



America's Instant Gratification Mentality Undermines Foreign Policy Efforts

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American society increasingly has become an instant gratification mecca. We want text responses now. We want to stream our shows at the highest speed immediately. We want good food fast. We want no delays on our roads and airplanes. We want to win wars over a weekend. America has no patience, especially with things that have become encrusted with the passage of time.

Unfortunately, when it comes to foreign affairs, our adversaries play the long game. China sees the world through a 5,000-year lens; term limits don't apply in Russia to Vladimir Putin; Iran's theocratic leaders are fighting for the afterlife; and North Korea is living under the third generation of Kims.

In stark contrast, American presidents have four-to-eight years at most and Members of Congress live in two- and six-year election cycles. If, as President Donald Trump believes, the global system no longer favors America or its workers, reforming that system will take time and require what Americans lack: patience.

The recent summit in Helsinki, Finland, is a great example of this deficit. Short of Trump leaving Helsinki with a public admission that Putin interfered in the 2016 elections, will scuttle all nuclear weapons, will pull out of the Crimea and Georgia, and will help in Syria and North Korea, Trump was destined to lose the summit. Putin has manhandled two other U.S. presidents over the last eighteen years, perhaps we should give Trump some time to develop a relationship with Putin and to secure actions beneficial to America's broader aims.

Let's be clear. We need help from Russia with Syria, Iran, North Korea, and China. We can guarantee Russian opposition if Trump publicly lectures or shames Putin, as armchair quarterbacks like Senator Bob Corker demand he do. Think about it for a minute. Trump spent his life in New York City real estate among some of the biggest egos in America. He knows that guys like Putin need to look like the strongman back home. We lose nothing by letting Putin look that way and possibly gain enormous help from him if Trump can secure key actions from him. The same goes with Kim Jung-Un in North Korea.

Can we just give Trump time to do that without going Eugene McCarthy, Part Deux?

The same rationale applies to Trump's rejection of trade deals and his use of tariffs. It is absolutely that case that European countries, Canada, Mexico, China, and other countries place undue burdens on U.S. exports at the same time they receive generous access to the American

market. Trump believes that too many Main Street Americans got cheap goods in exchange for pink slips. Trump wants to alter that bad deal.

Doctrinaire conservatives are quick to lecture Trump and the rest of us on egghead lessons about why trade deficits don't matter, why tariffs hurt those who use them, and why emergency aid to farmers is bad policy. They raise the ghost of Herbert Hoover and 1929 to scare us. For the sake of the argument, just assume everything they said is totally right...in the short term.

The reality is, however, not one trading partner will agree to lower their burdens on our exports unless they are forced to do it. The French will continue to use the European Union to protect their farmers, the Germans will continue to protect their high-end manufacturers, the Canadians will keep our milk prices too high, the Mexicans will lure companies with cheap labor, and the Chinese will steal our intellectual property and make it hard for our companies to succeed there.

It is not surprising that those countries love the current system.

I respectfully submit to my colleagues on the Right that they are doing more to undermine Trump and his efforts to improve the global trading system than the fiercest liberal-progressive on the Left. Why? Because, if by aggressively using tariffs in the short term, Trump can secure new trade deals for the long term that lower the burdens on U.S. exports to the rest of the world while keeping the burdens on imports low, then U.S. companies and their workers will face a more level playing field allowing them to compete fairly with other countries in the international market.

On net in the long term, Trump will drive the use of tariffs and the burdens countries use to stifle true free and fair trade down. To get there, Trump needs time and our patience. Doesn't he deserve some time to try? After all, it took Trump's threats and actions over the last few months to get the EU to agree to negotiate a new trade deal with lower or no tariffs as announced yesterday. That is a big win that wouldn't have come any other way.

The same goes for NATO and the burden we carry compared to those we are protecting. Trump is absolutely right to demand higher contributions from NATO members and intellectual consistency from the Germans. Either Russia is a real threat requiring NATO or it is the primary supplier of energy needs the Germans are increasingly dependent upon, but it shouldn't be both.

At the end of the day, it may not be pretty, but Trump is getting results. Americans need to ditch their need for instant gratification and give Trump some breathing room to fix the broken system he inherited and solve the problems past presidents not only failed to tackle, but in some case made worse.