

Documents from the 2022 Russia-Ukraine Ceasefire Consultations

Head, America, Europe, and Russia Division, Regional Studies Department **YAMAZOE Hiroshi**

February–April 2022 Ceasefire Consultations Reach an Agreement on a Communique but Fail to Conclude a Treaty

Since early 2025, the U.S. Donald Trump administration has been proceeding with consultations on halting hostilities in Ukraine. Steve Witkoff, U.S. Special Envoy to the Middle East involved in the talks with Russia, stated in a February 23 interview that the 2022 “Istanbul Protocol Agreement” would serve as a guidepost for the negotiations going forward.¹ In response to this remark, a report by the Institute for the Study of War argued that Russia’s demands in the draft treaty of April 15, 2022 would restrict Ukraine’s capabilities to levels far below those at the start of 2022 and effectively force it to surrender, and that the treaty was not applicable to the fundamentally different situation today.² It is easy to confuse what the negotiators at the time agreed to. Some claim that Ukraine and Russia came close to an agreement, but that Ukraine or its partners prioritized the use of force. Others claim that Russia merely went through the motions of negotiation without ever intending to finalize a deal.³ Against this backdrop, this article examines the nature of the documents crafted during the 2022 negotiations, referring to the texts of the March 29 Communique, sometimes called the “Istanbul Communique,” and the draft treaty of April 15. As a basic point of clarification, although the talks between Ukraine and Russia were based on the content of the March Communique, consensus was not reached on the subsequent draft treaty. While President Vladimir Putin spoke as if Ukraine consented to a draft treaty in Istanbul, including restrictions on Ukraine’s military strength,⁴ the Communique in March was different from the draft treaty over which the two sides had unresolved differences.

Even in 2022, information about the negotiation documents was available through Ukrainian and Russian announcements and through summaries provided by the media. However, more details became available in 2024 when diplomatic efforts entered a new phase. On April 16, 2024, Samuel Charap and Sergey Radchenko published a paper analyzing the 2022 negotiation process, obtaining and referring to the Communique of March 29, the draft treaty of April 12, and the draft treaty of April 15.⁵ Subsequently, on June 15, 2024, *The New York Times* (NYT) published an article detailing the negotiation process based on 2022 records and testimonies. NYT obtained and released the full text of the following three documents in the article: the draft treaty of March 17, the Communique of March 29, and the draft treaty of April 15.⁶ Both articles have confirmed the authenticity of the documents with the negotiating parties, and they

discuss the same March 29 and April 15 documents.

<p>March 29 Communique</p> <p>Main Provisions of the</p> <p>Treaty on Ukraine's Security Guarantees</p>	<p>April 15 Draft</p> <p>Treaty on Permanent Neutrality</p> <p>and Security Guarantees for Ukraine</p>
1. Ukraine is a permanently neutral state under international guarantees.	Ukraine is a permanently neutral state under international guarantees.
2. Guarantor states: Great Britain, China, Russia, the United States, France, Turkey, Germany, Canada, Italy, Poland, and additional states.	Guarantor states: Great Britain, China, Russia, the United States, France, and additional state(s).
3. Security guarantees do not apply to the Crimean Peninsula and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. (The agreement will include an interpretation of how Ukraine and Russia respectively understand the certain areas.)	Security guarantees do not apply to the Crimean Peninsula and areas indicated on the <u>annexed map</u> .
4. Ukraine does not join any military alliances, does not deploy foreign military bases and contingents, and can conduct international military exercises only with the consent of the guarantor states. Ukraine may become a member of the European Union.	Ukraine does not join any military alliances, does not deploy foreign military bases and contingents, and can conduct international military exercises only with the consent of <u>all</u> guarantor states. Ukraine may become a member of the European Union. Foreign armed forces do not conduct military exercises within 50 kilometers from the line indicated on the <u>annexed map</u> . Restrictions on military strength: Ukraine can have <u>up to 85,000 military personnel, 342 tanks, 96 Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) units with a firing range of no more than 40 kilometers, etc.</u>
5. In the event of aggression, each of the guarantor states will provide military assistance to Ukraine in order to restore its neutrality: closing airspace, providing weapons, and using armed force.	In the event of aggression, each of the guarantor states, <u>on the basis of a decision agreed upon by all guarantor states</u> , will provide military assistance to Ukraine in territories indicated on the <u>annexed map</u> in order to restore its neutrality: closing airspace, providing weapons, and using armed force.
6. The Treaty shall be provisionally applied from the date of its execution by the parties.	The Treaty shall be provisionally applied from the date of its execution by the parties.
7. The Treaty shall enter into force after a national referendum, amendments to the Constitution, and ratification.	The Treaty shall enter into force if Ukraine ratifies it following a national referendum and amendments to the Constitution, and if the majority of states including Russia ratifies it.
8. The status of the Crimean Peninsula will be discussed for a period of 10 years.	
9. Military means will not be used to resolve the issues of the Crimean Peninsula.	Measures are taken to resolve disputes by peaceful means.
10. The parties will continue consultations on the provisions	The timing and procedure for a ceasefire, withdrawal of

of the Treaty on Security Guarantees for Ukraine, a ceasefire, withdrawal of troops, humanitarian corridors, the exchange of bodies of the deceased, and the release of detainees.	troops, and exchange of prisoners of war from the beginning of the provisional application of this Treaty are determined by the annex: <u>Ukrainian units withdraw to places agreed upon with Russia, Russian units withdraw from territories indicated on the annexed map at a timing subject to future consultations, etc.</u>
11. It is possible to hold a meeting between the presidents of Ukraine and Russia with the aim of signing an agreement and/or making political decisions regarding the unresolved issues.	Signed <> April 2022
	<u>Russia and Ukraine shall lift mutual sanctions. International judicial proceedings filed against each other shall be terminated.</u> <u>Ukraine shall remove restrictions on the use of the Russian language. Ukraine shall regulate nationalism.</u>

Table: Comparison of two documents (underlined sections of the April 15 draft indicate proposals by Russia not agreed upon by Ukraine)

Ukraine's Military Resistance and the March 29 Communique

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a military operation targeting the capital Kyiv, with the goals of the "demilitarization" and "denazification" of Ukraine. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy released a video announcing that he would remain in the capital and command the defensive war. On the one hand, he vowed to fight and secured pledges of assistance from Western countries. On the other hand, he promoted dialogue to achieve a ceasefire, stating that he was not afraid to talk to Russia.⁷ Kyiv was on the brink of falling. On February 28, the Ukrainian delegation (Davyd Arakhamia, chairman of the ruling party's parliamentary faction, and others) and the Russian delegation (Vladimir Medinsky, aide to the president, and others) met in the territory of Belarus and agreed to continue their dialogue.

This was followed by a meeting on March 3 in the territory of Belarus and a meeting on March 7 at which talks began on the draft treaty on Ukrainian neutrality proposed by Russia.⁸ Russian-language investigative journalism unit, Sistema, obtained the text of the March 7 draft "Treaty on the Resolution of the Situation in Ukraine and the Neutrality of Ukraine" and published it on November 4, 2024.⁹ Moscow's demands to Kyiv included Ukraine becoming a permanently neutral state and renouncing alliances with foreign states, reducing its military strength to a level significantly smaller than the pre-war level, recognizing Russian sovereignty over the Crimean Peninsula¹⁰ and the independence of two "people's republics,"¹¹ terminating sanctions and lawsuits filed against Russia, making Russian the official language, and repealing and regulating laws supporting nationalism. Russian forces were to remain on Ukrainian territory until the implementation of the treaty was completed. These provisions appear to reflect the maximum demands Russia sought during the negotiations at the time.

In between their in-person meetings, both delegations continued to communicate and negotiate online and discussed each other's position on the draft treaty. On March 10, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov held talks in Antalya, Turkey. The March 17 draft treaty (published by NYT) titled, "Treaty on settlement of the situation in Ukraine, its neutrality and security guarantees of Ukraine," incorporates Ukraine's position and the Russian side's claims regarding the draft treaty. Ukraine proposed turning the treaty into a multilateral agreement that provides international guarantees for Ukraine to ensure its security as a neutral state, and opposed many of Moscow's demands other than the neutrality of Ukraine. Conversely, Russia objected to references to the 1994 Budapest Memorandum added by Ukraine. Viewing Russia's core demand to be neutralization, Ukraine aimed to reach an agreement by fulfilling this demand while pursuing security guarantees to maintain its neutral status. However, the Russian delegation had strong demands for the geographical scope of a neutral Ukraine as well as Ukraine's military and political rights, leaving a wide gap between the two sides.

Meanwhile, during the hostilities in March, Russian forces suffered heavy losses from Ukrainian counterstrikes, making the imminent prospect of Kyiv's capture more unlikely. On March 25, Russian forces announced that they had succeeded in striking enemy forces across Ukraine and would therefore focus on advancing into the eastern Donbas region.¹² In reality, this signaled the termination of the Russian offensive on Kyiv, and Russian forces withdrew by the end of the month.

As the tide of battle shifted, Russia seemed to lose its leverage to impose demands on Ukraine, resulting in more compromises being made in the negotiations. The Communique, dated March 29, was crafted during the consultations in Istanbul (full text published by NYT). It is a two-page document titled, "Main Provisions of the Treaty on Ukraine's Security Guarantees," compiled by Ukrainian negotiators with a view to reaching an agreement. On the same day, Medinsky described that the Ukrainian written proposals included proclaiming Ukraine's neutrality, promoting Ukraine's membership in the European Union (EU), and not applying international security guarantees to the Crimean Peninsula and the eastern Donbas region.¹³ That same day, journalist Farida Rustamova wrote that she had obtained the text of the ten-proposal Communique and published a summary of the proposals on her blog.¹⁴ While the full text published by NYT in 2024 consists of eleven proposals, they broadly align with the proposals Rustamova revealed.

According to the above draft Communique, Ukraine would become a neutral state in exchange for security guarantees provided by foreign states, and Ukraine would not join military alliances or host foreign military bases or contingents. The guarantor states would include Russia and China. In the event of aggression against Ukraine, the guarantor states would provide military assistance to restore its neutrality. However, security guarantees would not apply to the Crimean Peninsula and certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts. Furthermore, the status of the Crimean Peninsula would be discussed for a period of 10 years. The parties would continue consultations on issues, such as the termination of hostilities, the withdrawal of troops, and humanitarian corridors, and aim to hold a meeting between the presidents of Ukraine and Russia and sign an agreement. At this stage, Russia has dropped its demand that Ukraine recognize the status of the Crimean Peninsula and the "people's republics" and accepted Ukraine's

membership in the EU.

This Communique was issued by the Ukrainian negotiators in the course of the diplomatic negotiations and is not an agreement signed by Moscow. Nonetheless, it has been treated as a document broadly agreed upon by Russia. Indeed, its contents have been carried over into a subsequent draft treaty (see table). However, since it was not a document signed by Ukraine and Russia and thus not executable, it was assumed that both parties would continue negotiations to prepare a treaty document, which their presidents would sign at a summit meeting that addresses this and other issues.

Russia's Withdrawal from Northern Ukraine and the April 15 Draft Treaty

In late March, after Russian forces had withdrawn from Kyiv Oblast, Ukraine announced the mass murder of civilians in the town of Bucha during the Russian occupation. On April 4, President Zelenskyy visited Bucha. He condemned Russia for this incident but indicated he would continue the negotiations. On April 7, Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov stated that Ukraine proposed a draft treaty that deviated from the provisions of the March 29 Communique and that it was unacceptable. He mentioned that Russia would continue the negotiation process despite Ukraine's provocations.¹⁵ On April 9, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Kyiv and announced assistance for defending Ukraine. On April 12, President Putin claimed that Ukraine had fabricated the massacre and had undertaken actions that were inconsistent with the agreement reached in Istanbul, leading to a stalemate.¹⁶

Yet, consultations between the two sides continued. At a Ukrainian government meeting on April 5, Arakhamia and other senior officials proposed to suspend the talks. Arakhamia recalls President Zelenskyy telling him that although more horrific civilian casualties would likely come to light, any chance to end the war cannot be missed. It was therefore decided that video conferences with the Russian side would continue in accordance with the Communique.¹⁷ Roman Abramovich, a Russian businessman involved in the dialogue between the two countries, spoke with President Putin on April 9 and spoke by phone with Arakhamia, the Ukrainian negotiator, on April 10 (NYT). President Putin reportedly phoned his negotiators several times and urged them to concentrate on the key issues and settle them quickly (NYT).

The draft treaty of April 15 was created amid preparations for the next round of negotiations. The 16-page text published by NYT consists of 18 articles and five annexes (the map in Annex 6 was not included). The draft treaty is addressed from the Russian negotiators to the president of Russia. The text contains markings in red bold (proposals not agreed upon by Russia), red italics (proposals not agreed upon by Ukraine), and black italics (proposals that Ukraine refused to discuss as they are outside the scope of the Communique).

Text in black regular font appears to indicate proposals agreed upon by Ukrainian and Russian negotiators based on the Communique. It stipulates that Ukraine would become a neutral state; the

guarantor states would maintain dialogue and cooperate in the event of an aggression against Ukraine; and procedures would be determined for the termination of hostilities, the withdrawal of troops, and the exchange of prisoners of war. The signature line is dated April 2022, suggesting that the two sides intended to reach an agreement quickly. Based on the Communiqué, the draft treaty excludes Ukraine's recognition of the status of the Crimean Peninsula and the "people's republics," as claimed by Russia.

The Russian side still retained provisions from the March 17 draft treaty, including the lifting of sanctions, the termination of international judicial proceedings, the removal of restrictions on the use of the Russian language, and the regulation of nationalism. Ukraine refused to address them, citing that they fell outside the scope of the clauses of the neutrality treaty in the Communiqué. Among these provisions, the removal of restrictions on the Russian language and the regulation of nationalism may have been aimed at eliminating "Ukrainian nationalist attacks on ethnic Russians," i.e., achieving "denazification" (Charap and Radchenko).

The draft treaty published by NYT does not contain the annexed map and reveals only that Ukraine did not agree to Russia's claims. Moreover, it does not mention any agreement about the timing for Russia's withdrawal from the areas indicated on the map. Although the two sides moved in the direction of neutralizing Ukraine and achieving the withdrawal of Russian (foreign) forces from Ukraine, they had not decided on when and from where the withdrawal would start.

As part of neutralization, Ukraine accepted restrictions on its military strength. However, Russia set low maximum numbers for military personnel, weapons, and equipment, whereas Ukraine put forward significantly higher numbers. It seems that Russia aimed to realize "demilitarization" by restricting Ukraine's military strength to levels inadequate for maintaining its independence.

A major point of divergence was Article 5 regarding the actions of guarantor states in the event of an aggression against Ukraine. Russia did not agree to "closing the airspace over Ukraine, the provision of the necessary weapons" in the Ukrainian draft and demanded its removal. Furthermore, the Russian draft inserted wording stipulating that actions by the guarantor states would require agreement by all guarantor states. This would effectively allow Russia to block actions by the guarantor states by withholding consent, rendering the guarantees of neutrality unenforceable depending on Russia's claims. Charap and Radchenko point out that this wording was not in the April 12 draft and was inserted by Russia in the April 15 draft. If so, it would mean that, partway through the negotiations, Russia added a new demand to a provision it had accepted, attempting to make it impossible to maintain Ukrainian neutrality. It still remains unclear what occurred around April 12 and 15, and what motivations were behind the change.

The Choice of Forming an Agreement through a Neutrality Treaty, and the Intention Behind the Selected Choice

If the two sides were to work on and agree to an enforceable document to achieve peace based on the March 29 Communique, the following steps would have been necessary: Ukraine and Russia discuss and make adjustments to the April 15 draft treaty until they resolved their differences (e.g., the requirements for security guarantees, the maximum number of personnel, weapons, and equipment, and the regions covered); the guarantor states agreed to implement the draft treaty; the countries concerned conduct parallel discussions on issues other than the neutrality treaty (e.g., the handling of territories and nationalism); the neutrality treaty is signed; and as part of the treaty's implementation, Russian forces, which are foreign forces, halt their attacks on regions covered by the neutrality treaty and withdraw from Ukraine. Only by taking such steps will it be possible to stop the use of force against Ukraine. The two sides then needed to continue consultations on issues other than the neutrality treaty.

Both delegations had prepared for such an option. However, there was also the option to prioritize the use of force. The choice between them depended on what the power holder wished to accomplish based on its calculations of interest. If the power holder had no intention of choosing to reach an agreement, it had to simply present demands that would make an agreement difficult and could frame the other side responsible for refusing those demands. While Ukraine and Russia's intentions are unclear, April 2022 saw hostilities conducted by the Russian forces, including fighting in Mariupol, a shelling attack on Kramatorsk, and advancement toward Popasna. Negotiations for a ceasefire ceased to be reported. The negotiators had worked toward building on the March 29 Communique and forming an acceptable draft agreement whereby both sides would achieve security through security guarantees and neutrality for Ukraine. Nevertheless, Russia's demands in the April 15 draft treaty suggest that President Putin wished to demand "demilitarization" and "denazification" more unilaterally.¹⁸ Will the two countries aim to reach a mutually acceptable agreement or will unilateral demands continue to be made? This case calls into question the fundamental premise of the negotiations.

¹ ["Top Trump negotiator suggests Russia's invasion of Ukraine was 'provoked',"](#) CNN, February 23, 2025; and [Transcript](#).

² ["Fact Sheet: Istanbul Protocol Draft Document of April 15, 2022,"](#) Institute for the Study of War, February 24, 2025.

³ Daniel Szeligowski at the Polish Institute of International Affairs was involved in providing advice during the 2022 consultations. He writes that Russia had never intended to settle the negotiations, judging from the members of the Russian delegation and physical attacks on Ukraine. Daniel Szeligowski, @dszeligowski, X, April 16, 2024, <https://x.com/dszeligowski/status/1780183992907481137>

⁴ [«Встреча с руководством МИД России»](#), President of Russia, June 14, 2024.

⁵ Samuel Charap and Sergey Radchenko, ["The Talks That Could Have Ended the War in Ukraine: A Hidden History of Diplomacy That Came Up Short—but Holds Lessons for Future Negotiations,"](#) *Foreign Affairs*, April 16, 2024.

⁶ Anton Troianovski, Adam Entous and Michael Schwartz, ["Ukraine-Russia Peace Is as Elusive as Ever. But in 2022 They Were Talking,"](#) *New York Times*, June 15, 2024. For the released documents, the following were referenced: [draft treaty of March 17 \(English\)](#), [Communique of March 29 \(English\)](#), [Communique of March 29 \(Russian\)](#), [draft treaty of April 15 \(English\)](#), [draft treaty of April 15 \(Russian\)](#). In addition, the following article

outlines the differences in Ukrainian and Russian positions on the draft as of around April 15, 2022. Anton Troianovski and Michael Schwartz, [“The Sticking Points That Kept Russia and Ukraine Apart,”](#) *New York Times*, June 15, 2024.

⁷ Simon Shuster, *The Showman: The Inside Story That Made a War Leader of Volodymyr Zelensky* (William Collins, 2024), p. 78.

⁸ [«Мединский заявил, что ожидания России от переговоров с Украиной не оправдались»](#), TASS, March 8, 2022.

⁹ [«Каким у Путина "цели СВО": документ от 2022 года раскрывает планы России на послевоенное устройство Украины»](#), *Nastoiashchee vremia*, November 4, 2024. The document was circulated on Telegram at the link in this article. Sistema, Telegram, November 4, 2024, <https://t.me/systemasystema/63>

¹⁰ In this article, the Ukrainian administrative regions of Crimea and Sevastopol are collectively referred to as the “Crimean Peninsula” as a geographical term. In March 2014, Russia took legal measures to incorporate the Crimean Peninsula into its territory and refers to it as “Crimea” and “Sevastopol.” Ukraine and the majority of countries do not recognize the Crimean Peninsula as Russian territory.

¹¹ In Ukraine, in 2014, anti-government armed groups around the city of Donetsk proclaimed the “Donetsk People’s Republic” (DNR) as an independent state, while anti-government armed groups around the city of Luhansk proclaimed the “Luhansk People’s Republic” (LNR) as an independent state. On February 21, 2022, prior to its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russia took legal measures to recognize the two as states that gained independence from Ukraine. Although the Russian side uses “DNR” and “LNR” in the draft treaty, this article refers to them collectively as the “people’s republics.” On September 30, 2022, Russia took legal measures to incorporate Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson Oblasts in Ukraine into Russian territory. Ukraine and the majority of countries do not recognize these regions as having been separated from Ukraine.

¹² [«В Минобороны России заявили, что ВС РФ сконцентрируются на полном освобождении Донбасса»](#), TASS, March 25, 2022.

¹³ [«Мединский подвел итоги переговоров России и Украины в Стамбуле»](#), RIA Novosti, March 29, 2022.

¹⁴ She states that the proposals were compiled as an outcome of Russia-Ukraine consultations for a treaty that guarantees Ukraine’s security, and that the Communique was not a final agreement. [«Что Украина предложила России на мирных переговорах в Стамбуле»](#), Faridaily, March 29, 2022.

¹⁵ [«Лавров заявил об отходе Украины от стамбульских положений в ее новом проекте соглашения»](#), TASS, April 7, 2022.

¹⁶ [«Совместная пресс-конференция с Президентом Белоруссии Александром Лукашенко»](#), President of Russia, April 12, 2022.

¹⁷ Shuster, *The Showman*, pp. 154-155. In a different interview, Arakhamia stated that Ukraine needed security guarantees but Russia would not approve them and could not be trusted; the two sides were not at the stage of signing an agreement document; although British Prime Minister Johnson came to Kyiv and said Ukraine should not sign, that was not what stopped Ukraine from doing so. [«Арахамія заявив, що росіяни зваблювали Україну "миром" за нейтралітет»](#), *Ukrainska Pravda*, November 23, 2023.

¹⁸ Szeligowski writes that the draft treaty reveals how the negotiators were unable to make any decisions due to Russian demands on April 15. Daniel Szeligowski, @dszeligowski, X, May 13, 2024, <https://x.com/dszeligowski/status/1789958677325021647>

PROFILE

YAMAZOE Hiroshi

Head, America, Europe, and Russia Division, Regional Studies Department

Field of expertise: Russian security, international history

The views expressed in this paper do not represent the official views of the National Institute for Defense Studies.

We do not permit any unauthorized reproduction or unauthorized copying

Planning and Coordination Office

National Institute for Defense Studies

Telephone (direct) : 03-3260-3011

Telephone (general) : 03-3268-3111 (ext. 29177)

National Institute for Defense Studies website: www.nids.mod.go.jp