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No Zelensky, no Brussels, no problem: Here's how Putin and Trump's Alaska power move will play out

The Russia-US summit could reshape the Ukraine war – and leave Europe watching from the sidelines

By Dmitry Suslov, member of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, deputy director of World Economy and International Politics at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, and Valdai Club expert.



FILE PHOTO: Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump. © Kremlin Press Office / Handout / Anadolu Agency / Getty Images

On Friday, Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump will meet in Alaska. This will be the first full-scale Russia-US summit since June 2021 in Geneva, and the first official visit by a Russian president to American soil since Dmitry Medvedev's

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trip in 2010 at the height of the “reset.”

It will also be the first time the leaders of Russia and the US have met in Alaska, the closest US state to Russia, separated only by the narrow Bering Strait, and once part of the Russian Empire. The symbolism is obvious: as far as possible from Ukraine and Western Europe, but as close as possible to Russia. And neither Zelensky nor the EU's top brass will be in the room.

The message could not be clearer – Moscow and Washington will make the key decisions on Ukraine, then inform others later. As Trump has said, “*they hold all the cards.*”

From Geneva to Alaska: A shift in tone

The Alaska summit marks a sharp departure from the Biden years, when even the idea of such a meeting was unthinkable and Washington's priority was isolating Russia. Now, not only will Putin travel to Alaska, but Trump is already planning a return visit to Russia.

Moderate optimism surrounds the meeting. Summits of this type are rarely held “*just to talk*”, they usually cap a long process of behind-the-scenes negotiations. The idea for this one emerged after three hours of talks in Moscow on August 6 between Putin and Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff. Russian presidential aide Yuri Ushakov described Washington's offer as “*very acceptable.*” That suggests Putin and Trump will arrive in Alaska with a preliminary deal – or at least a framework for a truce – already in place.



Read more: Why Trump wants Putin in Alaska – and not anywhere else

Why Trump needs this

Trump has good reason to want the summit to succeed. His effort to squeeze Moscow by pushing China and India to stop buying Russian oil has backfired badly. Far from isolating Russia, it triggered the worst US-India crisis in 25 years and drove New Delhi even closer to Moscow. It also encouraged a thaw between India and China, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi now set to attend the SCO summit

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in Tianjin.

BRICS, which Trump has openly vowed to weaken, has only grown more cohesive. The Alaska summit is Trump's chance to escape the trap he built for himself – trying to pressure Moscow through Beijing and New Delhi – and to show results on Ukraine that he can sell as a diplomatic victory.

Why Russia does too

For Moscow, a successful summit would be a powerful demonstration that talk of "isolation" is obsolete – even in the West. It would cement Russia's standing with the "global majority" and highlight Western Europe's diminished influence. The transatlantic split would widen, weakening Brussels' claim to be Russia's toughest opponent.



Most importantly, Washington today has little real leverage over Russia, especially on Ukraine. If the summit yields a joint Russian–American vision for a truce or settlement, it will inevitably reflect

Read more: Cold hard land, cold hard bargain: Putin and Trump head off to Alaska

Moscow's position more than Kiev's or Brussels'. And if the Western Europeans try to derail it, the US could pull the

plug on all aid to Ukraine – including intelligence support – accelerating Kiev's defeat.

Resistance at home and abroad

Not everyone in Russia is cheering. Many prominent "Z"-aligned war correspondents see the war as unfinished and oppose any truce. But they have been asked to stick to the official line. If the Alaska meeting produces a deal, they will be expected to back it – or at least use "cooling" language for their audiences. The Kremlin is betting it can manage this dissent.

Western Europe, for its part, will be watching from the sidelines. Its leaders are "scrambling" for scraps of information via secondary channels. The optics will underline a humiliating reality: for the first time in almost a century, decisions about Europe's security will be made without the likes of Italy, France and Germany in the room.



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Beyond Ukraine

The location hints at other agenda items. Arctic economic cooperation, largely frozen since 2014, could be revived. Both sides stand to gain from joint development in the far north, and a deal here would be politically symbolic – proof that the two countries can work together despite the baggage of the last decade.

Arms control will also be on the table. Moscow's recent decision to end its unilateral moratorium on deploying intermediate-range missiles was almost certainly timed to influence the talks. Strategic stability after the New START Treaty expires in February 2026 will be a central concern.

The stakes

If Alaska delivers, it could reshape the conflict in Ukraine and the broader Russia-US relationship. A joint settlement plan would marginalize Kiev and Brussels, shift the diplomatic center of gravity back to Moscow and Washington, and reopen channels for cooperation on global issues – from the Arctic to arms control.

If it fails – if Trump bends to last-minute EU pressure – Moscow will continue fighting, confident that US involvement will fade. Either way, Russia's position is stronger than it was two years ago.

What's different now is that the two powers with *"all the cards"* are finally back at the same table – and Western Europe is on the outside looking in.

ANALYSIS

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G **GeorgeBMac** 8/15/2025 at 9:45 AM **0**

It took Trump awhile to figure it out. But give him credit for getting there eventually! It was the American war hawks who teamed with Biden to create this war and who refused to give up their war. So, even while they could not actively support it under Trump's peace initiatives, they could support the European War Hawks who were determined to keep it going. So Trump neutered them all!

1) First he made Peace the main goal that nobody could publicly disagree with — even those seeking war — because they based their war on the lie that it was RUSSIA who had started it.

2) Then he gave the European War Hawks fair warning that he did not see this war as a US concern and they would have to fight Russia on their own if they wanted to continue the war. They agreed but eventually realized they simply didn't have the resources to Go It Alone. Without the backing of American war hawks, they could not fight Russia.

3) Seeing a looming and humiliating loss in their Proxy War, US and European war hawks wanted to fall back on their Economic / Sanctions war on Russia by sanctioning Russia's trading partners. Trump accommodated them with his trade mark Tariff Taxes. But, when that failed, the war hawks were out of cards to play. They had to accept defeat.

So now, with the war hawks on both sides of the Atlantic out of cards to play, Trump can negotiate a peace deal on his own that supports his own priorities (Ukrainian Minerals and an Arctic Deal with Russia)

But, the real master strategist all along was Putin: His nation was under attack in a hybrid war against it and he systematically and methodically defeated all phases of it — even the economic and isolation parts of that war. All that kept it going was false hope of western war hawks that they could not be defeated. Ever.

[Reply](#)



Kenneth Moses 8/15/2025 at 10:06 AM ↑

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Well written. Articulate. Pure truth.

[Reply](#)



Jeremy Horne 8/15/2025 at 2:00 AM

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AlexanderMercouris of the Duran said this morning that there were no military representatives accompanying the Russians, indicating that there will be no specific negotiations about Ukraine.

[Reply](#)



GeorgeBMac 8/15/2025 at 9:48 AM ↑

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Negotiations are over. The deal is decided. Now all that remains are the hand shakes and photo ops. Oh, and showing Zelensky where to sign.

[Reply](#)



Fred Lockett 8/15/2025 at 4:17 AM

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I'm thinking it would be good if Trump could promise EU membership to both Russia and Ukraine. Then there is no need for NATO. Russia would be a European partner and ally once again.

[Reply](#)



GeorgeBMac 8/15/2025 at 9:47 AM ↑

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London, Paris and Berlin rejected that because they would be over shadowed by Russia. Second rate bit players.

[Reply](#)



Linguist 8/15/2025 at 8:25 AM

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No, the ONE country with all the cards will be talking to the yanks, who have NO cards!!

[Reply](#)



Old Frame 8/15/2025 at 7:15 AM

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...one thing is certain...the end of Western Europe spheres of influence across the world...

[Reply](#)



Charles Ng 8/15/2025 at 4:34 AM

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May Almighty Jesus bless both Trump and Putin with instincts, courage, honesty, conradship, humanity, and determination to end the Ukrainian conflict with Russia, the Gaza debacle and genocide, the Iranian conflict with Israel

and all other troubling spots in the world.

May the meeting usher in goodwill, happiness to all people of the world and prosperity for all.

[Reply](#)

T **T Joes** 8/15/2025 at 2:31 AM

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Any agreement they make reminds me of the Balfore Declaration where Rothschild declared for Israel state: « it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.» Rothschild lied. Israel does both.

[Reply](#)

x **xawecki** 8/15/2025 at 12:36 AM

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I do not understand why Trump is listening to those idiotic demands and suggestions from Europeans, what he should demand and talk about with Mr. Putin. JD Vance was there and even he couldn't tell those clowns that if they have some demands towards Russian President, why don't they tell him it themselves? What stops them from asking for the audience in Kremlin, you never know, it may be granted.


[Reply](#)

J **Juan Pacillas** 8/14/2025 at 11:48 PM

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Maybe Mr TACO and Mr Putin will be ready to DEAL themselves against the EU organization and the UK monarchy and the Mr zelensky Ukraine.. anyone else around the world are pro war against Russia.. or maybe Mr TACO is looking for the isolation of CHINA ASAP and at any cost.. yes this is the reason future ISOLATION of CHINA.. and without Russia support or defense capabilities.. CHINA will be eliminated and that's the reason why India got into so much weapons and even Pakistan is already armed to the tooth.. and Philippines are none friends with CHINA and Thailand is already looking for war against Cambodia.. finally we' are understanding the Mr TACO agenda against China and using Russia as a Patsy for their own pleasure,.....

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 **Croydon Kemp** 8/14/2025 at 11:28 PM

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Trump is going to sell Alaska to Putin for a dollar if he get's out of Ukraine.

[Reply](#)

I **Itel A36** 8/14/2025 at 10:53 PM

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