Bowen: Zelensky forced to face tough new reality after Trump-Putin phone call



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After Putin, the White House dialled up Zelensky's number. Speaking to journalists in Ukraine the morning after, Zelensky accepted the fact that Putin received the first call, "although to be honest, it's not very pleasant".What stung Zelensky more was that Trump, who rang him after he spoke to Putin, seemed to regard him, at best, as a junior adjunct to any peace talks. One of Zelensky's many nightmares must be the prospect of Trump and Putin attempting to settle Ukraine's future without anyone else in the negotiation.

President Zelensky is heading to the Munich security conference, starting on Friday, where he will attempt to rally Ukraine's allies. He faces a tough meeting with Trump's vice president, JD Vance, who was one of the sternest critics of Joe Biden's aid to Ukraine.

The argument Zelensky will hear from the Americans is that Ukraine is losing and it needs to get real about what happens next. He will argue that Ukraine can win - with the right backing.

The European Union is worried too. After meeting and praising the Ukrainian defence minister Rustem Umerov, the EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas posted that Europe must have a central role in any negotiation. "Our priority now must be strengthening Ukraine and providing robust security

He told the journalists that Ukraine "will not be able to accept any agreements" made without its involvement.It was vital, he said, that "everything does not go according to Putin's plan, in which he wants to do everything to make his negotiations bilateral"