

Thank God Trump Isn't a Foreign Policy Expert

Over the last century, the world has witnessed the slow but steady depoliticization of America and Western Europe in favor of the rule of the apolitical “expert.” The great challenge of our era is to foster the return of actual political life between the people and their elected officials. President Trump’s summit with Kim Jong-un successfully served this purpose.

One must jettison the abstractions of modern intellectuals in order to make politics possible again. Perhaps nowhere is this truer than on matters of foreign policy. As Claremont Institute Senior Fellow Angelo Codevilla has written ([*No Victory, No Peace*](#)), as our increasingly miseducated rulers sought abstract impossibilities, the quest for “everlasting peace” over the last century has increasingly given us “never-ending war.” As Codevilla explains in “[*On the Natural Law of War and Peace*](#),” at least “[s]ince Korea in 1950, the U.S. government has explicitly disavowed seeking military victories.”

Despite the fact that the *New York Times* itself seems to acknowledge that the Trump administration’s North Korea “maximum pressure” policy has thus far been “one of its first, and arguably most successful initiatives,” if you are a non-deplorable person you were supposed to be deeply, Jake-Tapper-with-a-furrowed-forehead worried about President Donald Trump’s intelligence, expertise, temperament, and discipline [at Tuesday’s summit in Singapore](#).

What Trump Lacks

In fact, many on the Right and Left over the past two years have suggested their main worry about Donald Trump is the fact he now represents America to the rest of the world and will

cause a devastating disaster, nuclear or otherwise.

I propose some simple, evaluative questions and a thought experiment to set the minds of the nation at ease the morning after the most significant moment of the Trump presidency.

Does Donald Trump have enough experience and expert wisdom to give away as much to North Korea as the American foreign-policy establishment, with all its experience, top-shelf degrees, and stratospheric test scores, has given away in the past 30 years?

Does Donald Trump have enough experience and expert wisdom to keep the hostile stalemate the American foreign-policy establishment created and fostered with North Korea since America first waged the Korean War?

For that matter, does Trump even have the experience and caste of mind to start a war, say, in the Middle East, that costs trillions of dollars and disrupts and inflames the region as President Bush and his entourage did? Does he even know *how*?

Does Trump have the expertise to take over the wreckage of such a war and support jihadist rebels, help create ISIS and a global refugee crisis, and give Russia the most power it's had in the region since the peak of the Cold War, like Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton did?

The truth may alarm you. Trump has never even started a war before—not even a little one.

Trump is such an ignoramus, forget war—for decades the uniparty American foreign policy establishment's most basic solution to problems overseas has been to supply the gift of training and weapons to people in other countries who then end up becoming terrorists or some other version of our worst nightmare. That's an inside the beltway American *tradition*, for Democrats and Republicans alike.

Does Trump even know this?

Departing from “the Norm”

There’s sure as hell *no way* Trump knows yet how to meet with a foreign dictator like Kim Jong-un and come to an agreement that ultimately doesn’t change anything or makes things worse, like all our sane and competent leaders have been doing since the Cold War ended. Thus, we should indeed all consider the possibility that Trump might somehow be different.

Assuming North Korea has some desire to reform itself—admittedly, the very assumption we are now testing—the biggest obstacle to peace on the Korean Peninsula is the disastrous legacy of Hillary-Obama foreign policy, which mimics decades of earlier, similar American failures.

Even if Kim Jong-un is willing to make a deal trading in nukes for becoming the hero and leader of a potentially burgeoning economy, thanks to the previous administration he’s worried about getting killed with the assistance of the United States government as happened with Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi.

Gaddafi gave up his nuclear program in Libya in exchange for the promise that we wouldn’t depose him during a Republican administration. He kept his part of the bargain. When Obama and Hillary came into office, and Hillary supported the rebellion against him, they helped cause a continental humanitarian refugee crisis after his death.

“We came, we saw, he died,” Clinton publicly joked of Gaddafi’s ouster. But, of course, she and Obama were surrounded by all the best people. They were all very smart. Very well educated. Perfectly competent. Rational. Professional. Not like the nasty Trumpsters.

Meanwhile, the human slave trade is thriving in Libya.

Of course, Obama won the Nobel Peace Prize, so I suppose it was all Hillary’s fault.

But you still worry that Trump is constitutionally incapable of living up to the expert wisdom and Nobel Prize-winning peace of the Bush-Obama legacy?

The Right Negotiator at the Right Moment

A simple thought experiment ought to further alleviate your concern about what happened in the room between The Donald and The Dictator.

If you understand anything about modern American elite culture, call to mind the totality of the persons of Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama: their respective educations, life experiences, philosophies of the human person and politics, and everything that makes them who they are.

Next, imagine them, alone in that room with Kim Jong-un, trying to negotiate for you.

The result is parodic. What, in their person and experience, would render Obama or Clinton suitable for the role? Such people, along with most establishment Republicans are wholly unequipped. *Wholly unequipped*. They are wholly unequipped to do anything other than follow a risk-averse script, cobbled together by committees upon committees of bureaucrats.

As one Washington, D.C. bureaucrat who has worked closely with two U.S. cabinet secretaries and the head of a regulatory agency told me, “[i]n anecdotal support of this very correct evaluation . . . the amount of preparation, and scripting, and artificiality that goes into a bilateral meeting with the foreign counterpart of a minor cabinet secretary is embarrassing and absurd.”

An average, celebrated elite American political leader’s meeting with another world leader only makes sense for a few moments in a predetermined photo-op, with a phalanx of fake experts supporting them as they serve as talking heads, with all manner of technocrats carrying them along a long and complicated process before and after the meeting, supported by

white papers and myriad bureaucratic procedures meant to deflect all risk and, of course, and even more importantly, accountability.

President Trump, on the other hand, simply needs to be secured firmly in the role and then pointed in the right direction. So long as his self-interest is tied to peace, he seems exponentially better, even granting all manner of bullish and hardened personality flaws.

Why?

First, as I pointed out in "[David Brooks and the Lizard People](#)," Trump's decades of experience in urban real estate, as opposed to habitual risk aversion in the safe sectors inhabited by our supposed best and brightest, no doubt give him insight into the totalitarians who actually run the world. Brooks [is right](#) that "[t]he world is a lot more like the Atlantic City real estate market than the G.R.E.s." Thus, Trump understands the other guy better, and read and dealt with him personally and politically, without the baggage of the silly and contradictory views of human nature absorbed by our elites at fancy schools and exposed in their hollow rhetoric.

In other words, Trump eschewed both the wooden, faux-toughness of Hillary Clinton and the faux-inclusivity of Barack Obama. Neither of them had the stomach for actual politics dealing with actual people. Whatever his flaws, Trump is a spirited man with plenty of intestinal fortitude who knows viscerally how fear of loss and desire for gain drive human dealings.

Second, because Trump actually considers it his main job to negotiate himself, directly, with their man in charge, and get right to the point. He isn't "professional" enough to pass the buck to the administrative state. He thinks politically, in an almost pure fashion, and considered it obvious that it is his job to wrest a victory for the American people and the world

from the meeting and knows it's in his own self-interest to do so, because he will now be judged accordingly.

Regardless of the spin on both sides, remember: whatever the ultimate result of the Singapore summit, it will not be determined, as it has been in the past, by the slow-moving, Byzantine maneuvers of the foreign-policy expert class, the members of which Michael Anton aptly calls "priests" in "[America and the Liberal International Order](#)." This priest class has tried to make a science of "international relations" that somehow abstracts from prudence and the plain old study of human nature, history, and politics. Trump upended their order. What matters now is the result of two men in a room, representing their respective people, sizing each other up, and speaking directly to one another.

This is yet another sign of the dawning of a new era of American politics; this is the return of actual political life.

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