

Opinion

A Trump-Putin ‘deal’ won’t bring peace, just more Russification of our stolen children



[Vasyl Myroshnychenko](#), Ukrainian ambassador, August 13, 2025 — 5.00am

When we see news about the meeting in Alaska between US President Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin, we should think about a specific group of innocent young people who could be strongly affected by appeasing the Russian dictator and global bully.

Namely, there are as many as [20,000 Ukrainian children](#) from Russian-occupied Ukrainian territory who have been seized by Moscow into an elaborate system of relocation to Russia and so-called “[re-education](#)” there. As confirmed by independent international [human rights](#) organisations, these children have been [forcibly separated](#) from their families, language, culture and communities, and are now being artificially assimilated and brainwashed.

In fact, while Putin is guilty of many [atrocities](#), such as bombing Ukrainian schools, hospitals and residential suburbs, the unlawful deportation of Ukrainian children is the only war crime that he has been formally charged with by the [International Criminal Court](#) to date. He is the first leader in the history of a UN Security Council permanent member country to have been issued an international arrest warrant.

Indeed, some have suggested that Putin should be arrested immediately upon touching down on American soil. That would be just.

At a minimum, the captive children of Ukraine should hope that their situation is not worsened by discussions and decisions taken in Alaska – potentially without the presence or participation of Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky.

If, however, it is wrongly decided in some “deal” that Ukraine should cede sovereign territory to the Russian Federation, such as further sections of Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, then the missing children’s further detention is legitimised. Moreover, it opens the door to thousands more Ukrainian children being abducted from any further territory that Russia occupies.

Ukrainians cannot abide some form of recognition of Russian-occupied territory as somehow Russian; they certainly will not agree to any more territory being given away to Russia. This is because – whether it’s the example of the kidnapped children or otherwise – Ukrainians acutely know the horrific implications of being occupied by Putin and his henchmen. The price of peace cannot be the persecution of millions of innocent people.

Current occupation and any further occupation have the following features: erasure of Ukrainian language, culture and religions; removal of freedom of speech and assembly and other human rights; no independent media; incarceration of those who dissent; deterioration of social services and economic conditions, and skyrocketing rates of [addiction](#) and medical illnesses as drug traffickers exploit instability and corruption among occupational authorities.

Ukrainians cannot give up any more land and, thereby, subject countrymen to Russification, routine human rights abuses and the constant threat of violence and repression.

The experience of the past three-plus years of Russian occupation of Ukrainian territory – and the teachers, nurses, farmers, students, mothers and fathers, and sons and daughters who live there – reveals the stark reality of Putin’s ambitions and behaviours. Namely, Russia’s full-scale invasion has never been about security risks or taking over Ukrainian land, per se. For Putin, it is not about geography, but hegemony.

Putin’s real aim is the elimination of Ukrainian statehood, identity and basic human dignity. He simply hates having a vibrant, modern democracy with a distinct history and culture as his neighbour.

The reality is that appeasing Putin not only rewards his illegal and savage actions to date but also enables his ethnocidal agenda against Ukrainians. It also emboldens his brutal brand of autocracy in the global arena, which seeks to undermine the democratic West, where Australia is deeply invested.

This is why Zelensky has highlighted that Ukraine’s Constitution specifically prohibits any secession of Ukraine’s internationally recognised territory. This is why Ukraine’s European and other allies have publicly asserted that there can be no just peace or regional security without the full participation of Ukraine itself.

I thank Prime Minister Anthony Albanese for very clearly stating that Ukraine must be included in any discussion and for strongly noting that “it is Russia and Vladimir Putin who are the aggressor here”. It is Putin, he says, who has “breached international law, who has engaged in an illegal and immoral invasion of Ukraine, who has taken action which has resulted in death and destruction in Ukraine. And Vladimir Putin can end all this tomorrow ... by withdrawing behind his boundaries of Russia.”

The truth is that, no matter what transpires in Alaska, Ukrainians will continue to stand in defence of their way of life and their values – values they share with Australia – against unprovoked and unilateral aggression by Putin and his forces. To do otherwise risks great human harm and suffering, including to thousands of Ukrainian children kidnapped by the Kremlin.

“Deals” won’t bring peace. What will bring peace is containing rather than complimenting a mafioso and madman.

Vasyl Myroshnychenko is Ukraine’s ambassador to Australia.