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Putin Says Responsibility for Peace Lies With EU, Vows Response to Europe's 'Militarization'

By Brawley Benson

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Putin delivers the plenary address at the 22nd annual Valdai Discussion Club in Sochi. **kremlin.ru**

Responsibility for ending the war in Ukraine rests with European countries, President Vladimir Putin said at the Valdai Discussion Club on Thursday.

In a wide-ranging speech that appeared to absolve the United States of a major role in ending the war, Putin also vowed a "significant" response to "Europe's militarization" as tensions run high over a slew of incursions into NATO airspace.

"Unfortunately, so far we haven't been able to stop the hostilities, but the responsibility for that relies not on the majority [of countries] but on the minority, first and foremost Europe, who continues to escalate the conflict," Putin said. "I believe there is no other goal over there."

“At the same time I believe that good will shall prevail. We have no doubt about this,” he said.

Putin’s words follow U.S. President Donald Trump’s statement that Kyiv, “with the support of the European Union, is in a position to fight and WIN all of Ukraine back in its original form.”

Some experts took Trump’s words as an attempt to shirk responsibility for resolving the conflict.

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Speaking in the southern resort city of Sochi, Putin called out Western hypocrisy and supposed desire for regional dominance as driving forces preventing peace.

His words at times echoed those of U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance, who lambasted European countries’ perceived hypocrisy and suppression of free speech at the Munich Security Conference in February.

Putin voiced similar grievances but also went further, suggesting that Western countries are deceiving their own people and repeating his long-held belief that NATO’s eastward expansion is the primary cause of Russia’s war in Ukraine.

“We see that our European neighbors are now trying to… plaster the cracks of the edifice of Europe,” he said, adding that they want to “strengthen this shaken unity that they were so proud of and flaunted.”

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Putin went on to say that European countries are stoking the image of Russia as a political and military bogeyman.

“They try to recreate the well-known enemy that they invented hundreds of years ago: Russia,” he said. “Many people in Europe do not know what’s so horrible about Russia. Why should they tighten their belts countering Russia, forgetting about their own interests, sacrificing [themselves] and acting [to] their own detriment?”

On the subject of what he called Europe’s “militarization,” Putin said that “the response to such threats will be, to put it mildly, quite convincing.”

“Russia proved on many occasions that when threats to our peace and security come to the fore — and threats to our sovereignty and our statehood — we are swift in responding,” Putin continued. “No, you should not provoke us.”

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Putin was speaking at a meeting of the Valdai Discussion Club, an influential think tank and discussion forum founded in 2004 at which his speech is a yearly fixture.

His speech came as the Trump administration appears to be trying new tactics to force an end to the war in Ukraine after eight months of shuttle diplomacy failed to deliver results.

On Thursday, Reuters reported that Trump had authorized the Pentagon and U.S. intelligence agencies to start providing Ukraine with intelligence to strike energy infrastructure deep inside Russia.

The order reportedly came shortly before Trump posted about his newfound belief that Ukraine can win back its territory occupied by Russia.

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