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Do Journalists Who Behave Unprofessionally Violate Media Ethics?



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Ukrainian President Volodymyr Oleksandrovysh Zelenskyy visited the White House on February 28, 2025. The visit was an effort for both nations to sign a minerals deal that would form an alliance between the countries for years to come.

The minerals deal was also purported to aid Ukraine in ending their war on Russia. The United States would have access to rare earth minerals that assist in the aerospace, defense, and nuclear industries. All matters at hand are of the utmost importance for the safety and progression of two nations of people. But somehow, during this oval office interaction focused on matters of importance between two dignitaries, a member of the press managed to shift focus to the fashion choices of President Zelenskyy.

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Brian Glenn, a conservative reporter representing the Real America's Voice network, stood in the midst of the press conference, interjected between more pressing matters and asked "Why don't you wear a suit?" The attention of every person in the room shifted between Glenn and President Zelenskyy, anticipating what further ill placed inquiries or befuddled responses would follow. Glenn continued,

"Do you ever...Why don't you wear a suit?" Laughter erupted in the room as Glenn continued. "You're at the highest level in this country's office, and you refuse to wear a suit. Just want to see if — do you own a suit?" He added, "A lot of Americans have problems with you not respecting the office." (Montague, NYT). President Zelenskyy seemed to answer the question with nonchalance after asking the journalist to repeat himself. A hush fell across the other media representatives in the room, as they witnessed the exchange. Glenn appeared agitated, and used aggressive body language and tone when addressing the foreign president. After the exchange, the mood in the room continued to shift into a negative disposition, and the conversation to follow between the two presidents increased intensity.

This poor representation of journalistic professionalism arrives on the heels of the current administration's decision to abolish legacy media practices.

Social media users and fellow journalists met Green's performance with criticism. One American social influencer posted a video response in tears, as he described the shame and embarrassment he felt for our country and the way President Zelenskyy was treated while the people of his country are in the process of being murdered amidst a war. Journalist Victoria Derbyshire, of the BBC media channel scheduled a virtual interview with Green. During the interview Derbyshire called Green to the carpet, questioning his intent, his perception of the exchange, and gave examples of his hypocrisy. Derbyshire began the interview by asking Green why did he ask President Zelenskyy about wearing a suit.

She followed up with "Do you think it came across as snarky?" Green admitted that it did come off as snarky, and began to bemoan that he has since been receiving death threats from the same Americans that he initially claimed were inquiring about President Zelenskyy's lack of a suit. Green deflected from his behavior and denied his involvement in shifting the tone of the diplomatic meeting. Derbyshire brought it back to the facts and the more important matters pointing out that most people have publicly acknowledged the almost three year war on Russia and the president being more concerned about the lives of his people, than fashion. Derbyshire also pointed out the lack of Elon Musk and Winston Churchill not wearing suits during White House visits, and Green quickly defended against this point and doubled down on the hypocrisy of it all. Does this behavior go against media ethics?