

With Trump failing, Europe must work on deal for Ukraine

DONALD Trump, never one to hide his light under a bushel, likes to claim repeatedly that he has brokered eight peace deals worldwide. There is one conflict, however, that he has most definitely not solved – the all-out war between Ukraine and Russia that has been going on now for four years and three months.

Before being elected US president for a second term, Trump claimed he would end it in a single day. Yet his secretary of state Marco Rubio recently admitted peace talks had stalled. He added the intriguing comment: “If someone else would like to handle it, they should.”

The time has come for Europe to take the lead in talks between the two sides and in any security guarantees emanating from a deal.

Trump’s major problem is that he has been too impressed by Russia’s military capabilities and too trusting of Vladimir Putin. When Putin tells Trump he will take all of Ukraine unless a peace deal – favourable to Russia – is made, Trump passes on that message in a rant at Volodymyr Zelensky.

Yet the reality is that Russia is not winning despite believing it would conquer Ukraine within weeks of its all-out invasion.

Some 20% of Ukraine’s territory, including Crimea and much of the Donbas region, remains in Russian hands, but the invaders have made no significant gains for some time. In fact, the minimal day-to-day gains are being made more by Ukraine.

THIS brutal war has resulted in up to 2.5 million casualties – dead and wounded – with only one side, Russia, being the aggressor, and one side, Ukraine, the victim. Every other nation in the world should therefore be backing Ukraine.

But, of course, international politics is never that simple.

On a personal level, Trump



Donald Trump has let himself be manipulated by Vladimir Putin over Ukraine War



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dislikes Zelensky – a hangover from the November 2024 presidential election when he believed Ukraine favoured a win for the Democrats.

Over the past 16 months, Trump has tried to bully Zelensky into an unfavourable deal but the Ukrainian president has shown time and again that he will not allow this.

Trump has also been far too inconsistent. For example, last September he wrote on Truth Social: “I think Ukraine, with the support of the EU, is in a position to fight and WIN all of Ukraine back in its original form.” Yet, just days later, he was berating Zelensky for refusing to hand over land that had not even been taken.

How can any nation negotiate with someone who irrationally changes his position on a regular, sometimes daily, basis?

When Trump took office for a second time, he appointed the astute retired general Keith

Kellogg as US special envoy to Ukraine and Russia. Within weeks, following objections from Russia, he was demoted to special envoy to Ukraine only. Instead, Steve Witkoff, a businessman and Trump ally who Ukraine considered too sympathetic to Russia, was appointed to negotiate with Putin.

Despite having helped broker the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, Witkoff has spurned invitations to visit Ukraine.

With Trump and his senior team now pre-occupied by Iran, what is needed is a senior European diplomat who is trusted by both sides – admittedly easier said than done.

Putin has indicated that his preferred negotiating partner would be Gerhard Schröder. The former German chancellor is a long-standing friend of Putin and controversial because of his work for Russian state-owned energy firms. This makes him unlikely to be considered neu-

tral by Ukraine or other European nations.

Europe is also capable of taking the lead on the security guarantees that Ukraine would need for a peace deal. Countries bordering or close to Russia are far more prepared for war than they were four years ago.

OF COURSE, if Europe is to take the lead in negotiations, it would need to step up on many fronts and get the EU and others, notably the UK, to be united in their aims. There are no easy solutions, which is why the conflict is the longest and most deadly in Europe since the Second World War.

However, President Trump has had 16 months, rather than the day he said he needed, to negotiate a peace deal. With the two warring sides still far apart, his enthusiasm for finding a resolution appears to be waning. A reinvigorated Europe deserves the chance to prove it can succeed where the US has failed.

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