

Where are the leaders? Putin, Ukraine, Trump, and the c...

Published: January 12, 2026, 11:41 pm

What happens when politics dies in August? A flight of leaders to Washington that achieved nothing. Trump was flattered. Zelensky was patronised. And the rest? Ditherers. This is what neoliberalism has delivered us – a politics of paralysis.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzpocCe4uB4?si=u8pPxzALScuM2IIX>

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=vzpkh-193b2db-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&font=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

It's the middle of August. Politics is dead, or at least decidedly dormant, parliaments are not sitting, and it seems that eight world leaders needed to go to Washington to hold the hand of President Zelensky of Ukraine in case Donald Trump beat him up again.

What sort of world are we living in where the supposed leader of the free world, as we once used to term the president of the USA, is such a thug that we can't trust him to meet the president of a country that is suffering an invasion without the risk that he will actually abuse him in public.

Did this meeting achieve anything? It's not clear if it did.

Why is that? Because no one in the room seemed to have any idea what to do. They all knelt down and praised Donald Trump, in effect, because that is what they think they need to do.

Trump lapped up everything that people had to say about him, even though he's a man who can't even walk in a straight line down a red carpet anymore, as he proved quite convincingly in Anchorage, Alaska, last week.

Why did they all have to praise him? Because they wanted to persuade him that maybe he shouldn't be in the pocket of President Putin of Russia, the last man who used that ploy to get his way with Trump.

Trump is very obviously a man who remembers what he was told by the last person he was with. He obviously hasn't got the brain capacity to do more than that anymore, and as a consequence, he's even more dangerous than I once thought.

Trump is quite clearly suffering some form of onset of old age, whether it be dementia, whether it just be failing faculties, whether it be the inability to remember what he said last week, whatever it might be, it's clear that something is up.

He managed to knock Biden out of the presidential election in 2024 on the basis that it was very clear that Biden was suffering a form of degeneration with regard to his mental faculties, and at the age he was, that's not surprising, but Trump is only just behind him in age at 79, and the fact is he is very clearly no longer able to govern or to be relied upon in any way. And that's why we had this remarkable flight, and I mean the word, quite literally, flight of presidents, prime ministers and others to Washington to tell Trump what he might need to do, which included, don't beat up President Zelensky.

But the net outcome is absolutely uncertain.

We live in a world where none of these people can say for certain what they are willing to do to defend Ukraine.

They're not willing to commit to funding.

They're not willing to talk about what they're up to.

They're not willing to actually say to Ukraine, maybe peace is going to be necessary at some point, and your claim that you can't agree to peace because the constitution of Ukraine says that's impossible is a little bit threadbare at this point in time.

And, maybe they need to actually work out what a European defence system actually means, because in principle, they have very much more power than Russia does, and yet they're very clearly not willing to use it.

So the fact is that what we have seen in the middle of August, when there is nothing to disguise it, is the total confusion in the minds of so-called world leaders, none of whom seem to know what they're in office to do.

Except, of course, Putin, who's there to commit thuggery.

And Trump, who's there to make himself richer.

And Zelensky, who has got a purpose, but let's be honest about it, may be hanging on to a point where his people may be paying too high a price to preserve territory, which it looks likely will be ceded at some point to Russia, whether he likes it or not.

As for the rest, ditherers, the lot of them.

How did we come to a point where politics is now such a managerial science, or rather art, or rather, not even either of those two - just an exercise in dithering - that this is what we ended up with; a bunch of leaders who will go to hold somebody's hand but cannot actually usefully add to debate.

What a state democracy is in.

We need people with ideas.

We need people with conviction.

We need people who are willing to change the mould.

And instead, neoliberalism, the force in politics that said politicians should stand back and let the markets do everything, has delivered us people who believe that that's what they should do, and as a consequence, can do nothing.

We are in deep trouble, and until we get rid of neoliberalism, that will remain the case.