of the full-blown war, the European Union, its Member States and its partners have been supportive of Ukraine's efforts to restore comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine, based on international law.

The EU has been one of the most active promoters of the Peace Formula initiative proposed by President Zelenskyy. European institutions and member states provided substantial support in the preparation for the first Global Summit on Peace in Ukraine, held in Switzerland in June 2024. The European Union is also a co-signatory of the Summit's Final Communiqué.

In the Joint Security Commitments between the European Union and Ukraine, signed in June 2024, the EU reaffirms its support for a comprehensive, just and sustainable peace in Ukraine, based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law, in line with the key principles and objectives of the Ukrainian Peace Formula. The main elements of this initiative are:

- All thematic points of the peace initiative are based on the norms of the UN Charter and international conventions.
- Forming coalition of partners based on the primacy of international law and the UN Charter. The initiative focuses on building the broadest international support, including non-Western states.
- As a result of the implementation of all thematic points, peace must not only be sustainable but also just.
- Introducing strong security guarantees for Ukraine that would be able to deter the aggressor from attempts to invade in the future.
- It will be for Ukraine, not for the aggressor, to decide about the conditions and timing for negotiations.

## Trump's era of "peacemaking"

It can hardly be said that Ukraine had not prepared for Donald Trump's return to the White House. Understanding the potential complexity of the situation, the Ukrainian side focused on holding thematic meetings and issuing relevant thematic communiqués under the Peace Formula framework, which could have become a kind of insurance policy against Trump's desire to resolve the conflict quickly and painfully for Ukraine's legitimate interests.

However, the Ukrainian calculation did not work out, as Trump chose an approach that was the opposite of what Ukraine and its Western partners expected. Predictably, the team of the 47th US president chose the traditional conflict resolution policy known from the previous cadence.

The characteristics of this approach are as follows:

- Trump's desire to exclude Europe from the negotiations to secure bilateral US-Russian agreements;
- Blurring of the parties' qualifications as 'aggressor' and 'victim', imposing equal treatment of their positions;
- Focusing on temporary diplomatic successes that can be used as a good media pretext to declare Trump a peacemaker, without addressing the issue of peacekeeping;

- Willingness to act based on emotional assessments and instincts, without much understanding of the political and psychological characteristics of the enemy;
- Rejection of the position of adherence to international law and the UN Charter in the search for a solution.

Based on the realities of the battlefield and public opinion in Ukraine, Zelenskyy and his team could not allow themselves to be guided by principles that were diametrically opposed to those postulated during the development of the common position of the participants of the Global Summit on peace in Ukraine and the meetings of the relevant thematic working groups.

The meetings of the Ukrainian and American negotiating teams in Jeddah on 11 March showed that it is possible to form a constructive outline of potential steps towards negotiations. One of the main achievements of these consultations is at the bilateral level of Ukrainian-American relations. After these talks, the parties returned to a normal diplomatic track and dialogue at various levels, including the highest. Already at this stage, Ukraine agreed to the US proposal to ensure a 30-day ceasefire. Predictably, Russia did not respond unequivocally, but set additional conditions for Ukraine. In this regard, Ukraine demonstrated to the world that it is not Ukraine that is an obstacle to peace. Now it is important for Ukraine to ensure common approach that pressure should be put on the aggressor and violator, and not at the expense of a country that has suffered from aggression and is trying to preserve its sovereignty.

The main challenge now is whether the United States will be ready to pressure Russia to compel it to fulfil the conditions for de-escalation, including good faith compliance with the ceasefire.

## Ukrainian plans and steps towards peace

The primary objective of Ukraine in establishing partnerships on its way to peace is to maintain the current stance on achieving comprehensive peace, grounded in the nine thematic pillars of the Peace Formula initiative.

Within “peace through strength” Ukraine asks partners to consider two elements: economic and military. At the level of the economic dimension, Ukraine appeals to its partners, primarily the EU, to increase economic and sanctions pressure on Russia in order to reduce the ability to finance the war machine. This means not only the introduction of new sanctions packages, but also the closure of the failed implementation of previous restrictions. Sanctions should remain in place until Russia begins to withdraw its troops from Ukrainian land and fully compensates for the damage caused by its aggression.

In the military dimension, the partners should strengthen Ukraine's capabilities by providing ammunition for artillery, air defence systems, and strikes deep into Russia's territory against strategic military facilities. Specific focus is also on training of Ukrainian troops under the EUMAM mandate or bilateral agreements. Ukraine has restored its defence capabilities to produce certain types of weapons and ammunition, so attracting European investment in the defence industry is also a priority in cooperation with partners.

Ukrainian authorities have recently identified three core redlines that are non-negotiable in any future discussions concerning the termination of the war. Firstly, the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine. It is inconceivable that Ukraine would ever acknowledge the occupied territories. Secondly, the imposition of a neutral status on Ukraine is regarded as unacceptable. Moreover, Ukraine firmly believes that no other country has the right to influence its decision regarding the accession to any union or alliance, be it NATO, the EU, or any other organisation. Thirdly, Ukraine will not accept any imposed limitation on the size of the Ukrainian armed forces and other defence capabilities.

Ukraine immediately agreed to the United States' proposal for a ceasefire. At the same time, an important element should be the exchange of prisoners of war under the formula of all for all, civilians, as well as the return of Ukrainian children abducted by the aggressor and forcibly taken to Russia and Belarus.

Ukraine perceives its possible accelerated accession to the EU as not only a strategic goal, but also a necessity for strengthening European and global security.

## EU's peace principles "27-1"

In March 2025 the texts of the European Council's conclusions concerning Ukraine were adopted with the support of 26 EU member states (6 March, 20 March). Drawing upon these texts, we can identify the following EU principles and approaches that could inform a settlement of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

The first principle, and one that is fundamental to this approach, is that a comprehensive, just and lasting peace must be based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law.

Second, the decision regarding the security environment for both Ukraine and Europe must be made by the respective States and institutions themselves.

Thirdly, a ceasefire is only possible as part of the preparation for a comprehensive peace agreement. In this regard, the European Union acknowledges that a key precondition for any agreement should be credible security guarantees for Ukraine. And any peace agreement must respect Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The European Union's approach is guided by the principle "peace through strength," with a clear vision that Ukraine requires substantial support, including military assistance, throughout the negotiations to bring an end to the war.

Against the backdrop of the joint statement by Ukraine and the US, including the proposal for a ceasefire agreement between Russia and Ukraine, the EU called on Russian side to show real engagement by executing the prisoners of war exchange as well as the release of civilians, including all Ukrainian children unlawfully deported to territories of Russia and Belarus.

It has been also mentioned that the European Union shows its readiness to increase pressure on the aggressor by applying new sanctions and enforcing already existing restrictions.



# European shades of peace: lasting and just

The statements made by President Zelenskyy during his meetings with European partners demonstrate a clear reliance on maintaining transatlantic unity in forming a common position on the modalities, time and procedural framework for ending the war.

For instance, alongside the work in the US-Ukraine negotiation format in Jeddah, Ukraine discussed its position with its European partners in advance. In the statement following the meeting, Ukraine also stressed that Europe should be a direct participant in the negotiation process.

In mid-March, the government formalised the creation of a negotiating track with European partners. By presidential decree, a Ukrainian delegation was formed to interact with Ukraine's international partners to ensure the negotiation process to achieve a just peace. The emphasis here is on just peace, which brings an additional dimension of international cooperation alongside the US track, which focuses on creating the preconditions for a lasting peace as understood by the White House.

Justice for Ukrainians means that Russia must be punished for the crime of aggression against Ukraine and war crimes. Ukraine counts on the support of the European Union and its European partners in forming an institutional and procedural framework for bringing justice when the war is over.

In March 2025 in Strasbourg, the Core Group completed technical work on three draft documents necessary to establish a Special Tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine. Importantly, that the EU takes part in the Core Groupe in the framework of the Council of Europe.

European support is vital in installing the International Register of damage caused by Russian aggression as the first step toward an international compensation mechanism. EU must stay firm in keeping Russia's sovereign assets immobilised till the time when the war stops and Russia covers damage inflicted to Ukraine.

## Ukraine's expectations of the EU's active engagement

### *Coordinate*

- Currently, we are witnessing the emergence of formal and informal elements of the institutional ecosystem to support the negotiation process for just peace. Thematic meetings on a periodic basis in the format of EU heads of state and government, the Coalition of the Willing, G7 consultations, NB8+Ukraine meetings create a platform

for division of responsibilities between partners in solidifying “peace through strength” policy towards Ukraine.

- Ukraine has an established level of political consultations with the leadership of European institutions on the prospects for a peaceful settlement. The heads of the cabinets of the President of the European Commission, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, and the President of the European Council. On the one hand, this is a positive aspect of the inclusion of most institutions in the process, but on the other hand, it may send a signal to the Kremlin about the lack of ‘one voice’ policy and internal competition for leadership. That is why the proposal made by official Kyiv to appoint an authorised representative, the head of the EU's negotiating team, is gaining relevance.

### **Communicate**

- At the level of European countries, Russia has significantly intensified its attempts to shape public opinion towards Ukraine through hybrid influence and the spread of disinformation. The calculation is based on sowing doubts about Ukraine's position as a victim of an aggressive war that is turning against its sovereignty. At this stage, the fight against FIMI should be strengthened in terms of human resources at the same pace as attempts to develop defence capabilities.
- Given the fact that Ukraine still intends to secure comprehensive international support for the Ukrainian plan and its implementation steps, European partners who are currently co-authoring approaches to potential negotiations should continue to help maximise the initiative's visibility in non-Western countries around the world. The example of the preparations for the first Global Peace Summit in Ukraine in 2024 shows the importance of joint outreach to third countries.
- One of the areas of information attacks by Russian special services will be discrediting the Ukrainian leadership and spreading doubts about its legitimacy. Messages about the need to hold presidential and parliamentary elections in Ukraine as soon as possible are spread by both Russian sources and individual politicians in the United States and Europe. European partners should help to minimize such narratives in public discourse.

### **Support**

- European partners, participating in the Coalition of willing, have to come up with a clear plan on security guarantees, including possible deployment of contingents and their mandates. It may serve as a strong deterrent if numbers and commitment are relevant to the level of the threat.
- At the same time, European partners can actively engage in alternative initiatives that have potential to deliver much needed protection of Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure. For example, the SkyShield initiative, a European-led Integrated Air Protection Zone that is covered by European or Euro-Atlantic combat air patrols over the unoccupied territories of Ukraine, is worthy of note. It can be implemented by a coalition of the willing as part of security assistance and guarantees to Ukraine. This is not only an element of potential deterrence, but also active protection of critical infrastructure, including nuclear power plants.

## **Prepare**

- The issue of the number of potential troops that could be present on the Ukrainian territory is still at the stage of active search for solutions. However, it is already clear that the presence of these European armed units on the territory of Ukraine requires extensive training, physical and psychological preparation. The deterrence or garrisoning units must be ready to deter in the event of a negative spin-off. Unprepared troops will suffer more losses in a potential clash. Therefore, measures should be taken at this stage to ensure training on the territory of EU and NATO Allies.
- Given the absence of preconditions for a quick end to the war, the EU should transform its approach to positioning itself as a leader in crisis prevention and conflict resolution. The current tools available to the European Union do not correspond to the scale of the challenges and threats that are in the immediate vicinity of the EU's borders. In this regard, the CSDP policy needs to be revisited in order to face the necessity to engage in large-scale conflicts. More manpower should be selected and trained to cover various mandates, including for disengagement of conflicting parties.
- European support might also be instrumental for immediate needs of Ukraine if partial or comprehensive ceasefire is reached. The issue of monitoring and verification is of critical importance. Ukraine has started preparing Ukrainian team to tackle these issues, but such a mission also need to have international component.
- The European Union, as well as the member states that are part of the coalition of the willing, should work with Ukraine to start preparing the Ukrainian negotiating team and strengthening its expert and institutional capacities. At the time of the prospect of negotiations on an agreement to end the war, the Ukrainian and European sides should be confident that they are fully prepared to confront Russia's manipulative negotiation practices.











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