



Basilius-Kathedrale in Moskau - Bild: Christian Müller

The Deal That Never Was: Washington Proposed, Moscow Agreed – and Trump Blocked It

A ceasefire in Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, including Ukraine's withdrawal from the Donbass, was on the table. Moscow was ready – but Washington pulled back at the last moment, letting the agreement collapse.

Felix Abt

Fri 07 Nov 2025

The Deal That Never Was reveals how Trump's transactional diplomacy – from Seoul to Anchorage – turned a tangible opportunity for peace into yet another missed chance.

The proposed plan – something akin to an “*Istanbul Plus*” – was formulated by Washington and then abruptly abandoned. From Lavrov’s revealing interview, which we discuss below, to the collapse of the Alaska summit, the story shows how a U.S.-initiated ceasefire plan in Ukraine failed, leaving Russia skeptical, freezing diplomatic channels, and escalating military tensions.

It was a unique opportunity that could have altered the course of the war and strengthened Washington’s international credibility – but it went unused, serving as a lesson in how short-term political calculations can destroy long-term prospects for peace.

Trump’s Pattern of Transactional Diplomacy

President Donald Trump recently visited South Korea, where he received ceremonial honors and negotiated a new trade agreement. According to reports, Trump agreed to lower U.S. tariffs on South Korean exports in exchange for South Korea’s pledge to invest roughly \$350 billion in the United States.

This deal illustrates Trump’s typical tactic: imposing crushing tariffs, extracting enormous investment pledges – and then rolling the tariffs back. He applied the same strategy to the EU, Japan, and others, while China resisted and retaliated. The approach resembles less a coherent protectionist policy than a 1920s-style protection racket, more akin to Mafia extortion than modern statecraft. Many doubt that the promised investments will ever materialize, and the U.S. Supreme Court is set to review the constitutionality of Trump’s tariff strategy, widely viewed as coercive diplomacy rather than sound economic policy.

This approach mirrors Trump’s methods in other areas, particularly in dealing with Russia. During the Anchorage summit, Trump’s envoy proposed a peace plan for Ukraine, which Moscow accepted. Yet Trump later withdrew, issued new demands, publicly disparaged Putin, and escalated tensions through threats of sanctions and missile deployments. The pattern – bluster, theatrical deal-making, and retreat – has become a defining feature of his foreign policy and has severely undermined U.S. credibility in the eyes of many international observers.

Russian analyst Dmitri Trenin, writing in *Kommersant*, a newspaper widely read in Russia’s business circles, described Moscow’s evolving perception of Trump, suggesting that meaningful business dealings between Russia and the U.S. are unlikely in the foreseeable future. He portrays President Trump as:

- unpredictable and manipulative, alternating between threats and charm;

- motivated by personal glory rather than a consistent strategic vision;
- economically predatory, using tariffs and trade wars to suppress rivals;
- more concerned with optics than substance, favoring photo-op “truces” over lasting peace.

Коммерсантъ

October 27, 2025, 12:21 PM



12K



2 min.

Virtual roller coaster ride

Dmitri Trenin on Donald Trump's tactics and strategy



Over the past year, Russian commentary has largely morphed into "Trumpologists." Any statement by the US president—often several each day—becomes the subject of intense scrutiny and discussion. Because Trump's statements often contradict previous ones, following his train of thought is a fascinating experience—a virtual roller coaster ride of sorts. It's breathtaking.



Dmitri Trenin in *Kommersant* – screenshot with English translation from Russian

Trenin concludes that Russia no longer expects meaningful negotiations with Trump, having recognized the limits of his actual power within the American system, namely the permanent Deep State. Still, Moscow's engagement with Trump – the so-called “special diplomatic operation” – served a strategic purpose: signaling to key partners such as China, India, and Brazil that Russia remained open to dialogue and, absent Western interference or obstruction by the Banderite regime, interested in a peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict. At the same time, it reassured the Russian public of their leadership's resolve and reinforced the belief that only military success – not U.S.-brokered, coercive “diplomacy” – can secure Russia's long-term objectives in Ukraine.

Lavrov's Interview: New Insights into a Failed Peace Plan

In a recent interview with a Hungarian YouTube channel – the same one occasionally used by Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán – Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov offered insights into U.S.-Russia diplomatic exchanges

since midyear. His remarks clarified several uncertainties surrounding the Alaska summit and the canceled Budapest summit, providing a rare glimpse into negotiations that could have changed the course of the war.



The Ministry of Foreign
Affairs of the Russian
Federation

Search

About the MinistryPress service

Foreign policy / News /

26 October 2025 19:30

Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with
Ultrahang Youtube Channel, Moscow, October 26, 2025

1783-26-10-2025





The Alaska Summit and the U.S. Proposal

According to Lavrov, when President Vladimir Putin traveled to Alaska, it was after a plan had been delivered to Moscow days earlier by Trump envoy Steve Witkoff. Putin reviewed the U.S. proposal in detail, with Witkoff present, and confirmed that Moscow was prepared to accept it – even though the plan was entirely of American origin.

The proposal envisioned a ceasefire in the Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions in exchange for Ukraine's withdrawal from the Donbass. Contrary to many Western media reports, this was not a Russian peace initiative – it was an American plan, first proposed and framed by Washington.

Collapse of the Deal

Putin reportedly expected Trump to formally confirm the agreement during their Alaska meeting. Instead, Trump hesitated, saying he needed more time to consult allies and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky.

Zelensky and European leaders immediately rejected any arrangement requiring Ukraine to withdraw from the Donbass. They insisted that Kyiv's NATO and EU aspirations remain non-negotiable and that any ceasefire occur along existing frontlines.

Trump's hesitation – and his failure to uphold the proposal advanced by his envoy – led to the deal's collapse. The Kremlin interpreted this reversal as another instance of American inconsistency and political weakness, reinforcing long-held doubts about Washington's reliability.

Strategic Calculations and Misjudgments

From Washington's perspective, the U.S. believed Russia was close to capturing the Donbass and saw the proposal as a way to manage leverage and create a diplomatic off-ramp. Moscow, by contrast, viewed the American plan as an opportunity to formalize territorial realities and stabilize the conflict under mutually agreed conditions.

When Trump failed to follow through, Russian analysts concluded that the window for compromise was closing. As Moscow's military advances continued, the incentive to negotiate diminished – leaving future outcomes to be determined more on the battlefield than at the negotiating table.

Historical and Territorial Context

Lavrov reiterated that Zaporizhzhia – founded under Catherine the Great in the Russian Empire – and Kherson are historically Russian territories. Their incorporation into Ukraine, according to Moscow, was merely the result of Soviet administrative decisions. The Kremlin is now convinced that neither the U.S. nor Western guarantees can reliably protect Russian interests in these regions. This perception has hardened Russia's stance and reduced its willingness to entertain new Western proposals.

U.S.-Russia Missile Dynamics

Another key factor driving U.S.-Russia tensions involves missile deployments. Russia views long-range missiles – including systems such as Tomahawk, Taurus, and Storm Shadow – as red lines that could escalate the conflict beyond control.

In response, Moscow has accelerated production of its nuclear-powered Burevestnik cruise missile and expanded deployment of hypersonic weapons capable of reaching any European target. These developments highlight the militarization of failed diplomacy – a shift from negotiation tables to deterrence through force.

Trump's Alaska Gamble and Its Consequences

Trump's handling of the Alaska proposal is widely seen in Moscow as inconsistent, indecisive, and politically naive. Despite initiating the proposal, he failed to confirm it to Putin, citing the need for additional consultations. Simultaneously, he engaged in parallel outreach to Chinese President Xi Jinping, apparently believing he could pressure both Beijing and Moscow at the same time.

Russian observers interpreted these moves as strategically incoherent and emblematic of Trump's flawed understanding of global power dynamics. Trenin and other analysts argue that this episode has permanently damaged Moscow's trust in Washington, illustrating the volatility of U.S. policymaking when driven by short-term domestic or personal interests.

Current Situation

With Russia consolidating control over the Donbass and southern Ukraine, prospects for any U.S.-brokered compromise have virtually disappeared. Russian hardliners, vindicated by the failure of the Alaska plan, are now even less willing to negotiate.

Diplomatic channels between Washington and Moscow remain minimal, while military risks – particularly the possibility of missile confrontations in Europe – are rising. Lavrov has made it clear that Russia's red lines will be enforced militarily if necessary.

Key Takeaways

- The Alaska ceasefire plan was originally proposed by the U.S., not Russia.
- The plan collapsed due to U.S. indecision and Ukrainian-European rejection of territorial compromises.
- Russia considers regions such as Donbass, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson historically legitimate Russian territories.
- Trump's transactional style, evident in both South Korea and Anchorage, reflects a pattern of coercive, short-term deal-making.
- Moscow's distrust of Washington has deepened; the U.S. is seen as unreliable, politically fragmented, and incapable of sustained diplomacy.

Diplomacy as a Protection Racket

Trump's foreign policy increasingly blends economic intimidation with diplomatic showmanship. Whether in Seoul or Anchorage, the pattern remains: apply massive pressure, extract enormous promises, claim victory, and move on.

Yet this strategy – part political theater, part coercion – may ultimately backfire. Should Russia ever release the stenographic records of the Anchorage talks, they could expose Trump as duplicitous and weak, further eroding his international credibility.

The Deal That Never Was now stands as a cautionary tale: a moment when personal ambition and transactional diplomacy overshadowed strategic foresight. It illustrates how the pursuit of short-term optics over long-term vision can undermine not only peace but diplomacy itself.

ARTICLE TAGS:

Trump, Donald Trenin, Dmitri China EU Japan South Korea USA Ukraine Russia
Brazil India Lavrov, Sergey Orban, Viktor Witkoff, Steve Xi Jinping Zelensky, Volodymyr
Analysis