

# The “Anchorage formula”: Why Russia’s war aims have not changed

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## Executive Summary

- As Russia’s war against Ukraine continues and the US-led peace negotiations go in circles, the Kremlin is promoting new rhetoric to obfuscate the fact that its maximalist war aims have not changed.
- In 2026, the Russian Armed Forces aim to take control of the entire Donbas region. However, annexation of territory is only one element of Russia’s wider strategy. The Kremlin is seeking a revised “Eurasian security architecture”.
- A two-pronged approach is discernible: Russian officials insist that there is a diplomatic solution to the Russo-Ukrainian war, dubbed the “Anchorage formula”, on the one hand, while preparing for a long-term military conflict, on the other.
- The Kremlin differentiates its messaging depending on the audience. Russia’s current strategy is to maintain functional relations with the Trump administration, frame Europe as the source of Russia’s security problems and persist with its military and political goals.

## Russian war aims

Vladimir Putin met with the leadership of the Russian General Staff on 27 December 2025. At this meeting, [Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov reported](#) to Putin that Russian forces will continue to conduct combat missions to seize all of the Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson oblasts. Gerasimov made no mention of freezing the conflict along the current lines of contact.

At a separate meeting two days later, Defence Minister Andrei Belousov informed Putin that the course of the special operation [“corresponds to the approved plan” and is developing “at a high pace ahead of the planned deadlines”](#). In addition, both Gerasimov and Belousov made a series of exaggerated claims regarding the extent of Russian territorial annexations in eastern Ukraine.

Territorial annexations are a means to an end. Russia's main goal is a new security architecture. [Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has recently argued](#) that the “military threats from Ukraine to the national security of Russia must be eliminated” and that the “fulfilment of the goals of the SVO [the war] supports the founding of a Eurasian security architecture” – where Eurasia is a reference to a century-old conservative idea that Russia is a unique civilisation straddling the two continents of Europe and Asia.

More specifically, Lavrov has [reiterated](#) that the draft treaties presented to the world on 17 December 2021 remain Russia's basis for security discussions. In other words, that NATO should retreat to its pre-1997 borders and Russia should be granted a sphere of interest in its neighbourhood. Lavrov has [repeated](#), “that Russia's demands concern not only Ukraine, but also Finland and Sweden, all the countries...which joined NATO after 1997”.

## The “Anchorage formula”

The “Anchorage formula” refers to alleged understandings reached at a summit meeting between US President Donald J. Trump and Putin in Anchorage, Alaska, on 15 August 2025. However, [according to CNN analysis](#), the meeting did not result in any kind of concrete “understandings” and there was no mention of an Anchorage Formula until months later.

The earliest documented use of the term appears to be by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov on 8 October 2025, when he [declared](#) that “the powerful momentum from Anchorage towards reaching agreements [...] has been largely exhausted”, blaming Europeans and “proponents of fighting to the last Ukrainian”. A few weeks later, he [stated](#) that “Anchorage has set the parameters within which we should work. We have no alternative”.

Lavrov has described the alleged Anchorage agreement as the sole diplomatic solution to the Russo-Ukrainian war, declaring the inadmissibility of “blurring the letter and spirit of Anchorage” in any possible peace plan. He has argued that Russia and the United States reached agreement on the [“solving of the Ukraine crisis”](#) but US officials are now [“backtracking from their own initiatives”](#). He later [stated](#): “If we approach this ‘as men’, they made an offer – and we accepted. It means that the problem needs to be solved”.

What the Anchorage formula really means is open to interpretation. [According to the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs](#), not only Donbas but also “Novorossiya” – a territory encompassing the southern mainland of Ukraine – belong to Russia and “Russia will fulfil its process of reuniting these traditionally Russian lands with its “native harbour”. Kremlin spokesperson [Dmitri Peskov](#) has suggested a somewhat more flexible approach: “Exactly what formula we are considering for the Anchorage formula, I cannot tell you”.

Moscow insists that Russia is under threat, primarily from Europe. European countries are also alleged to be undermining a peaceful resolution to the Russo-Ukrainian war. The United States, for now, is described as a reasonable actor that is willing to engage in talks with Russia. It is political leaders “in Brussels and London”, [fumes Lavrov](#), that are “interfering in the movement of Russia and the USA towards peace in Ukraine”.

## Concluding remarks and policy implications

- Moscow's aim in 2026 is to take control of the entire Donbas region, and perhaps other territories that the Russian Armed Forces are currently unable to occupy. The Kremlin is seeking to achieve these territorial gains through diplomatic means while preparing for a long-term military conflict.
- The Anchorage formula is a Russian diplomatic construct used to frame ongoing negotiations around territorial claims in Ukraine, particularly with regard to control of the Donbas region. It has no direct link to the wider political and military goals set by Moscow. Whether the rhetoric will stick and influence US-Russian talks remains to be seen.
- Europe needs to prepare for an enduring Russian security threat. Official Russian statements suggest no moderation regarding Ukraine, although a certain flexibility (or uncertainty) can be detected regarding the precise parameters of a potential end to the war.



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