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Trump, International Man of Action

This space is not often used to offer succor to the Trump. Nonetheless, it seems timely to do so now, given to what all but the Trump view as deteriorating relations between him and Kim Jong Un.

Upon assuming office, the Trump, described Mr. Kim as “Rocket Man” who “is on a suicide mission.” The Trump went on to say that if the United States is “forced to defend itself or its allies, we will have no choice but to totally destroy North Korea.”

As we now know, Little Rocket Man has become the Trump’s best friend, replacing in his affections even Vladimir Putin of Russia. Their mutual affection was on display during their trysts in Singapore and Vietnam as well as on the short honeymoon trip they took together over the DMZ in Korea.

In bragging about the letters Kim has written him, letters that he frequently shows White House visitors, Trump says he and Kim fell in love. Describing one of the letters the Trump said: “It’s a beautiful piece of art. And I think we’re going to make a deal.” He expressed confidence that he would be able to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.

Before the Singapore tryst, Mr. Kim discontinued all weapons tests, a lull in testing that lasted through the tryst in Viet Nam. In the eyes of all but the Trump’s, the honeymoon is over. Since April, the North has resumed testing missiles. On August 1, 2019 it was reported that the North had conducted a third test launch in a period of less than ten days. Numerous photos appeared of a self-satisfied Kim observing the testing.

In commenting on the renewed testing the Trump said he and Kim had never discussed short range missiles. He said: “He will do the right thing because he is far too smart not to, and he does not want to disappoint his friend, President Trump.”

The United Nations Security Council did not greet the renewed testing with the same equanimity. In a closed-door United Nations Security Council briefing on August 1, the Council said the tests violated U.N. sanctions and said Pyongyang should “take concrete steps” toward denuclearization. The Trump is no doubt downplaying the renewed testing because if it results in bringing about an end to his friendship with one of the world’s most brutal dictators, it will reflect badly on him.

The good news I bring Mr. Trump is that there is waiting in the wings another despot who would like to befriend him and give him the opportunity to demonstrate his negotiating skills. The former despot who has offered himself as a person who can, working with the Trump, resolve one of the most difficult problems on the international scene, is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former president of Iran. Mr. Ahmadinejad is not exactly a match for Mr. Kim. Mr. Kim not only arranged for the murder of his half-brother but presides over a country in which millions of its citizens are starving. Nonetheless, if events prove that he is no longer the Trump’s best friend, Mr. Ahmadinejad could be a good replacement.

Mr. Ahmadinejad became president of Iran in 2005. According to a report prepared by Amnesty International, following his election he took steps that were described as “squeezing the life out of universities.” Women were barred from taking courses deemed to be more suitable for men. Women’s rights were excluded from courses on Women’s studies. Gender segregation was enforced.

Following the 2009 presidential election in which Ahmadinejad was reelected, there were massive protests that resulted in the arrests of students, long periods of detention and in many cases torture of those detained.

On July 19, 2019, it was reported that Mr. Ahmadinejad had suggested that he and the Trump sit down together to negotiate a way out of the confrontation that threatens the peace in that part of the world, according to reports, in a long telephone interview with the New York Times Mr. Ahmadinejad said he wants to sit down with the Trump. As he explained in the interview: “Mr. Trump is a man of action. He is a businessman and therefore he is capable of calculating cost-benefits and making a decision. We say to him, let’s calculate the long-term cost-benefit of our two nations and not be shortsighted.”

If the friendship with Mr. Kim comes to an end, the world's disappointment in that failed effort could be ameliorated by the Trump's new found friendship with Mr. Ahmadinejad and their efforts to bring lasting peace to the Middle East. That would be a success we could all celebrate. Those who anticipate that the Trump's negotiating skills will bring about peace in the middle East should not hold their breath. If they do, they may well expire before that happens.

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