

Published: January 12, 2026, 6:24 pm

I think it is appropriate to undertake a very quick appraisal of who might be responsible for yesterday's debacle in the White House.

Let's be clear who is responsible for the war in Ukraine. Putin's Russia has invaded Ukraine twice in little over a decade. Crimea was seized in 2014, and he invaded again in February 2022. Both acts were those of an aggressor. Ukraine was not in any way responsible for provoking these wars.

I am not pretending that the recent history of Ukraine is beyond fault. It clearly is not. There has been discrimination, and there has been corruption. I also think it is fair to note that Zelenskyy was a fairly elected as president of the country, and the suggestion made by Donald Trump that he is a dictator borders on the absurd because he has not been able to stage elections during war time, just as we did not in the UK during World War II.

I am not, for a moment, presuming that the war in Ukraine has not produced atrocities on both sides. I suspect it has and would condemn whoever might have committed them. That said, there is very clear evidence of the deliberate targeting of civilians by Russia that would appear to represent war crimes.

President Zelenskyy did also present evidence of Russian mistreatment to prisoners of war to President Trump during his visit to the White House. Trump showed absolute indifference to this abuse.

Trump's own behaviour on this issue is quite extraordinary.

His suggestion that he could have prevented this war starting is completely unfounded.

The blame that he is heaping on President Zelenskyy for having permitted this war is completely unjustified.

The abuse that he is delivering against President Biden for his support for Ukraine during the course of this war is completely inappropriate.

His support for the aggressor in this war is wholly unjustified, and without political

precedent in the USA, or elsewhere.

Trump's behaviour since coming into office has been extraordinary. In particular he has:

- * Accused Zelenskyy of being a dictator, wholly inappropriately.
- * Staged supposed peace talks with Russia to determine the future of Ukraine, to which he has denied both Ukraine and European countries access.
- * Made false claims about the relative levels of support provided to Ukraine by the USA and Europe.
- * Sought to exploit the current weakness of Ukraine for the benefit of the USA, and no doubt his commercial allies.
- * Denied doing some of these things, including expressing surprise at the suggestion that he had said that Zelenskyy was a dictator during the course of his press conference with Keir Starmer.

In the process, Trump has demonstrated that he is:

- * An aggressor.
- * An ally of Russia's position on Ukraine.
- * Wholly unrepresentative of US political and diplomatic traditions, whether they be right or wrong.
- * An unreliable ally of NATO and its European partners.

In addition, he has as a consequence of his comments and diplomatic approaches to Mexico, Canada and Greenland shown that he, like Russia, desires the territorial expansion of his state, although there is no political justification for this action. As a consequence, he also has left a number of European states subject to aggression from Russia, and his particular lack of willingness during his press conference with Keir Starmer to support the Baltic states was notable in this regard. It would appear that he and Putin have a current nonaggression pact that will permit the other to annex territory to which they have no legal, political, ethical or other justifiable claim without condemnation of each other's actions, or any reaction.

At a more basic level, it was apparent that Trump quite deliberately stage-managed some of the events during the course of yesterday's White House meeting with Zelenskyy. In particular, the references to Zelenskyy's wearing of military drab, which he does to indicate that he is president of a country at war, from the moment that he arrived at the door of the White House, through to deliberately provocative comments made by a journalist, to the moment when Van addressed him on this issue, all suggested that there was a deliberate intention to annoy in Zelenskyy on an issue which has become a part of his personal identity, and with which many would sympathise. It is not as if he is alone in adopting such a style of dress. I note that Winston Churchill was inclined to do so on occasion. This deliberate provocation cannot be ignored when attributing blame for the diplomatic breakdown that took place yesterday.

In that case, and to return to my theme, whilst I am not suggesting that Ukraine is a country without issues that might need to be addressed, those must necessarily be

addressed as part of a post-war settlement. They are not issues that can be resolved now. All that can be appraised at this moment is the position in which Ukraine finds itself, and the quite extraordinary pivot that has taken place in the US position towards the country.

I am, again, not suggesting that I think anything and everything that President Biden did is beyond criticism. He did, after all, supply weapons and political support to the government of Israel whilst Netanyahu directed a genocide, which fact was very obviously known to Biden's White House. Biden's administration is very far from being innocent of blame when it comes to its conduct of world politics and diplomacy.

That said, Russia's aggression towards Ukraine was unjustified. The diplomatic and military support that Ukraine has received since the start of that war has been justified, even if political errors of judgement have occurred, mainly outside Ukraine, on issues such as EU and NATO membership.

At present, no solution to the conflict in Ukraine that looks to be either politically or militarily deliverable without the imposition of external force has appeared to be available. Nothing that Trump has done has changed this.

What Trump has done has, however, been quite deliberately provocative to Ukraine and all traditional US allies whilst considerably enhancing the position of Russia as the aggressor within this conflict.

On the balance of probabilities there can, therefore, be no doubt that blame for the current political and diplomatic crisis that has developed falls fairly and squarely solely on the actions of President Trump and his government of the USA.

The result is that we are living in the time of considerable international risk, and even peril, where potential courses of action that states might pursue are very hard to predict, but with few of the possible consequences looking to be good at present.

I often conclude blog posts by saying that I am worried. I am much more than averagely so when concluding this one.