



THE LONG ROAD TO PEACE: A FRAGILE BREAKTHROUGH AT THE WHITE HOUSE



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The diplomatic world, so often a stage for rigid posturing and predictable statements, witnessed a rare moment of dynamism and genuine tension on Monday. The convergence of President Trump and President Zelenskyy at the White House, with a powerful coalition of European leaders in tow, was more than just a meeting; it was a high-stakes play for peace on the global stage.

The air in Washington must have been thick with the ghosts of past meetings, especially the contentious one just months ago, where President Trump and Vice President Vance lashed out at President Zelenskyy for not being "grateful enough." But this time, the narrative was different. The smiles and public cordiality were a welcome change, signalling a shift from a transactional relationship to one built on a shared, if still complex, objective: ending the war in Ukraine.

The most significant takeaway was President Trump's commitment to U.S. involvement in security guarantees for Ukraine. This is a potential game-changer. For years, the security of Ukraine has been the central obstacle to any lasting peace. Russia has always opposed Ukraine's integration into NATO, and without that Article 5-like protection, any ceasefire or peace deal would be precarious. Trump's statement, following his private talks with President Putin, suggests a new, albeit vague, willingness from Moscow to accept some form of security assurances for

Kyiv. While Trump was careful to state that Europe must "shoulder much of the burden," the very fact that the U.S. is prepared to play a role is a pivotal step.

However, the path forward remains riddled with challenges. President Trump's apparent shift away from a firm demand for a ceasefire is a concerning point of divergence with his European counterparts. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, among others, were resolute in their belief that a ceasefire is a prerequisite for a trilateral meeting and any meaningful negotiations. Their logic is sound: without a pause in fighting, any discussions risk being undermined by military realities on the ground. A truce is not just a strategic tool; it is a humanitarian necessity.

The push for a trilateral meeting between Trump, Zelenskyy, and Putin is a central component of the U.S. strategy. While both Trump and Zelenskyy expressed their readiness, the European leaders' insistence on a ceasefire first highlights a critical fissure in the Western alliance's approach. This will be the next major hurdle. Can a unified front be maintained when key players have different ideas on the necessary sequence of events?

As a voice from Canada, a nation deeply invested in international peace and security, we watch these developments with cautious optimism. The symbolism of a unified Europe standing with Ukraine in Washington is powerful. It sends a clear message to both the U.S. and Russia that the continent is united in its support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. The meeting was a significant step forward, but the real work—the complicated, grinding work of diplomacy has just begun.

