

What happens now after the fallout in the White House?

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I rarely feel sorry for Keir Starmer, but I do this morning. He is hosting an eighteen-nation summit meeting on Ukraine in London tomorrow. President Zelenskyy will be present. Starmer will have more difficulty working out his position for that meeting than I am in planning this post.

Let's reflect on what happened yesterday.

First, like many other commentators, I think the debacle in the White House last night was stage-managed by Trump and Vance. Nothing Zelenskyy did or said would have appeared to have justified the onslaught that came his way. I know the far right will say otherwise - as was already becoming apparent in news reports last night - but the extraordinary nature of what happened looked like a pincer movement or sabotage to me.

Second, this leaves Zelenskyy, and Ukraine, in what can only be called a perilous position. Trump's best friend and handler, Putin, will be absolutely delighted by what has happened. His hand has been considerably strengthened, as I am quite sure Trump intended.

Third, Europe is in an extraordinary position. What is it going to do without sufficient military power and with Russia and the USA denying it access to any of their so-called peace discussions? What do they do now?

Fourth, note that Trump pointedly refused to defend the right of the Baltic states to independence during questioning before the fracas finally broke out last night. It is quite clear that he was sending an unambiguous message to Moscow, and the world. In that case, the issue facing Europe is not just about Ukraine. It is much bigger than that.

Fifth, let's not pretend that NATO, special relationships or anything else matter any more, at least with Trump. All that has gone.

Sixth, quiet heads now need to consider (war game, to use an unfortunate but apt

term) just what might happen. When Russia has advanced just 55 miles in the last year, how do things really change on the ground now, given that it seems that Russian supply lines are also stressed.

Seventh, is Europe united? If not, what will that mean?

Eighth, where might the UK be on any such division? Will it side with France, which is most likely to push what I might call a post-NATO line, given its long term position on alliances with the USA (about which it has always been lukewarm), or will its sympathies be elsewhere, or will he play the charlaton (again) and pretend that it can still be a broker with the USA?

Ninth, how do these states deal with all this in a day?

Tenth, Zelenskyy said he would quit last week in exchange for peace. Is that a realistic option now? It would not feel good, I admit. But do the realpolitiks of this situation require it?

Eleventh, I hope someone has the sense to tell Charles Windsor to withdraw his invitations to Trump. These now look like an act of total foolhardiness that maybe the monarchy could not survive.

I could go on. The honest answer is, that this morning I doubt that anyone knows the answers to all these questions. There will also, very obviously, be others I have not raised.

But what we do know is that Trump's chosen form of management, which is to create chaos and then see what happens, is utterly unsuited to situations like this. If, in that case, there is a person to blame, it is undoubtedly Trump. The world would not be in crisis now but for him.

And let me add another final thought, for now. If Trump thought that he could get a deal yesterday, then he very obviously failed. His own, self-promoted ability clearly let him down. He has egg on his face, but maybe that is the least of our problems, excepting that he is the sort of man who will want revenge, and that is what is so worrying.