

April 20, 2018

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And vastly is an understatement. Obama's foreign policy was a disaster, beginning with the peculiar apology tour that mystified much of its Middle Eastern audience, through the yet more peculiar (misspelled) reset button with Russia that further mystified Sergei Lavrov, on to Obama's overheard whisper to Medvedev telling Putin he would be more accommodating on missile defense after the election (imagine the apoplectic reaction of our media if Trump did that!), to the Libyan war leading to the assassination of Qaddafi (the only Arab leader to voluntarily denuclearize) that created a failed state and a raft of refugees to Italy and elsewhere, and, of course, the rapid exit from Iraq that gave rise to ISIS.

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Victor Davis Hanson has more on Trump's triumphs in foreign policy.

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Matthew Contineti writes on one specific problem created by obama's feckless weakness.

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I spent a few hours after the attack rereading the ludicrous coverage that greeted President Obama's announcement in 2013 that, rather than take military action, he had entered into an agreement with the Russians to remove and destroy Assad's chemical stockpiles. The Obama administration knew at the time that the deal would leave Assad plenty of armaments, but officials were happy nevertheless to make statements that left the public with a different and mistaken impression. These statements were often lawyerly, sophistic, and deceptive, using weasel-phrases like "declared chemical weapons." They assumed that the everyday voter would not recognize that the word "declared" signified a loophole Assad could drive a tank through.

Let's remind them. ...

Pajamas Media

Trump Vastly Better than Obama at Foreign Policy

by Roger L. Simon

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And vastly is an understatement. Obama's foreign policy was a disaster, beginning with the peculiar apology tour that mystified much of its Middle Eastern audience, through the yet more peculiar (misspelled) reset button with Russia that further mystified Sergei Lavrov, on to Obama's overheard whisper to Medvedev telling Putin he would be more accommodating on missile defense *after* the election (imagine the apoplectic reaction of our media if Trump did that!), to the Libyan war leading to the assassination of Qaddafi (the only Arab leader to voluntarily denuclearize) that created a failed state and a raft of refugees to Italy and elsewhere, and, of course, the rapid exit from Iraq that gave rise to ISIS.

And this omits the equally egregious examples -- the failure to enforce the red line on Assad's use of chemical weapons, about which he naively believed Putin, and the never-signed, never-published Iran Deal itself, which has done nothing but enrich the mullahs who wreak havoc from Venezuela to Yemen. This duplicitous and unverifiable non-agreement prolonged the monstrous Syrian civil war, causing the greatest refugee crisis since World War II and changing the character of Europe possibly forever.

There's more but you get the point. Not even Jimmy Carter had that bad a record. And this is without Obama's sickening lack of response to the freedom demonstrators in Iran. ("Obama, Obama, are you with us or are you with them?" Well, we know.)

And Trump?

To begin with, there's the near-annihilation of ISIS. Then there's the renewed alliance with Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states without, miracle of miracles, the ostracism of Israel. Indeed, while announcing the move of the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem (with little protest by ME standards), the Israeli-Saudi alliance has flourished. Does this mean a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem is imminent? Probably not. But at least the decades of moribund unchanging policy since Oslo have finally been bypassed and new perspectives made possible.

He has also so far managed the Syrian gas attacks with an intelligent level of response, escalating it carefully.

And then there is the North Korea situation. Not one American president made a dent in it. There are no guarantees, but Trump seems to be on the brink of... something. It's exciting to watch because there is actually a possibility of real peace in a part of the world that has not seen it in well over half a century. Trump, the peacemaker, balancing North Korea, South Korea, China and Japan? Who would have thought it? Not our media. They hate him so much if he cured cancer they would think it was a trick -- or a clever way to sabotage Obamacare.

The so-called trade war is a part of foreign policy too. Our media and some of our business people and the knee-jerk political opposition went into paroxysms when Trump threatened tariffs with China. But how else could a rebalancing of our trade with our greatest competitor ever be effectuated? Certainly not by the jawing of stodgy trade officials who have been at it for decades with no results and little incentive to have any. Now it looks as if it may succeed. (What's surprising is that our media didn't get what Trump was up to in the first place, negotiating. Scratch that. They probably did. They just couldn't stand it because it was Donald doing it. That's how stunted they are.)

But what accounts for this great difference between Trump and Obama in foreign policy and the closely related trade negotiations? It could come down to something as simple as this. Trump may have read a tiny bit of Marx at school, but I doubt he paid very much attention to it or even remembered it. It seemed useless to him -- it wouldn't help him build a single hotel. Obama read it and believed it, with "modern" reservations. Those reservations, however, were never strong because alternatives (Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, etc.) felt uncomfortable to him and, more importantly, not useful to his personal advancement whether in the academy or in the wards of Chicago. So the Marxism remained as part of his credo, though never mentioned, except perhaps to the most trusted friends. Sometimes he didn't even admit it to himself. Truth, from the beginning, had to take a second place for Obama. Adhering to economic reality, actually helping people, ran counter to his own advancement.

For Trump, laissez-faire with all its pluses and minuses ruled. The bottom line was king. What worked worked.

This partly explains Trump's two-tiered approach -- criticizing a country's actions while seemingly being softer or even too soft on their leaders (Putin, Xi). The president wants to get things done and realizes, from business, that is the effective way. You might insult the leader for a while, as he did with Kim, but eventually you stop in order to get your way. You don't alienate the boss who has to make the final decision or it won't get made -- unless you want to

completely annihilate him, but Trump, despite what his critics says, has not indicated that he does. In fact, the reverse is true. Consequently, Trump, as he has demonstrated, has little use for ideology or even consistency. In a constantly changing world, he may be right. Those who are looking for some sort of Trump Doctrine may be looking for something that is actually outmoded. So far he is being more successful than Obama and all the neo-Marxist works of Marcuse, Gramsci, etc. combined.

Jewish World Review

Trump is cutting old Gordian knots

by Victor Davis Hanson



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Donald Trump inherited an array of perennial crises when he was sworn in as president in 2017. He certainly did not possess the traditional diplomatic skills and temperament to deal with any of them.

In the last year of the Barack Obama administration, a lunatic North Korean regime purportedly had gained the ability to send nuclear-tipped missiles to the U.S. West Coast.

China had not only been violating trade agreements, but forcing U.S. companies to hand over their technological expertise as the price of doing business in China.

NATO may have been born to protect the European mainland, but a distant U.S. was paying an increasingly greater percentage of its budget to maintain NATO than were its direct beneficiaries.

Mexico keeps sending its impoverished citizens to the U.S., and they usually enter illegally. That way, Mexico relieves its own social tensions, develops a pro-Mexico expatriate community in the U.S. and gains an estimated \$30 billion a year from remittances that undocumented immigrants send back home, often on the premise that American social services can free up cash for them to do so.

In the past, traditional and accepted methods failed to deal with all of these challenges. Bill Clinton's "Agreed Framework," George W. Bush's "six-party talks" and the "strategic patience" of the Obama administration essentially offered North Korea cash to denuclearize.

American diplomats whined to China about its unfair trade practices. When rebuffed, they more or less shut up, convinced either that they could not do anything or that China's growing economy would sooner or later westernize.

Europeans were used to American nagging about delinquent NATO contributions. Diplomatic niceties usually meant that European leaders only talked nonstop about the idea that they should shoulder more of their own defense.

Mexico ignored U.S. whining that our neighbor to the south was cynically undermining U.S. immigration law. If America protested too much, Mexico usually fell back on boilerplate charges of racism, xenophobia and nativism, despite its own tough treatment of immigrants arriving into Mexico illegally from Central America.

In other words, before Trump arrived, the niceties of American diplomacy and statecraft had untied none of these knots. But like Alexander, the outsider Trump was not invested in any of the accustomed protocols about untying them. Instead, he pulled out his proverbial sword and began slashing.

If Kim Jong Un kept threatening the U.S., then Trump would threaten him back and ridicule him in the process as "Rocket Man." Meanwhile, the U.S. would beef up its own nuclear arsenal, press ahead with missile defense, warn China that its neighbors might have to nuclearize, and generally seem as threatening to Kim as he traditionally has been to others.

Trump was no more patient with China. If it continues to cheat and demand technology transfers as the price of doing business in China, then it will face tariffs on its exports and a trade war. Trump's position is that Chinese trade duplicity is so complex and layered that it can never be untied, only cut apart.

Trump seemingly had no patience with endless rounds of negotiations about NATO defense contributions. If frontline European nations wished to spend little to defend their own borders, why should America have to spend so much to protect such distant nations?

In Trump's mind, if Mexico was often critical of the U.S., despite effectively open borders and billions of dollars in remittances, then he might as well give Mexico something real to be angry about, such as a border wall, enforcement of existing U.S. immigration laws, and deportations of many of those residing illegally on U.S. soil.

There are common themes to all these slashed knots. Diplomatic niceties had solved little. American laxity was seen as naiveté to be taken advantage of, not as generous concessions to be returned in kind.

Second, American presidents and their diplomatic teams had spent their careers deeply invested in the so-called postwar rules and protocols of diplomacy. In a nutshell, the central theme has been that the U.S. is so rich and powerful, its duty is to take repeated hits for the global order.

In light of American power, reciprocity supposedly did not matter -- as if getting away with something would not lead to getting away with something even bigger.

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Washington Free Beacon

The Men Who Didn't Disarm Syria—But Said They Did

by Matthew Continetti

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I spent a few hours after the attack rereading the ludicrous coverage that greeted President Obama's announcement in 2013 that, rather than take military action, he had entered into an agreement with the Russians to remove and destroy Assad's chemical stockpiles. The Obama administration knew at the time that the deal would leave Assad plenty of armaments, but officials were happy nevertheless to make statements that left the public with a different and mistaken impression. These statements were often lawyerly, sophistic, and deceptive, using weasel-phrases like "declared chemical weapons." They assumed that the everyday voter would not recognize that the word "declared" signified a loophole Assad could drive a tank through.

Let's remind them.

The Russians proposed the chemical-weapons deal on September 9, 2013. The following day, before any agreement had been reached, Vox.com editor-at-large Ezra Klein tweeted:

Ezra Klein

I can't believe the White House's strategy on Syria is working out this well. I doubt they can, either.

2:45 PM - Sep 10, 2013

The plaudits only increased after a deal was reached on September 14. Before a single weapon had been removed, MSNBC anchor Alex Witt asked a guest, "Doesn't President Obama actually come out the big winner here ultimately? Because without firing a shot, you said you believe that Syria will get rid of its chemical weapons." On November 4, deputy national-security adviser Ben Rhodes tweeted a link to a White House report with the slug:

Ben Rhodes -Archived

"Read more on how additional chemical agents or munitions cannot be produced in Syria."

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2013/11/04/major-milestone-our-effort-eliminate-syria-s-chemical-weapons-program>

Assad began transferring weapons to international authorities in the summer of 2014. As liberal pundits and journalists celebrated this supposed victory of diplomacy, they made sure to include caveats allowing that Assad and the Russians—perish the thought—might be lying. A June 23, 2014, article at the left-wing ThinkProgress.org was headlined, "Nobody Thought Syria Would Give Up Its Chemical Weapons. It Just Did." And while the article cautioned, "There's a chance that Syria may also have not declared all of its chemicals to the international community," it did not dwell on that idea for long.

That same evening, Rachel Maddow announced on her MSNBC show: "The chemical weapons are gone." She interviewed foreign-policy gadfly Steve Clemons, who called the deal "an enormous success for the White House." Clemons went on, "had we attacked at that point and not had the leverage to get Syria to give up 1,300 tons of chemical agents, those chemical agents would still be there." That's true: The Syrians no longer had the weapons they agreed to hand over. They just had all the weapons they kept instead.

In a June 23, 2014, article for DefenseOne.com headlined, "A Victory in the Battle Against Mass Destruction," Joe Cirincione of the Ploughshares Fund declared confidently, "Syria's operational chemical weapons arsenal is no more." But the arsenal used in subsequent attacks seemed pretty operational to those on the receiving end who died or were sickened.

To be sure, Cirincione also noted, "there are lingering questions and concerns—including possible undeclared weapons and facilities still to be destroyed—but the United States, using a negotiated agreement, an international network of inspectors, the involvement of some 30 nations, and an initial threat of the use of force, has just wiped out one of the two largest remaining chemical weapons arsenals in the world."

Except, you know, not.

Even though Obama and his supporters parenthetically acknowledged that the deal with Syria depended in large part on the good faith of the Baathist regime—always a bad idea—they were nonetheless determined to play up the transfer of chemical weapons as a significant achievement. To do otherwise would have undermined the logic of the president's foreign policy, which privileged negotiated settlements and concessions over hard power.

So, for example, on June 28, 2014, the New York Times editorial board clucked that Obama's critics "have been proven wrong." Why? Because "the chemical weapons are now out of the hands of a brutal dictator—and all without firing a shot." The following month, Secretary of State John Kerry did not bother to couch his language when he said on Meet the Press, "We struck a deal where we got 100 percent of the chemical weapons out."

After the Sunday show had ended, the fact-checking website Politifact.com reviewed Kerry's claim. "Kerry said all of Syria's chemical weapons had been removed," wrote Jon Greenberg.

The UN body in charge said that the last of Syria's declared chemical weapons left the country in late June. There remain, however, some discrepancies in the details of the weapons the Syrians had acknowledged possessing, and some additional work is needed. With that qualification, we rate the claim Mostly True.

Pretty big qualification!

The August 18, 2014 New York Times carried a piece headlined, "Syria's Chemical Arsenal Fully Destroyed, U.S. Says." It began with the following paragraph: "The United States said Monday that it had completed the destruction of the deadliest chemical weapons in Syria's arsenal, a rare foreign policy achievement for President Obama at a time when the Middle East is embroiled in violence and turmoil."

On August 19, 2014, Steven Benen, a blogger for Rachel Maddow, wrote a post called "A big win on Syrian chemical weapons." "When Obama and U.S.-coalition partners reached this agreement, critics assumed the framework would fail and the president would be humiliated by the inevitable failure," Benen argued. "As it turns out, the opposite has happened—the Obama administration's policy has worked."

On December 6, 2016, Obama bragged, "We've eliminated Syria's declared chemical weapons program." But eliminating declared programs does not matter if an undeclared program exists—as Assad demonically revealed in 2017 when he used chemical weapons to attack a town in northern Syria.

Even after the deal was exposed as a farce, however, Obama's friends were willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. On April 7, 2017, a New York Times headline read, "Weren't Syria's Chemical Weapons Destroyed? It's complicated." Scott Shane reported, "Despite the failure to completely eliminate Syria's chemical weapons, Obama administration officials and outside experts considered the program fundamentally a success."

Defending a policy he did so much to create, and attacking President Trump's decision to enforce a red line his boss had ignored, Obama deputy Ben Rhodes tweeted on April 9, 2017:

Ben Rhodes

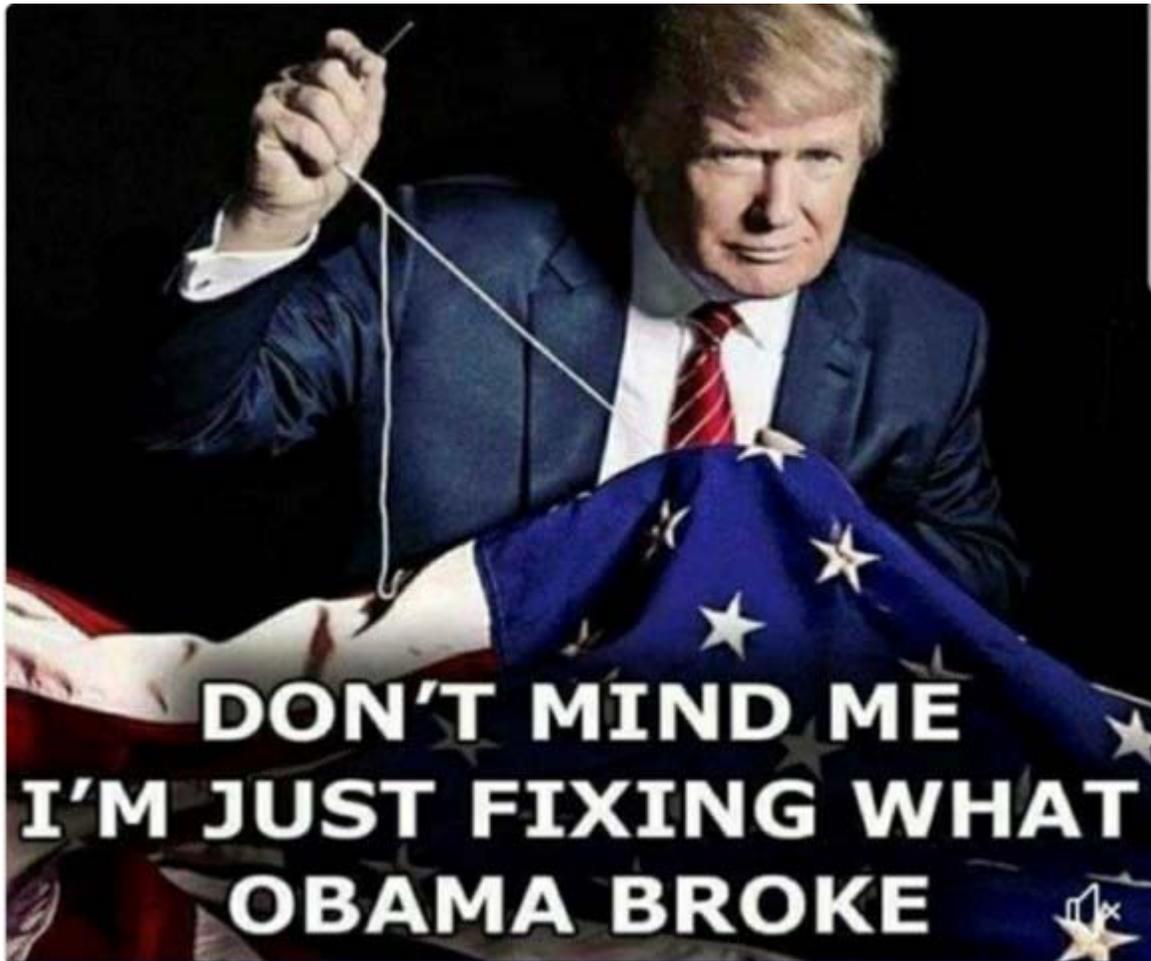
"Also worth noting that strikes could not have ended the violence in Syria or removed all of the CW which was destroyed through diplomacy."

Care to revise that statement, Mr. Rhodes?

Not every Obama official is as blinkered and cocooned as Rhodes, however. Also last spring, an article in the New York Times quoted Tony Blinken, former national-security adviser to Vice

President Biden. "We always knew," Blinken said, "we had not gotten everything, that the Syrians had not been fully forthcoming in their declaration."

Now they tell us.



IF GUN CONTROL WORKED



CHICAGO WOULD BE MAYBERRY



PATRIOT HUMOR

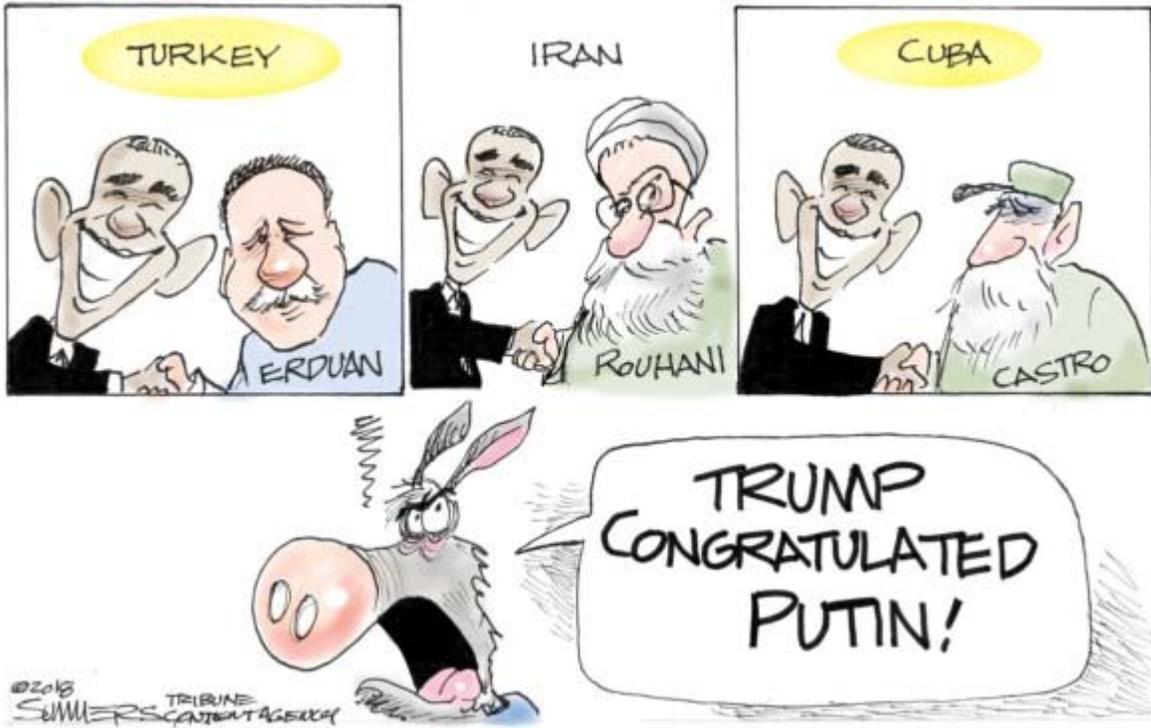
Obama congratulates Putin for election “win”

The Russian people and international observers may not see last Sunday’s presidential election in Russia as legitimate, but President Barack Obama has now officially endorsed the return of Russian past and future President Vladimir Putin. President Obama called Russian President-elect and Prime Minister Putin to congratulate him on his recent victory in the Russian Presidential ...

BY JOSH RODIN | MARCH 9, 2012, 7:52 PM



**THAT AWKWARD MOMENT
WHEN TRUMP HATERS ARE
REMINDED THAT THEIR HERO
OBAMA ALSO CONGRATULATED
PUTIN FOR ELECTION WIN**



Joe Biden in hospital bed after attacking the president

