

# Connecting the Dots of Trump's Foreign Policy Approach

By Conrad Black

There has naturally been a great deal of controversy over Donald Trump's conduct of foreign policy. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that there was no serious discussion of peace in Ukraine by anybody prior to his return as president of the United States, and that the return of hostages in Gaza has accelerated since that date and violence has abated, although Israel has not, as had been demanded, decamped altogether from Gaza.



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio meets with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, Feb. 17, 2025. Reuters/Evelyn Hockstein/Pool/File Photo

Trump has made it clear that he will not tolerate a nuclear-

armed Iran, and while expressing a strong [preference to negotiate](#) the necessary assurance that Iran will not attempt to take that step, he has also made it clear that he is prepared to prevent it by military intervention. Despite Ayatollah Khamenei's fiery assertion on March 8 that he would [not have direct negotiations](#) with the United States, even the muddled and bloodstained theocracy in Tehran cannot doubt that Trump will do as he promises, and if they wish to negotiate through an intermediary, that will not change the results or significantly spare the Iranian government the embarrassment that it has so determinedly brought upon itself.

In Ukraine, it only took three days for President Zelenskyy, after his unfortunate exchange in the White House, to say that he was happy to [sign the minerals agreement](#) after all, a signing that had been an itinerant affair from Kiev to Munich to Washington. Given that membership in NATO requires the agreement of all members, and that Ukraine's membership is opposed by a number of European countries including Germany and Hungary, Trump has not inflicted much hardship on Ukraine by taking the position that any membership in NATO will have to be deferred indefinitely.

Meanwhile, in tightening sanctions on Russia from the porous and ineffectual constraints imposed on it by the previous U.S. administration, Trump has started the process of bringing Putin to the party. Trump is the only person who can effectively deliver both sides to the agreement. Ukraine cannot continue at war without American assistance, and the war could quickly be raised to a point of being intolerably burdensome to Russia if the United States supplied Ukraine with the weapons that would make the civilian Russian population as familiar with the devastation of this war as the civilian population of Ukraine has become because of Russia's lengthy and indiscriminate assault upon it.

As far as can be deduced from public statements by Trump and others, Russia will retain most of its acquests within Ukraine, but will unambiguously acknowledge the legitimacy and sovereignty of Ukraine in its revised borders. There will be NATO peacekeepers, including from France and the United Kingdom, durably in Ukraine, and in the event that they are

attacked, France and the UK—nuclear powers and close allies of the United States as they both are, reaffirmed as such by their leaders in Washington two weeks ago—would be free to invoke [Article 5](#) of the NATO agreement and request direct military assistance from the United States. Under the [strategic minerals agreement](#), the United States would have extensive and sophisticated personnel in Ukraine, and as Trump stated in the somewhat acrimonious exchange in the Oval Office last month, that in itself would be a considerable assurance of security for Ukraine.

Any such arrangement would constitute a definitive recognition of the legitimacy of Ukraine as an independent country, and not the shabby and instantly abandoned assurances of its security that were given when, in 1994, Ukraine, Belarus, and Kazakhstan [voluntarily surrendered](#) the nuclear weapons that they had inherited from the USSR. Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian government has been deliberately ambiguous about the extent to which it recognized the sovereignty of the 14 other so-called republics of the USSR.

The Kremlin still exercises extensive influence over some of the Muslim Asian republics and effectively dominates Belarus. It has forcibly taken two provinces back from Georgia and effectively prevented Georgia's entry into NATO. Moldova is a politically contested area that intermittently seeks [admission to Romania](#), a status it partly had in the past when it was known as Bessarabia. Putin is still [trying to intimidate](#) Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, and there are substantial Russian ethnic minorities in Latvia and Estonia. But this is much more complicated given that all three countries are members of NATO and there are significant deployments of NATO forces within them.

It is easy to forget, because we have so long been accustomed to thinking of Russia as one of the world's great powers, that its GDP is in fact [smaller than](#) Canada's. And while it is an expert manufacturer of sophisticated armaments, though not the equal of the United States, it is an underachieving country plagued by alcoholism, and its attempt substantially to undo the West's victory in the Cold War by the reabsorption of Ukraine has been a terrible fiasco. There have been [over 750,000](#) Russian casualties, and Putin has been reduced to

seeking arms from Iran and mercenaries from North Korea. This, as well as the defection of the Wagner mercenary army in 2023 and its [march toward Moscow](#) while it was cheered on by the civil population, has revealed Russia as an indifferent military power apart from its nuclear arsenal.

In addition to the humiliations endured by the Russian armed forces, Putin's aggression, compounded by Trump's impatience, appears finally to have prompted Western Europe to take better care of its own defence. This must be considered a serious setback for the Kremlin. Trump is surely on the right track and a satisfactory peace should be worked out fairly soon.

It is more difficult to foresee what will happen in the Middle East. Trump's proposal to take over Gaza and rebuild it, demilitarize it, and relocate much of its population elsewhere, may provide the origins of a durable solution to the Middle East problem. The basic difficulty [arose when the British](#), despite the fact the area was governed by Turkey, in 1917 promised a Jewish homeland in Palestine without compromising the rights of the Arabs. This has always indicated a two-state solution, but it has been impossible for Israel to reach serious agreement with parties that do not acknowledge the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state.

The Palestinians could have had their state [any time in the last 20 years](#), but they have chosen to hold out for a one-state solution in which they would expel, subjugate, or massacre the Jews.

The Arab powers, meanwhile, have no great affection for the Palestinians, and only promoted the issue to distract the Arab masses from the misgovernment they were receiving. But the emergence of Iran as an aggressive opponent of the Arabs has created a propitious climate for Arab-Israeli conciliation. It may be that peace could be had on the basis of a Palestinian state that was a much deepened Gaza or a narrowed West Bank, with Palestinian sections of Jordan and Lebanon added to it. At least there is movement, and the Saudi-Israeli agreement should not be far off.

Though his methods are unorthodox, President Trump has been a positive influence in these areas.

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