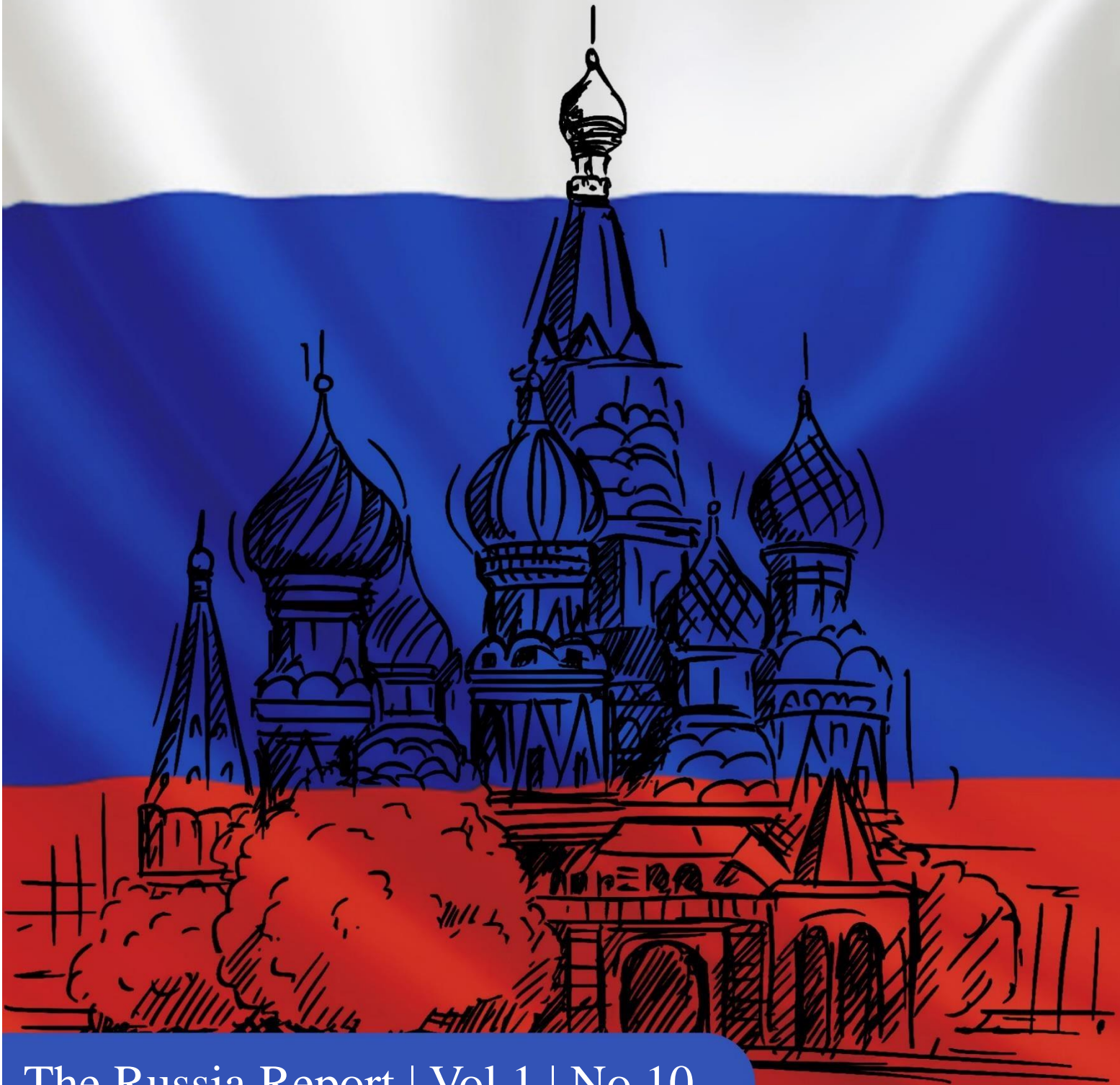


# CLAWS Newsletter



The Russia Report | Vol 1 | No 10

by Anusua Ganguly

- **Russia – North Korea Relations**

### **Inside North Korea's New Beach Resort — Where Only Russians Are Welcome**

[The Wall Street Journal](#), August 1, 2025

North Korea has opened its brand-new Wonsan Kalma coastal resort to foreign tourists for the first time — but only Russians are invited. This sprawling, modern complex, built under Kim Jong Un's leadership, aims to showcase a glimpse of luxury and affluence despite international sanctions.

The resort boasts pristine white sands, crystal-clear waters, and plans for hotels, casinos, and shopping malls inspired by Spain's Benidorm. However, the first group of Russian tourists found the beaches nearly empty, enjoying VIP treatment with attentive staff and even free jet-ski rides.

Kim Jong Un personally oversaw the resort's design and attended its opening with his daughter. Recently, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov visited, meeting Kim aboard a luxury yacht and discussing closer ties between Russia and North Korea.

Travelers pay around \$2,000 for a week-long stay, with extras like a \$465 model of North Korea's Hwasong-17 missile available as souvenirs. Although the resort is still unfinished and facing some logistical challenges, it represents Pyongyang's effort to cautiously reopen to foreign visitors — albeit very selectively.

For now, Wonsan Kalma remains a unique, exclusive destination where Russians get a rare peek behind the curtain of North Korea's tightly controlled tourism

### **Telephone Conversation with Chairman of State Affairs of the DPRK Kim Jong-un**

[President of Russia](#), 12 August 2025

President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with Chairman of State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Kim Jong-un.

The Russian President extended warm congratulations to the Korean leader ahead of the national holiday marking the 80th anniversary of Korea's liberation from Japanese colonial rule, celebrated on 15 August. Kim Jong-un noted that the DPRK regards this as a shared holiday and honours the Red Army's role in the fight against the occupiers.

Both leaders reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening friendly, neighbourly, and cooperative relations in all areas, in accordance with the Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership signed in Pyongyang on 19 June 2024.

President Putin expressed deep appreciation for the DPRK's support during the liberation of the Kursk Region from the Kiev regime, highlighting the bravery, heroism, and dedication shown by DPRK soldiers.

The Russian President also informed Kim Jong-un about the upcoming meeting with US President Donald Trump.

The two leaders agreed to maintain regular personal contact.

### **North Koreans Forced to Work 'Like Slaves' in Russia Amid War Labor Shortage**

[BBC](#), August 12, 2025

As Russia's war in Ukraine drags on, it faces a severe labor shortage with many Russian men fighting or fleeing. To fill the gap, Moscow is increasingly sending tens of thousands of North Korean workers to Russia — but under brutal, near-slave conditions, the BBC reports.

Key points:

- Over 50,000 North Koreans are expected to be sent to work in Russia on construction sites, factories, and IT centers, violating UN sanctions banning such labour exports.
- Workers report 18-hour workdays with minimal rest, dangerous conditions, and harsh surveillance by North Korean security agents to prevent escapes.
- Most wages are confiscated by the North Korean regime as “loyalty fees,” leaving workers with only a small fraction — often paid only upon their return home.
- Escape is difficult but some have fled, exposing horrific conditions: overcrowded, bug-infested sleeping quarters, physical abuse, and denial of medical care.
- South Korean intelligence and experts warn that Russia is exploiting North Korean labor as a cheap, compliant workforce to sustain its war effort.
- This workforce expansion is expected to continue long after the war, reflecting the deepening ties between Kim Jong Un and Vladimir Putin.

For many North Koreans, these overseas jobs are seen as rare opportunities to escape poverty, but the reality is one of exploitation and hardship. The human cost of this arrangement adds a grim dimension to the geopolitical alliance fuelling the ongoing conflict.

### **North Korea's Growing Military Threat: The Russia-Ukraine War's Ripple Effect**

[The Diplomat](#), August 14, 2025

The conflict in Ukraine is reshaping security far beyond Europe — notably, making North Korea a more formidable military power.

By supplying weapons and troops to Russia, North Korea has gained billions in revenue, advanced weaponry, and critical combat experience. These developments are rapidly

modernizing Pyongyang's military capabilities, posing new challenges for South Korea and its allies.

Key developments include:

- Massive military support to Russia: North Korea has sent thousands of soldiers and millions of artillery shells to support Russia's war efforts, boosting its own war chest by billions of dollars.
- Advanced technology transfer: With Russian assistance, North Korea is upgrading its air defenses, missile systems, and electronic warfare, and making strides in satellite and nuclear missile technology.
- Combat experience: Fighting alongside Russian forces in Ukraine is honing North Korean troops' skills in modern warfare, including drone operations and AI-assisted tactics.
- Strategic alliance: A 2024 treaty between Russia and North Korea includes mutual defense commitments, signalling deeper military cooperation.

For South Korea, these shifts demand a re-evaluation of security policies. President Lee Jae Myung's approach favours dialogue and easing tensions, but North Korea's growing Russian ties reduce incentives for peace talks. Seoul is increasing joint military exercises with the United States, focusing on missile defense, cyber threats, and drone warfare.

As North Korea evolves into a more dangerous adversary, South Korea may need to strengthen regional partnerships and adapt its defense strategy to meet this heightened threat.

### • **India – Russia Relations**

#### **Meeting with National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India Ajit Doval**

[President of Russia](#), August 7, 2025

President Vladimir Putin received National Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of India, Ajit Doval, at the Kremlin.

From the Russian side, Security Council Secretary Sergei Shoigu and Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov took part in the meeting. The Indian delegation included Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of India to the Russian Federation, Vinay Kumar.

#### **Putin to Visit India at the End of 2025, Confirms Indian Security Adviser**

[Reuters](#), [The Hindu](#), [The Moscow Times](#), [TASS](#), August 7, 2025



Russian President Vladimir Putin is set to visit India at the end of 2025, according to a statement by India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval during his visit to Moscow. The clarification comes after earlier reports incorrectly suggested that the visit would take place in late August 2025.

The announcement underscores the continued importance of India-Russia relations amid shifting global alliances. Putin's visit is expected to focus on strengthening strategic and economic ties, especially in defense, energy cooperation, and multilateral engagement through BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Putin and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi last met during the BRICS Summit in Kazan, Russia, in October 2024.

### **Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi**

[President of Russia](#), [PIB](#), [TASS](#), August 8, 2025

President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.

In the context of the special privileged partnership between Russia and India, Vladimir Putin shared the main outcomes of his meeting with US President's Special Envoy Steven Witkoff, which had taken place on 6 August in Moscow. The Prime Minister thanked the Russian President for the update and reaffirmed India's consistent position in support of resolving the Ukraine situation through political and diplomatic efforts.

The two leaders also exchanged views on key bilateral matters, including cooperation in trade, the economy, and investment.

### **Upcoming Diplomatic Meeting: Russian and Indian Foreign Ministers to Meet in Moscow**

[MFA Russia X](#), August 9, 2025

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov will host Indian Foreign Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar in Moscow on August 21 for high-level bilateral talks.

The ministers are expected to discuss:

- Strategic issues on the Russia–India bilateral agenda
- Enhanced cooperation within multilateral frameworks such as BRICS and the SCO
- Regional and global developments affecting mutual interests

This meeting reflects the continued depth of the long-standing strategic partnership between Russia and India.

- **Russia on Armenia – Azerbaijan Peace Deal**

**Russian Foreign Ministry on Armenia-Azerbaijan Talks in Washington**

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), August 9, 2025

The Russian Federation reaffirmed its commitment to stability and prosperity in the South Caucasus, emphasising that comprehensive normalisation of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, based on mutual respect, is key to regional security. Russia supports all efforts to achieve this goal and welcomed the recent meeting between the two leaders in Washington, facilitated by the United States, as a positive step towards peace.

The Foreign Ministry reminded that previous progress was largely due to Russia's central role, including the trilateral ceasefire agreement of November 2020 and the deployment of Russian peacekeepers, who played a vital part in stabilising the region.

Between 2020 and 2022, the trilateral format helped advance key issues such as peace agreements, unblocking transport and economic links, border delimitation, and civil society contacts.

Russia stressed that the best path forward lies in solutions developed by the countries of the region themselves, with support from neighbouring states Russia, Iran, and Türkiye. External involvement should support peace efforts rather than create divisions. The statement also expressed concerns about Western mediation efforts, citing the EU observer mission in Armenia as a source of regional discontent.

Russia said it would closely monitor Washington's comments on restoring regional communications, noting that the trilateral agreements remain in effect. It highlighted Armenia's role in the Eurasian Economic Union and the importance of Russian border troops guarding Armenia's border with Iran under an interstate treaty.

The Ministry concluded that a peace agreement and the establishment of bilateral relations are essential for lasting peace in the South Caucasus, which must be based on balanced interests and respect for both nations and their neighbours.

**Telephone Conversation with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan**

[President of Russia](#), 11 August 2025

President Vladimir Putin held a telephone conversation with Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan, initiated by the Armenian side.

Prime Minister Pashinyan provided a detailed overview of his 8 August meeting in Washington with US President Donald Trump and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. President Putin stressed the importance of steps towards lasting peace between Yerevan and

Baku, reaffirming Russia's commitment to supporting a comprehensive normalisation of Armenia–Azerbaijan relations, in line with the trilateral declarations of 2020–2022, including the unblocking of regional transport routes.

President Putin also briefed the Armenian Prime Minister on the outcomes of his recent talks with US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and the ongoing preparations for the upcoming meeting with Donald Trump in Alaska. Prime Minister Pashinyan welcomed efforts aimed at a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine crisis.

The two leaders also discussed current bilateral issues, focusing on expanding trade and investment cooperation and working together within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

### **Telephone Conversation Between Foreign Ministers Sergey Lavrov and Ararat Mirzoyan**

[The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation](#), August 11, 2025

On 11 August, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held a telephone conversation with Armenian Foreign Minister Ararat Mirzoyan at the request of the Armenian side.

During the call, Minister Mirzoyan updated Minister Lavrov on recent contacts involving Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan, US President Donald Trump, and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev.

Minister Lavrov emphasised the importance of securing a lasting peace between Baku and Yerevan, based on the trilateral agreements of 2020–2022, in which Russia played a central role. Russia reaffirmed its readiness to continue supporting the comprehensive normalisation of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations.

The ministers also discussed several current matters on the Russian-Armenian agenda.

- **Putin – Trump Meet at Alaska Summit**

### **Putin: “Too Many Expectations” Behind Disappointment in Peace Talks**

[TASS](#), August 1, 2025

Russian President Vladimir Putin says recent disappointment around peace negotiations with Ukraine is due to “excessive expectations.” Speaking from Valaam, he stressed that any real peace process needs to happen quietly, without media attention or public drama.

Putin revealed that Russia had proposed creating working groups to explore a settlement and claimed Ukraine's initial response was "positive." However, he admitted that actual talks have not yet started.

His comments come days after the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska ended without a ceasefire or agreement. While the meeting was billed as a potential breakthrough, it concluded with no concrete progress and raised concerns in Ukraine and across Europe.

Putin says he remains hopeful that quiet negotiations can still begin.

### **Vladimir Putin's Meeting with US President's Special Envoy Steve Witkoff**

[President of Russia](#), [TASS](#), August 7, 2025; [RT](#), August 15, 2025

Aide to the President Yury Ushakov reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin met with US President's Special Envoy Witkoff. Both sides had expressed satisfaction with the outcome. The talks had focused on future cooperation in addressing the Ukraine crisis. It had been noted once again that Russia-US relations could shift to a new, mutually beneficial course, differing from recent years.

On the Ukraine issue, a US proposal had led to a general agreement to arrange a bilateral meeting between Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump in the coming days.

Russian and American officials had begun working on the meeting's details and venue. The location had been mostly agreed upon, with further information to be provided later.

Ushakov clarified that the idea of a trilateral meeting, which had sparked speculation in Washington the previous day, had only been briefly mentioned by the US representative during the Kremlin talks. No detailed discussion had taken place, and Russia had not commented on it. The focus had remained on preparing a bilateral meeting with Donald Trump, with the goal of ensuring tangible and successful outcomes.

Following the briefing from Steve Witkoff, Donald Trump had spoken by phone with several European leaders. In parallel, Russia had also updated its close partners and allies through appropriate channels on the subjects discussed at the meeting.

Next week had been suggested as a possible timeframe for the meeting. However, as preparations had only just begun, it was still unclear how long they would take. The option of holding the meeting next week had remained under consideration and was viewed positively.

### **Trump to Meet Putin in Alaska Amid Ukraine Peace Talks**

[CNN](#), August 8, 2025



U.S. President Donald Trump is set to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska to discuss a potential resolution to the ongoing war in Ukraine. Trump has proposed a controversial “land swap” plan, suggesting that both Russia and Ukraine may need to make territorial concessions to reach a peace deal.

However, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has firmly opposed any ceding of Ukrainian territory, emphasizing constitutional protections and the need to preserve Ukraine’s sovereignty.

The upcoming summit marks a critical moment as world leaders seek a path to peace amid years of conflict. While details remain uncertain, the talks aim to explore options that could end hostilities and establish security guarantees for Ukraine.

### **Putin–Trump Meeting Confirmed for 15 August in Alaska**

[President of Russia](#), August 9, 2025

Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov confirmed that an agreement had been reached to hold a meeting between President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump on Friday, 15 August, in Alaska.

Ushakov noted that, as neighbouring countries sharing a border, it was fitting for the Russian delegation to travel across the Bering Strait for such a significant and anticipated meeting. He also pointed out that Alaska and the Arctic represent areas where Russian and American economic interests align, with potential for major joint projects.

The talks are expected to focus primarily on finding a lasting political and diplomatic resolution to the Ukraine crisis.

Looking ahead, Ushakov added that Russia had already invited President Trump to hold the next meeting on Russian territory.

Preparations for the Alaska summit are now underway, with both Moscow and Washington actively working on its practical and political arrangements.

### **Putin Proposes Ceasefire in Exchange for Eastern Ukraine, WSJ Reports**

[WSJ X](#), [The Kyiv Independent](#), August 9, 2025

According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Russian President Vladimir Putin has floated a sweeping ceasefire proposal during a recent meeting with U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff. The plan, reportedly discussed behind closed doors, would halt active hostilities in exchange for Ukrainian withdrawal from Donetsk Oblast — effectively ceding full control of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Crimea to Russia.

The proposed plan, delivered in a two-phase structure, envisions:

1. Immediate withdrawal of Ukrainian forces from Donetsk, freezing the current front lines.
2. A subsequent peace agreement, to be negotiated between Presidents Trump, Putin, and potentially Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

European officials briefed on the call expressed concerns that the proposal might be a stalling tactic by Moscow to evade looming U.S. secondary sanctions. Ambiguities also remain regarding the status of partially occupied areas in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts.

In response to the news, U.S. President Donald Trump confirmed he will meet Putin in person on August 15 in Alaska. Speaking to reporters, Trump hinted at a potential territorial compromise:

“There will be some swapping of territories to the betterment of both... We’re going to get some back. We’re going to get some switched.”

Ukrainian President Zelenskyy has not yet officially responded, but Kyiv insiders told the *WSJ* that Ukraine is open to discussing proposals — contingent on a verified ceasefire. Still, any agreement involving territorial concessions remains deeply controversial in Ukraine, where public support for sovereignty remains firm.

Analysts warn that any deal reached without Ukraine’s direct participation risks deepening divisions among Kyiv’s Western allies and undermining long-term peace prospects.

### **Zelenskyy: “Peace Without Ukraine Is Peace Against Ukraine”**

[X](#), August 9, 2025

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has reiterated that any international decisions made without Ukraine’s involvement will not contribute to a genuine peace process. In a post on social media, Zelenskyy emphasized Ukraine’s readiness for “real decisions that can bring peace,” but firmly rejected any solutions imposed without Ukrainian participation.

“Any decisions that are against us, any decisions that are without Ukraine, are at the same time decisions against peace. They will not achieve anything. These are stillborn decisions,” Zelenskyy stated.

His comments come amid ongoing global diplomatic efforts to end the war, as some talks have taken place without Kyiv directly at the table. Zelenskyy continues to push for a peace framework rooted in sovereignty, international law, and respect for Ukraine’s territorial integrity.

## **Russia–US Summit Held in Anchorage, Alaska**

[President of Russia](#), August 15, 2025

President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump met at the Arctic Warrior Convention Centre for talks.

The Russian delegation included Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Presidential Aide Yury Ushakov, while the US side was represented by Secretary of State Marco Rubio and Special Envoy Steve Witkoff.

Following the discussions, Presidents Putin and Trump held a joint news conference.

## **Putin and Trump Hold Joint News Conference Following Alaska Summit**

[President of Russia](#), August 15, 2025

Following their talks in Anchorage, Presidents Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump held a joint news conference.

President Putin described the meeting as constructive and productive, thanking President Trump for hosting the summit in Alaska. He highlighted the close geographical and historical ties between Russia and the US, noting their shared history in Alaska and cooperation during World War II.

Putin acknowledged the challenging state of Russia-US relations over the past four years, calling the meeting a necessary step to move from confrontation to dialogue. He praised the direct contacts established with President Trump and expressed hope for progress on key issues.

The Ukraine crisis was a central topic, with Putin emphasising the need to address the conflict's root causes and Russia's security concerns. He welcomed President Trump's commitment to a peaceful resolution and called on all parties to support the process.

Putin also noted a 20% increase in bilateral trade under the current US administration and outlined opportunities for cooperation in trade, energy, technology, space, and Arctic development.

He concluded by expressing optimism that the summit would mark a turning point in Russia-US relations and bring closer an end to the conflict in Ukraine.

## **Trump-Putin Alaska Summit Ends Without Ceasefire**

[Al Jazeera](#), [RT](#), August 15, 2025

U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin met in Anchorage, Alaska, on August 15 for high-stakes talks aimed at ending the war in Ukraine. Despite red carpet diplomacy and public optimism from both sides, the summit concluded without a ceasefire or concrete agreements.

Putin reiterated Russia's willingness to end the war—but only under conditions Kyiv has repeatedly rejected, including withdrawal from occupied eastern regions and recognition of Russian control over Crimea, Donetsk, and Luhansk.

Trump, describing the meeting as “extremely productive,” admitted key sticking points remain. “There's no deal until there's a deal,” he told reporters.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the meeting “very positive,” suggesting it laid the groundwork for future negotiations. Russian officials touted the summit as a diplomatic win, highlighting the full ceremonial welcome given to Putin on U.S. soil.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was not invited to the talks but is expected to be part of a potential future trilateral meeting. Ukrainian officials expressed concern that the summit served as a platform for Russia to “buy time” and deflect sanctions without making real concessions.

U.S. lawmakers, particularly House Democrats, slammed Trump for granting Putin legitimacy without securing any commitments. Critics said Trump prioritized optics over accountability, warning the summit undermines Ukraine's defense and international law.

Trump has hinted at a follow-up meeting in Moscow, possibly including Zelenskyy. For now, the war grinds on, and pressure is mounting—especially in Europe—for more decisive diplomatic progress.

## **Meeting on the Outcomes of the Russia–US Summit**

[President of Russia](#), August 16, 2025

Following his return from the United States, President Vladimir Putin held a meeting to report on the outcomes of the Russia–US talks in Anchorage. The President briefed senior officials from the Presidential Executive Office, Government, State Duma, ministries, and agencies.

Attendees included Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin, State Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin, Security Council members Dmitry Medvedev and Sergei Shoigu, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, Defence Minister Andrei Belousov, and other senior officials.

President Putin described the visit as timely and useful, covering nearly all aspects of bilateral interaction, with a focus on finding a fair resolution to the Ukraine crisis. He noted



that for the first time in a long period, direct talks took place at this level, allowing Russia to present its position calmly and in detail.

Putin expressed respect for the US administration's desire to end hostilities quickly and emphasised Russia's own commitment to resolving issues peacefully.

He described the conversation as frank and substantive, moving both sides closer to necessary decisions. The President then provided a detailed overview of the talks and invited questions from those present.

### **Trump Reverts to Land Swap Proposal After Meeting Putin**

[The New York Times](#), August 16, 2025

Following his recent meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, U.S. President Donald Trump has shifted his approach to the Ukraine conflict. Instead of pushing for an immediate cease-fire, Trump now supports a peace plan involving territorial concession, including ceding parts of the Donbas region to Russia—even areas not currently occupied by Russian forces.

This stance marks a reversal from agreements discussed earlier with European allies, who strongly oppose Ukraine giving up sovereign territory. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has reiterated that any permanent loss of land would violate Ukraine's constitution.

In exchange, Putin reportedly offered a cease-fire along current battle lines and a written guarantee not to attack Ukraine or other European countries again—though European officials expressed skepticism due to past violations of such promises.

Trump also indicated that Ukraine would receive strong security guarantees post-conflict, possibly involving U.S. troops, but outside of NATO. Putin requested protections for the Russian language and Russian Orthodox churches within Ukraine.

Trump plans to discuss the land swap proposal with Zelensky at an upcoming White House meeting. Meanwhile, European leaders remain committed to maintaining sanctions on Russia until the violence stops.

### **Rubio: No U.S. Backing for Putin's Donbas Plan — Ukraine Will Decide**

[Fox News](#), August 17, 2025

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio pushed back on reports claiming President Trump supports Russia's plan to take full control of Ukraine's Donbas region. Speaking on Fox News, Rubio stressed that only Ukraine can make decisions about its territory, saying, "These are things that Zelenskyy is going to have to decide on."

Rubio said Trump’s Alaska summit with Putin made some “progress,” but warned that additional sanctions on Russia could derail peace talks, suggesting diplomacy requires careful handling.

He also defended Trump’s role as the only leader capable of brokering peace, while admitting the road ahead is still uncertain. “If one side gets everything they want, that’s not a peace deal. It’s called surrender,” he added.

European leaders and NATO officials are expected in Washington this week to continue discussions on long-term security guarantees for Ukraine.



## About the Author

Anusua Ganguly is a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies, where her study focuses on Russia and Central Asia. She holds a Master's degree in Conflict Analysis and Peace Building, and her research interests include non-traditional security threats, the role of media in conflict, and the intersection of gender with conflict and peacebuilding.



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