

Examining the White House Meltdown

By Armando Simón

By years of training as a psychologist, I automatically look at both sides of an argument, or fight, even though I may be personally more inclined to one side (resulting at times in being criticized from both ends). Like many, I was aghast at the recent public Zelensky-Trump meltdown. It will certainly go down in the annals of diplomacy. But, unlike most people I have not restricted myself to just viewing the dramatic snippets and instead watched the meeting from beginning to end. I encourage others to do the [same](#). It puts matters in a different perspective. From seeing those snippets, I initially thought Zelensky was boorish. Not so much now.

I was particularly interested to find the point when the meeting went off the rails.

The meeting went well four fifths of the way in. Boring, actually. Most of the time was taken up by journalists asking questions. One question was put to Trump (inaudible because of poor acoustics) which he called out as stupid. Another stupid question put to Zelensky was why was he not wearing a suit and tie.

Throughout, Zelensky was fidgety, appeared nervous, almost



desperate. He repeatedly tried to convince Trump that Putin was a war criminal: at various times, he showed the American president photos of Ukrainian POWs who had been tortured, pointed out that Ukrainian children in occupied territories had

been taken to Russia to forget their national identities, that Putin has repeatedly stated that Ukraine does not deserve to be an independent country, that his country had been subjected to death and destruction by the Russians, that Russia had been essentially at war with Ukraine since 2013, and that Putin had broken numerous agreements in the past including ceasefires.

Trump did not respond to these facts. He stated several times that he was a third party to the dispute and had to stay neutral in order to secure A Deal. Towards the end of the meeting, when things went sour, he pointed out that it's counterproductive to insult one of the parties and expect that person to agree to The Deal.

Trump takes great pride, and with good reason, in being a master of The Deal. He wrote a book about it. His apparent aim is to end the war through incremental Deals. This first Deal was for the US to be allowed to extract rare earth minerals in Ukraine, hinting an American presence in those areas would be a sort of deterrent to Russia. The agreement also included a ceasefire. When a reporter asked what would happen if Putin broke the ceasefire, Trump refused to answer, I believe not from wishful thinking but rather by not showing his cards. Zelensky, on the other hand, was asking for a guarantee.

Apropos cards, when things got hot, Trump was telling Zelinsky the latter had no cards. This was an idiom that perhaps the Ukrainian president may not have understood because of the language barrier. Zelensky's English was not the best.

I believe a weakness in Trump's argument is that A Deal is not the same as a treaty. Ordinarily, if one of the signatories breaks the agreement, he can be taken to court. This is not the case in international Deals, as history has shown. Secondly, Trump pointed out that compromises must be made by both sides in any Deal. Not necessarily. No compromises were made when the Allies defeated Germany and Japan during the war.

Another weakness is that Russia has taken over 20% of Ukraine's territory, its Sudetenland. That is 20% of the territory to be decided at a later date. Put another way, if Mexico was a superpower and America was not, and Mexico had invaded California, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Utah and New Mexico, would we not want to recover those territories? When the Confederacy seceded, half of the Union was gone, yet a long war recovered those territories.

Donald Trump wants the killing to end. Which is good. He wants to be known as a peacemaker (he let slip that two countries were about to go to war, but he stopped it before it started; my guess is Venezuela against Guyana).

The crucial point

But to get back to the investigation. At what point, did the meeting blow up?

When J. D. Vance attacked Zelensky. And followed it up by demanding Zelensky thank Trump. And saying he was disrespectful in being in the Oval Office and "litigating" his views in front of the American media.

At which point, Trump, Vance and Zelensky kept interrupting each other loudly and tempers flew.

Zelensky had not been disrespectful, he had not attacked Trump.

Reactions

The left proclaimed—again—that Trump was Putin’s puppet (don’t they ever get tired of peddling the same BS?). Also, the word of the day is “extortion.” Trump is engaging in extortion of Ukraine’s minerals. And the meeting was “a setup.” And so on.

The right is parroting Vance in saying Zelensky was being disrespectful by voicing his country’s suffering. And by not wearing a suit. And conservatives are also relishing the public attacks on Zelensky. But what is most disturbing is that they are repeating the Kremlin’s propaganda about Zelensky being a dictator and of Ukrainian corruption (it is often forgotten that during WWII and the Cold War, we supported dictators and countries rife with corruption—rightfully so, under the circumstances).

And to be clear, this is not to say, that we should continue sending millions to Ukraine.

Let Europe do it from now on.

Armando Simón is a retired psychologist and historian, author of [Very Peculiar Stories](#) and [The U](#).