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The “Big Three” vs. “Europeans Gone Berserk”

Kremlin Narratives on Summit Outcomes

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For the Kremlin, the invitation to European representatives to visit Moscow remains a formality. While Putin adopts ostensibly conciliatory rhetoric in Shenzhen, more junior officials deny Europe an independent role in international affairs, propaganda portrays it as a direct participant in the war, and the pro-war Z community describes a direct military confrontation with Europe as inevitable.

Key topics:

1. Officials: Europe Must Come to Moscow First
2. Domestic Propaganda: a Dagger Through the Russophobes' Hearts
3. Z Community: "A Fight Is Now Inevitable"

Executive Summary

Kremlin propaganda devoted extensive coverage to last week's summits in Shenzhen and Berlin, developing sharply contrasting narratives around the two meetings. The summit between Vladimir Putin, Donald Trump, and Xi Jinping was consistently portrayed as a meeting of genuine peacemakers and a reconstituted Big Three of "great powers": the United States, China, and Russia.

> The summit of the "coalition of the willing" in Berlin, by contrast, was portrayed as a gathering of "rabid" and "berserk" "sponsors of the Kyiv regime" intent on "derailing the ongoing peace efforts," securing Russia's "capitulation," and "destroying Russia and Russians."

Despite official "invitations" for European representatives to visit Moscow for security consultations and, as Putin publicly stated in Shenzhen, "to ascertain Europe's position," neither more junior Russian officials nor official propaganda have moderated their aggressive rhetoric toward European countries. This contrasts with the noticeable restraint in rhetoric toward the United States at the start of each new round of negotiations since Donald Trump's return to the White House.

Instead, propaganda continues its systematic portrayal of Europe as both the instigator of the war and an actual participant in it. Germany is accused of challenging the outcome of World War II and seeking revenge for the Nazi defeat; France, of already taking part in hostilities; the United Kingdom, of engaging in "dirty tricks" against Russia in cyberspace; and Poland, of attempting to "dictate terms to Russia," something that supposedly ended in "another partition of Poland" every time it occurred in history.

A division of roles has also emerged in Russian public messaging. Putin himself tends to emphasize Moscow's readiness for dialogue, a message that propaganda prominently amplifies to cultivate

his image as a supposed peacemaker. His press secretary and foreign policy officials, however, continue to articulate a hardline position.

On November 20, for example, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov stated that inviting the "European trio" (Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) to Moscow did not mean admitting them to the trilateral negotiations.[1] On November 24, Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov said that Moscow did not see what added value European participation could bring to the Abu Dhabi negotiating format.

On November 23, the Russian Foreign Ministry also issued official threats of war against Estonia, a member of NATO. In a press release, the ministry explicitly stated that Estonia's alleged recent actions "are bringing the situation to the brink of open war with Russia."[2] The statement ignores the fact that European countries are strengthening their security in response to multiple acts of sabotage in Estonia and elsewhere in Europe that have been directly attributed to Russia.

> Leading propagandists, including Vladimir Solovyov, are already openly calling for NATO aircraft to be shot down and for Russia to "act preemptively."

The pro-war Z community goes even further, portraying peace as contingent on the comprehensive weakening of Ukraine and a direct conflict with Europe as inevitable. Svarshchiki, a Telegram channel linked to the security bloc, already argues:

> "Europe has made its move. War has effectively been declared, and Grandpa's [Putin's] threats have failed. […] A fight is now inevitable. Whether we strike first or get knocked out ourselves is a rhetorical question, and we'll find out soon enough (in 1–3 years)."

NATO remains a central antagonist in these narratives, although propaganda increasingly overlooks US membership in the alliance, presenting it instead as a grouping of "Western European scum."

> Even official coverage of Europe increasingly features harsh language bordering on profanity, as well as thinly veiled threats against European capitals.

Taken together, these developments and the broader pattern of actions and decisions by Russia's leadership suggest that Moscow is unprepared for substantive dialogue and remains committed to its aggressive policy, using maximalist demands as cover. Throughout his press conference in Shenzhen, Putin repeatedly described these demands as "compromises," not as mutually negotiated solutions but as terms that "Ukraine and its European sponsors" must accept.

> The absence of any signs in recent weeks or months that the Kremlin is seeding or even testing a "ceasefire as victory" narrative in propaganda outlets, on television or among pro-war Z bloggers further underscores its commitment to escalation.

In late spring and early summer 2026, for example, EK Stratcom documented a brief campaign to test this narrative.[3] No comparable activity is currently evident.

Officials: Europe Must Come to Moscow First

At his post-summit press conference in Shenzhen, Vladimir Putin himself made statements[4] that ran almost entirely counter to those actively promoted by Russian propaganda and more junior officials before, during, and after the summit, continuing to cultivate his image as a supposed peacemaker.

Regarding Europe's security architecture, he stated that "it probably makes no sense to go back to some of the situations that existed in the early 1990s." This was his response to reports dating back to November 13 that Russia was demanding that NATO revert to its 1997 military configuration,[5] even though his adviser Yuri Ushakov had publicly confirmed those demands that same day.[6]

> Putin nevertheless insisted that "everyone must take existing realities into account, including territorial realities."

He used the word "compromise" at least 13 times but stressed that "we are not going to sacrifice anything." What he described as compromises were thus Moscow's terms, which the other participants in the process, Ukraine and Europe, were expected to "recognize" and accept.

Putin also reiterated that "we are not seeking a war with Europe," blaming Europe for the deterioration in relations and for its "political diarrhea." At the same time, he said that "we need to establish some sort of dialogue with them [Europe]," again on the Kremlin's terms: a bilateral meeting in Moscow, after which the format of broader negotiations possibly involving European representatives would be determined.

Following the summits, other Russian officials consistently adopted a more radical version of this position. On November 20, Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, whose portfolio covers

North and South America, stated that a European decision to accept Moscow's invitation would not automatically mean "joining the trilateral format," asserting, in effect, Moscow's right to determine the conditions under which European representatives could participate in the negotiations.[1]

On November 24, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reinforced this position, saying that Moscow did not see what added value European participation could bring to the negotiations on Ukraine.[7] On November 25, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov joined in promoting this position:

> "With their manners and intentions, [the Europeans] will sit down at the negotiating table on Ukraine and immediately put their feet up on that table. We have no need for that."[8]

Other officials involved in foreign affairs also weighed in. Grigory Karasin, first deputy chair of the Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs, noted[9] the "stark contrast" between the "hopes raised by the recent Big Three meeting" and the "mood of the 'coalition of the willing for war and sanctions' in Europe," which had recognized the contrast and "started squirming."

Leonid Slutsky, leader of the Kremlin-controlled Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, also commented extensively on the outcomes of both summits. Slutsky lost an internal power struggle for the chairmanship of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs after the newly elected State Duma convened. He had held the position since 2016 and now comments particularly frequently on international affairs to keep his institutional ambitions alive, in contrast to the committee's current chair, Pyotr Tolstoy.[10]

> Slutsky described the outcome of the Shenzhen summit as "the collapse of the attempt to isolate Russia and confirmation of our country's status as a superpower. And Europe, with its Russophobic snarl, was shown its place on the periphery of world affairs."[11]

He also proclaimed a "diplomatic victory of common sense over the 'party of war' [Europe]," which "continues to maneuver itself into zugzwang."[12] He concluded: "Europe, united by Russophobia, risks ending up in the dustbin of history and losing its agency in world affairs."[13]

Domestic Propaganda: a Dagger Through the Russophobes' Hearts

Throughout last week and into this week, domestic propaganda devoted extensive and emotionally charged coverage to the summits. It portrayed Europe simultaneously as an aggrieved outsider excluded from "a meeting of the world's most powerful leaders," with propaganda claiming that "the footage from China was like a dagger through the Russophobes' hearts," and as the main obstacle to peace.

For example, Sunday's flagship television news roundups on November 22 presented the Berlin meeting as a "counter-summit" that German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Andy Burnham had "deliberately timed to coincide" with the meeting in China. According to the Rossiya-1 TV channel, it was a "motley gathering of small and medium-sized countries" brought together by "two weak European leaders" and "a newcomer without a mandate," referring respectively to Merz, Macron, and Burnham.[14]

> Propaganda attributes the idea of a "new Yalta" to the Europeans themselves ("they invented their own Yalta, and now they're afraid of it"), even though the Big Three was the central message it promoted throughout the week.

Channel One stated the conclusion explicitly: "Derailing any peace efforts is Europe's response to the ongoing negotiations."[15] In these reports, the call for a ceasefire is interpreted as a demand that Russia "capitulate." The refusal to discuss "indivisible security" is presented as evidence that Europe sees its own security as contingent on "the destruction of Russia."

> Europe's negotiating tactics are portrayed as an attempt to "kill another two years until the next US presidential election" with "fruitless talks about peace" before "returning to the goal of Russia's strategic defeat."

At the same time, Europe is depicted as a party already engaged in hostilities and "hurtling at full speed toward full-scale war." According to Channel One, Britain is "actively playing dirty tricks on Russia in cyberspace," while France is "already fighting on the ground."

> European armed forces are ridiculed: soldiers taking part in coalition of the willing exercises in Poland, "who are seeing drones for the first time," are merely "enthusiastically simulating a war with Russia."

In leading propagandist Vladimir Solovyov's Sunday broadcast, the rhetoric shifted openly toward dehumanization and explicit calls for military escalation.[16] He described Europeans as having "gone berserk," as "Western European scum," and as "petty European nobodies." He called Germans "nemchura" [a derogatory term for Germans] and Poles "psheki" [a derogatory term for Poles], claiming that every attempt by the latter to "dictate terms to great Russia" had resulted in "another partition of Poland." He called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy "a little green booger."

> Solovyov demanded that Russia "clear out [Ukraine] at least as far as the Dnipro River" and "give nothing back," and that it "start shooting down" NATO countries' reconnaissance aircraft and drones.

He described the strike on the Crimean Bridge as "entirely NATO's handiwork" and concluded that "it's time to act preemptively." In these broadcasts, NATO was consistently discussed without any reference to the United States, essentially as a European project.

RT editor-in-chief Margarita Simonyan further mocked Europe's political impotence, referring to its "long-withered biceps and long-sagging tits." She also claimed that Europe's objective is "to destroy Russians, to destroy Russia," and that Germans have never come to terms with their defeat in World War II and "now want to do it all over again."

Two narrative strands converge here. The first concerns Germany's role as a driving force behind current developments and its alleged revanchism. On Rossiya-1, Merz was described as the first chancellor "to venture a direct criticism of the outcome of World War II"; for Solovyov, Germans were the "heirs of Nazi Germany"; for Simonyan, they were a people who want to fight "all over again."

The second concerns Europe's alleged strategy of waiting out Donald Trump. On Rossiya-1, it was an attempt to "kill another two years" until the next US presidential election; for Simonyan, Trump was "a figure on his way out." Together, these narratives prepare domestic audiences for the idea that an agreement with Washington is possible without Europe and that confrontation with Europe will continue.

> Calls to shoot down NATO aircraft and "act preemptively" directly contradict Putin's statement that "we are not seeking a war with Europe" and mark a third, more radical level of rhetoric.

While Putin speaks of readiness for dialogue and foreign policy officials restrict its terms to a European visit to Moscow without guarantees of participation in the negotiations, propagandists discuss scenarios involving the use of force against NATO countries that officials generally avoid articulating publicly.

Z Community: "A Fight Is Now Inevitable"

Most pro-war Z commentators echoed official propaganda about "superpowers," called for escalation and portrayed Europe's security policies as provocative. In reality, European countries are simply strengthening their own security in response to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and the increasingly overt hybrid attacks Moscow carries out against them every week.

> During the summit of the coalition of the willing, Two Majors, a Z Telegram channel linked to the security bloc, called for a strike on Berlin, stating that "a single Yars or Sarmat [missile] could replace all the hostile elites incapable of negotiating in one fell swoop."[17]

Rybar, a channel close to the Ministry of Defense, was the most consistent in arguing that negotiations are ineffective and that peace should be achieved through military means. It summed up the Shenzhen outcome with the ironic phrase "They agreed to keep talking" and argued that the end of the war still depended on "realities on the ground," meaning that "the more that is destroyed on the territory of so-called Ukraine (ports, factories, bridges, energy facilities), the less worthwhile it will be for the West to support it. And half measures won't achieve this."[18]

The channel later explicitly identified "continued strikes on the economic potential of the Kyiv authorities as part of the 'war of cities'" as the "main means of achieving peace," linking this to Putin's statement that strikes on Ukrainian territory would intensify in the near future (in response to strikes

on the Crimean Bridge).[19] Alexander Kots, a war correspondent for Komsomolskaya Pravda, applies the same logic to Kyiv:

> "Zelenskyy and his British handlers have themselves swung the pendulum toward war." Because Ukraine rejects the proposed compromises, he argues, it "will ultimately end up with worse terms than those currently on offer."[20]

In Z bloggers' coverage of the coalition of the willing summit, Europe appears simultaneously dependent, weak, and dangerous.

> According to Rybar, European governments "are becoming increasingly dependent on Washington. They are paying for American weapons in the hope of retaining influence over the course of the conflict, but the terms for ending it are increasingly being discussed without them."[21]

Dmitry Steshin, another war correspondent for Komsomolskaya Pravda, describes the coalition of the willing as "a group of European politicians who are eager to finally get an invigorating [ass-kicking] from Russia but are terrified of it."[22] Kots, who consistently echoes the official line, effectively reiterates Putin's invitation:

> "Nobody shut the door on the Europeans. They slammed it shut from the inside themselves with sanctions, ultimatums, and lectures about the 'right side of history.' Now they're knocking and complaining. Well, come to Moscow. We'll listen to you carefully."[23]

Some time later, however, he effectively reverses the narrative: rather than Moscow inviting Europe, it is now the "European trio asking to come over," because "it is uncomfortable to be left outside the door while Europe's fate is being discussed without it."[24] He describes European leaders as "a group of European Lilliputians temporarily in power," who bear "full responsibility"

for prolonging one conflict and bringing another closer, one that is "more terrible and whose consequences are more predictable."[25]

The Z channel Russian Engineer hints at the same prospect, calling Europe an "Axis of Evil" and rejecting the Yalta analogy in favor of Tehran, the 1943 conference at which the decision was made to open a second front against the Third Reich:

> "This isn't Yalta yet; it's more like Tehran. The 'Normandy landings' are still ahead: stripping Europe of its wealth and dividing the spoils three ways with China and the US. Unfortunately, we once again have the less rewarding part of the job: the use of force."[26]

Kots also expressed dissatisfaction with the Yalta analogy, albeit for a different reason: according to him, the Shenzhen declaration contained "not a single border, not a single sphere of influence, not a single decision about anyone else's fate."[23]

Virtually the entire Z community agrees on one point: no concessions to Europe, a party that must be coerced rather than persuaded. In a piece published by Readovka, for example, pro-Kremlin US affairs commentator Malek Dudakov warns that further concessions by Moscow "may be perceived by Kyiv and European proponents of continuing the conflict as a sign of weakness."[27]

Following a session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, Yevgeny Poddubny, a war correspondent for the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK), concludes that Russia "will have to rely primarily on its own resources, continuing to build up its military capabilities while remaining open to negotiations on realistic terms. That is, of course, if such terms can emerge at all in the current circumstances."[28]

On November 24, Svarshchiki, a Z channel linked to the security bloc, summed up the situation:

> "Europe has made its move. War has effectively been declared, and Grandpa's [Putin's] threats have failed. Until Oreshnik/Valezhnik/Burevestnik proves itself in action, nobody is even going to budge anymore. […] A fight is now inevitable. Whether we strike first or get knocked out ourselves is a rhetorical question, and we'll find out soon enough (in 1–3 years)."[29]

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