



**DAILY EXPRESS**

One Canada Square, London E14 5AP  
Tel: 020 8612 7000 (outside UK: +44 20 8612 7000)

## King shows why Britain is a global power broker

**T**hose who continue to doubt Britain's reputation and clout on the world stage should take stock of an extraordinary few days.

While embattled Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky entered the lion's den of the Oval Office, and received a verbal mauling to boot, he was greeted warmly in the UK.

And therein lies the secret as to why we remain unrivalled as a global power broker.

President Trump's White House outburst, some might say scripted humiliation of Mr Zelensky, might have gone down very well at home but will do little to end a war that has killed thousands and shows no sign of ending. That said, America remains a crucial ally and critical to global stability.

After European leaders gathered in London yesterday to reaffirm their unwavering support for Ukraine, the heavy artillery was rolled out.

King Charles has grown into the statesmanship role assumed after the death of his mother and is now demonstrating the power of shared culture and political values as a vehicle to enact lasting change.

Their private discussions will not have been comfortable, but in meeting Mr Zelensky at Sandringham, Charles showed the world the importance of cooperating rather than coercing in the search for solutions and has emerged as a key player in Britain's new role as a bridge between the US and EU.

## Piers face tide of Labour

**N**ot a week passes without another area of our lives being clobbered by Labour. Now some of our most historic and cherished institutions face an uncertain future because of the budget tax raid.

Piers, for more than 150 years constants of our glorious seaside towns, are battling to keep their heads above water in the face of a tsunami of rising energy and insurance costs and looming national insurance and wage rises which will kick in next month.

This newspaper repeatedly warned of the dangers of trusting our economy to end of the pier politicians from a party with form for playing fast and loose with other people's money. The net result, like so many services facing a rising tide of financial constraints, will now be fewer jobs, reduced opening hours, or much worse.

## Clarkson's golden touch

**J**eremy Clarkson might be a Marmite figure but almost everything he touches turns to gold.

His Diddy Squat shop opened at the weekend for the first time in two months, prompting a rush on homemade farm produce in Oxfordshire.

Like him or loathe him one thing is for sure: his status is legen-dairy.

# A bad ceasefire deal is worse for Ukraine than no ceasefire



**NOT SEEING EYE TO EYE: Presidents Trump and Zelensky clashed when they met**

**T**HE ugly scenes at the White House on Friday were not what anyone who cares passionately about the future of Ukraine wanted to see.

And the subsequent war of words is unhelpful for a beleaguered eastern European nation trying to end a much more real war with its powerful Russian neighbour.

Fortunately, President Volodymyr Zelensky enjoyed a much warmer reception from Sir Keir Starmer, King Charles and European leaders when he visited London this weekend.

Yet, naturally, it will be the bruising encounter at the Oval Office that remains in the public's memory for far longer.

The crucial question now is: where do we go from here?

I have just returned from my eleventh visit to Ukraine since the start of its all-out war more than three years ago and my respect for the resilience of its people has no limits. Sadly, but unsurprisingly, Ukraine looks to be losing this war as it runs short of men, as well as arms.

Yet I remain optimistic that through a mixture of courage, ingenuity and grim determination, Ukraine will be able to hold off its aggressor for long enough to secure a "fair" peace deal: one which will give it the protection it needs to agree a ceasefire.

This is a time when calm heads are needed if progress is to be made. Significantly, even President Donald Trump, for all his bluster after effectively kicking the Ukrainian leader down the steps of the White House, described their meeting as "meaningful" and did not rule out another get-together.

**L**OOKING on the bright side, the fact both the US and Ukraine want peace and that Russia needs peace is a good starting point. I say "needs" because the Russian economy is creaking with rampant inflation, soaring interest



## Lord Ashcroft

Guest Columnist

rates and stalling productivity. During my most recent visit to Ukraine, I met Lieutenant General Kyrylo Budanov, Ukraine's astute head of defence intelligence. He made the stark prediction that in the middle of this year Russia's economy will collapse.

Having spoken privately to numerous senior military and political figures in Ukraine last week, they are realistic enough to accept that a peace deal will not give them all they deserve: for example, they are unlikely – in the short term at least – to win back the near 20% of land illegally seized by Russia.

Similarly, they are unlikely to see President Putin and his military leaders prosecuted as war criminals.

Ukraine's leaders also reluctantly accept that their country is unlikely to receive reparations for the billions of pounds of damage done to their country. Nor is Ukraine likely to be

given NATO membership any time soon.

However, Ukraine does want and need President Trump to persuade his "friend" Putin to make a public statement acknowledging Ukraine's future as an independent, sovereign country. From that point onwards, a peace agreement can follow because such a statement would make it easier for the West, even the US if it changes its tune, to provide meaningful "security guarantees". In simple terms, Ukraine needs to know that if Russia attacks again, it will get an immediate and significant level of protection from its allies.

As President Zelensky made it clear to President Trump, Russia has proved to be an untrustworthy neighbour. "Just [a] ceasefire will never work," he said.

I am repeatedly told by my friends in Ukraine a bad deal, which leaves them vulnerable

to another attack, is worse than no ceasefire. I share that view.

**Y**ET, President Trump's anti-European stand in recent weeks has undoubtedly achieved some of its aims. Only last week our Prime Minister set out his commitment to increase spending on defence to 2.5% of GDP from April 2027. Other European nations now accept they have to pull their weight too, especially if, as seems likely, they cannot rely on the US for their future protection.

What European leaders need to come up with now is a pathway for the future that enables their respective nations to survive for generations to come.

As for President Trump, I strongly suspect he still believes he can not only negotiate a lasting ceasefire but will eventually get the honour his formidable ego so desperately wants: the Nobel Peace Prize. In this crazy world that we all now live in, stranger things have happened.

● Lord Ashcroft KCMG PC is an international businessman, philanthropist, author and pollster. For more information on his work, visit [lordashcroft.com](http://lordashcroft.com). Follow him on X/ Facebook @LordAshcroft

**'Russia has proved to be an untrustworthy neighbour'**