

## Trump Summons His Sacrificial Lambs To The White House

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**Dimitri Lascaris (DL):** Okay, so I'll just briefly summarize how this meeting came about on Monday. And the meeting I'm referring to is Donald Trump meeting with Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian president, and with a number of high ranking European officials. Who were these so-called European leaders? They were French President Emmanuel Macron, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer, Finnish President Alexander Stubb, who apparently has become quite a golfing partner of Donald Trump, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte, and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. You know, the Guardian referred to these characters when it announced or reported that they were going to accompany Zelensky to the meeting on Monday as a "European dream team". If that's a dream team, we Europeans are toast. Now, the meeting in the White House, of course, occurred three days after Trump met with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska. And the Trump administration has, especially in recent days, expended enormous energy to convince the public that Trump is trying very hard to bring the Ukraine war to an end, and that the primary obstacles to Trump's peace initiative are Zelensky and his European backers. Now, based on all of the evidence available to us, is that a credible claim? That Trump is really trying to bring the war to an end, but Zelenski and the Europeans are getting in the way.

Let's recall that during last year's presidential election in the United States, Trump vowed repeatedly that he'd bring the war to an end within 24 hours of returning to the White House. At times, he even went further, and he claimed that he would end the war before returning to White House if he actually won the election. Of course, as of today, seven months after Trump returned to the White House, his administration continues to provide weapons, battlefield intelligence, and crucial economic aid to Zelensky's regime. And as far as we can tell, it continues to do that even after this historic summit with Vladimir Putin in Alaska on Friday of last week. And in fact, today, the reports I've seen about what is actually happening on the battlefield of Ukraine is that there's been a flare-up. I mean, there's intense fighting day after day after day now for three and a half years. There's hardly been a moment when that wasn't the case, but there were quite significant attacks by both sides on energy infrastructure. Apparently, Ukrainian forces blew up a pipeline that delivers fossil fuels to Hungary and

Slovenia – not a good way to endear yourself to your European backers. And my understanding is the Russian forces retaliated by severely damaging or destroying a major refinery. And I may be mistaken about this, but I believe that refinery is owned by people who are linked to the president of Azerbaijan who has done quite a bit during the past few weeks to aggravate the Russian government. And of course, on top of all of that, the Trump administration has lifted no sanctions on the Russian Federation. But most...

**Rami Yahia (RY):** We can't forget as well that after a tweet by Dmitry Medvedev, Trump decided to toss in nuclear-powered submarines on the coast of the Baltic Sea, basically escalating tensions between Russia and the West.

**DL:** Absolutely. And there was also that attack on Trump's watch on Russia's nuclear bombers – by the way, in which Israel may have had some involvement, not directly, but indirectly. But we'll park that for now. On top of all of this, to me the most telling fact of all is that the Trump administration, since Trump returned to the White House in January, said repeatedly that European nations should drastically increase their military spending and assume responsibility for funding the Ukraine war. I've mentioned many times on this program that that was the essential message that US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth delivered to European military and political leaders in February of this year, shortly after Trump returned to the White House. He gave a speech in which he said, we need to implement a division of labor. You take care of Ukraine. We'll take care of China. We have limited resources. We can't do it all. And you need to dramatically increase your military spending in order to assume responsibility for funding the Ukraine war. This message, as I'm going to explain in a moment, can't be reconciled with Trump's claim that he's trying to end the war. This is the antithesis of trying to end the war, telling your vassals you need to spend a lot more money on buying weaponry, you need to buy them from us, and then you need to give them to Ukraine. And I want to give you a more recent example of this message being delivered to the Europeans. This is an excerpt or some excerpts from an interview that US Vice President J.D. Vance gave a few days ago in which he talked about the Trump administration's new posture towards the Ukraine war.

**J.D. Vance:** We're done with the funding of the Ukraine war business. We want to bring about a peaceful settlement to this thing, we want to stop the killing, but Americans, I think, are sick of continuing to send their money, their tax dollars to this particular conflict. But if the Europeans want to step up and actually buy the weapons from American producers, we're okay with that, but we're not going to fund it ourselves anymore.

**DL:** We're okay with that. We're okay with Europeans enriching our military contractors by buying massive amounts of weaponry, giving it to Ukraine, and prolonging the war, intensifying the war. We're okay with that, but man, we want to do everything we can to stop the killing. Those poor Ukrainians, those poor Russians, we have to put a stop to this killing. It's terrible what's going on. You can't reconcile these two messages. They're talking out of both sides of their mouths, and the proof is in the pudding. There's no indication that the war

is coming to an end anytime soon and that the parties have moved closer on the key points of disagreement between them.

**RY:** Dimitri?

**DL:** Go ahead.

**RY:** Was it the last time that kind of Trump hinted that he was going to put an end to the war? He came out with the rare earth contract from Ukraine, basically getting access to all the rares in Ukraine and a shit ton of agricultural land. So it looks like a kind of a carrot and stick kind of dynamic between Europe and the United States: you could keep fighting if you buy us weapons, we will give away Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, unless you give us favorable deals in Ukraine for the reconstruction.

**DL:** It's hard to say exactly what's going on in that orange head of Trump from time to time. Thank you for reminding us about that minerals deal. I don't know whether those deals actually are going to amount to much now, given the trajectory of this war. What minerals is Ukraine going to have left if Russian forces keep advancing westward at the end of the day? Every single day they're making significant advances and the pace of their advances is accelerating. And this is why I've been saying since February of 2022 when Russian forces entered Ukraine en masse that whatever you may think of the legality or morality of the position of the Russian government – and I for one have said repeatedly, I don't support the war, but I understand that it was provoked and I think we should bring it to an end by acknowledging the culpability on our side and the legitimate security concerns of the Russian Federation. But whatever you think about Russia's position morally and legally, the reality is that with each passing day, more and more land is being lost to the Russian Federation. More and more lives are being lost. More and more infrastructure is being destroyed. More and more damage is being done to the Ukrainian economy. More and more contamination and then exploded munitions are being embedded in the countryside of Ukraine and in the cities of Ukraine. Why would any sane person – whatever your view of the morality or legality of Russia's military intervention may be – think that it is in the interests of Ukraine to prolong the war in those circumstances? You're damaging the country and ultimately where this may lead is that there will be no country left for the Ukrainian people. So I just think as a matter of basic human decency and common sense, wherever your sympathies may lie. And in fact, if your sympathies lie with Ukrainian people, I would say this is an even more compelling argument. You would want this war to be brought to an end to minimize any further damage to the Ukrainian people and to their country.

Now, to go back to this contradiction that I just talked about, where the Trump administration is saying, oh we got to stop the killing, all this blood being spilled, those poor Ukrainians, those poor Russians – and remember, this is an administration that is presently perpetrating a genocide in Gaza. That in and of itself should put to bed any doubts about whether Donald Trump is a warmonger and a war criminal. That is crystal clear just by virtue of his policies in West Asia. But there is this evident contradiction as I've mentioned and I still am amazed that

there are a lot of people, including people I respect in the alternative media, the anti-imperialist alternative media including military experts, who have tried to reconcile these conflicting statements. And the way that they do it is this: They say, yeah, you know, Trump and his officials are saying, we're okay with you buying our weapons. In the case of Hegseth, he's even telling them they should buy weapons. He's demanding that they buy weapons and that they give them to Ukraine. But this is all just kind of noise because at the end of the day, the Europeans don't have the money to fund the war. I've actually heard that argument from some serious analysts in the alternative media. And I want to address that argument because I think it's just incorrect as a matter of economic reality.

Now, let's take a closer look at, for example, Germany which is Europe's largest economy and its capacity to fund the Ukraine war, okay? Their argument is that the Europeans collectively can't do it. I'm just going to focus on the largest economy in the European continent, that of Germany. Let's see what Germany's capacity might be to fund the Ukraine war. The German government of Friedrich Merz has made it clear that his government is prepared to borrow massive sums of money to remilitarize Germany and to continue funding the Ukraine war. And in my opinion, there's no serious question that Germany has the financial capacity to borrow the sums needed to do just that. And before I explain to you why I say that, I've never professed to be a military analyst, but I spent the first part of my legal career working as a securities and capital markets lawyer in a Wall Street law firm. And part of the time that I spent at that law firm was spent in the Paris office. And one of my main responsibilities, this was back in the 90s, was to represent the German development bank called KfW, Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau, in capital markets transactions. At that time, Germany through KfW was raising gigantic amounts of money to fund the reunification of Eastern and Western Germany. And I can tell you that raising billions upon billions of euros and other currencies in the Euro bond market and even in the US market and other markets around the world, they could do that at KfW without even breaking a sweat. They were regularly going to the market and doing transactions for 500 million euros, a billion, two billion euros. And this is back in the 90s. So we're talking about a lot of dough. And in my opinion, there's no serious question that Germany has the financial capacity to borrow the sums needed to remilitarize massively and to fund the war for years to come.

So why do I say that? Germany's current debt to GDP ratio is about 62%. This is the lowest in the G7 and far below the debt to GDP ratio of all other six G7 members. If you could pull up chart 12, Rami. I compiled this little chart. You'll see Canada is the closest to Germany. It has a debt to GDP ratio of 69%. France is 111%. Italy, 138%. Japan, 216%. The United Kingdom is 96% and the US is 124%. The average of those six states is 126%. This is their public debt relative to GDP. So that's a little more than twice, twice the debt to GDP ratio of Germany. So I did a little bit of math. It's not hard to do. And I calculated what Germany would have to borrow just to bring it up to the average debt to GDP ratio of the six other members of the G7. And that amount is approximately 3 trillion US dollars. So just to clarify what I'm saying here, I'm saying that based on official debt figures and GDP figures, if Germany were to borrow US dollars 3 trillion, the result of that, all else being equal, would be that Germany's debt to GDP ratio would rise to the average of these six other members of

the G7. So \$3 trillion can buy you a lot of weapons. I can assure you. And this number, quite apart from what you may think about the Ukraine war, this number should horrify people. That the idea that Germany, after what it did to the world in the Second World War – there are people alive today who suffered at the hands of the German Nazi regime – the idea that it has this kind of capacity to remilitarize and that its government with the encouragement of the United States government is aiming to do just that, to borrow massive sums of money to remilitarize, that should horrify us all, especially those of us living here in Europe. That's where I spend a lot of my time. And again, if that doesn't concern you, well, at least we should be able to agree that Germany alone could fund the Ukraine war for many months to come, perhaps several years, not indefinitely. Eventually, this will catch up with Germany. Barring this kind of money, the kind of money that would be necessary to raise military spending to the stratospheric level of 5% of GDP year after year as they've vowed to do by 2035, this will ultimately, if they go down that path and they try to sustain that level of military spending, it will have a dramatically negative impact on social programs and ultimately could very well lead to European-wide bankruptcy, or at least the bankruptcy of some of these more indebted states.

But in the interim, I don't think they particularly care about that, frankly. What they care about, people like Macron and Merz and Starmer and Von der Leyen, is keeping this war going. And I think that's exactly what the Trump administration wants them to do. And they have the capacity to do it so long as the United States is willing to sell them the weapons. And the Trump administration has been unambiguous about its willingness to do just that. So when you add it all up, it seems crystal clear, I think to any objective observer that what really is going on here is Trump is engaged as in so many other conflict zones in theater. There's some role playing going on. He's playing the role of the dove or the good cop, and the Europeans are playing the role of the hawks or the bad cop. They're going to take the blame for the fact that there will be no peace deal, and he's going to be able to go back to his MAGA base, many of whose members genuinely want this war to be brought to an end and are sick and tired of America's forever wars, and he's going to be able to say, hey, I did everything I could. This is not my fault. It's up to them. It's to them and they are just determined to press on. So you can't blame me. And by the way, our military contractors are going to make a ton of money off of this. That's the message that's coming in my opinion.

**RY:** But Dimitri, I have two questions. The first one is that at that summit in Alaska between President Putin and Trump, Trump conceded that there will have to be land concessions that Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Crimea will have to concede to Russia. And I mean, there's no going back from there. And at the same time, it seems like Putin has recognized that Ukraine will have security guarantees from the West. Not necessarily be part of – I mean, Trump ruled that Ukraine wouldn't be part of NATO, but still there's still these security guarantees. It seems like one of the hurdles here is whether there's going to be foreign boots on the ground in Ukraine. But it seems like there were some very obvious – right, I mean, for people who've been following this whole Ukraine war since the beginning – major blockers or that the major fuel to this war was Ukraine being part of NATO. And it seems like the

territorial dispute, the NATO dispute seems to have been conceded by Trump. So do you not see this as a breakthrough that might lead to an actual end to this war?

**DL:** No. And I'll explain why. It's a very important question you're asking, Rami. Thank you for the question. So on this question of territorial concessions, we interviewed John Helmer, the longest serving foreign correspondent in Moscow on Friday, I think it was Saturday, just after the summit in Alaska. And as he reported, we published a widely watched video in which John said that his Russian sources were telling him that Donald Trump had effectively conceded that land concessions would be necessary. Okay? So I'm prepared to assume – in part because John's an excellent journalist and I think he wouldn't be repeating what the sources said if he didn't have good reason to believe they were reliable – I'm prepared to assume that Trump communicated something like that in his discussions with Putin. Or it may have been communicated when Witkoff went to Moscow most recently, because after that meeting with Vladimir Putin, Ushakov, the foreign policy advisor of Vladimir Putin said publicly that the Americans have made an acceptable offer. Okay, so fine, they made an offer. But if they're going to do everything in their power to undercut their offer and to ensure that this concession isn't actually realized, it's just meaningless. It's fact, it's deceptive. It's subterfuge, and we've seen that this is something that the Trump administration has done repeatedly. There's a very simple way that Trump could ensure that the Ukrainian government and its European backers make the concessions that are necessary to bring the war to an end. There's actually more than one way they could do that. First of all, the Trump administration could say, we don't care how much you're willing to spend, we're not selling you the weapons. We're happy to give you weapons for other purposes, but we will not authorize you to send any further weapons to Ukraine. And there's an even more powerful way I think that Trump could bring all of them to heel. All he has to do is say to the European leaders, if you don't play ball with me and respect the agreement that I'm negotiating with Vladimir Putin, the United States is going to withdraw from NATO. We're done. We're done providing a security umbrella to Europe because you are potentially going to drag us into a war with a nuclear armed state. We've done everything possible to bring this thing to an end. You're being maximalist and unreasonable. And we're just no longer going to provide you NATO's protection. I can't imagine that that would not cause every single leader in Europe to stand up straight at attention and say, yes, Donald, we will do as you dictate and we will respect whatever peace agreement you negotiate with Vladimir Putin. But he's not doing any of that. Just as in the case of Israel, Donald Trump has the ability to stop the war, just as he has the to stop to the genocide and he's choosing not to use his leverage. The rational inference in both of those instances, the Ukraine war and the genocide in Gaza is that he's not using his leverage because he wants the slaughter to continue. And this is consistent, perfectly consistent with reports as Brian Berletić has explained, put out by the RAND Corporation and other influential Neocon think tanks about how to weaken Russia, how to surround Russia, how to overextend Russia. The Trump administration is implementing a plan that was laid out by Neocons years ago, but he has a political problem. And the political problem is that in order to win the election, he told all the Americans who were sick of forever wars that he was going to bring them to an end. So in order to retain their support, he has to put on this spectacle.

**RY:** And then, Dimitri, my other question is, do you feel like Trump – well, obviously we cannot compare the situation in Ukraine and the genocide in Gaza, especially the colonization and land theft that the Israeli Zionist entity has committed on the Palestinians or on Palestine – but do you believe that this talk of land concessions can be used to give a backing for Israel's claims to annex Gaza or to take control over large parts of land in Gaza?

**DL:** No, I don't. Look, the circumstances are extraordinarily different. First of all, there are and have been for centuries, millions of Ukrainians of Russian origin and Russian speaking Ukrainians living in the Southeast of the country and in Crimea. That's number one. So it's not like the Russians came in in the last few decades and there was a massive influx of colonists and they took over. The Russian state has deep historical ties to some of these lands, including in particular Crimea. I mean, it's well known, for example, that Odessa, which the Russians don't yet occupy, is a Russian city. And so are numerous of the other cities, including Donetsk. These are essentially Russian cities and have been for centuries. The second thing is that the Russians actually refrained from intervening militarily up until the United States and Europeans orchestrated a coup in Ukraine. There was a democratically elected government that was essentially neutral. It wasn't pro-Russian, it was neutral. They mischaracterized it as the government of Viktor Yanukovich. And they overthrew him violently. And then over a period of years in violation of the Minsk Accords, the Ukrainian forces were bombing civilian areas that had rebelled, whose residents had re-belled. And I don't know if I mentioned it, but there were also referenda held. Now you may question a couple of those referendums whether they accurately reflected the population sentiments. So particularly I'm thinking here about the Kursan Oblast and Zaporizhia. But the other ones, especially Crimea, I was in Crimea in 2023, okay? More than a year after the current war began. And I went all over Crimea for 10 days. And I spoke to lots of people living there and I did not encounter a single one, young, old, middle-aged who expressed a desire to be part of the Ukrainian state.

**RY:** I meant more in terms of narrative for the rest of the world, right? Trump seems to be talking that for peace there must be land concessions. Can that be used to push the Palestinians to normalize this conversation that there must be land concessions in Gaza?

**DL:** Okay, well, if you are talking about whether this could be an effective propaganda tool, that's one question, I'll address that in a second. So for me, as a matter of principle, the argument doesn't hold water.

**RY:** Of course.

**DL:** But, okay, well again, you can look at it from a propagandistic perspective. The Israelis, if they gave the Palestinians a state on the 1967 borders, which is the international consensus, they would end up with about 80%. The Israeli Jewish population would end up controlling about 80% of historic Palestine for Christ's sakes, okay? Even though the Palestinians constitute a slight majority, depending upon how many Palestinians have been slaughtered by

Israelis in Gaza, a slight majority of the population of historic Palestinian – isn't that enough? I mean, isn't it enough to give them 80%? And the Israelis, they won't even give them that! You know? So in the case of Ukraine, if Russia was given every single inch of territory it is demanding, the Ukrainian government in Kiev would end up retaining control of something in the range of 75% of Ukraine as it existed at the time of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. They would still have a sovereign state, and it would be a much bigger and more viable sovereign state than the one the Palestinians would have if they got a state along the 1967 borders. And I've said many times, Rami, just in case people accuse me of being inconsistent on this issue, if the Palestinian people were content with a state along the 1967 borders, I wouldn't say, as all these Europeans are saying, oh no, you can't allow the Israelis to confiscate land by territorial conquest. There's a principle here, the UN Charter. I would say to the Palestinians, I completely understand your decision. I completely understand your decision because, you know, you want your kids to have a decent life, and you're devastated, and you've suffered enough. And so it's a huge concession to make, but if that's something that you can live with, and it's better than the alternative from your perspective, I would completely support that. And if you look at the polls in Ukraine nowadays, there's more and more – I think the most recent polls have shown that a majority of Ukrainians now are fully prepared to make significant territorial concessions to bring the war to an end. Okay, so, you know, at the end of the day, survival and the protection of your children is more important than how much land you control. If you get a sovereign state, and it's a viable one, and you prefer that to the alternative, which is perpetual war and endless suffering, I think that's a decision that's eminently sensible.

**RY:** Dimitri, I think that's the perfect time to open up for Q&A.

**DL:** I just want to say one other thing before we go, very quickly, because I think it says so much. If you could pull up image 13? This is a picture taken in the White House on Monday. Yes, that's Donald Trump standing behind his desk, and the "dream team" is sitting there taking instructions from Donald as though they are pupils in grade school. And just look at the body language of these people. I don't get the impression – especially Giorgia Meloni, who's supposed to be the most affectionate of that crew towards Trump – she doesn't look happy about the messaging here. She looks quite unhappy, as a matter of fact. Now, I just want to compare this image, which is all over social media, to this. This is from the 2019 BRICS Summit.

**RY:** A roundtable.

**DL:** It's actually a pentagon and no table is directly facing any other table. The layout of this meeting conveys unmistakably the principle of equality, even though these are not, strictly speaking, equal states. I mean, South Africa, for example, has far less economic and military power than China, or really than any of those other states.

**RY:** And China and India are basically coming out of some major territorial disputes, they just restarted having direct flights from one country to another, sitting next to each other.



**DL:** Exactly. I think this is quite conscious imaging, designed to convey the principle, communicate the principle of sovereign equality of nations. And if you look at that image from the White House, that is the antithesis of the sovereign equality of nations. In any event, that's my closing comment on the theater in Trumpland on Monday, and happy to take questions from you all with Rami.

**END**

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