**Headline:** Marshal Zelenskyy’s High Noon

By Biljana Vankovska

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**[Article Body:]**

The past few days have felt like a decisive chapter in the Ukrainian conflict - a time of mounting tensions, sudden twists, and a game of diplomatic ping-pong between Moscow and the West. The apparently divided and squabbling West now appears united in its support for Kiev. Trump, the Peacemaker, seems to be leaving the final acts to the unserious adolescents of Europe, captured on [camera](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGHhXLDjf0g) with grins that are more fitting of mischievous schoolboys caught in the act.

Sadly, the 80th anniversary of the victory over fascism only exposed the immaturity of today’s Western political elites. Instead of showing respect or remorse for past atrocities, Macron, Merz, Starmer and Tusk enjoyed a cheerful weekend (judging by their smiling [faces](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2025/05/10/ukraine-emmanuel-macron-friedrich-merz-keir-starmer-and-donald-tusk-travel-together-to-kyiv-for-the-coalition-of-volunteers-summit_6741109_4.html)). And as if that weren’t enough, they began plotting a new ‘heroic plan’ to prolong the Ukraine war. One of these ‘brilliant ideas’ is the proposal for another Hague [tribunal](https://www.justiceinfo.net/en/111613-trying-russian-leaders-in-absentia-pros-and-cons.html) to investigate war crimes in Ukraine. (NATO’s next summit will take place in the same city.) It seems like another kangaroo court… If it weren’t so tragic, it would be comical, considering that these very leaders consistently ignore international law, [ICC](https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/imposing-sanctions-on-the-international-criminal-court/), ICJ, and court arrest warrants when it comes to figures like [Netanyahu](https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20250204-amnesty-international-says-that-us-welcome-of-israels-netanyahu-shows-contempt-for-international-justice/), who roams the world freely. Meanwhile, they threaten world leaders en route to Moscow with drone [attacks](https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c2dedjn3px3o).

Unfortunately, Macedonia’s young and inexperienced foreign minister, Timčo [Mucunski](https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/en/mucunski-makedonija-ja-podrzhuva-inicijativata-za-formiranje-na-voen-sud-vo-ukraina/), once again rushed to be the first to agree to the tribunal – eager to prove loyalty, perhaps, without stopping to reflect on his own country’s past. He seemed to forget amnesty to all those involved in crimes against humanity during the 2001 conflict, through a political [manoeuvre](https://balkaninsight.com/2011/07/14/macedonian-government-deal-cancels-hague-cases/) orchestrated by his own party. That same party accepted an ultimatum from the political offshoot of the Macedonian UÇK (Albanian Liberation Army) paramilitaries in order to form a post-election coalition in 2011. But that’s another long and painful story – about (in)justice and (selective) memory.

It’s been clear for some time now that Europe’s role is not to prevent violence, but to prevent peace. In Trump’s early attempts to normalise relations with Moscow – not out of love for peace but geopolitical calculus – the main obstacles came from his European allies, who have consistently cheered for war. Still, Trump’s inconsistency and tendency to change his mind only required a bit of patience. He’s grown tired of the peacemaking charade and is now gradually handing over the dirty work in Ukraine to the Europeans. By the way, do you remember ‘F\*\*\* the [EU](https://www.theguardian.com/world/video/2014/feb/07/eu-us-diplomat-victoria-nuland-phonecall-leaked-video)’? And who launched [Euromaidan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Euromaidan)?

Trump may not want war, but he keeps sending [weapons](https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2025/5/9/after-minerals-deal-trump-approves-arms-to-ukraine-plays-down-peace-plan). Europeans talk of peace while waving a big – but entirely imaginary – stick. Their delusions of defeating Russia are hot air; their arsenals are depleted. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s initiative, ReArm Europe, is currently just a concept for further [militarisation](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v5_wNTsp_Ps) and support of the military-industrial complex. Even if the money existed – and it doesn’t – implementing the plan would take years. And Ukraine doesn’t have years.

In short, the last few days have brought more of the same: new warmongering dressed up as bold leadership. The only novelty? Ukrainian President Zelenskyy’s self-casting in the role of Gary Cooper in [High Noon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_Noon). But unlike Sheriff Kane, he has no Quaker wife, no voice of pacifist reason by his side. When I heard Zelenskyy challenging Putin to a showdown in Turkey, my first thought was another classic Western: [Gunfight at the O.K. Corral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunfight_at_the_O.K._Corral). Pick any cowboy flick you like – it fits. Because this public relations duel to see who is braver and who is a [coward](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7ykUR53Hrs) only serves to obscure the reality on the battlefield, where the West continues to fight to the last Ukrainian.

It’s no revelation to say that the only real attempt at negotiations to end the special military operation was in February–March 2022, and that Britain (and the [US](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJntadqDS2U)) rushed to sabotage it from the outset. The rest is a blood-soaked tale of a million victims and enormous destruction. Some naïvely believed Trump wanted, could, and knew how to end this complex conflict. But this isn’t Bosnia in 1995, nor Macedonia in [2001](https://www.amazon.com/Peacemakers-American-Leadership-Genocide-Diplomacy/dp/081317435X), to dictate and impose alleged peace.

What’s astonishing is that no state or organisation has seriously called for expert-led diplomacy or professional mediation. Instead, Zelenskyy is sent – encouraged even – to appear in Turkiye at the negotiation site, relying solely on his heroic image to intimidate the adversary. But Putin is far too experienced and shrewd to sit at the table under such flimsy pretexts. This isn’t diplomacy; it’s a cowboy movie – cheered on by the West, which threatens that if its champion doesn’t win, then... what exactly? What more could they possibly come up with in their sanctions toolbox? And what have previous sanctions [achieved](https://theconversation.com/sanctions-rarely-achieve-their-goals-heres-why-they-failed-in-russia-and-myanmar-244975)? They’ve mostly shot themselves in the foot.

What is the alternative to Trump the Peacemaker? To become a Biden.

The global order lies in tatters. Diplomacy has become a joke, a game for amateurs. Without taking sides, the conclusion practically writes itself: Putin is a Statesman (with a capital ‘S’), and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov a Diplomat (with a capital ‘D’) – types increasingly rare in the world, more likely found in the East than in the West, where dialogue still means ultimatums, coercion, and muscle-flexing. These two have no worthy counterparts to engage in serious talks, let alone meaningful peace negotiations.

All signs point to a prolonged war – after all, Putin himself finally used the word ‘war’ – until the inevitable end.