Can Europe conjure a united front on Ukraine's future?



Europe's leaders are scrambling. Their hastily convened security summit in Paris on Monday is proof of that.

They are still reeling from not being invited by the US to talks with Russia over the future of Ukraine. US President Donald Trump said on Sunday he could be meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin "very soon".

Can Europe, under pressure, put political differences and domestic economic concerns aside, and come up with a united front on security spending and on Ukraine's future, including potentially sending troops there - to force themselves a spot at the negotiating table?

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They are going to try. The Trump administration is clearly not 100% sure what it wants to do about Ukraine. There were a number of mixed messages over the weekend.This allows Europe a tiny window of opportunity to try to persuade the American president it's an invaluable partner.

It hopes to do that via this Paris meeting, getting the ball rolling on two major issues demanded by Donald Trump: That Europe spend and do more for its own defence, and that Europe send troops to Ukraine after a ceasefire.Europe's leaders insist Kyiv be directly involved in ceasefire talks too. They've long maintained the view that "there can be no decisions about Ukraine, without Ukraine

Depending on the parameters of the Russia-US talks over Ukraine, and how emboldened Putin feels by them, there is also a European fear this could end up changing their continent's security architecture.Putin historically resents the spread of Nato eastwards. Russian neighbours - the tiny, former Soviet Baltic States and also Poland - now feel particularly exposed.