

Trump Cards in Anchorage

When it comes to negotiating with Putin to end the Ukraine war, Trump may have a stronger hand than people think.

Putin is winning the war and doesn't need a deal to achieve his strategic goals. Trump has no big stick with which to beat Russia, except to take full ownership of Biden's war, and there is little or no prospect of that happening.

But Trump does have a few carrots:

1. Putin wants to stop the slaughter as soon as possible - it is his kith and kin who are being killed, and Slavic lands that are being laid waste.
2. Ending the war through robust diplomacy is Putin's best guarantee of a stable peace settlement; permanent warfare with the West in relation to Ukraine would be no great victory for Russia.
3. A Russian-American peace deal would be the Zelensky regime's death knell.
4. The Global South's continuing support for a compromise peace.
5. The possibility of Moscow re-balancing its relations with Beijing, of making their 'no limits partnership' more equitable.
6. Significant sanctions relief, some immediately, with more to come.
7. The boost to anti-establishment populist forces in Europe that favour collaboration, not confrontation, with Russia.
8. With the tariffs in his pocket and the Senate in recess, Trump is free to make a deal with Putin, for a while anyway.
9. The grand prize of a global détente with the United States.

Zelensky and his Europeans allies could conspire to wreck any Putin-Trump deal. But will they just watch as Trump walks away from the conflict and dooms Ukraine to utter destruction?

13 August 2025