

Prospects & Perspectives



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Picture source: The White House, August 18, 2025, *Flickr*, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/whitehouse/54731809336/in/photostream/>.

August Summitry and the Russo-Ukrainian War

By Paiku Wei

Two summits over the Russian war in Ukraine held in August were high in symbolism but rather low on substance, highlighting the fact that core



disagreements between Russia and Ukraine remain unresolved. In the weeks since, it has also become clear that a future ceasefire in Europe could free U.S. resources for the Indo-Pacific, and that Chinese involvement in Ukraine's postwar security would likely deepen mistrust in Europe.

High-level Talks

On August 15, President Donald Trump met with President Vladimir Putin at a U.S. military base in Alaska. The three-hour conversation was described by both sides as “constructive,” yet it produced little in the way of tangible results. No progress was made toward a ceasefire. In the end, the summit functioned more as a diplomatic gesture than as a turning point in the war. The absence of breakthroughs on sanctions or ceasefire terms confirmed that the broader dynamics of the war remain unchanged.

Three days later, on August 18, President Trump convened a meeting at the White House with the leaders of Ukraine, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Finland, as well as representatives from the European Union and NATO. Compared with the Alaska summit, this gathering highlighted Europe's collective stance. European leaders reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine's security, while Trump indicated a willingness to consider participation in a “security guarantee arrangement.” Yet, the content and scope of such guarantees remain unsettled.

Unlike the Alaska summit, the White House meeting underscored how European capitals, despite diverging national interests, have found common ground in supporting Kyiv. The meeting was more significant in diplomatic symbolism than in immediate practical terms, but it nonetheless signaled a degree of alignment between the United States and Europe regarding Ukraine's security arrangement.

Three Unresolved Issues

The Alaska talks confirmed that the central disputes remain unchanged. First, territory: Moscow continues to insist on recognition of its control over Crimea and the four occupied regions of Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson. Kyiv, however, has consistently insisted on upholding its territorial integrity and rejects any arrangement that would legitimize annexation.



Second, NATO membership: Russia has repeatedly framed Ukraine's accession as an existential threat, echoing the same arguments it advanced in the 2014 crisis. Kyiv, by contrast, emphasizes that its constitutional commitment to participate in NATO cannot be negotiated away without undermining domestic legitimacy. Moreover, Kyiv argues that Ukraine, as a sovereign state, has the right to decide independently whether to join international organizations, be it the European Union or NATO, and that Moscow has no authority to interfere.

Third, security guarantees: Russian proposal to have the five permanent members of the UN Security Council provide assurances is, in practice, a mechanism for Russia to preserve veto power over Ukraine's defense. President Zelensky, on the other hand, has called for robust and binding guarantees akin to NATO's Article 5 on collective defense. Zelensky's plea has found sympathy in some European capitals, but there is no consensus on implementation. Moreover, the United Kingdom and key EU member states have also advocated for the creation of the "Coalition of the Willing" to safeguard Ukraine's security.

Beyond these three issues, Moscow has suggested what it calls a "swapping of territories," namely, consolidation of the remaining parts of Donetsk. It would allow President Putin to claim that he had "completed" the protection of the Russian-speaking population in the Donbas, a narrative that has been central to his domestic justification of the war.

Under such conditions, diplomatic summits serve less as vehicles of resolution than as opportunities for each side to signal endurance. They show both domestic and international audiences that dialogue continues, but the core disputes remain unresolved. This dynamic suggests that the current deadlock is not temporary but structural. Given these entrenched positions, a negotiated settlement is improbable in the near term.

Reinforcing the U.S. Strategic Posture in the Indo-Pacific

If Russia and Ukraine were to achieve peace, the United States would be able to free up additional resources to reinforce its strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific and intensify its competition with China. However, it is estimated that the United States would require two to three years to adjust production capacity and replenish stockpiles before such a shift could be fully realized. As a consequence of extensive military assistance to Ukraine, the United States has experienced a



depletion in its ammunition inventories. In response, Washington has undertaken efforts to expand production capacity, setting a target of manufacturing 100,000 rounds of 155mm artillery shells per month. Nonetheless, according to a report in National Defense, current assessments indicate that this production objective is unlikely to be achieved before mid-2026.

Dilemma of Chinese Peacekeeping in Ukraine

Moscow has hinted at the possibility of Chinese participation in a postwar peacekeeping mechanism. While such involvement could enhance Beijing's image as a "responsible major power," the risks are substantial. According to NATO's Washington summit declaration in 2024, it mentioned that China has become a decisive enabler of Russia's war against Ukraine through its large-scale support for Russia's defense industrial base. This includes the transfer of dual-use materials, such as weapons components, equipment, and raw materials that serve as inputs for Russia's defense sector. In other words, European policymakers already view China with suspicion, particularly regarding sanctions evasion and energy cooperation with Russia. Therefore, if China were to take on a direct security role in Ukraine, it would likely deepen mistrust and strain its relations with Europe.

In sum, neither the U.S.-Russia summit in Alaska nor the U.S.-Europe summit at the White House achieved any real progress on a ceasefire. With issues of territory, NATO membership, and security guarantees unresolved, a negotiated settlement remains unlikely. As a result, the fighting remains at a stalemate. In recent days, Moscow has carried out large-scale drone and missile attacks on Kyiv. While a ceasefire could allow Washington to redirect focus to the Indo-Pacific, any Chinese role in Ukraine's security would run the risk of straining Beijing's relations with Europe.

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