

Original story	Rewrite
<p>Inside Donald Trump’s secret plan to end the Ukraine-Russia war</p> <p>Foreign policy experts and some Republicans warned that pressuring Ukraine to cede land would reward Putin</p>	<p>Trump plan to end Russian war in Ukraine would reward Putin, experts warn</p> <p>Trump would pressure Ukraine to give up Crimea and the Donbas border regions to Russia.</p>
<p>Former president Donald Trump has privately said he could end Russia’s war in Ukraine by pressuring Ukraine to give up some territory, according to people familiar with the plan. Some foreign policy experts said Trump’s idea would reward Russian President Vladimir Putin and condone the violation of internationally recognized borders by force.</p> <p>Trump’s proposal consists of pushing Ukraine to cede Crimea and the Donbas border region to Russia, according to people who discussed it with Trump or his advisers and spoke on the condition of anonymity because those conversations were confidential. That approach, which has not been previously reported, would dramatically reverse President Biden’s policy, which has emphasized curtailing Russian</p>	<p>Former president Donald Trump’s plan for ending Russia’s war in Ukraine would give parts of Ukraine to Russia, according to several people who have had discussions with Trump or his advisors.</p> <p>The plan tacitly endorses Vladimir Putin’s forceful violation of “internationally recognized borders” according to three foreign policy experts.</p> <p>The Russian war in Ukraine is the largest land war in Europe since World War II, according to RAND, a nonprofit organized in 1948 to promote “the public welfare and security of the United States.”</p> <p>Trump would pressure Ukraine to hand over both Crimea and the Donbas border region to Russia, according to several people who “spoke on the condition of anonymity because those conversations [had been] confidential.”</p>

Commented [KG1]: Truth Sandwich start ... flip to the important part first. Don't lead with anything that suggests this plan is viable or good.

Commented [KG2]: Move straight to implications of the plan.

Commented [KG3]: “three” not “some”. Be specific. Give us an incentive to keep reading.

Commented [KG4]: Provide a source for the claim. Move it UP for context.

Commented [KG5]: This IS the plan.

<p>aggression and providing military aid to Ukraine.</p> <p>As he seeks a return to power, the presumptive Republican nominee has frequently boasted that he could negotiate a peace deal between Russia and Ukraine within 24 hours if elected, even before taking office. But he has repeatedly declined to specify publicly how he would quickly settle a war that has raged for more than two years and killed tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians.</p> <p>Trump-aligned foreign-policy thinkers have emphasized addressing threats to U.S. interests from China and seeking ways to reverse Russia’s increasing dependence on China for military, industrial and economic assistance. They have also embraced limiting NATO expansion.</p> <p>Privately, Trump has said that he thinks both Russia and Ukraine “want to save face, they want a way out,” and that people in parts of Ukraine would be okay with being part of Russia, according to a person who has discussed the matter directly with Trump.</p> <p>Accepting Russian control over parts of Ukraine would expand the reach of Putin’s dictatorship after</p>	<p>Trump thinks “people in parts of Ukraine would be okay with being part of Russia, according to a person who has discussed the matter directly with Trump.”</p> <p>Trump’s plan for Ukraine “circulated” in November at Heritage Foundation meeting. Former Trump White House aide Michael Anton described plan “as Ukraine ceding territory in Crimea and Donbas, limiting NATO expansion and enticing Putin to loosen his growing reliance on China, according to multiple people present for the meeting, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a private discussion.”</p> <p>The Trump proposal “would dramatically reverse President Biden’s policy.” The Biden Administration has provided military aid to Ukraine and rallied NATO nations to support Ukraine in order to curtail Prime Minister Putin’s aggression.</p> <p>Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) is a Trump supporter who has argued against such a proposal. “I’ve been spending 100 percent of my time talking to Trump about Ukraine,” the onetime Trump critic turned ally said. Putin “has to pay a price. He can’t win at the end of this,” Graham added.</p> <p>“Graham said he has warned [Trump] against giving Russia desired land and</p>
--	---

Commented [KG6]: Move up in the story

Commented [KG7]: Move WAY up

Commented [KG8]: This is a claim. As such, it needs a source, WaPo writers.

what has been the biggest land war in Europe since World War II. Some of Trump's supporters have been trying to persuade him against such an outcome.

"I've been spending 100 percent of my time talking to Trump about Ukraine," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.), a onetime Trump critic turned ally. "He has to pay a price. He can't win at the end of this," Graham added, speaking of Putin.

Russia has previously declared it was [annexing](#) Ukrainian land beyond the Donbas region and Crimea and Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, has said he would not accept surrendering any territory. Exchanging territory for a cease-fire would put Ukraine in a worse position without assurances that Russia would not rearm and resume hostilities, as it has in the past, said Emma Ashford, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan think tank. "That is a terrible deal," she said of Trump's proposal.

The Trump campaign declined to directly address questions for this article. "Any speculation about President Trump's plan is coming from unnamed and uninformed sources who have no idea what is going on or what will happen,"

wants Trump to embrace a pathway forward to Ukraine to join NATO."

[Trump has reportedly pressured](#) congressional Republicans to resist additional American support for Ukraine's war effort.

"We don't have time for all of this. We've got a [bipartisan] bill that got 70 votes in the Senate. Give members of the House of Representatives an opportunity to vote on it," [Sen. Mitch McConnell \(R-Ky.\)](#) said earlier in March.

Nevertheless, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) has refused to bring the matter to a vote due to vocal [opposition from Trump-supporting Republicans](#). The bill has "enough support from members of his own Republican party to pass comfortably," [according to The Guardian](#).

Foreign policy experts speak out

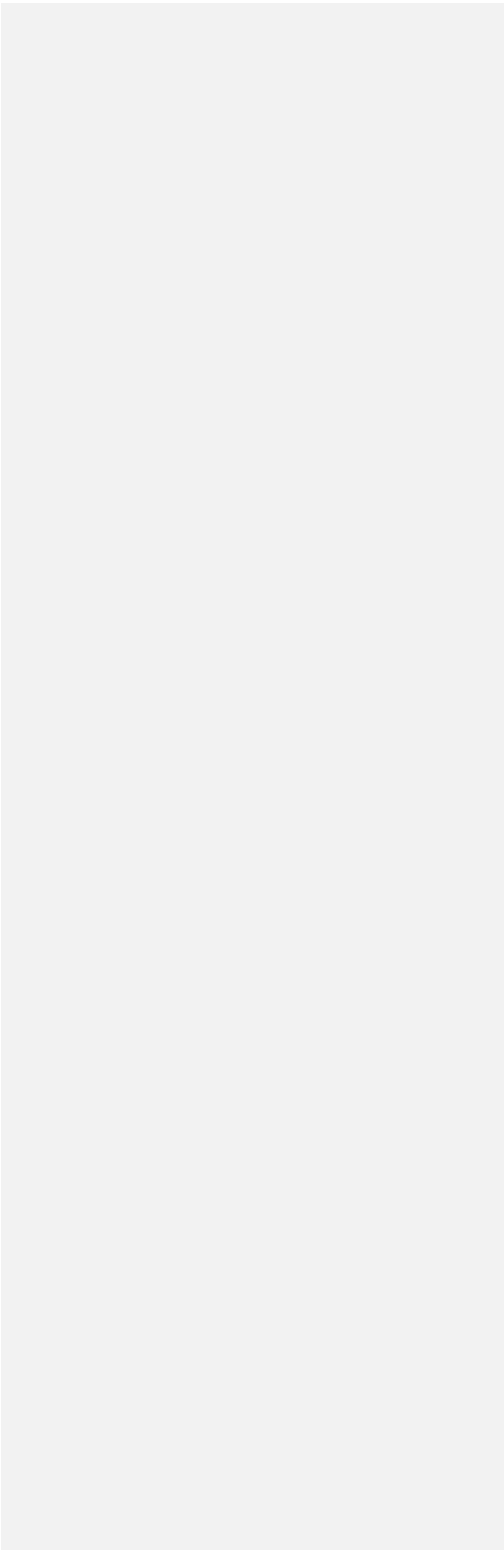
"Fiona Hill, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who was Trump's top Russia adviser and has since emerged as a prominent critic, said it reminded her of 2017 — when unvetted foreigners and business executives approached Trump with various peace plans, and he thought he could sit down with Russia and Ukraine and mediate on the strength of his personal charisma.

Trump's team "is thinking about this very much in silos, that this is just a

Commented [KG9]: SOURCE CLAIMS

Commented [KG10]: Take the three experts and put their observations TOGETHER.

<p>campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. "President Trump is the only one talking about stopping the killing."</p> <p>Biden said in his State of the Union address that Putin is "on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond," and that Ukraine is trying to defend itself. The president has outlined a long-term plan of support for Ukraine that would build up its military capabilities this year so that it is in a better place to go on the offensive next year. But U.S. aid is already in jeopardy as House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.) faces a revolt from Republican hard-liners who are digging in against any more funding and clamoring to oust him.</p> <p>Out of office, Trump has pressured congressional Republicans to resist additional American support for Ukraine's war effort and a return to the White House would significantly expand his influence over the debate. Seeing the political dynamics in the U.S., European allies have jump-started military industry to a point where they hope to supplant a significant portion of the current U.S. assistance to Kyiv. But analysts said that realistically, Ukraine's capacity to keep fighting</p>	<p>Ukraine-Russia thing," Hill said. "They think of it as a territorial dispute, rather than one about the whole future of European security and the world order by extension."</p> <p>"Ukraine and European allies would probably resist Trump's efforts to strike a deal with Moscow, Hill said. She said the Europeans have jump-started their military industry to a point where they hope to supplant a significant portion of the current U.S. assistance to Kyiv. She added that the U.S. has limited leverage for a unilateral deal because meaningful sanctions relief would rely on European cooperation."</p> <p>The proposal to exchange land for a ceasefire "is a terrible deal," according to Emma Ashford, a senior fellow at the Stimson Center, a nonpartisan think tank. Ukraine would have no assurances that Russia would abstain from future attacks, she said.</p> <p>Michael Kofman, an analyst of the Russia-Ukraine war at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a nonpartisan research center, agreed. "No amount of leverage the United States has is likely to compel Ukrainian leadership to engage in policies that would constitute domestic political suicide...This is a situation where if you're willing to give a hand, the other side will very quickly want the rest of the arm," he said.</p>
--	---



would be weakened if Trump succeeds in blocking further U.S. aid.

In many ways, Trump's plan is in line with his approach as president. His preference for splashy summits over policy details, confidence in his own negotiating skills and impatience with conventional diplomatic protocols were all hallmarks of how he approached foreign affairs in his first term.

In his eight years as the GOP's standard-bearer, Trump has led a stark shift in the party's prevailing orientation to become more skeptical of foreign intervention such as military aid to Ukraine. Trump has consistently complimented Putin, expressed admiration for his dictatorial rule and gone out of his way to avoid criticizing him, most recently for the death in jail of political opponent Alexei Navalny. He has not called for the release of Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter held in Russia for a year without charges or a trial.

Trump has refused to acknowledge Russia's interference in the 2016 election and falsely blamed Ukraine for trying to help Democratic rival Hillary Clinton — a smear spread by Russian spy services. His

Trump plan reverses Biden policy

The Trump proposal "would dramatically reverse President Biden's policy." The Biden Administration has [provided military aid to Ukraine](#) and [rallied NATO nations](#) to support Ukraine in order to curtail [Prime Minister Putin's aggression](#).

The [Council on Foreign Relations](#) reported in March:

[Biden] invoked President Franklin Roosevelt's [January 1941 State of the Union address](#), one of the very few memorable State of the Union addresses. Better known as the [Four Freedoms speech](#) and delivered eleven months and one day before Pearl Harbor, FDR used it to argue that the United States should arm Great Britain and other democracies fighting Hitler and Nazi Germany...

"Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond. If anybody in this room thinks Putin will stop at Ukraine, I assure you, he will not. But Ukraine can stop Putin if we stand with Ukraine and provide the weapons it needs to defend itself. That is all Ukraine is asking," [Biden said].

attempt in 2019 to withhold aid to Ukraine unless Zelensky announced an investigation into Biden led to Trump's first impeachment.

In a [phone call](#) with Zelensky that year that Trump said was "perfect," the U.S. president pressured Zelensky to investigate Biden and the discredited theory that Ukraine and not Russia sought to interfere with the 2016 election. The GOP-controlled Senate later acquitted Trump.

"Former president Trump's inexplicable and admiring relationship with Putin, along with his unprecedented hostility to NATO, cannot give Europe or Ukraine any confidence in his dealings with Russia," said Tom Donilon, President Barack Obama's national security adviser. "Trump's comments encouraging Russia to do whatever it wants with our European allies are among the most unsettling and dangerous statements made by a major party candidate for president. His position represents a clear and present danger to U.S. and European security."

Graham said he has warned against giving Russia desired land and wants Trump to embrace a

The Trump campaign declined to directly address questions for this article.

"Any speculation about President Trump's plan is coming from unnamed and uninformed sources who have no idea what is going on or what will happen," campaign spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt said in a statement. "President Trump is the only one talking about stopping the killing."

"The United States wants a Ukraine that is sovereign, independent and secure," [Celeste Wallander, assistant secretary of defense for international security affairs](#), said in February.

The [United States and European Union are committed to Russia "end\[ing\] its brutal war" in Ukraine](#). This includes withdrawing "military forces and proxies and military equipment immediately, completely, and unconditionally from the entire internationally recognized territory of Ukraine."

-30-

At this point, I left out most of the Heritage Foundation meeting gossip and all the not-essential-to-this-story Trump history:

In many ways, Trump's plan is in line with his approach as president.

Commented [KG11]: WaPo writers chose not to fact-check the claim.

pathway forward to Ukraine to join NATO.

“The way you end this war to me is you make sure Ukraine gets into NATO and the E.U.,” he said. “He doesn’t say much about that. I don’t know if he’s thought too much about it.”

In his public promises to end the war, Trump has pointedly withheld the specifics on how he would negotiate with Putin and Zelensky. “I will say certain things to each one of them that I wouldn’t say to the rest of the world, and that’s why I can’t tell you much more than that,” Trump said in a March interview with former aide Sebastian Gorka.

His public silence on his negotiating tack has left room for others to fill in the blanks. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has antagonized European allies with his autocratic and pro-Russian tendencies, met with Trump last month and afterward claimed Trump told him he will force the war to end because “he will not give a penny” to help Ukraine. Orban’s statement was false, but the former president didn’t want to publicly contradict him after entertaining him all night at his Mar-a-Lago Club and admiring his toughness and anti-immigration positions,

His preference for splashy summits over policy details, confidence in his own negotiating skills and impatience with conventional diplomatic protocols were all hallmarks of how he approached foreign affairs in his first term.

In his eight years as the GOP’s standard-bearer, Trump has led a stark shift in the party’s prevailing orientation to become more skeptical of foreign intervention such as military aid to Ukraine.

Trump has consistently complimented Putin, expressed admiration for his dictatorial rule and gone out of his way to avoid criticizing him, most recently for the death in jail of political opponent Alexei Navalny. He has not called for the release of Evan Gershkovich, the Wall Street Journal reporter held in Russia for a year without charges or a trial.

Trump has refused to acknowledge Russia’s interference in the 2016 election and falsely blamed Ukraine for trying to help Democratic rival Hillary Clinton — a smear spread by Russian spy services. His attempt in 2019 to withhold aid to Ukraine unless Zelensky announced an investigation into Biden led to Trump’s first impeachment.

Commented [KG12]: 100% opinion in a “news” article

Commented [KG13]: Opinion/unsourced claim

Commented [KG14]: Opinion/unsourced claim

Commented [KG15]: Opinion/unsourced claim

according to a person close to Trump, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a private conversation.

During the meeting, Orban spoke at length about Soviet history, Russia's desire for Ukrainian territory and the military challenges facing Ukraine, the person said. Trump listened but was noncommittal, the person said. An Orban spokesman did not respond to a request for comment.

Word of Trump's plan for Ukraine circulated in Washington last November at a meeting at the Heritage Foundation between right-of-center foreign policy figures and a visiting delegation from the European Council on Foreign Relations. Former Trump White House aide Michael Anton described the expected contours of Trump's peace plan as Ukraine ceding territory in Crimea and Donbas, limiting NATO expansion and enticing Putin to loosen his growing reliance on China, according to multiple people present for the meeting, who like others spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe a private discussion.

Reached by phone in March, Anton said he hadn't spoken with Trump

In a phone call with Zelensky that year that Trump said was "perfect," the U.S. president pressured Zelensky to investigate Biden and the discredited theory that Ukraine and not Russia sought to interfere with the 2016 election. The GOP-controlled Senate later acquitted Trump.

"Former president Trump's inexplicable and admiring relationship with Putin, along with his unprecedented hostility to NATO, cannot give Europe or Ukraine any confidence in his dealings with Russia," said Tom Donilon, President Barack Obama's national security adviser. "Trump's comments encouraging Russia to do whatever it wants with our European allies are among the most unsettling and dangerous statements made by a major party candidate for president. His position represents a clear and present danger to U.S. and European security."

Commented [KG16]: Both-sides reporting ... to counter more than one Trump supporter.

in 18 to 24 months and denied knowing anything about Trump's plan for Ukraine. He did not respond to further questions.

James Carafano, a Heritage Foundation fellow who convened the meeting, declined to comment on the private discussion but criticized the idea of splitting Russia from China. "That is stupid idea 101," he said. "Anything you could give Russia that they would really value would compromise all your other interests. The way to deal with the Russia-China relationship is to make Russia a weaker partner."

Peeling Russia away from China would presumably involve sanctions relief, since the Kremlin has turned toward Beijing to try to offset broad-based Western sanctions on its energy, defense and financial sectors, said Jeremy Shapiro, head of the Washington office of the European Council on Foreign Relations, who brought the group's delegation to the meeting in November. Shapiro declined to comment on the specifics of the conversation, citing ground rules of the November event that prohibited attributing anything that was said, but he said that Trump's Ukraine

peace plan did not appear to be detailed.

“Trump people feel as if one of the great sins of the Ukrainian war and the Russia policy, generally speaking, is to push Russia toward China and to make it all the more dependent on China,” he said. Trump’s “fundamental approach with all things is to get men in a room together to discuss,” without necessarily having detailed plans in advance, Shapiro said.

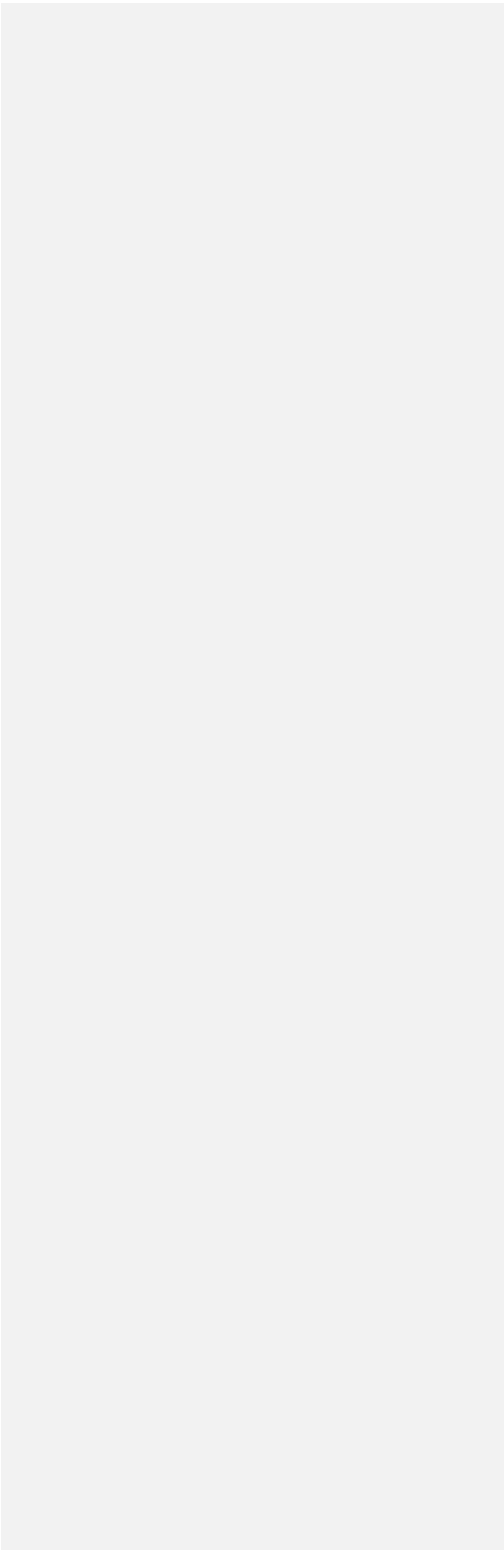
Russia experts doubted Trump’s peace efforts could succeed. Fiona Hill, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution who was Trump’s top Russia adviser and has since emerged as a prominent critic, said it reminded her of 2017 — when unvetted foreigners and business executives approached Trump with various peace plans, and he thought he could sit down with Russia and Ukraine and mediate on the strength of his personal charisma.

Trump’s team “is thinking about this very much in silos, that this is just a Ukraine-Russia thing,” Hill said. “They think of it as a territorial dispute, rather than one about the whole future of European security and the world order by extension.”

Even drawing an armistice line might not be so straightforward. The Kremlin in September 2022 declared that it was annexing four southern and eastern Ukrainian provinces, including the Donbas region but extending well beyond it. Since Kyiv still controls much of the territory, any attempt to resolve the war with territorial concessions is likely to involve extensive haggling — unless both sides simply agree to freeze the front lines that are in place at the moment of a deal.

Ukraine and European allies would probably resist Trump’s efforts to strike a deal with Moscow, Hill said. She said the Europeans have jump-started their military industry to a point where they hope to supplant a significant portion of the current U.S. assistance to Kyiv. She added that the U.S. has limited leverage for a unilateral deal because meaningful sanctions relief would rely on European cooperation.

“No amount of leverage the United States has is likely to compel Ukrainian leadership to engage in policies that would constitute domestic political suicide,” said Michael Kofman, an analyst of the Russia-Ukraine war at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a nonpartisan research center. “And no amount of leverage



the United States has can compel Ukraine to cede territory or engage in these types of concessions. This is a situation where if you're willing to give a hand, the other side will very quickly want the rest of the arm."

