



DC Elites Cling to DELUSIONS About Ukraine While Trump Tries to End War

This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.

Glenn Greenwald (GG): This is January of 2025. So it's after he lost the election or after Kamala lost the election and he's on his way out nine days or ten days from then. Trump is about to be inaugurated. Biden holds a press conference and doing the best that he can given his brain capabilities, he was asked about Ukraine and this is what he said.

Joe Biden: I had a long talk with Zelensky today. And I think that, as long as we continue to keep Western Europe united as relates to Ukraine, that there is a real chance that the Ukrainians can prevail because the cost to Russia is incredibly high; over 600 and some thousand dead or wounded, the Koreans they brought in are having high mortality rates as well. And I made it clear that I provided every bit of funding that authority I have as president to be able to do that now, and I know that there are a significant number of Democrats and Republicans on the Hill think we should continue this...

GG: I mean, this is delusion and public deceit of the highest order. It reminds me a lot of what happened in the war in Vietnam. When people were obviously extremely dissatisfied and kept saying, like, what's going on? This war seems endless. And the US government kept saying, oh, look, we can say with a lot of confidence we're on the road to winning. We're close to winning and of course, Daniel Ellsberg almost went to prison for life because he had the Pentagon Papers where internally they were admitting, they had no chance of winning the war, that they get at most fight it to a stalemate. None of these people thought they were going to win this war, not by 2024 anyway. Some of them were delusional enough to still in 2023 think it was possible; that was when the great surge was coming, the counter offensive from all the people who promised a surge in Iraq. But by 2024, it became very apparent the Ukrainians had no ability to expel the Russians, the front line, in fact, was moving in the wrong direction from the Western perspective. And they will just stand up in line and say, yeah, we're getting there, we're probably going to win, we think we can really win. Here is a top US general testifying before the US Senate. This is June of 2025. So this is just a couple of months ago.

Senator: Let me ask this question. This Ukraine-Russia war has been going on for a long time. A lot of people killed. We've spent a lot of money. Can Ukraine win?

General Alexis Grynkeiwich: Senator, I think Ukraine can win. I think anytime your own homeland is threatened, you fight with a tenacity that's difficult for us to conceive of if we haven't found ourselves in that same situation.

Senator: Yeah, they have absolutely fought hard. You've got to give it to them.

GG: All right, so that's the level of high-level discourse, geopolitical and military analysis. I will say raising dogs – it is an interesting phenomenon. It's not untrue. I think it's part of instinct. If you have dogs who aren't particularly good at fighting and some other dogs who clearly are bigger and stronger, come on to your dog's territory, your house, your property, whatever, the dogs who are defending their territory usually are much more vicious and aggressive and will win the fight against dogs that are the invaders. And so there probably is some extent to which this is true, but it goes only so far; like a Rottweiler is still going to devour a poodle no matter whose land they're fighting on. And the Russians just simply through their size have – I mean who's going to fight this war for Ukraine? They're running out of people. And the people they have have been there years and they're just worn out and tired and using... I mean, it's a disaster on every level. The Russians have infinitely more people to just keep sending. This is all nonsense. They know this is a lie. But they can't admit we have no chance because that will end the gravy train that the Pentagon and all their allies in the military industrial complex need. This is how this always works.

But there's also just a kind of humiliation aspect. That NATO and the US stood up over and over these exact same people and said, we're going to win in 2022 and 2023. We're never going to stop until we win. We must win. Losing is not an option. They're now losing. They know they're going to end up losing by the, again, the terms they defined it as being. No one thinks all Russians are leaving Ukraine, let alone Crimea. And it's like they can't admit it. And they'd rather just keep up a war that is completely fruitless, that's killing huge numbers of people, just not their own citizens, but Ukrainians and Russians, rather than just admit that yet again, they got everything wrong. These same Western foreign policy elites. Here's the NATO chief Mark Rutte meeting with Antony Blinken, this is December of 2024 talking about Ukraine again.

Mark Rutte: Maybe most importantly, also thanks to American leadership, Ukraine has prevailed and Russia has not won. And obviously we have to do more to make sure that Ukraine can stay in the fight and is able to roll back as much as possible the Russian onslaught and prevent Putin from being successful in Ukraine.

GG: That was November 2024. The Ukrainians have rolled back almost nothing since then, nor had they rolled back barely anything in the months before he said that. While the Russians continue, not rapidly, it's not like a blitzkrieg, but certainly you look at the map and it's clear in which direction it's headed. And it's not the direction that Ukraine and its Western backers want. Go back to 2022 and you had extremely triumphalist statements like this from

the Kyiv Independent. The EU unelected president, Ursula von der Leyen, who loves war. I don't know what it is about German officials. I really don't. Not trying to suggest it is in their DNA, but whatever it is, you find a German official and they're talking about the imperatives of the winning of wars often against Russia for some reason. And she said, quote, "I'm deeply convinced that Ukraine will win this war". Yeah, you might have been deeply convinced or you might not have been, but that statement in 2022 turned out to be not just false, but laughable.

So into all of this steps Donald Trump, who, of course, has made clear from the start that he wants to end this war. He's tried. He has not really gotten very far. He's expressed extreme amounts of frustration, both with Zelensky and Putin, because as I said, I think he came in with this understanding of the power of the US presidency, that's not realistic. It might have been realistic in the 90s into the 2000s when the US was the only superpower, but that's not the world in which we live. And the Trump administration has wars with multiple countries on multiple fronts. You can only fight so many. You have China and India that are very formidable. You have BRICS, which is I'm not saying yet a competing alliance, but certainly on its way to becoming something. And maybe if the United States brought all of its power to bear on one situation, it could prevail. But the US is in conflicts of trade and military and so many other countries that we're still financing the war in Israel and the destruction of Gaza. We just got out of protecting Israel and their war against Iran. We spent a month bombing Yemen, all of which is depleting our resources, depleting our forces. And there's only so much that you can do. And I think that Trump got frustrated with both because neither is willing to just do what Trump says and jumps through his hoops because he doesn't have that power. Both of them perceive, look, this is our country. We're not going to just take orders from Trump and stop a war until we perceive we've got what we can get and what we want. But in the last ten days, he has really accelerated his efforts. And I think, to his great credit, I really do, there is nobody else trying down this war but Donald Trump.

Here from the New York Times, this is August 18th: *Trump Returns to Washington After Putin Talks Yield No Ukraine Deal*. Now, this framing is so preposterous. No one thought that Trump was going to Alaska to meet with Putin and come out with a deal. The Ukrainians weren't even there. The Europeans weren't there. No one thought there was going to be a deal that wasn't the goal. So the fact that they didn't get a deal doesn't mean that that was a failure. Quote, "President Trump returned to Washington early Saturday after a summit meeting with President Putin ended without a stated agreement on any issue, much less on ending the war in Ukraine. At a joint appearance after their nearly three hour meeting at Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson in Anchorage, Mr. Trump gave a vague but positive assessment that progress had been made with Mr. Putin saying, quote, 'many points were agreed to and there are just a few left after that'. But he did not describe these points or even specify that they had to do with Ukraine. Quote, 'We've made some headway', he said. 'So there's no deal until there's a deal'. Moments earlier, Mr. Putin had signalled no change in his hard-line position on Ukraine, claiming it, quote, 'has to do with our fundamental threats to our security.' 'We're convinced that in order to make the settlement lasting and long term, we need to eliminate all the primary causes of the conflict', he said, repeating the phrasing he and other Russian

officials have used to refer to a list of Kremlin positions that Ukraine – and for the most part, the West – have called unacceptable."

All right, so just to be clear, so often we just are incapable, maybe not incapable, but unwilling, but maybe both, also incapable, of looking at the perspective of our enemies in a certain situation or who we've decided our enemies by reference to how we would see things. So I've certainly said this before; others have imagine if there were some Chinese led force accumulating and assembling on the border between Mexico and the US or in Cuba or some close with great proximity to the United States, and China was arming those factions and specifically saying go and use them against the United States, against US forces, even inside the US, imagine if China at the same time were changing the government of Mexico, changing the government of Cuba, changing the government of various Caribbean countries or places in South America to make them more anti-American and more pro-China, do you think we would consider that to be a grave and existential threat? To ask the question is to answer it. That's how the Russians see NATO interference in and governance in and engineering coups in and threatening to include NATO membership for Ukraine. You don't have to agree with the Russian position, but you should understand it if you want to understand this position.

And so the Russian view is not that complicated. The Russian, even though the New York Times calls it hard-line, I can guarantee you the US would do a lot more if the situation were reversed. In fact, we almost went to nuclear war with Russia over the Cuban missile crisis where the government of Cuba invited Russia to put their nuclear weapons and nuclear submarines because they were afraid the US is going to attack it again, as the US tried to do in 1961 in the Bay of Pigs operation that failed to change the government. So they call on the Soviets, their allies, to protect them. And the US said, you're way too close to our border. And the Soviets said, we're in a sovereign country. You have no right to tell Cuba what they can have and what they cannot have. Same thing that we're now saying on behalf of Ukraine. Ukraine is a sovereign country. They can have whatever they want there. They can belong to whatever military alliance they want. That was not our view when it came to the Russians and the Cubans, and that's what precipitated the Cuban Missile Crisis, where we came very close to nuclear war.

And so the position of the Russians is, we need a buffer and that buffer should be this zone in the Donbass of these four oblasts, which we already control. The Russians already control them. It's not like the Russians are asking for control of them. The Russians have acquired control, militarily, of almost all of them. And they're saying, if you recognise that we have this in Crimea, we can protect the Russian ethnic citizens who are there, we get the buffer zone that we want, Ukraine never goes into NATO and Ukraine, for the most part, demilitarises, not entirely, but enough to prevent them from attacking us, from being a threat to us. They want to deneutralize, they want to eliminate and neutralise the threat that Ukraine poses and has posed to Russia from their perspective because of NATO and US backing there. Those are their demands. And in order to do that, they need to have Russian troops stationed in what we've been calling Ukraine, which are those four provinces, as well as

Crimea. And remember the NATO-US view from the start was, victory means expelling all Russian troops. So any attempt to accept a Russian deal that includes that is an admission of defeat from NATO and the US.

And that was always the problem from the first place. You could see it coming a mile away. You define victory in a way your enemy can never accept and either you have a war that goes on forever or you have something extremely dangerous that happens. And that's what this war has become. And that is the obstacle Trump is trying to overcome is to find a deal that Putin can live with but that the Europeans and the US don't have to admit was a complete defeat, even though, of course, it's going to be because part of Ukraine, what was Ukraine is now going to belong to Russia because Russia won the war. Russia took over parts of Ukraine, significant parts of Ukraine, and those aren't coming back.

Here is Donald Trump talking to Sean Hannity, August 15th. And I think this is really an interesting dynamic because Trump realises now the reality. He understands that he can't order these countries to stop the war. He can't force them to stop the war. He has a lot more leverage over Zelensky, because we fund that war, than he does over Putin. As Putin said, what do you mean you're going to sanction us? You've already sanctioned us so much. There's basically nothing else left to sanction. And then Trump's new threat was we're going to impose secondary sanctions on you, meaning any country that does business with you, we're gonna sanction them, too. But then both India and China went out of their way to embrace Russia after that, basically daring the US to try and sanction India and China. The US cannot sanction India, China, Russia and every other country that decides to do business with Russia. And Trump kind of painted himself into a corner with that threat. Remember, he said the Russians have 50 days to wind down the war or they're going to get secondary sanctions. And by agreeing to the meeting with Putin, Trump kind of got out of it. He said, look, I had this meeting with Putin. It shows he's back at the negotiating table. I don't need to do that anymore. And so Trump has shifted his rhetoric now to, it's not up to me. I can't end the war on my own. Putin has made enough concessions. He doesn't want all of Ukraine. He's not trying to conquer parts of Eastern Europe, all that propaganda that we've heard. He just wants his buffer zone in the places he already has. Whether you like it or not, the Russians have that part of Ukraine. They occupy it. They govern it. No one's getting them out of there. Unless the US and NATO want to go fight them in an actual combat war, the Russians aren't leaving. That belongs to Russia. You can recognise it or not, but that's the reality. So I think in Trump's mind, Putin has a deal that maybe the world doesn't love, maybe isn't what we accept in an ideal world, but in the actual world we live in, it's kind of a deal that I think Trump thinks Putin has a rational case for. And he shifted the burden now on whether this war ends. It used to be on Trump; I'm going to get this war done. Then it was on Putin; I need him to make a lot more concessions. Now, look at where he's putting the onus to end this war in his interview with Sean Hannity. Let's play this clip. /

Donald Trump: We were together for almost three hours. And it was very extensive, and we agreed on a lot of points. I mean, a lot of points were agreed on, but there's not that much, there's, you know, one or two pretty significant items, but I think they can be reached. Now

it's really up to President Zelensky to get it done. And I would also say the European nations, they have to get involved a little bit, but it's up to President Zelensky. And if they'd like, I'll be at that next meeting. They're going to set up a meeting now between President Zelensky and President Putin and myself, I guess. You know, I didn't even ask about it. Not that I want to be there, but I want to make sure it gets done. And we have a pretty good chance of getting it done.

GG: Now, I don't say at all that Trump's ability to get this war ended is remotely guaranteed. And I think he's come to the understanding that it's not remotely guaranteed. He talks a lot differently now in terms of his tone about his ability to get it done. It used to be, oh, yeah, I'll get it done. I'll pick up the phone. I know both of them and I'm going to say, knock it off. And remember, that was his tone for the first couple of months. He would tweet: Vladimir, knock it off. I'm not happy. And you can imagine what the reaction in Moscow was to that. And I think Trump has given up the idea that he can unilaterally dictate to these parties that they have to end the war, that it's going to require delicate diplomacy, and there may be no diplomatic solution that both sides can reach. And that's why I nonetheless say that I do think Trump deserves a lot of credit, along with Steve Witkoff and those working on this, because the Europeans have no interest in ending this war. And that has been clear from the start. This is driven almost entirely now by Trump, this diplomatic effort to end the war. And I think the United States has a lot of reasons in its own interests, which we're going to talk about with our guest in just a minute as to why maybe it needs to end this war. But it's certainly been something that Trump has been saying for a long time.

And at the end of the day, it's hard to imagine many people continuing to argue for the usefulness and the nobility of this war that is killing huge numbers of people with barely any effect any longer, other than, as I said, incremental consumption of more Ukrainian territory by Russian forces, where both sides are enduring enormous amounts of losses. You almost have to be a sociopath to want this war to continue. Kind of like Brussels leaders seem to be, and large parts of the US foreign policy establishment, which we've seen in many other instances, where wars, despite having no real value, even geopolitically, just kind of keep going on their own inertia because enough people have invested their identity and their pride and their profit motive in them that they just prefer that those things not be injured than this war that is killing huge numbers of people to no real effect continues. So if there's any chance this war is going to end, anytime soon, it's going to be because of Donald Trump. And as I said for that, he deserves credit.

Thanks for watching this clip from System Update, our live show that airs every Monday through Friday at 7 p.m. Eastern, exclusively on Rumble. You can catch the full nightly shows live or view the backlog of episodes for free on our Rumble page. You can also find full episodes the morning after they air across all major podcasting platforms, including Spotify and Apple. All the information you need is linked below. We hope to see you there.

END

Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:

BANKKONTO:

Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.
Bank: GLS Bank
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

PAYPAL:

E-Mail:
PayPal@acTVism.org

PATREON:

<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

BETTERPLACE:

Link: [Click here](#)