

The K.F. Stone Weekly

(Formerly "Beating the Bushes")



March 04, 2013

SEQUESTRATION: ABDICATION, DESECRATION, INDIGNATION AND A WHOLE LOT MORE

Up until recently, about the only people who could define the words "sequester" or "sequestration" were chemists, Shakespearean nerds and fans of "Perry Mason" or "Law and Order." In science, "sequestration" is defined as "*The action of forming a chelate,*" which is a compound having a metal bond that can act



somewhat like a magnet. In Shakespeare's *King Henry VI, Part I*, the imprisoned Edmund Mortimer (the Earl of March), upon learning from his gaoler that his nephew, Richard Plantagenet, is going to visit him in the Tower of London, bemoans "*This loathsome sequestration I have had,*" meaning his term in the hoosegow. Any "Perry Mason" or "Law and Order" maven knows that juries are frequently "sequestered" -- kept separate and secluded. Juries aside, in law, "sequestration" is "*The act of seizing property that belongs to someone else and holding it until profits pay the demand for which it was seized.*"

Of course, over the past several months, the word "sequestration" -- now carrying a new, specific meaning -- has not only loomed large in our nation's political, economic and civil (and not-so-civil) debate; it has become capitalized . . . "Sequestration." In this, its new, linguistically specific incarnation, "Sequestration" has yet to make it into either the *New York Times* Sunday Crossword or [Sue Gleason's Double Crostic Puzzle Page](#). And although most readers of this blog have a good

general sense for the meaning of capital-S "Sequestration," defining it with any degree of precision is not all that easy.

In doing research for this essay, I discovered that there are more than 365 four-letter words which [rhyme with sequestration](#). More than a dozen of them underscore the horrific ugliness and asininity of what this country is about to undergo. For when all is said and done, the [Budget Control Act of 2011](#) (that which mandated the \$85 billion in random spending cuts which will be phased in over the next four-plus weeks):

- Represents an *abdication* of congressional responsibility.
- Is the *consummation* of the Tea Party/GOP's plan to eviscerate the Federal Government -- to, in the words of Grover Norquist, "drown it in the bathtub."
- Is a *declaration* of war against the will of the American people, the majority of whom -- including registered Republicans -- think Sequestration is suicidal.
- Is a *fabrication* which claims that all of America's economic difficulties are due to deficits, and as such, spending cuts are the only solution.
- Shows what harm an *infestation* of amateur ideologues can do to an institution, a government, and an economy in less than two years.
- Says that living up to America's historic and moral *obligations* amounts to less than a farthing.
- Sets in motion the further *strangulation* of the American middle class.

Additional rhyming words which come to mind include *abrogation, condemnation, depredation, exploitation, fumigation, irritation, laceration, mutilation, orchestration, revocation, suffocation, termination and violation* -- all of which play a role in defining this new, mindless impasse -- an impasse we never would have reached if our politicians acted more like practiced professionals and less like the childish cowards they've proven themselves to be. The *Rolling Stone's* [Matt Taibbi](#) put it succinctly in his most recent piece: " . . . *what we're watching is irresponsibility on an epic scale, wherein both of our major political parties seem to prefer government by random outcome over one managed by sensible compromise.*"

How in the world did we ever reach this sorry dead end?

When dozens of Tea Partiers got elected to Congress in 2010, they brought with them an apocalyptic vision of an eviscerated federal government; one that would be incapable of lending assistance to the sick, the elderly or the unemployed. In short, they saw a clock running backwards towards a time prior to FDR's New Deal. The first step in achieving their ultimate goal involved holding the full faith and credit of the United States hostage . . . remember the Debt Ceiling Crisis of 2011? In order to avoid defaulting on the public debt, the White House and

House Republicans agreed to harsh and arbitrary “sequestered” spending cuts if they couldn’t come up with a more reasonable deal in the interim. “But,” in the words of Clinton-era Labor Secretary [Robert Reich](#), “the Tea Partiers had no intention of agreeing to anything more reasonable. They knew the only way to dismember the federal government was through large spending cuts without tax increases.” To be certain, this short-term strategy leads to increased unemployment and economic stagnation, without doing anything to lower the nation's deficit in the long-term. This can only lead to an American public that is angry, fearful and full of resentment.

And this is precisely what the Republican Party's most conservative ideologues are after: anger, fear and resentment against (they hope) the Democrats. Their hope is that the more angry, bitter and fearful the American public becomes, the more they will turn to . . . guess who? . . . The smaller-is-better conservatives of the Tea Party wing of the GOP. True to their playbook, Republicans blame every aspect of the nation's economic woes on a spendthrift president who gladly pays off the poor, the elderly and the unemployed in order to gladly drive up long-term debt while simultaneously receiving the continued support and adulation of the “entitlement crowd.”

Although most polling shows that a majority of the American public don't buy into the Tea Party worldview, Tea Partiers like Eric Cantor (VA), Tim Huelskamp (Kan), Steve King (IA) and Rand Paul (KY) don't really care . . . nor do they have to. So long as they can keep their local base happy -- by holding fast to their pledge of “No taxes, no compromise, no engaging the enemy . . . ever!” they know they will likely run unopposed in their next primary and be reelected come November.

Most regrettably, President Obama's response to *Sequestration* involves neither *evocation* nor *exhortation*: it is, once again, searching for the illusive, idealistic “grand bargain” of “balanced” spending cuts (including cuts in the projected growth of Social Security and Medicare) combined with tax increases on the wealthy. As of today, the president has agreed to a gross imbalance -- \$1.5 trillion in cuts to Republicans’ \$600 billion in tax increases on the rich. Such an approach gives me feelings of *indignation*, *irritation* and *perturbation*. Try as he may, the president is never going to get the Tea Party crowd -- which controls one-half of one-third of the Federal Government -- to agree to a dime in new revenue. To them, compromise on anything spells both defeat at the polls and a one-way ticket to Hell. Better that the president get back to discussing jobs, jobs, jobs and convincing the public that with jobs comes increased purchasing power; with increased purchasing power comes economic growth; with economic growth comes increased revenue; with increased revenue comes a better position from which to seriously tackle our long-term economic challenges.

It seems to me that the *medication* of increased employment and economic growth beats the *domination* of the Tea Party seven days a week . . . and twice on Sunday.

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March 10, 2013

TIME TO EXHALE?

Even in death, longtime Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez remains pretty much what he was in life: a lightening rod of conflict and contradiction. Without question, Chávez was revered by many -- if not most -- of his country's



poor, who believed him to be their paternal champion against the entrenched rich and powerful. At the same time, he was reviled by many who considered him a corrupt autocratic clown. Chávez was, to say the least, a man of contradictions. You either loved him or hated him. (And if you were Raoul Castro, you did both.)

Conflicts and contradictions? Chávez was a secular socialist who went out of his way to form an incongruous friendship with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the

president of an Islamic theocracy. Raised and educated in one of this hemisphere's most tolerant and civilized countries -- one that opened its doors to Jewish victims of the Holocaust -- Hugo Chávez became a strident enemy of the Jewish State, had his intelligence service (SEBIN) spy on the country's Jewish community, gave voice to the age-old canard about a world-wide Zionist-Jewish conspiracy, and accused Israel of perpetrating a "new Holocaust" by using Nazi-

like methods to kill Palestinians. Lastly, the leader of a country possessing one of the world's largest supplies of oil, Chávez pretty much bankrupted his economy while enriching himself -- reportedly to the tune of \$1 billion or more.

I sincerely doubt that members of Venezuela's Jewish community -- whether residents or ex-pats now living abroad -- are shedding many tears over Chávez's passing. The Venezuelan Jewish community -- which numbered about 20,000 when Hugo Chávez first became president, spent much of the past 14 years holding its collective breath. One simply never knew what Chávez and his government would do next. As the Jewish Telegraphic Agency's [Uriel Heilman](#)

[noted](#): *"While Chavez never explicitly threatened the Jews of Venezuela, his frequent harassment and staunchly anti-Israel positions kept them continually on edge. Afraid to criticize their president, the Jewish community found itself in a predicament that took on a frightening resemblance to the one faced by Jews in another staunchly anti-Western, anti-Zionist country: Iran."*



Throughout the last several years of his presidency, Chávez drew closer and closer to Iran and its president, Mahmoud Ahmajinedad. The two sharply increased bilateral trade, inaugurated weekly flights between Caracas and Tehran, and frequently visited each other. Not surprisingly, the closer and chummier Chávez got with Iran, the stronger, more strident his rhetoric became against Israel. Venezuela severed relations with Israel in 2009, during the three-week Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. In addition to severing diplomatic ties with the Jewish state and expelling the Israeli ambassador in Caracas, Chávez accused Israel of committing genocide against the Palestinians. He also insisted that the Jews of Venezuela rebuke Israel for its actions.

Beyond the hostile, anti-Israel rhetoric they were subjected to, the Jewish community also suffered through acts of violence. Anti-Semitic graffiti appeared in Caracas, equating the Jewish Star of David with the swastika. Broadcasters on state radio recommended the notorious anti-Semitic forgery "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion" as an insightful read. Jewish institutions and houses of worship in Venezuela were attacked. To his credit, Chávez never placed restrictions on Jews leaving Venezuela. As such, during his 14-year presidency, nearly one out of two Venezuelan Jews left the country. Many "made *aliyah*" to Weston, Florida, a ten-minute drive from our home. Indeed, there are so many

Venezuelans living there -- both Jewish and Gentile -- that the upscale Broward County municipality is frequently referred to as "Westonzuela." And less than half-an-hour south, in Doral (where Tiger Woods is currently tearing up the back nine), one finds the largest Venezuelan ex-pat community in the world.

Now that Chávez is dead and, like Lenin and Mao about to become an eternal embalmed presence, two questions predominate:

1. Who will be the next president, and what changes, if any, will the country undergo as a result?
2. Will the tens of thousands of prosperous ex-pat Venezuelans living in South Florida and points north return home?

Vice President Nicolas Maduro is Hugo Chávez's hand-picked successor. Speaking at Chávez's funeral this past Friday, Maduro delivered a speech that sounded far more like a campaign address than a eulogy. In his address, Maduro pledged eternal loyalty to the deceased president and vowed that the Chávez movement "will never be defeated." From all indications, Nicolas Maduro is no



Hugo Chávez. Where Chávez was charismatic, bombastic and highly animated, Maduro is more of a monotone technocrat. His election, although probable, is by no means a done deal. Just last year, Hugo Chávez and his United Socialist Party won reelection by 54%-45% over Miranda Governor Henrique Capriles Radonski,

candidate of the center-right Justice First. It was by far the closest election of Chávez's career. That recent campaign was notable for the amount of anti-Semitism it contained.

Capriles (Radonski) is the Catholic grandson of Jewish Holocaust survivors. During the campaign, Capriles was quoted saying that "my mother's four grandparents were murdered in Treblinka," and that his grandmother, who was in the Warsaw Ghetto "taught me not to hate anyone." In response, Chávez's United Socialist Party portrayed Capriles as a "Zionist agent," and claimed that "A Capriles victory will inevitably lead to Zionist infiltration." (It should be noted that Chávez's henchmen also accused the unmarried Capriles of being gay to boot.)

Word just in: Henrique Capriles Radonski has just announced that he *will* run for president in the upcoming April 14 election.

It remains to be seen if Nicolas Maduro -- or whoever would pull off an upset victory next month -- will seek, or be able to, change much in the political or economic life of Venezuela. It is a very rich country with very poor people, the

highest murder rate in the Western world and "friends" who tolerate her because she has one the one thing everyone wants and needs . . . oil.

As to whether the ex-pats will be returning to the land of their birth, only time will tell. For many, it will be a time to exhale, to begin breathing and dreaming anew. For many others -- and this includes those who have "made *aliyah*" to Westonzuela, I would imagine that they'll keep holding their breath . . . and living in a country where being a Hispanic Jew is both safe and wonderful.

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PATIENCE: THAT MOST UN-AMERICAN OF TRAITS

When it comes to building, crafting or using my hands for anything other than typing, I am a ten-thumbed idiot. Nonetheless, I live in a home filled with furniture and antiques made by people who *did* have gifted hands. I am fairly well obsessed with hand-made objects; to me, an antique table, chair or lamp is imbued with the soul of the artist or craftsman who made it. And for me, antiques are not merely for display; they are meant to be used. Here in the library -- where I spend the lion's share of time when I'm home -- there are three ornate Victorian chairs dating back to the mid 1870s, a barber chair made by E. Berninghaus of Cincinnati in 1881, a blue Jasperware Wedgewood telephone from the 1930s and a 1934 Philco radio.



This radio, an artistic, Deco-domed delight, is more than a working antique; it is an object-lesson in patience. For unlike any other electronic device in our house -- save the computer -- this one has to warm up. It requires 30 or 35 seconds of patient waiting and anticipating before a sound is heard. Those of a certain age will recall that once, all radios -- and televisions -- had to "warm up"; that in order to change channels one had to get out of their seat, go over to the set, and turn a knob; that a flight between, say, Los Angeles and Chicago took the better part of a day; that a long-distance call was an occasion, and required the assistance of an operator; and that sending or receiving a telex or a telegram was considered the fastest, most accurate means of two-way communication. Without

question, transistors, microchips and microprocessors have added greatly to modern life in good and positive ways. Then too, they have made us increasingly impatient, increasingly unable to wait for anything, up to and including dinner. The 56k modem of the late 1990s -- which in its day was blazingly fast -- is, by today's standards, slower than an Aldabra giant tortoise. . .

Indeed, patience has never been an American trait; it's simply not part of our national DNA. Perhaps it is because we are still, relatively speaking, such a young country; our understanding of time is weighted towards the immediate. Consider, that at the time of our founding 237 years ago, China was midway through its 15th dynasty; England had already been ruled over by 57 Kings and Queens; heck, even tiny San Marino had been around as a country for 1,475 years. What's an unbearable eternity to an American is the day before yesterday to a Brit . . . or Peruvian, Egyptian or Korean.



Self-knowledge is a good thing. It gives us, as individuals -- or a people or a nation -- perspective and if properly heeded, helps us to see the so-called "big picture" with greater clarity. In other words, recognizing and understanding that as individuals -- and as a nation -- we Americans tend to be rather impatient, can help shape the way we view, understand and frame options for dealing with the challenges of a highly complex world. These challenges run the gamut from the domestic to the international and from the gravely existential to the merely



inconvenient. Take our relations with the "new" Egypt as an example. Without question, what happens in Egypt will have a deep affect on the U.S. and our staunchest ally, Israel. Nonetheless, in reality, we have only limited ability to influence events in that ancient country. Many look upon the Muslim Brotherhood's victory -- and the consequent inclusion of many Islamists into the political process, as a disaster for both the U.S. and Israel. As

a result many are impatiently demanding that the Obama Administration quickly withdraw all U.S. aid. A patient, less hair-trigger response to the new Egypt might lead to an understanding that inviting Islamists into the political process can build stability -- which is a far sight better than an out-and-out Salafist regime. In order to succeed at rebuilding a fragmented, economically stagnant nation, Morsi and his allies are going to have to create new institutions and assert civilian control over the military. And that takes both time and patience.

Likewise with Iran, patience -- up to a point -- is extremely important. Increasingly, there are more and more impatient voices proclaiming that economic sanctions have not, and cannot, work; that the time is fast approaching when we must "take out" the Mullahs and their nuclear facilities. Never mind that Iran is not Iraq or Syria; that hard targets like Fordow and Natanz are not like Osirak (Iraq) or Deir al-Zour (Syria). A more patient, dispassionate review of the situation would indicate that sanctions *are* clearly having an effect; Iran's currency dramatically devalued last fall.

On the domestic front, America faces its most existential challenge: the economy. The impatient seek to address a long-term problem -- the deficit -- with a short-term solution -- drastic budget cuts. Those exercising a bit more patience seem to understand that the best way to address the long-term challenge (putting the federal budget back on a more balanced track) is by first dealing with the short-term challenge (creating jobs so that people can lift our consumer-driven economy out of its doldrums). The latter approach does regrettably -- and of necessity -- require an even greater level of government spending. And for that reason, it will be held in check. What we are likely to see in future days is even more gridlock as Congress and the White House continue playing a game of chicken. The sad irony is that if both sides would put a bit more patience into their proposals, would take a longer view of the situation, they would see that in economic terms, neither the fiscal problem nor the pain required to fix it is all that severe. Some things just take a bit of time.

It never ceases to amaze me how much patience, vision and foresight some people have displayed over the course of human history. When Archbishop Walter de Gray (1180-1255) first ordered up plans for a cathedral in York, England in the year 1220, he knew full well that neither he nor anybody's great, great, great grandchildren were going to be alive when it would eventually be completed. And he was absolutely correct; York Minster took 252 years to complete. Then there was the ancient Chinese emperor who, in circa 3,100 BCE issued the initial decree for the construction of a wall around his empire. That wall would not be completed for 2,000 years -- until 1660 CE. Talk about patience and vision! Today, if a football stadium or a skyscraper isn't open for business within a year, we go hunting for heads . . .

Patience, we are told, is a virtue; that good things come to those who wait. Even more, it is that dash of reality which keeps us grounded and makes progress -- real progress -- possible. It is essential that we, as people and as a nation, try to see big pictures -- those that won't come into proper focus for another two, three decades or more. With patience and proper vision, we can begin planting seeds today which may well be ready for our children and grandchildren to harvest in

years to come. And even though we won't be around for the harvest, at least we will have the satisfaction of knowing that *we* did the planting.

And now, if you will excuse me, my old Philco has finally warmed up . . .

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PUBLICO DAMNARI!

According to nearly a dozen reputable national polls conducted over the past month, an overwhelming majority of the American public favors stricter, tighter gun laws. In its review of [nine recent polls](#) -- including those run by Gallup, Pew Research, CNN/Time, CBS/New York Times and Fox News (!) -- [Constitution Daily](#) found an average of 88% of the public favoring universal background checks. Moreover by an average of 57%, people favored a ban on high-



capacity ammunition clips, while 56% of those polled approved of a ban on assault rifles and semi-automatic weapons. In other findings:

- About 50% of the people questioned by the three most conservative polling organizations, were concerned that gun-control legislation would take weapons away from them, or believed protection from gun violence was a lesser concern than protecting their Second Amendment rights.
- In addition to background checks, another idea that has widespread support is devoting more funds and attention to mental health issues. An average of 83% of people surveyed in four polls favored increased attention to mental health programs.
- Of the 12 ideas that appeared across the grouping of all nine polls, the least popular was arming teachers and school officials with guns. It only had a support rate of 41%.

Despite these findings, Congress -- which in a recent [Think Progress poll](#) was found to be held in far lower esteem than Genghis Kahn, used car salesmen, lice and the band Nickleback (formally known as "The Village Idiots") -- Congress

has yet to do much more than cower before Wayne LaPierre and the National Rifle Association. (*This just in: on today's "Meet the Press," LaPierre declared that background checks were based on "a dishonest premise," and said that New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg -- an advocate of stricter gun control who has given millions of dollars toward tighter regulation through Mayors Against Illegal Guns -- has an "insane" approach to gun control. Bloomberg supports universal background checks, as well as a ban on assault weapons and an upgraded gun-tracking system -- all measures the NRA opposes.*)

Despite LaPierre's rhetoric and his group's deep pockets, the NRA is increasingly being shown for what it truly is: a blustering band of paper tigers whose roar is far more chimeric than concrete. Need proof? In [the 2012 election](#), the NRA spent more than \$18 million, making contributions to 140 incumbents (111 Republicans and 29 Democrats); 95% of those dollars were spent on races in which their preferred candidate lost -- this according to data compiled by the [Sunlight Foundation](#). Moreover the NRA spent more than \$100,000 in seven Senate races in 2012. On Election Day, their preferred candidate lost in six of those races, often by healthy margins. In three of those states (Florida, Missouri and Maine, their candidates lost by more than 10 points. Similarly, of the 26 members of the House of Representatives who lost on Election Day, 18 were endorsed by the NRA.



Despite the NRA's dismal track record, nearly every Congressional Republican -- and a sizeable number of Democrats as well -- are loathe to support any gun control measure with teeth, such as reinstating the assault weapons ban, severely limiting the number of rounds in a magazine or taxing the daylight out of bullets. (Do check out this fascinating [interactive website](#) to see where your senators and representative stand on gun control and what "grade" they have received from the NRA)

While it is undoubtedly true that no new law or set of laws will ever put an end to gun violence in America, to do nothing -- or next to nothing -- is not only irresponsible; it is a frontal assault on the will of the people. *Publica locutus est* -- the public has spoken. We want Congress to enact significant gun reform legislation. And what is their response? *Publico damnari!* -- "The public be damned!" This attitude, of course, extends well beyond the issue of what Congress is going to do -- or not do -- about guns and ammo. The detached arrogance of *publico damnari!* -- again, meaning "The public be damned" -- is both overwhelming and omnipresent. It is largely nourished by truckloads of cash

provided by corporations and a handful of mostly right-wing billionaires who owe everything to Justices Roberts, Alito, Thomas, Scalia (RATS) and Kennedy for their decision in the *Citizen's United* case. It will be recalled in this decision -- which, back in October 2010 I wrote was "[Worse Than Dred Scott](#)," the court declared that corporations had the same constitutional rights as people, and that individuals could contribute unlimited sums of money just so long as it wasn't to a specific candidate. At the time, I noted that, ". . . in giving corporations and anonymous 'civic-minded' mega-billionaires the legal right to deluge the political system with dollars, they have hastened the transition of America from a capitalist to a corporatist state." In that essay, I also wondered aloud if, "there is any power on earth that might one day lead to the nullification of *Citizens United*?" The answer to that question is "perhaps."

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and Florida Representative Ted Deutch have introduced a constitutional amendment to overturn *Citizens United*. To date, 11 states and more than 300 cities and towns have passed resolutions calling for the ruling to be overturned. In announcing his proposed constitutional amendment, Senator Sanders noted:

What the Supreme Court did in Citizens United is to tell billionaires like the Koch brothers and Sheldon Adelson, 'You own and control Wall Street. You own and control coal companies. You own and control oil companies. Now, for a very small percentage of your wealth, we're going to give you the opportunity to own and control the United States government.' That is the essence of what Citizens United is all about. That is why this disastrous decision must be reversed."

Indeed.

If passed by Congress and then ratified by three-quarters of the states (a big "IF"), the Sanders/Deutch proposal, "[The Democracy is For People Amendment](#)," would, as Senator Sanders explains, ". . . effectively prevent corporations from bankrolling election campaigns. Congress and states would have specific authority to regulate campaign finances by, for example, limiting donations, requiring disclosure of donors or creating public-financing systems for campaigns." Much of the *publico damnari!* attitude is made possible by the fear that unless one toes the line -- as set by the richest of the rich and the craziest of the crazy -- they will be voted out of office. This attitude undergirds far more than the current gun debate; it is the launching pad for most of the critical issues facing Congress -- from immigration and taxes to global warming, healthcare and the deficit. I for one believe that The Democracy is For People Amendment, Quixotic though it may be, is terribly important. For unless and until we can drive big, big, big money out of the political system, *publico damnari!* will continue being the politician's favorite cheer.

For anyone interested in The Democracy is For People Amendment, please visit the [Public Citizen website](#). Together, we can change *publico damnari!* -- "The public be damned" -- to *super omnia voluntatem populi* -- "Above all, the will of the people . . ."

ים היהודים שלי את מיטב איחולים לפסח כשר ושמחולכל הקורא

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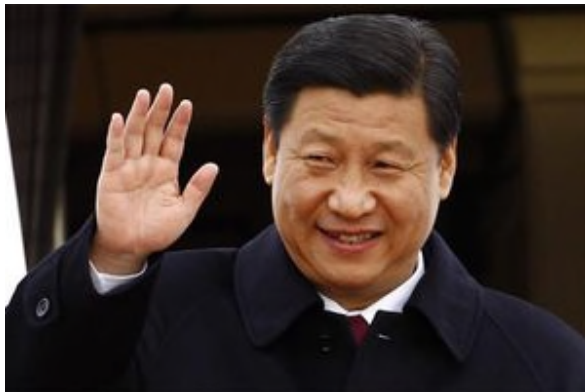


March 31, 2013

A LETTER TO PRESIDENT XI JINPING (習近平)

Dear President Xi:

I never know whether to offer congratulations or condolences to people when they are elected president of a country -- let alone a condo or a synagogue. Sure, being elected president of *anything* -- especially the most populous nation on earth -- does carry a



mega-ton of ego strokes. But then again, the way things are going in the world, one wonders why *anyone* in their right (or left) mind would ever want to don the mantle of leadership. You know, all that Shakespearean "Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown . . ." sort of stuff.

In any event, congratulations on becoming President, and welcome back from your trip to Africa; I know the latter was a success. I mean, you guys have really been going great guns on that continent for a couple of decades now. If I'm not mistaken, every year since 1991, your foreign ministers have made their first overseas trip to some African country and, from 1996 to 2011, your country's trade with Africa has grown from \$6.3 billion to \$166 billion -- a whopping twenty-six fold increase. Truth to tell, you're leaving the U.S. in the trade dust.

And, so far as I know, the only "non-negotiable demand" you make on the 54 countries comprising the African continent is that they recognize Beijing -- not Taiwan. As of

today, I am told that there are only four holdouts -- Swaziland, Burkina Faso, São Tomé and Príncipe and Gambia; they still recognize tiny Taiwan. But I would imagine that with appropriate incentivizing, you can look forward to bringing the remaining four into the fold. Where there's a will -- and profit -- there's a way.

My purpose in writing you goes beyond mere words of congratulation; I am deeply interested in what plans you have in store for North Korea. To be perfectly honest President Xi, trying to figure what "Lil Kim" (Kim Jong-un) and his Stalinist henchmen have up their collective sleeve is more than daunting; at this point, it is no better than a fool's errand. One seeks even a shred of lucidity amidst all the lunacy. I mean, one day the pinheads of Pyongyang are ferocious, the next day they are weak and the day after that just plain crazy. Then the cycle begins anew. Tell me President Xi: are these bouts of ferocity, weakness and insanity actual ingredients of a diabolically coherent strategy, or a dissociative disorder? I mean, in February, Kim and company detonate an underground nuclear device; herein, a display of **ferocity**. Within a month you guys -- North Korea's only significant ally, vote against them at the U.N., which clearly demonstrates Pyongyang's **weakness**. Then, Kim and his comrades start threatening to launch full-scale attacks against South Korea and turn U.S. cities into "seas of fire." This, to put it bluntly, is sheer, utter **insanity**. Just yesterday, Pyongyang threatened to close the Kaesong industrial zone -- one of the very few remaining forms of inter-Korean cooperation. This is yet another example of **insanity**, considering that the Kaesong zone gives North Korea access to approximately \$2 billion in hard currency each year.



The other day, [George Friedman](#), one of the sharpest geopolitical thinkers in the business, wrote: *North Korea's primary goal is regime preservation. Demonstrating ferocity -- appearing to be close to being nuclear capable -- makes other countries cautious. Weakness, such as being completely isolated from the world generally and from China particularly, prevents other countries from taking drastic action if they believe North Korea will soon fall. The pretense of insanity -- threatening to attack the United States, for example -- makes North Korea appear completely unpredictable, forcing everyone to be cautious. The three work together to limit the actions of other nations.*

Without question, President Xi, the United States, while recognizing that North Korea has a history of spewing bellicose B.S., is taking the threats, the ferocity and the insanity seriously. Less than 48 hours ago, in a rare show of force, the U.S. flew two nuclear-capable stealth bombers over the Korean peninsula. Although I can't imagine North Korea wanting to resume the Korean conflict in dead earnest, given that Stalinist nation's utter unpredictability, one would do well to take the threat seriously.

What do you think, President Xi? It seems to me that it would be in everyone's best interest -- especially yours -- to take charge of the situation and issue your own ultimatum. Let's face facts: you are the only power with significant influence in North Korea. I can't imagine your being sanguine with a nuclear nation on your border, much less than a country undergoing gross political instability. You need tens of millions of North Koreans streaming across your border like a hole in the head. President Xi, you provide North Korea with a majority of its food and fuel; without you, they would starve -- not that there are many overweight North Koreans to speak of. Just as importantly, you have been turning a blind eye to all the illegal trade that goes across the China-North Korea border. Yes, yes, I understand that tightening the noose too much could cause the Kim regime to topple which, from your point of view, is not in your best interest. After all, North Korea *does* act as a kind of buffer between your country and South Korea . . . which contains upwards of two dozen American military bases and just under 30,000 American troops. And, with President Obama's new-found interest in Asia and the Pacific, you must be walking on more than a few egg shells.

President Xi, no one said it was going to be easy. You've got a ton of challenges and problems in your country . . . just like any president. You have to walk a fine line between what is right and what is politic; between what is economically in one's own self interest today and what will work tomorrow or the day after. Like President Obama you are faced with issues of war and peace, pollution and prosperity, of all those things which make even the most thick-skinned chief executive ask "What in the world have I got myself into?"

Please President Xi, exercise a bit of your power and prestige and get "Lil Kim" and his comrades to cease and desist; to curb all the bellicose B.S.; to make the world a safer place.

謝謝

肅然,

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