

# Trump's handling of Putin is a masterclass in The Art of the Kneel

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Donald Trump's much-vaunted reputation as a dealmaker was always more hype than reality. His book *The Art of the Deal* was primarily a work of fiction, mostly made up by the [ghost writer Tony Schwartz](#), employed by Trump to pump up his giant ego. Sure, he pulled off a couple of big property deals as a businessman such as New York's Trump Tower. But much of the success he did have was down to his wealthy father and his most ambitious projects, like the Atlantic City casino, were huge flops. Critics have observed how his enthusiasm for a big building project would suddenly evaporate when it collapsed and Trump would pretend he was never really interested in it all along, or that it never happened at all.

It is tempting to wonder whether we are witnessing a similar phenomenon in his foreign policy. Having initially boasted he could end Russia's war with Ukraine within 24 hours of entering the White House, nearly two months later (roughly 1,400 hours and counting) he is no nearer to achieving it.

Trump's army of fawning apologists like Boris Johnson rushed to his defence at the start, claiming he had to be judged by his deeds, not his erratic words. That there was method in Trump's madness was the gist of Shakespearean scholar Johnson's argument. Having seen the catastrophic results of Trump's methods in Ukraine and also Gaza, Johnson and co are coming round to the view most sane and intelligent people have always had about Trump: he is dangerous, ignorant and weak.

The manner in which Putin made Trump bend to his will has led some to joke that his book, *The Art of the Deal* should be renamed *The Art of the Kneel*. Trump's approach to bargaining with hardened ex-KGB agent Putin was a masterclass in how to lose a deal, not win one. He humiliated President Zelensky in public, bowed to Putin's demands on keeping Ukraine out of Nato while handing over vast tracts of land seized by Russia and forced Zelensky to agree to a full ceasefire - before he had even spoken to Putin. And surprise, surprise, when he did get him on the phone, wily Putin refused to blink and barely moved an inch. The key 'concession' Trump's fan club claim Putin made, a promise not to attack Ukrainian energy installations in return for a similar pledge by Zelensky, was nothing of the sort. If Trump had done his homework - which of course he hadn't - he would have known this is a Ukrainian, not a Russian, concession because their attacks on Russian oil refineries have been highly effective. Similarly, in the face of countless instances of Putin flouting international treaties on a whim, Trump has repeatedly said he believes he can trust him. Yet within hours of their phone call, Russian forces launched fresh attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure. Has Trump called out Putin for his treachery? Not a word so far.

Despite being the innocent party in the disgraceful Oval Office incident last month, Zelensky had the humility to apologise for his part and backed Trump's peace deal in full. Putin has refused to do so, with no sign that he intends to call off his troops anytime soon. Why should he when he can run rings around deluded "deal maker" Donald?

Meanwhile, the first ceasefire Trump tried to take credit for, in Gaza, has also collapsed. His stance on the Israel-Palestinian war has been about as steady as a drunk on a tightrope. He has veered from threatening to unleash "HELL on Hamas" using the capital letters deployed by all bloviating bullies on social media to opening talks with them, to backing the Israeli massacre of

more than 400 Palestinians including many children, according to local health officials in Gaza, this week.