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European Languages

زبانهای اروپایی

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18.12.2024

## ***Much ado about nothing: Trump's Plans for Ukraine End-Game***

As Donald Trump prepares to assume the U.S. presidency, his approach to ending the military conflict in Ukraine is drawing intense scrutiny.



What are the options available to the US president-elect, Donald Trump, to end the military conflict in Ukraine? He could always continue the path laid down by the Biden administration (and his allies in Europe). The question, however, is: how has that plan worked so far in the three years since the beginning of this conflict? Russia is strong, both militarily and economically. Financial sanctions, Europe's boycott of energy supplies from Russia, and the US-NATO military aid to Ukraine have not worked to force Moscow into submission and/or ensure Ukraine's membership in NATO.

The entire issue could have been resolved through diplomatic means

As a businessman-turned-politician, Trump sees NATO's war on Russia as a bad transaction that should be undone. His political allies, accordingly, are already sharing the end-game plans publicly. The question is: will they work and be acceptable to Russia? Most

importantly, the Trump administration will have to counter the American “deep state” that essentially sees the conflict necessary for expanding NATO. Finally, the very fact of the end-game exposes the Western hypocrisy – and how Ukraine embraced it for three years – surrounding the whole conflict.

### **The End-game Plan**

As reports indicate, Trump’s incoming Russia-Ukraine envoy, Keith Kellogg, has shared details of a plan to end the conflict. This plan, first and foremost, has taken Ukraine’s bid to become a NATO member off the table. Ukrainian officials are now talking to people from the incoming Trump administration to “narrow wide differences” to clear the path for the conflict to settle even before Trump’s oath. That’s how quick they are now!

The fact that Ukraine is now ‘willing’ to drop its bid to join NATO, one is left wondering if doing this was just as easy as it is now, why didn’t Ukraine do so in early 2022? Was the entire conflict about nothing in the end? Sadly enough, it looks like this was the case after all. Ukraine chose to be a pawn in the hands of the American “deep state” wanting to undo the ‘damage’ done by the Trump administration’s distance from NATO between 2016 and 2020. The “deep state” put in motion a plan to not only revive US-NATO ties, but also to expand it to maintain its geopolitical relevance. The path went through Ukraine. It worked well insofar as NATO still expanded by adding new members (Sweden and Finland) but the end game is going to be a lot more costly than it seems. If Russia ends up retaining control of even some of the regions it is presently controlling and if Ukraine agrees to permanently drop its bid to join NATO, this will be a major blow to the Western hegemony.

### **The Hypocrisy Exposed**

Kellogg is now overseeing the end game. Why is he doing so? Because he understands the hypocrisy underlying the entire crisis. Publicly, it was Russia that threatened Ukraine’s sovereignty. Privately, as Kellogg wrote in a policy paper in April 2024, the whole issue was little more than the Biden administration’s “proxy war” with Russia via Ukraine. The entire issue could have been resolved through diplomatic means – something the Trump administration is looking to do now. All of a sudden, Ukrainian leadership is also willing. In reality, the only thing that has changed is that the American “deep state” no longer has a president in the White House willing to toe their line of foreign policy uncritically. Still, the “deep state” is very unhappy and is already reacting.

### **The “Deep State” Reaction: Wars must go on**

One reaction came a few weeks ago when the Biden administration allowed Ukraine to fire US missiles into the Russian territory. The idea was to make things complicated. Deep down,

the Biden administration wanted Russia to resort to the nuclear option. However, they never realised other tactical options that Russia had in its arsenal, i.e., the new, unstoppable missile. That plan to provoke Russia, thus, failed. But the “deep state” is now surfacing somewhere else. Its modus operandi involves using media to spread alternative plans and/or key modifications to the existing plan.

Marc A. Thiessen, a very well-known American ‘conservative’, who defends torture and supports the CIA’s wars and was part of the Bush administration (he was Bush’s speechwriter), recently wrote in *The Washington Post* saying that even if Trump can bring the conflict to an end, the US must continue to arm Ukraine.

*“Ukraine must be militarily strong enough to deter Russia. Giving up its nuclear deterrent, and depending on others to protect it, was a mistake. Ukraine will need to create a conventional deterrent so powerful that Russia will never take it on. This means that, even if Trump succeeds in forging peace, the imperative to arm Ukraine will continue. We must find mechanisms to increase the flow of U.S. weapons headed to Kyiv that do not require U.S. taxpayers to bear the cost”.*

According to Thiessen, Russia’s president does not want peace. He wants Ukraine. This is the same claim intensely propagated by the “deep state” and the Biden administration in late 2021 when they refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of Russia’s security interests that were directly threatened by NATO’s expansion into Ukraine.

While it is unlikely that the “deep state” will be able to do any significant damage to Trump’s bid to end the conflict, there is no denying that it wants to continue to fight Russia. If not in Ukraine, it has now resurfaced itself in Syria. By recapturing Syria, they want to reverse Russian gains there. Deep down, they think that they will be able to counter-balance Russian gains in Ukraine with Russia’s ‘loses’ in Syria. Will that work? Trump’s policy of ‘no wars’ might undo the Syrian ‘rebels’ too.

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