

Peace Talks: Why Kyiv Should Not Negotiate Ceasefire with Moscow

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion at the end of February 2022, possible negotiations and peace between Russia and Ukraine have been widely discussed. This idea was prevalent in the Western media and in the political discourse of many states. In spite of most countries and their chief analysts believing that Ukraine would fall in a few days, brokering a cold peace or another "Minsk-3" seemed quite favorable – it would satisfy Russia's needs, formalize support for Ukraine, allow Western countries to continue doing "business as usual" with Moscow, and reduce any additional costs that the West would be faced with. The successful defensive and counter-offensive operations conducted by Ukraine and the incredible resilience of Ukrainians showed that Ukraine could not only withstand Russian aggression but even make Russia pay a huge price for its war of choice. Furthermore, influential politicians and military professionals claimed that Ukraine was capable of liberating all the occupied territories of Russia, including the regions occupied before the full-scale invasion, as well as the Crimea peninsula, which did not exactly coincide with the beliefs of some world leaders, international relations scholars and analysts.

There is a significant incompatibility of interests between the warring parties. This became evident during the first attempts to hold peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, which took place in Belarus and then switched to Turkey. Several rounds of negotiations did not bring the major tangible results that one could have hoped for in the West. Many claimed that the Russian government was not interested in a diplomatic solution at all by framing its objectives as "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine. Meanwhile, Ukraine had shown more flexibility than Russia, when Kyiv was ready for some compromises regarding its neutral status, the issues of the Russian language, and the return to the status quo present before February 24. As of today, it seems that the two aforementioned mysterious goals remain relevant for the Russian political establishment. This indicates that Russia is still bent on conquering Ukraine by all means: killing anyone who opposes it and destroying Ukraine together with its national identity. Therefore, Ukraine is not willing to sign another "Minsk-3" agreement, which would not give any security guarantees and full restoration of sovereignty and territorial integrity within the borders of 1991.



Negotiations between delegations from Russia and Ukraine in Istanbul, March 29, 2022.

Cem Ozdel/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images

Due to the fact that Ukraine liberated parts of the territories occupied by Russia and found much evidence of its war crimes, it is unlikely that Ukraine will be able to negotiate a just peace with Russia. Moreover, no one in Ukraine supports any exchange of territories to end the conflict, which has caused countless tragedies in Ukrainian society. According to a poll run by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in December, **85% of respondents** across the country believe that even though the war may last longer and Ukraine's independence may be threatened, **Ukraine should not give up any of its territories under any circumstances**. The vital interests of the parties are diametrically opposite, making diplomatic compromise nearly impossible. Yet, some positive results emerged from the negotiations, such as the release of some prisoners of war and the unblocking of Ukraine's Black Sea ports to allow grain exports to be restored in order to address the food crisis caused by the invasion. But again, this was only possible because Russia had an interest. For example, Russia claimed it was facing problems exporting agricultural products and mineral fertilizers because of sanctions. Moscow uses any diplomatic initiative to make tradeoffs in order to lift certain sanctions that harm the Russian economy. Ukrainian analysts sometimes refer to this as "**a strategy of small compromises**" that Russia employs in order to maintain relations with the West and win concessions from it in order to proclaim victory for its domestic audience. In other words, Russia can say it is still a great power and that other leading powers have to take into account Russia's position.

Peace Talks Discourse and Misperception of Russian Intentions

After the all-out war broke out, calls for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine were made by various actors. "Give diplomacy a chance" is probably the most commonly used phrase that leads one to believe that all conflicts are resolved by diplomatic means. Probably. This is, however, not the case in this war. Sometimes, these calls were formulated in the way that the West should exert pressure on Ukraine and make it negotiate with Russia. Furthermore, such proposals were made by US

military leadership or members of Joe Biden's administration, which received a lot of criticism. For instance, General Mark Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, who is the US's highest-ranking military officer, during several forums suggested that Ukraine's successful operations on the ground created a "*window of opportunity*" to engage with Russia in negotiations from the point of strength. He also noted that he could hardly imagine Ukraine defeating Russia during the winter season. Another illusion widely cited by the press and politicians is that winter makes it difficult to conduct military operations and defeat the enemy. The United States, for instance, has not fought a winter campaign since the war in Korea, while Ukraine has gained experience in winter combat engagement since the Russian invasion of 2014. Depending on weather conditions, military performance may deteriorate or improve. Thus, they should not be used as a means of **pressuring Ukraine into negotiations**. The only fact that Milley advocated for negotiations makes it surprising. Being a member of the US military, he should be familiar with this and should understand Russia's true intentions in this war as he receives all necessary intelligence.



A new scandal involving Elon Musk once again illustrates the level of misunderstanding and misperception of Russia in the West. Musk proposed unacceptable conditions for settlement of the conflict – re-elections in the pre-24 February occupied territories of Luhansk and Donetsk regions, recognizing Crimea as a part of Russia, ensuring water supplies to the peninsula, and making Ukraine neutral. It appeared to Ukrainians as a suggestion for a renewed **appeasement policy** that would not end the war but only encourage the aggressor to annex more territories. The case of Elon Musk's tweets also demonstrates that the West is still under the influence of Russian propaganda. It might seem that Musk has nothing to do with international politics, though his stance became a climax point of what was discussed by many political analysts since the start of the invasion. Such an attitude unites those under the influence of the Russian legacy of being a great nuclear power, the interests of which should be considered first in the decision-making process. Moreover, it highlights that many in the West tend to forget about the historical lessons that the world was supposed to learn after the end of World War II. It is not even surprising that the only country that openly supported Musk's "peace plan" was Russia and its propagandists. Furthermore, Pope Francis urged Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyi to engage in serious negotiations with Russia and that "all actors in international life and political leaders should do everything possible to end this conflict", preventing "a dangerous escalation." This once again shows a low understanding of the conflict and the situation on the ground. Therefore, such calls only play in the hands of Russia and create a false perception about Ukraine which "does not want peace and rejects any proposal of this type".

On October 24, a group of progressive Democrats sent a letter to Joe Biden asking him to urgently look for possibilities of **establishing a ceasefire** in Ukraine. They also asked him to start negotiations with Russia. It was based on fears of a Russian nuclear attack and the outbreak of World War III. After facing strong criticism, the letter was retracted the next day. The letter was sent several weeks after Russia started shelling Ukraine's energy and critical infrastructure, causing a dire humanitarian crisis. The appeal of these Congress members sent a troubling signal, which doubted the support efforts that the US and other allies have already provided to Ukraine and highlighted another threat: possible interference of Russia in US domestic politics. For instance, Russia might use various influential political figures within the US in order to push the agenda of a "diplomatic solution" that would benefit only Russia. There is a possibility that the RF could try to take advantage of it to further destabilize the US by sowing discord and tension between political parties. In such a way Russia would get a divided US that is facing difficulties agreeing on military assistance and other types of aid to Ukraine. By promoting the talks' agenda, Russia would achieve a frozen conflict and have time to regroup and prepare for a new invasion.

It seems that the numerous calls to negotiate with Moscow, articles in journals and newspapers, and the analyses provided by the Western expert and scientific communities highlight another major issue - many in the West still **look at Ukraine through the lens of Russia**. It is indeed a boiling issue since it limits the scope of research, resulting in misperceptions of both countries. Such a problem is especially evident in Western research institutions where experts on Russia and Eurasia believe they are very well aware of Ukraine, simply because they studied Russia or lived there. As a matter of fact, many researchers look at Ukraine from Russia's perspective, as a major power in the post-Soviet region, whose interests are above the interests of all the other neighboring countries. It actually plays into Russia's vision of sovereignty that dates back to the 19th-century absolutist interpretation. Specifically, it regards the use of force against neighbors as a vital means corresponding to the status of a great power. Furthermore, many in academia still believe that Ukraine belongs to Russia's "borderlands" or to the "sphere of privileged interests" as once declared by Dmitry Medvedev, derived from the Cold War competition between the US and the Soviet Union. By acknowledging this and simultaneously disregarding Ukraine as a sovereign nation, analysis of Ukraine as something inextricably linked to Russia undermines the possibility of understanding the Kremlin's motivations.

In this respect, it is noteworthy to quote Andreas Umland, political scientist and analyst of the Stockholm Centre for Eastern European Studies (SCEEUS) at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs, who said that Russian leadership engages in aggression after they know that it will result in a victory. Russia's victories in Moldova, Chechnya, Georgia, and Ukraine (in 2014) did not dampen Moscow's appetites. In contrast to popular belief, Russia was preparing for other military operations. That is why it is dangerous to misperceive Russian intentions, as any potential gain or victory will lead to another wave of aggression until Russia is stopped.

Without exaggeration, Russia can only be stopped by force, not by diplomatic bargaining as many tend to believe. Instead of finding counter-arguments of why Ukraine should not win, or Russia should not lose, or there is a need to save Putin's face, the West should conduct a systematic job that would entail the coverage of why Ukraine's victory is so significant not just for Ukraine, but for the whole world. This work would require a substantial **review of Russia's behavior in different conflicts**. The role of history cannot be underestimated in current realities, as Russian conduct is largely determined by historical precedents. Each time the West shows weakness toward Russia, Moscow is not afraid to use any means, including military ones. As part of this discussion, Ukraine's foreign minister Dmytro Kuleba suggested that the West should "better prepare for Russian defeat already now, instead of trying to explain why Ukraine cannot or should not win."

Russia's Participation in the Peace Talks: Khasavyurt Accords and Minsk Negotiations

When one approaches Russia's behavior during various conflicts, it is possible to trace a common pattern or strategy that Russia sticks to. Russia has been involved in numerous military actions and negotiation processes in the post-Soviet space and beyond. My suggestion is to focus on two examples - the Khasavyurt Accords signed as a result of The First Chechen War, and the Minsk negotiations during Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014-2015. The ending of The First Chechen War demonstrates that even if you manage to reach a diplomatic agreement with Russia, **Moscow will adhere to it only if it corresponds to its own interests**. Russia, as demonstrated in the case of Chechnya, attempts to achieve an agreement that can be interpreted in a variety of ways through the use of unclear language. During the first Chechen campaign, Russia hoped to suppress the political party of Dzhokhar Dudayev, who sought to gain independence for Chechnya. As long as previous Russian attempts to remove Dudayev failed, Moscow started drafting plans for military intervention, which was supposed to be conducted in a blitzkrieg manner. However, despite Russian hopes for a quick siege, the campaign lasted for almost two years. This is because the Russians could not find a way to fight the guerrilla warfare tactics of the Chechens. Even considering Russia's advantage in manpower, weaponry, and air superiority, the Russian military faced severe casualties, which triggered a political and socio-economic crisis within the country. There were also heavy casualties among the civilian population - estimates suggest that Chechens lost around 100,000 civilians, mostly during Russia's assault on Grozny, the capital of Chechnya. It was the demoralized Russian forces, and the Russian population's opposition to a long-term conflict, that made Russia and President Yeltsin pursue negotiations.



First Chechen War. Footage of Chechnya Capital Grozny after intense Russian bombings.

In the first Chechen campaign, Russia discovered that its military had not been ready to fight against the Chechens. The war exposed the weaknesses of the Russian army and no one in the Kremlin denied that it should be reformed.



President of the RF B. Yeltsin and President of the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria A. Maskhadov in Moscow, May 12, 1997

Representatives of Russia and Chechnya signed the Khasavyurt agreement in 1996. According to the agreement, the conflict between Russia and Chechnya should have been resolved through political means. A deadline was set for withdrawing federal troops from Chechnya. Also, Russia was to provide assistance for the restoration of the Republic's social and economic structure. Experts note, however, that the agreement did not explain how the parties planned to address the root cause of the conflict – Chechen aspirations for independence. Observers claim that even the wording of the agreement was vague, leaving Russia some flexibility for maneuvering in the future. Others mentioned that Russia recognized the independent Chechen Republic by signing the Khasavyurt accord. In spite of this, experts in international law argue, referring in the document to the parties acting according to international law does not mean independence is recognized. Also pertinent to mention is the fact that the outcome of the First Chechen War also divided Russian society and the army. For instance, some of the Russian generals said that “their victory was stolen” and they

were not presented with a final chance to defeat the guerrillas. Russia’s ultra-patriots called the Khasavyurt accord to be “capitulatory” and “treacherous” for Russia. This, in its turn, paved the way for **revanchist sentiments** within Russian society and among Russian political elites, who demanded victory – something on which their legitimacy stands.

Because of this, the Khasavyurt accord is a clear example of how Russia keeps trying to reach its goals after it loses. Moscow tries to gain victory by fixing its previous mistakes, organizing better plans for military operations and reorganizing its military forces. Russia also changed its communication strategy and prioritized information warfare. In effect, Russian propagandists described The Second Chechen War as a different war, emphasizing the “terrorist nature of the Chechen threat”. They continued to mention apartment bombings in Moscow and other cities, which many researchers claim is the work of the FSB (Federal Security Service of the Russian Federation) in order to justify a new war. And Russian society gradually changed its opinion on the Chechen War. 65% of respondents to a public opinion poll stated they support keeping Chechnya in Russia through all means, including military ones. Using the case of the First Chechen War to link to current events, one could find interesting comments by Russian propagandist Zakhar Prilepin. In an argument with Olga Skabeeva, another top Russian propagandist, he argued that Russia would not achieve its goals by shelling Ukraine's infrastructure. Instead, Moscow has to negotiate with Volodymyr Zelenskyi. Moreover, Prilepin went further and openly said that Russia had to **coerce Ukraine to negotiate with Russia**. This is because Moscow will be busy regrouping forces and, in the end, it will be ready to finish the war by military offensive anyway. Furthermore, without any hesitation, he mentioned that **Russia needs “a new Khasavyurt”**, which is of course going to be a shame for Russia but will only be of a temporary character for Moscow. Russia's true intentions cannot be explained by taking the words of Russia's propaganda seriously. Even so, given the fact that Russia's TV propaganda shows are often staged, one might logically assume that they were ordered by the Kremlin to convey the message that Russia needs negotiations.

It is crucial to track the outcome of the Minsk negotiations - back in 2014-2015, when Ukraine was forced to negotiate with Russia in light of the failures on the battlefield. In reality, Ukraine negotiated with Russia under pressure, which came not only from the Kremlin but also from partners of Ukraine - Germany and France, who acted as mediators during the conflict. In the first attempt to establish peace, the Trilateral Contact Group, which consisted of representatives from Ukraine, the OSCE, and Russia, drew the Minsk Protocol. The representatives of the so-called “DPR” and “LPR” were also among the signatories. The protocol failed to produce any results because Russia-led mercenaries continued to breach the ceasefire agreement and launched an offensive operation on Donetsk Airport. Moreover, a few days before the Protocol was signed, Ukrainian forces were encircled during the Battle for Ilovaysk, which became one of the most tragic chapters in the history of the Russian invasion. Before that, Ukrainian troops liberated one town after another. However, regular forces of the Russian army crossed the border on August



The second Normandy Talks in Milan on October 17, 2014.

23 and 24, shifting the balance and creating unfavorable conditions for Ukrainian forces on the ground. Since Ukrainian troops were encircled, the Russian side proposed opening a humanitarian corridor, which was then ruthlessly shelled by the Russian army. The estimated number of casualties ranges, however, according to the preliminary investigation, Ukraine lost 366 killed and 429 wounded soldiers, 128 were captured and 158 were missing. The only episode of Ilovaysk indicates what Russia's guarantees really mean in practice.

Despite the agreed ceasefire in terms of the Minsk Protocol, the Russians continued to shell and advance into Ukrainian territory. They managed to capture Donetsk Airport after Ukrainian troops defended it for 242 days. By the end of January 2015,



Commemoration of Ukrainian soldiers killed in the battles for Debaltseve in the city of Lutsk, February 18, 2021

the Minsk Protocol completely collapsed as Russia did not take it seriously. The need to conduct another round of negotiations was triggered by another battle over the strategically significant city of Debaltseve. This city is located at a highway and railway junction. Although Ukraine, Russia, Germany, and France held talks on February 12 and signed an agreement, Russian forces continued shelling and conducting an assault on Debaltseve. This resulted in severe casualties among Ukrainian soldiers. It seemed that Russia was on purpose delaying the signing of the document in order to increase its negotiating power and achieve better results, simply by taking possession of more territories. Therefore, the final version of the Minsk agreements was highly influenced by the fighting on the ground. Minsk-2 was therefore the result of an absolute disagreement between Russia and Ukraine. The sequence of actions towards the implementation of the agreement was one of the major obstacles. Ukraine demanded security before moving into the implementation of the political part of the agreement.

In fact, the provisions of the Minsk agreements would have led to the loss of Ukrainian sovereignty through federalization. This would make the reintegrated regions of Donetsk and Luhansk an obstacle to conducting a truly independent foreign policy. They would have had the right to veto any attempts to join NATO and the EU. One could argue that Ukraine benefited from the agreement, as it allowed it to stop major fighting and gave time for Ukraine to rebuild its army and economy. But Russia also gained a benefit – it had an opportunity to escalate the situation within Ukraine whenever it wanted to push its own agenda without caring too much about its reputation. That is why the ceasefire was usually violated – Russia did not withdraw heavy weaponry and artillery systems according to the agreement. OSCE reports often indicated violations of the ceasefire hundreds or even thousands of times per day. I would also argue that the Minsk negotiations were primarily used by Russia to plan an all-out invasion and check the reaction of the collective West. As a result, the Minsk agreement at its core was designed in such a way that it could not resolve the conflict.

Generally speaking, Ukraine was humiliated by the Minsk agreements, which did nothing but brought more casualties. OHCHR in one of its reports mentioned that the total number of estimated casualties in Ukraine from April 2014 to December 2021 was between 51 000 and 54 000. Approximately 14 000 to 15 000 people were killed in this war, and the rest were injured. Moreover, Russia claimed that it was not a party to the conflict, which further hindered the implementation of any agreement in practice. After Volodymyr Zelenskyi became President of Ukraine, Moscow expected Ukraine to accept every condition it might have for the peaceful resolution of the conflict. Zelenskyi's background and inexperience in politics made the Kremlin think that the flexible position of the newly elected Ukrainian President would work for Moscow. However, Russian demands could not have been satisfied, as it would have meant losing Ukraine's sovereignty, which was unacceptable. Hence, after the Normandy Four high-level talks in 2019, it was clear that Russia's hopes to coerce Zelenskyi to accept Russian demands failed. There is a problem that Moscow still does not grasp when it comes to its assessment of Ukraine. No matter who is the President of Ukraine, he or she would never accept Russian conditions because of the position of a vibrant civil society. The issue of negotiations with Russia is extremely sensitive to the Ukrainian people. Any attempts to negotiate with Russia would face strong resistance from society and end up in the collapse of the government. Even President Zelenskyi himself was frequently criticized for his inconsistent take on Russia after he was elected. At that time, he believed it was possible to negotiate a just peace with the Kremlin.

Considering Russia's plans for Ukraine, it is pretty clear that Moscow was not interested in a peaceful settlement, given the fact that the Russian-controlled areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have been passportized. Russian official sources themselves claimed they issued more than 720 000 passports to inhabitants of the so-called "DPR" and "LPR", which is a

striking violation of international law and Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It is the different interpretations of sovereignty by Ukraine and Russia that are at the center of any potential peace talks between Ukraine and Russia. Therefore, a just peace deal is unlikely to be achieved unless Moscow changes its position, which stayed the same since 2014-2015.

Trying to negotiate peace with Russia then and now is a critical error by Ukrainian partners abroad. That is why the legacy of Germany and France should be an example for everyone in the West. Putting pressure on Ukraine to negotiate with Russia, as it was under the leadership of Angela Merkel and Francois Hollande, will only serve Russian interests.

Ukraine and Russia Are Far Away from Negotiations

The two above-mentioned cases provide an understanding that Russia uses negotiations to hide its real intentions. The case of the Chechen war and the Khasavyurt Accords demonstrates that even if you reach any agreement with Russia, Moscow will adhere to the agreement as long as it is beneficial for it. In spite of a serious political and economic crisis, the Russian population does not forget past losses and will continue demanding victories from its leaders, influenced by Russian propaganda. Growing revisionist sentiments may lead to a new attempt to win a war.

As a result of the Minsk negotiations, it is possible to observe Russia's attitude toward Ukraine. We see that the Minsk agreement in fact exposed the points of disagreement between the two countries. It had no success at all since Russia had not shown any flexibility or willingness to compromise. Instead, Moscow used the agreement to put pressure on Ukraine, create tensions and sow discord within the country, divide people and prepare the ground for a full-scale invasion. The root cause of the impossibility of negotiating a just peace with Moscow is that Russia does not recognize Ukraine as a sovereign nation. Furthermore, Kyrylo Budanov, the Ukrainian intelligence chief, stated that 82% of Russians support hostilities in Ukraine. That is a crucial factor to consider since many in the West believe this is only Putin's war. However, we must admit that Ukraine fights not only the Russian regime but also the Russian people.

Therefore, instead of seeking negotiations that would only provide Russia with an opportunity to regroup, it is vital to continue supporting Ukraine by providing the necessary military equipment. During the winter, another crucial step is strengthening the resilience of Ukraine's energy and critical infrastructure. **Negotiations with Moscow now are nothing more than a delay to another war.** It must admit that previous attempts to appease Russia did not work out and only increased Russian appetites. Asking Ukraine to negotiate now is similar to asking Winston Churchill to negotiate with Adolf Hitler during the Battle of Britain. The mobilization in Russia is sending a signal that Moscow is not intending to give up the idea of conquering all of Ukraine. By starting a full-scale invasion, Vladimir Putin and Russia signed up for a zero-sum game. After facing several major losses, Russia did not change its position. Contrary to this, the Kremlin wishes to prolong the war to regain the initiative against the backdrop of critical infrastructure shelling alongside weaponizing winter. Furthermore, Moscow is attempting to do everything it can to delay Western military aid supplies to Ukraine and trying to mobilize more people to fight in Ukraine. The cost of continuing the war has become relatively low as the likelihood of winning outweighs any potential losses for both parties. For Ukraine, it is an opportunity to retake all the captured territories. Russia may have hopes of bringing some victories to its domestic audience and showing the West that it is still capable of fighting. Even more, for Putin, continuing the war is a matter of life and death, both political and physical. That is why the issue of negotiations is not on the table right now.

Furthermore, the partners of Ukraine should be ready to increase support amid reports of a new potential invasion of the territory of Ukraine from Belarus. As NATO's Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg rightly mentioned, it is Ukraine that has to decide when to start negotiations and what kind of conditions. He also emphasized that *"if you want an outcome of those negotiations, which ensures that Ukraine prevails as a sovereign, independent nation, we need to provide military support to Ukraine"*. In light of the fact that this war is of existential significance for Ukraine, I find it relevant to mention the words of Golda Meir: *"If we lose a war, that's the end forever — and we disappear from the earth. If one fails to understand this, then one fails to understand obstinacy. **We intend to remain alive. Our neighbors want to see us dead. This is not a question that leaves much room for compromise.**"*

A conviction that all wars end diplomatically is far from reality and there have been numerous wars that were fought until they were concluded on the battlefield. It is certain that any hypothetical agreement would envisage a ceasefire that could bring more repression of millions of Ukrainians in the occupied territories. The examples of Bucha, Irpin, Hostomel, Izium, Mariupol, and many other cities speak for themselves. Russia would violate the agreement anyway, as it was in the context of the Minsk agreement because Moscow simply does not care about reputational costs. Moreover, Russians will not be willing to

withdraw from already occupied territories as long as they are strategically important for Moscow to preserve a bridgehead for future offensive operations.

As a final note, Volodymyr Zelenskyi outlined the key demands of Ukraine in order to open negotiations with Russia: withdrawal of Russian troops, return of Ukraine's occupied lands, compensation for war damage, and prosecution for war crimes. It is the only way to achieve a just and sustainable peace. The collective West must now support the position of the Ukrainian President and give up the fantasy of changing reality where Ukraine is not strong enough and Russia is still able to prevail. The Ukrainian forces have retaken the strategic initiative in this war. Ukraine's negotiating power will only increase amid the continuing progress in liberating its territories. As Kaja Kallas, Estonian PM stressed, there is no need to push for premature peace now. Unless Russia abandons its goal of conquering new territory in Ukraine, peace talks have a slim chance of achieving anything. History shows that appeasement strengthens and encourages aggressors and that aggression can only be stopped by force. Russia has not achieved any of its goals since declaring war. Kherson, the only regional center it managed to seize after the 24th of February, has already been lost. Finally, the latest study conducted by the Sociological group "Rating" at the request of the Transatlantic Dialogue Center revealed that victory in the war is the liberation of all Ukrainian territories, including Crimea and temporarily occupied territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions – the opinion is supported by 85% of Ukrainian respondents. Prior to commencing any negotiations with Russia, the opinion of Ukrainian society must be considered. The Ukrainian people are ready to fight till victory, despite the shelling of energy infrastructure and constant blackouts across the country. The will of the people must be respected, and observers and politicians from the West must halt their unrealistic calls for negotiations immediately. The push for negotiations will only demoralize Ukrainian soldiers and Ukrainian civil society, leading to a misperception about the intentions of the collective West in this war. Ukraine is not planning to give up no matter how desperate Russia is to win some time by promoting negotiations.

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