

‘Seize the Moment’: Joint Chiefs of Staff General Milley Sees Opportunity for Peace Talks Between Russia and Ukraine

Other US officials are reportedly at odds with Milley over his stance on negotiations

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Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Mark Milley [said on Wednesday](#) that he sees an opportunity for negotiations between Russia and Ukraine now that Moscow has announced its retreat from Kherson and that the two sides should “seize the moment.”

“When there’s an opportunity to negotiate when peace can be achieved, seize it,” [Milley told the Economic Club of New York](#). “Seize the moment.”

Milley thinks Russia is digging in for the winter and that the battle lines won’t change much over the next few months. He said lessons should be learned from World War I, when European powers’ refusal to negotiate led to millions more casualties in trench warfare.

Milley said Russia may be using the withdrawal to rest its troops for a future spring offensive but believes “there’s also an opportunity here, a window of opportunity for negotiation.”

The top US military officer said that the two sides need to reach a “mutual recognition” that victory “is maybe not achievable through military means, and therefore you need to turn to other means.”

Milley said that if a diplomatic solution isn’t reached, the US would continue arming Ukraine, and the US and NATO [have big plans to support Kyiv for years to come](#). But Milley reiterated his view that negotiations are possible in an interview with *CNBC* the following day. “Now, what the future holds is not known with any degree of certainty, but we think there are some possibilities here for some diplomatic solutions,” he said.

His comments came after [NBC News reported](#) that some US and Western officials believe this winter will bring an opportunity for peace talks. But [The New York Times reported on Thursday](#) that Milley is at odds with other high-level US officials over his stance.

The *Times* report said that President Biden’s advisors have concluded that the moment is not ripe for peace talks and that the US shouldn’t be pressuring Ukraine to negotiate. The White House has been careful to maintain that it’s not nudging Ukraine to the negotiating table, with Biden repeating on Wednesday that the US won’t pursue anything about Ukraine “without Ukraine.”

But National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan did visit Kyiv last week and reportedly asked Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to soften his stance on negotiations. Zelensky previously ruled out talks with Russia as long as Vladimir Putin is president, [but he dropped that position this week](#), although he is maintaining maximalist demands as preconditions for talks.

The comments from Milley and Sullivan’s request of Zelensky mark a significant shift in the US’s stance on negotiations. Up to this point, the Biden administration had discouraged diplomacy even when a deal [was within reach after Ukraine and Russia held in-person peace talks in Istanbul at the end of March](#).

After the Istanbul talks, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited Kyiv and urged against negotiations with Russia. Once it was clear there would be no deal, the US said its goal was to “weaken” Russia, and Congress passed a \$40 billion aid package for Ukraine.

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