



Ukraine Targets Putin's Residence? Jeffrey Sachs on War and Peace Talks

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in, I'm your host Zain Raza. Before we begin this video, I would like to provide you with the fourth update to the progress of our crowdfunding campaign. To provide you some context first: in last year's campaign we managed to raise 62,000 euros thanks to 2,200 donors. And in this year's campaign, due to a difficult economic environment and increased costs, we are aiming to raise €80,000. If we do not achieve this target, we will be left with no choice other than to drastically scale back our capacities or in the worst case even shut down our YouTube channel. So let's get to the update. As of January 2nd 2026, we've managed to raise 46,000 euros thanks to 1,200 donors. Compared to last year at this stage, we managed to raise €42,000. There are only 10 days left, and with the

amount raised so far, we can continue operating until July or August of next year. However, if we reach our target, we'll be able to make it through until next year's crowdfunding campaign.

I want to sincerely thank everyone who donated to our campaign so far. At the same time, however, it's important to put the number 1,200 donors into context, which is fewer than the least watched videos on our channel. Our channel was watched 240,000 times in December alone and has over 165,000 subscribers. If you've not donated so far and are watching our videos, please consider doing so now, even if it's just 1 to 5 euros, or by simply sharing the link to our crowdfunding campaign within your network. There are only 10 days left, and the actions of each and every one of you counts and will determine whether we can continue broadcasting in the coming months ahead.

On the screen now, you will see a PayPal QR code appear. If you click on pause and scan it with your phone's camera, you will be able to donate immediately without any hassle. For more detailed information on our crowdfunding campaign, our past work, the challenges and costs that we face this year, and how you can participate, please see the link in the description of this video. I thank you for your love, generosity and support.

Today I'll be talking to Jeffrey Sachs. Jeffrey serves as the director for the Center of Sustainable Development at Columbia University, where he holds the institution's highest academic rank. He's also a world-renowned economist, best-selling author, innovative educator, and a global leader in sustainable development. Jeffrey, welcome back to the show.

Jeffrey Sachs (JS): Thank you. Good to be with you.

ZR: Let me turn to the war in Ukraine. The war continues without a decisive shift on the battlefield while European governments have maintained and in some cases reinforced their military and financial support for Kiev, framing this as essential for deterrence and Europe's long-term security. At the same time, US officials have publicly continued to stress the importance of diplomacy and a negotiated end to the war, even as military assistance proceeds in parallel. Recent tensions have been further heightened by Russia's claim that Ukraine attempted a drone attack on one of President Vladimir Putin's residences. Ukraine has denied the allegation, and according to writers reporting, US intelligence assessment indicated there was no evidence that Ukraine targeted Putin's residents, casting doubt on Moscow's claim.

First, could you comment on Russia's recent claim that Ukraine attempted a drone attack on one of Putin's residences? And secondly, how do you make sense of this apparent contradiction? On the one hand, European members of NATO continue arming and supporting Ukraine, while on the other hand, the United States, NATO's leading power, increasingly speaks about the need to end the war through diplomacy.

JS: Well, first, any sentence that starts "the CIA denied..." is something that should be understood as a particular phenomenon. Whatever that follows the dot dot dot doesn't matter. It doesn't have to be believed. As the former CIA director, Mike Pompeo once told a group of students, "we lie, we cheat, we steal". That's what we're taught. The CIA denial is a meaningless statement. Please. Now, interestingly, Russia called in the US senior diplomat in Moscow and handed over the evidence directly. I don't think that they would have done that casually. They handed over the evidence. They didn't make their own press conference, they handed over the evidence. If they handed over flawed evidence, maybe we would hear about it, but we didn't hear about that. My assumption is that given those circumstances this happened, and because it's very much consistent with Ukrainian behavior, especially with Ukrainian behavior backed by MI6, I should add, because Ukraine has been carrying out many such operations. It's been assassinating many people in Russia through operations that are clearly supported by MI6. So I think that this is very plausible. Zelensky has talked openly about how desirable it would be to have Putin gone and so forth. So it's quite plausible.

The fact that Russia said "here is the direct evidence of the encrypted instructions that we recovered from the debris" is probably meaningful. If there's a show that this is absurd, that this had nothing to do with this in the next days, that would be something I doubt that we're going to hear that, and we certainly have not heard that. I would say on the battlefield Russia is making step by step very serious advances and if the war continues as it's continuing my guess is that Ukraine will end up also without its Black Sea coast, that Odessa will also be taken because this seems to be the next step. Nobody wants peace. The Europeans want war. Well, then they'll get more war. But I don't think they'll get any of their aims by more war. If you trace what has happened in Ukraine since 2013, every single escalatory action by Europe and the US have failed to bring them any closer to any of the stated aims. It's interesting. Before February 22nd, 2014, that is before the violent coup that overthrew Yanukovych, Russia did not have one square centimeter of territorial demand on Ukraine, never raised a territorial demand. It asked for a 25 year lease for its Sevastopol naval base. That's all.

Then came a coup actively promoted and supported by the United States, which Europe quickly lined up behind, contrary to a commitment that Europe had made the day before to both President Putin and President Yanukovych of a constitutional process in 2014 and Europe sided immediately with the coup and with the United States. Then came the Minsk Agreements, which after Russia said, "no, you're not gonna push us out of Crimea", Russia did not make territorial demands on the Donbass, but it said in light of this coup and the attacks on the Russian language and on the ethnic Russian population that there should be autonomy, there was an agreement, the Minsk II agreement on autonomy for Donetsk and Luhansk, and it was voted unanimously by the UN Security Council, and it was to be guaranteed by Germany and by France. And of course it wasn't guaranteed by either of them, because the United States and Ukraine said, "nah, we don't have to do that. We don't have to give autonomy". And it was blown off and then years later Chancellor Merkel said in a famous interview or infamous interview, "well, it was for a period for Ukraine to gain its strength. It was a holding period, not a real treaty". That's a strange way to view a UN

Security Council unanimous resolution and a treaty and a Normandy guarantee process of Germany and France. Blow it off. Doesn't matter. Be cynical about it.

But up until the end of 2021, no territorial demands by Russia on Luhansk and Donetsk. Quite the contrary. Honor the Minsk II agreement. And when President Putin put a draft security agreement with NATO and with the United States on the table in December 2021, it wasn't calling for territory in Ukraine. It was calling for NATO to stop its enlargement. And the US and Europe indignantly said, "we have an open door policy. NATO can go where it wants". Again, brazenly blowing off the national security concerns of Russia, which were absolutely legitimate not to have the US military on its border. Common sense, prudence and something that should have been part of the Helsinki final act and OSCE doctrine of collective security. You don't make security by threatening the security of another country. But no, US and Europe, no way.

And then even after the special military operation started Russia's invasion on February 24th, 2022, the goal obviously was for Ukraine to renounce its NATO aspirations because that's what Zelensky did after about a week of the invasion. And then the Istanbul process produced a communique and a draft agreement based on neutrality, and not based on annexation of these territories by Russia. But the US and UK said "no, why should we accept this? We're going to defeat Russia and Europe, oh yes, we're gonna defeat the nuclear superpower, no problem". Then in the fall of 2022 Russia annexes these territories. Europe keeps losing every step. Okay, Europe wants more war. Ukraine will continue to get eaten up step by step, as well as we should mention it, how many hundreds of thousands or perhaps by some counts two million dead and seriously wounded Ukrainians by now. Who knows the real number? Everything is lies and everything is obscure but it's a lot of deaths and suffering. But for Europe, that's fine. Ukraine's fighting our war for us.

So if you ask my opinion – thank you for doing so – this is not diplomacy. Diplomacy would be sitting down rationally and figuring out how to stop this in a way that is superior for all parties to the current trajectory. But that's not what is happening. What is happening is making kind of delusions. "Yes, Ukraine must become part of NATO", still. That's the official European doctrine at this moment. Are you kidding? That's where we are right now. So of course there's war. And the war does not go well.

ZR: Let me put the perspective that is coming from the mainstream media as well as the political establishment that Russia is posing a threat to Europe. All of this militarization is taking place in Germany. For example, the government has now allocated a record 13 billion in its 2026 federal budget to support Ukraine. Sites that were marked for social use, for example, schools or sports have now been taken back by the German military to be marked as sites for military development. And you can see this militarization all over the place, trying to recruit young people into the army, having military exercises, and it's also been affecting the social fabric of society. So there's a lot of talk about reforming the pension system, about trying to get people who've retired to work beyond the pension age. The healthcare sector is facing cuts this year. As an economist, do you think German's economy can be revived with

all of this militarization like it did during the 1930s? Or do you think this is going to have a counterproductive effect? That's number one. And number two, is Russia really interested in attacking? And does it have the capacity to do so?

JS: No, Russia is not interested in attacking Europe. Not at all. And what Germany is doing is a brazen self-destruction of the German economy. And we're watching it before our eyes. Contraction after contraction after contraction after contraction. The most recent data just of recent days was further contraction. None of this is gonna revive the German economy. This is an awful, awful process. And Germany should learn some history. That's why I wrote an open letter to Chancellor Merz that I published in the *Berliner Zeitung* a few days ago, and I said learn some history. It was Germany that promised President Gorbachev and President Yeltsin that NATO would not move eastward to take advantage of the end of the Warsaw Pact. And that was a very serious commitment. It was also expressed directly by Chancellor Helmut Kohl to President Gorbachev. I think the date was February 10th, 1990. I may be off by a day or two, but this is was a commitment made in the context of German reunification. It was not an idle chit chat as propagandists want to dismiss it right now. Germany should reflect on that. Germany should reflect on its failure to enforce the Minsk Agreement. Germany should reflect on the torpedoing of the Istanbul process. Germany should reflect on its history and stop this militarization. And a chancellor of Germany has a responsibility to reach out to a president of Russia to say we should sit down and talk. Just that by itself is something that has been beyond what Merz has done. I find it astounding that a German chancellor, one of the most important jobs in the world, comes in and doesn't breathe a word of diplomacy or negotiation, but from the first moment is all about war, about the coming war, about the need for militarization, rather than taking the responsibility to sit down with the Russian president to discuss these issues. This to my mind is very alarming.

ZR: Jeffrey Sachs, world-renowned economist and best-selling author, thank you for this interview on such short notice on this breaking development. It's always a pleasure talking to you.

JS: Great to be with you. I appreciate it. Thanks a lot.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow us going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And don't forget to participate in our crowdfunding campaign. Only 10 days are left, and if we don't achieve our target, we will be left with no choice but to scale back on our capacities or completely shut down our YouTube channel. Our independent media outlet does not take any money from corporations or governments. Hence, we only depend on you, our viewers, to continue with our work that you just won't hear in the corporate media. I thank you for your support and generosity. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time.

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