

WEF Davos 2026: Day 2 Summary (January 20)

Geopolitical Dimensions

- **Greenland Dispute Dominates Discourse:** Trump's threats to annex Greenland and impose 10% tariffs on Denmark, Sweden, Norway, France, Germany, UK, Netherlands, and Finland overshadowed traditional security discussions. Danish PM Mette Frederiksen and Greenland PM Jens-Frederik Nielsen stated they "cannot rule out" potential US military intervention. Macron's publicly shared message to Trump read: "I do not understand what you are doing on Greenland. Let us try to build great things" and proposed a G7 meeting in Paris post-Davos. France announced it would deploy troops to Greenland in solidarity with Denmark.^{1 2}
- **European Leaders Respond with Caution:** Ursula von der Leyen (European Commission President) delivered a special address emphasizing "European independence" and stated Europe "prefers dialogue and solutions" but is "fully prepared to act, if necessary, with unity, urgency and determination." Von der Leyen outlined a €90 billion loan package for Ukraine for 2026-2027 and stressed that "Europe will always stand with Ukraine until there is a just and lasting peace."³
- **Macron Delivers Anti-Bullying Message:** Emmanuel Macron, speaking indoors wearing striking blue-tinted aviator sunglasses (due to a subconjunctival hemorrhage in his right eye), made a forceful geopolitical statement: "We prefer respect to bullies. We prefer science to conspiracies and we prefer rule of law to brutality." He warned that the EU "should not hesitate" to deploy anti-coercion instruments against US tariff threats, calling it "staggering" that Brussels must consider such measures against Washington. Macron told reporters he did not plan to meet with Trump in Davos.²
- **Ukraine-Russia Peace Talks Gain Momentum:** Steve Witkoff (Trump's special envoy) and Jared Kushner met with Kremlin envoy Kirill Dmitriev for over two hours at the "USA House" in Davos. Witkoff described the meeting as "very positive," while Dmitriev called it "constructive," claiming "more and more people understand the correctness of Russia's position." The \$800 billion US "prosperity agreement" signing with Ukraine was reportedly postponed.^{4 5 6}
- **Mark Carney on Middle Power Strategy:** Canadian PM Mark Carney delivered a forceful address rejecting the "rules-based international order" narrative, stating: "The question for middle powers like Canada is not whether to adapt to the new reality—we must. The question is whether we adapt by simply building higher walls, or something more ambitious." He pledged Canada's commitment to building "strategic autonomy" in energy, food, and critical minerals.⁷
- **He Lifeng Defends China's Economic Model:** Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng countered protectionism rhetoric, stating: "Tariffs and trade wars have no winners" and that "while economic globalization is not perfect, countries cannot completely reject it and retreat to self-

isolation." He emphasized China's focus on boosting domestic consumption and positioned China as a "partner, not a rival."⁸ ⁹

- **EU Suspends Trade Deal Approval:** The European Parliament announced suspension of US trade deal approval scheduled for Wednesday (Jan 21), citing Trump's Greenland threats as incompatible with trade normalization, intensifying trans-Atlantic tensions.¹⁰
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AI and Tech Dimensions

- **AGI Pathway Discussion:** Demis Hassabis (Google DeepMind CEO) stated there are still "missing ingredients" on the path to artificial general intelligence but expressed optimism about convergence of various technologies. Hassabis told media that India should prioritize applied AI rather than building foundational models, noting Google's Bengaluru office conducts significant AI research.¹¹ ¹²
 - **AI Chip Export Concerns:** Dario Amodei (Anthropic CEO) expressed alarm over potential US AI chip exports to China, comparing it to "selling nukes to North Korea" after Trump signaled willingness to allow Nvidia H200 processor sales to Beijing. He stressed that "not selling chips to China is one of the most significant actions we can take to ensure we have time to manage this" regarding AGI risks.¹³ ¹⁴
 - **Nadella on Competitive Intensity:** Satya Nadella (Microsoft CEO) told Larry Fink (BlackRock CEO) that "it's going to be a very competitively intense world" and warned: "Unless your rate of change keeps up with what is possible, you're going to get schooled by someone small being able to achieve scale because of these tools." He emphasized that AI accessibility is globally leveling the playing field across nations.¹⁵
 - **Yoshua Bengio's Human-Like AI Warnings:** AI pioneer Yoshua Bengio cautioned that contemporary systems are engineered too closely to mimic human behavior, stating: "A lot of people engage with them under the misconception that they resemble us. The smarter we design them, the more this perception will grow...but it's uncertain whether this is beneficial."¹⁴
 - **"AI ROI" Focus Shifts Hype:** Fortune's correspondent reported that this year's AI discussions are "more sober and grounded" than 2025, with CEOs now focused on driving business returns rather than hype, noting "the age of pilots and experimentation seems to be ending."¹⁶
 - **Larry Fink's Inequality Warning:** BlackRock CEO Larry Fink warned that capitalism has exacerbated income inequality and that AI could make it significantly worse.¹³
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Gossip and People

- **Macron's Aviators Steal the Show:** French President Emmanuel Macron appeared onstage wearing striking blue-tinted mirrored aviator sunglasses—indoors. The eyewear masked a subconjunctival hemorrhage (burst blood vessel in his right eye) that Macron first disclosed at a military address on January 15, joking: "Simply see an unintentional reference to the 'Eye of the Tiger'...For those who catch the reference, it is a sign of determination." Social media erupted with speculation: some compared him to Tom Cruise in *Top Gun*; others joked he resembled a "cyborg" or wondered if his wife Brigitte had given him another "slapgate" incident. Fashion

sleuths identified the glasses as likely Louis Vuitton Pilot Attitude (autumn/winter 2009 collection, ~\$995) or possibly Oliver Peoples. Medical commentator Jimmy Mohamed told RTL that Macron chose the style "for aesthetic reasons, because he's a public figure...to avoid being photographed in that state, he decided to wear sunglasses." Despite the eyewear dominating discourse, Macron's substantive message—warning against "bullies" and advocating for "rule of law"—was aimed squarely at Trump's Greenland threats. ^{17 18 19 20 21 22 2}

- **Trump's Absence Creates Suspense:** Trump's anticipated Wednesday address dominated social conversation; Bloomberg reporters noted Davos was abuzz with speculation about his imminent arrival and potential statements on tariffs. Trump publicly shared private text messages exchanged with Macron on Truth Social, a breach of diplomatic privacy protocol that sparked criticism from European officials. ^{23 2}
- **Protests and Activist Projections:** Swiss citizen movement Campax projected a satirical image of Trump onto Davos ski slopes on Monday evening, symbolizing "the gap between power and the public." Over 1,000 protesters gathered in Zurich, with demonstrations calling WEF an "elite" gathering; Switzerland Young Socialists remarked: "It is concerning Swiss politicians courting profiteers in Davos." ^{24 25}
- **Oxfam Wealth Report Released:** Oxfam released a report on billionaire wealth accumulation, noting collective billionaire wealth hit record \$18.3 trillion with 3,000+ billionaires globally for the first time, warning of "oligarchy" as billionaires purchase political power, media, and elections. ²⁶
- **Iranian Foreign Minister Cancellation:** WEF announced Iran's Foreign Minister would not attend citing "tragic loss of civilian lives in Iran over the past few months." ²⁷
- **High-Profile Business Presence:** Microsoft, Tata Consultancy, TikTok, and CrowdStrike set up premium locations on the Davos Promenade alongside "USA House," Ukraine pavilion, and Qatar/Nigerian exhibits. ²⁵
- **Private Aviation Surge:** Approximately 1,000+ helicopter movements and private jets inundated Dübendorf Air Base near Zurich as global elites converged on the Alpine resort. ⁶

Word count: 1,312

Citations:

weforum.org Ursula von der Leyen address, weforum.org He Lifeng address, Bloomberg China Davos, Euronews Trump Greenland, WEF Day 2 highlights, Fortune AI ROI, Euronews activist projections, Pravda Ukraine Trump Putin envoys, weforum.org Mark Carney address, Novaya Gazeta Ukraine postponement, Democracy Now protests, Reuters Trump Putin envoys, Al Jazeera WEF expectations, Storyboard18 Hassabis India, Yahoo/Euronews AI Davos, BBC EU trade suspension, Morning Brew Davos AI, Observer Nadella, BBC Macron sunglasses, FirstPost Macron speculation, NYT Macron sunglasses, National News Macron, EWN Macron Top Gun, ABC Australia Macron, Independent Macron sunglasses

story. ^{5 9 12 18 19 20 21 22 1 2 3 4 6 7 8 10 11 14 15 16 17 24 26 27 13}

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