



Peter Trubowitz

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What to expect from the Trump-Putin summit in Alaska



*On Friday 15 August, Donald Trump will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, for talks on ending Russia's war in Ukraine. In this Q&A, Phelan US Centre Director **Professor Peter Trubowitz** outlines what Trump wants from the meeting, and what the summit says about his approach to foreign policy more broadly.*

Why is Trump meeting with Putin?

Trump ran for the presidency in 2024 **promising** to end the war in Ukraine within 24 hours of taking office. I think he is keen to salvage something of that promise and Putin has arguably given him an opportunity to do so by proposing they meet in person. Of course, with Trump you always have to think about what he is trying to avoid as well as what he is trying to achieve. In his book, anything that takes the media's attention off his problems at home (for example, weak poll numbers, the **Epstein files**, pushback in the heartland against the Big Beautiful Bill) is a plus.

What does Trump want from the meeting?

A win, which for him means something that can be interpreted as moving the needle on ending the war or alternatively, normalizing US-Russian relations. The chances that Putin agrees to ceasefire terms that are acceptable to Kyiv is slim. So I won't be surprised if the story that emerges from Anchorage has more to do with relaxing tensions between Washington and Moscow than ending the war. The mere fact that these talks are being held on American soil is already a move in this direction, but it is more a victory for Putin than for Trump.



President Trump at the G20 (Public Domain) by The Trump White House Archived

Why has Trump chosen Alaska?

It's unclear who chose Alaska — Trump or Putin. For Putin, the location is a reminder that the US and Russia are neighbors; it avoids the risk of big **protests** that might occur were the summit held in Washington or New York; and it boosts Putin's international stature, or so he will argue domestically. For Trump, the summit moves the needle toward normalization of relations with Russia, something many in his **orbit** want. But it does so in a way that minimizes the political risk of domestic blowback or embarrassment to either of the principals. Alaska is a solid red state, and Anchorage is not exactly a media hub.

Is Trump willing to work with the EU?

Yes, up to a point, as he demonstrated on Wednesday. But the EU is in the caboose on these negotiations, as they have been on Ukraine **since Trump became president** last January. The Europeans are being kept informed, but they are not being allowed into the locomotive with Trump and Putin. The real question is whether the train with Trump and Putin as engineers will jump the tracks by agreeing to something that Zelensky can't accept. This is what European policymakers are worried about.

Does this strengthen Trump's 'strong man' reputation?

I would say this depends on the outcome tomorrow. If Trump is outmaneuvered by Putin and agrees to something that is roundly denounced in the US and Europe as appeasement (a ceasefire that comes at Ukraine's expense territorially; an agreement that just serves to buy time for Putin to

replenish his forces), my guess is the only folks who continue to view Trump as a strong man will be pro-Russia MAGA influencers. So, there is some risk here for Trump, too.

- *This article is based on an [interview with Professor Trubowitz with Bloomberg TV](#) on 14 August 2025*
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Peter Trubowitz is Professor of International Relations, and Director of the LSE's Phelan US Centre. His main research interests are in the fields of international security and comparative foreign policy, with special focus on American grand strategy and foreign policy. He also writes and comments frequently on US party politics and elections and how they shape and are shaped by America's changing place in the world.

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