

A connecting link between Trump and Epstein: Who is Paolo Zampolli?

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20 April 2026

The crisis of capitalism has reached such an advanced stage that the ruling class no longer maintains even the façade of stable democratic forms or moral legitimacy. Political power increasingly operates as a gangster-like enterprise, enforced through loyalty, coercion and backroom deals.

In this environment, figures like Paolo Zampolli do not emerge by accident. Donald Trump surrounds himself with individuals who embody the methods and interests of the financial oligarchy. This layer responds to crisis with military aggression, violence, impunity and the systematic dismantling of democratic norms, imposing policies that affect the lives of billions of workers worldwide.

Zampolli's career exposes this reality with unusual clarity. Born into wealth in Milan, he inherited not only money but direct access to elite networks where business and politics function as a single, inseparable sphere. His early dealings, including the sale of his family company to interests tied to former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, placed him in a milieu where influence overrides accountability.

After relocating to New York in the 1990s, he expanded these connections. With the backing of modeling magnate John Casablancas, he entered an industry that served as a conduit into elite social and financial circles. This was never merely about fashion. It provided structured access to networks linking real estate, finance, media and politics.

His claim to fame as the man who introduced Melania Knauss to Trump in 1998 has given him a permanent "seat at the table" with the New York and Florida social elite. Zampolli acted as a broker within a network where wealth, celebrity, political power and scandal intersect and reinforce one another.

As Director of International Development for the Trump Organization from 2004 to 2006, Zampolli leveraged these relationships to expand real estate interests across

borders.

His connections to Jeffrey Epstein expose an even darker dimension of these networks. The overlap between Epstein's operations and the modeling industry reflected a predatory system in which powerful men exploited their control over wealth and access. Zampolli moved within this same environment.

The case of Amanda Ungaro makes the consequences unmistakable. Ungaro, a Brazilian model and Zampolli's long-time partner, circulated within Trump's social orbit and the same elite networks. As a teenager, she flew from Paris to New York on Epstein's "Lolita Express" plane. Ungaro's agent at the time was Jean-Luc Brunel, a close Epstein associate and alleged procurer. Shortly after, she signed with Zampolli's agency and began a 20-year relationship with him.

Based on "anonymous tips," she was arrested in June 2025 in Miami on charges of fraud and practicing medicine without a license. Shortly after, Zampolli, who had been in a long custody dispute with her over their teenage son, contacted senior Immigration and Customs Enforcement official David Venturella. Acting on that outreach, Venturella pressed ICE's Miami office to take custody of Ungaro before she could be released on bail, noting that the matter was important to someone close to the White House.

Ungaro was subsequently transferred into ICE detention for three and a half months and later deported to Brazil, a process that ICE officials and DHS later attributed to her immigration status and an expired visa. Ungaro argued that Zampolli used immigration enforcement and state power to strengthen his position in their child custody battle.

Independent reporter Brian Krassenstein linked Ungaro's deportation and threats to expose Jeffrey Epstein to Melania Trump's recent public statement, writing: "I can confirm with 99% confidence that the

reason Melania Trump came out yesterday with her Epstein Statement is because of information possessed by a former friend, and Epstein survivor, Brazilian Model Amanda Ungaro.”

Zampolli did not simply benefit from influence. He deployed one of the most coercive arms of government as a private weapon. If the elite is prepared to use immigration enforcement, which tears apart people’s lives, on its own members, there is no limit as to what it can do to workers.

Zampolli’s broader business career follows the same pattern. His legal battle with billionaire Ron Burkle centered on allegations that he attempted to broker favorable press through a \$220,000 arrangement with a *New York Post* writer. The dispute led to an FBI sting operation. Despite recorded meetings, federal prosecutors declined to bring charges, citing insufficient evidence of criminal intent.

Other lawsuits, including disputes over real estate commissions, reveal a consistent pattern of aggressive and contested business practices. These methods mirror the operating style long associated with the Trump Organization.

In March 2025, Trump appointed Zampolli as a U.S. Special Envoy for Global Partnerships, as well as naming him to the board of directors of the Kennedy Center, where he was part of the unanimous vote to rename the cultural institution by adding Trump’s name.

Zampolli serves as a conduit between private wealth and state policy. In this role, he has focused on mineral deals in regions like Uzbekistan and Oman.

Last year, he met with the Chief Rabbi of Ukraine to discuss the importance of international cooperation and support for Ukraine. The Chief Rabbi noted Zampolli’s status within Trump’s “inner circle” and his potential to open “new opportunities to strengthen global ties.”

His position has aligned closely with Trump’s “America First” rhetoric, pushing to reintegrate Russia into global sports, with broader efforts, especially criticizing European powers, to manage geopolitical tensions through informal arrangements that serve U.S. strategic interests and bypass meaningful oversight.

In the Middle East, his involvement in initiatives tied to the Abraham Accords connects him to projects advanced by figures such as Jared Kushner. These initiatives, falsely promoted as peace-building efforts, advance economic and strategic objectives that prioritize the interests of the United States and its allies, including Israel.

In fact, Zampolli’s ties to pro-Israel organizations and his recognition by groups such as the Zionist Organization of America reinforce this alignment.

Zampolli’s entry into diplomacy began with a position granted by the Commonwealth of Dominica, where he served as UN Ambassador for Oceans and Seas beginning in 2013. From the outset, his role intersected with one of the country’s most controversial financial mechanisms: an “economic citizenship” program that sells passports to foreign investors.

Operating within this system, he promoted high-end development projects such as the Cabrits Resort Kempinski, reinforcing a model that can be exploited by illicit actors to purchase mobility and political cover.

His record becomes even more troubling in his involvement with the UN Office for Project Services. In 2016, he helped channel a \$5 million UN grant into “We Are the Oceans,” a project framed around an educational video game and promotional song. An internal UN audit later linked this initiative to the early stages of a far larger fraud scheme that ultimately drained tens of millions of dollars from UN reserves.

Investigators highlighted not just procedural failures but the way Zampolli’s cultivated access and personal influence helped bypass safeguards, allowing dubious funding channels to pass as legitimate development work.

Former UN official Mukesh Kapila described Zampolli as a figure known for “vulgar charms” and a “Mafioso” style. The phrasing is blunt, but it captures a recognizable method of operation: reliance on personal loyalty, informal deals and the systematic bypassing of formal rules.

Attention to Zampolli risks personalizing what is in fact systemic. His growing prominence reflects a decay in political life. As ruling classes rely increasingly on intermediaries operating outside formal accountability, democratic institutions are hollowed out and replaced by direct forms of oligarchic control. As inequality rises and social conditions deteriorate, workers face declining living standards and little to no influence over political decisions, while private actors move freely between business and government, shaping policy without public oversight.



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