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An alleged ‘Trump plan’ for ending the Russian-Ukrainian war

Zespół OSW

On the evening of 22 April, Volodymyr Zelensky referred to the elements of the alleged ‘Trump plan’, reported in Western media, as ‘proposals, ideas, signals’, stating that it does not constitute an ‘official proposal for Ukraine’. Should such a proposal be formally presented, Kyiv ‘will respond immediately and make it public’. The President also expressed readiness for peace talks with Russia ‘in any format’ following a ceasefire.

Zelensky was responding to articles in *The Wall Street Journal*, *Financial Times*, and *Axios*, which – based on conversations with anonymous diplomats – reconstructed what was described as a purported US proposal for Ukraine and Russia (see Appendix). This proposal was reportedly presented during a meeting on 17 April in Paris – with representatives of France, the United Kingdom, Germany (in the E3 format), and Ukraine – by a US delegation comprising Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US Special Envoy for the Middle East Steve Witkoff, and US Special Envoy for Ukraine, General Keith Kellogg.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov dismissed media reports suggesting that Russia had allegedly agreed to freeze the conflict along the current front line as fake news. He added that the Kremlin is unaware of the contents of the so-called ‘Trump plan’ and noted that negotiations are complex, cautioning against expecting quick results. Moscow also confirmed that Steve Witkoff is scheduled to visit Russia in the coming days.

Commentary

- For Ukraine, *de jure* recognition of Russia’s annexation of Crimea is unacceptable, and renouncing aspirations for NATO membership – previously acknowledged as a possibility by Zelensky – would only be conceivable in exchange for other credible security guarantees. It appears that, in return for a full ceasefire, Kyiv might be willing to accept the temporary occupation by Russia of the territories it currently controls in Ukraine, as well as the transfer of the reclaimed Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant into US administration.
- For Russia, the key objective is to prolong the negotiations and take advantage of the urgency of the US administration to secure maximum concessions for the Kremlin (see ‘*The capitulation of Ukraine and the Finlandisation of Europe: Russia’s threats and ‘offers”*). Moscow is most likely seeking to provoke Kyiv into rejecting Washington’s proposal, thereby shifting the blame for the failure of the talks onto Ukraine and triggering a complete halt in American aid. At the same time, Russia seeks to persuade Donald Trump to lift sanctions and to pursue ambitious economic cooperation projects with

Moscow, regardless of whether the conflict in Ukraine is resolved.

- For the United States, the key objective is to conclude the negotiations by 30 April, marking the 100th day of President Trump's term. Securing acceptance of the peace proposal by both Russia and Ukraine would allow him to fulfil a campaign promise and demonstrate a major international success. Rejection of the proposal, on the other hand, could provide the US with a pretext to fully withdraw from the negotiation process and to end financial and military aid to Kyiv (continued support in areas such as intelligence and reconnaissance remains an open question). The absence of Rubio and Witkoff from the follow-up meeting in London on 23 April – after the initial gathering in Paris – serves part of a pressure tactic on Kyiv, lending credibility to the threat of the US walking away from the talks.

APPENDIX. Elements of the alleged 'Trump plan' according to media leaks

Russia's gains:

- *de jure* recognition of Russian control of Crimea,
- *de facto* recognition of the occupation of parts of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts,
- elimination of Ukraine's NATO membership prospects (Ukraine would remain free to pursue integration with the EU),
- lifting of sanctions imposed since 2014,
- economic cooperation with the US, particularly in the energy and industrial sectors.

Ukraine's gains:

- security guarantees from selected European states (no specific details provided),
- return of a smallportion of occupied Kharkiv oblast,
- freedom of navigation on the Dnieper,
- compensations and reconstruction assistance,
- the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, under US administration, producing electricity for the benefit of both Ukraine and Russia.