

Opinion

Two and half summits

By DEBRA J. SAUNDERS

Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's daughter and son-in-law, both trusted White House aides, crossed into North Korea with Trump and strongman Kim Jong-un last week.

And where was national security adviser John Bolton?

The foreign-policy hawk was on his way to Mongolia—which pretty much explains the dynamics that led Trump to become the first sitting U.S. president to set foot in the repressive Hermit Kingdom, with a leader who systematically has starved his own people in his quest to become a world nuclear power. In return for what, exactly?

The big takeaway was a photo op, after which Trump and Kim said the two nations would resume negotiations that began in June 2018 when they met for the first time in Singapore. The art of the deal that Trump hailed as culminating in “complete denuclearization” of the Korean peninsula has morphed into the art of the do-over.

To be clear, old-style negotiations with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea failed to deliver the denuclearization that previous presidents sought. So there is reason to ditch traditional diplomacy.

There is a faction within the administration that wants a “small deal,” because this rump sees a sweeping all-or-nothing deal as unobtainable and likely to end in failure. Trump certainly has the right to give that viewpoint a try, should he choose to do so.

But the Trump charm offensive with Kim isn't likely to lead to world peace. The commander in chief looked like a pushover when he declared victory at that first summit in Singapore, which produced a vague agreement dropping language—“verifiable” and “irreversible” denuclearization—that had been standard American asks of North Korea.

That first summit elevated Kim on the world stage. It was a gamble that supporters and optimists framed as a new beginning facilitated by Trump's willingness to break with convention and meet with an Asian leader ahead of staff negotiations in a nod to cultural differences.

If it worked, the world would see Pyongyang peel back its nuclear capability with an aim toward joining the international community and creating a modern economy.

But all Americans got was a lousy T-shirt—a postcard of a deal with no deliverables, later followed by the Hermit Kingdom's launch of short-range missiles.

Trump's decision to cut short a second summit in Hanoi in February showed the world Trump had the backbone to walk out of a bad deal. Yaaay. But then his last-minute Twitter invite to Kim to meet at the DMZ—a gesture that led to the border crossing—shows Trump's hunger for spectacle can be held at bay for only so long. Many foreign policy wonks are convinced that a good deal is more likely to emerge from talks without Trump than talks with him.

Trump does not seem to understand the “true nature of the mafia-like” culture that has guided the Kim family, David Maxwell of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies told the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*.

Perhaps the best example of Trump's willful blindness came from Hanoi, where Trump told reporters he did not think Kim was aware of the torture inflicted on Otto Warmbier, a University of Virginia student from Ohio whom the regime arrested at Pyongyang International Airport in 2016 and sentenced to 15 years of hard labor after he was found guilty of stealing a propaganda poster.

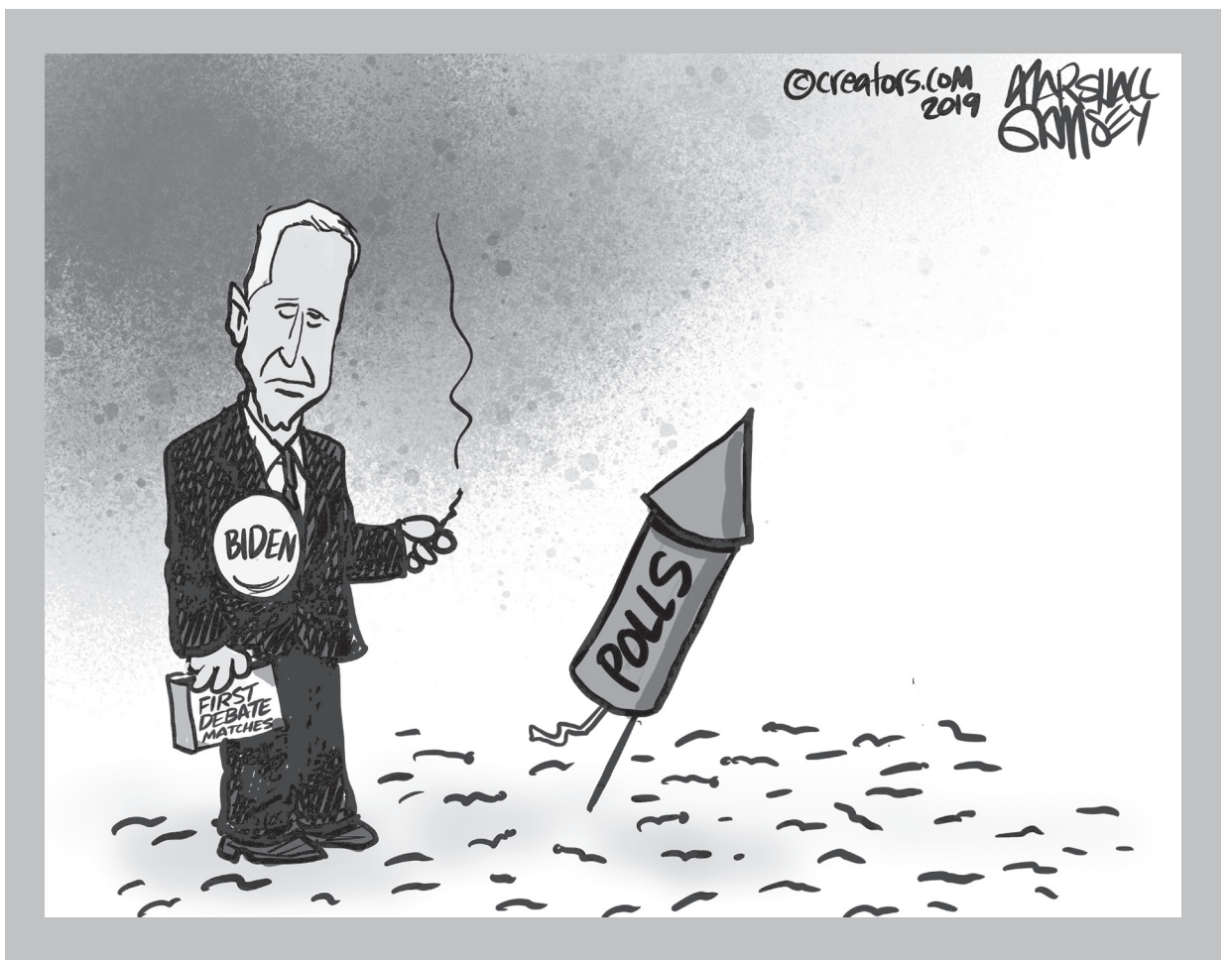
In 2017, Trump successfully prodded the country to release Warmbier, who by then was blind, unresponsive and paralyzed after enduring 17 months in a North Korean prison. The young man died six days later.

In Hanoi, Trump told reporters he did not hold Kim responsible for the 22-year-old's suffering and death. “I don't believe he knew about it,” Trump said. “He tells me that he didn't know about it, and I will take him at his word.”

Imagine the likely reaction on the right if President Barack Obama had said that.

(Creators Syndicate)

guest
opinion



Celebrating victories but not character

By MICHAEL GERSON

The celebration of American independence is supposed to be a unifying national ritual. But we are a country with profound differences over the meaning of nationhood itself.

People in more typical countries—such as Belgium, Japan or Russia—are attached primarily to a unique piece of earth, a unique language, a unique culture and (perhaps) a unique ethnicity. Their celebration of nationhood is the celebration of particularity. One may become a naturalized citizen of such a country, but it is less clear what it means to become Belgian, Japanese or Russian. If possible, it would require total immersion in national distinctiveness.

This is how the current American president appears to view his native land. President Trump's Fourth of July remarks did make reference to the abstract promises of the Declaration of Independence, but he mainly praised his nation as a place and a power. Like in his inaugural address, Trump presented America as a strong country, but not a country with a special historical role that grows out of certain moral commitments. He talked about the nation's military victories, but not much about the nation's character. He seems to love America because it is his country and a powerful country, but not because it is a country with a calling.

Contrast this with the national story told by Ronald Reagan or Franklin D. Roosevelt or John F. Kennedy or George W. Bush. American ideas—while growing out of a specific culture—are transcendent and

universal. Though military power is essential, the nation advances on the strength of democratic hopes. It wins a global competition of ideals because it accords most closely with the durable dreams of humanity for liberty and justice.

This differing emphasis has dramatic implications. If America is primarily a normal nation, united by a common culture, then it is diluted by outsiders and weakened by diversity. In this circumstance, cultural differences lead inexorably to conflict and disunity. A nation defined primarily by culture or ethnicity is a fortress to be defended.

But if America somehow embodies the best and highest of human aspirations—separate from culture and ethnicity—then there is hope of mutual progress. “America has never been united by blood or birth or soil,” said George W. Bush in his first inaugural address. “We are bound by ideals that move us beyond our backgrounds, lift us above our interests and teach us what it means to be citizens. Every child must be taught these principles. Every citizen must uphold them. And every immigrant, by embracing these ideals, makes our country more, not less, American.”

In this view, immigrants are not a contagion. By embracing national aspirations they actually strengthen our national identity.

These contrasting attitudes make a large political difference in a country that is approximately 14 percent foreign-born. This constitutes about 44 million people. If this historically large number of migrants is seen as a problem—bringing crime, threatening national security and changing the nature of our country—then

it makes sense to cut immigration (both legal and illegal), end Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, slash refugee admissions and build a wall across a continent.

And if our main source of national unity is cultural, then the composition of America's foreign-born population would matter greatly. According to Sen. Richard Durbin, D-Ill., Trump expressed disdain for immigrants from countries such as Haiti and said, “We should have more people from places like Norway.” It is difficult to separate such statements from their racial context. In this view, a national culture largely shaped by white European migrants is better carried forward by white European migrants.

This conception of nationhood can descend quickly into dehumanization. If Hispanic migrants are defined as a threat to national security and national identity, then it becomes easier to separate crying children from their parents. It becomes easier to store migrants in overcrowded, unhealthy conditions. And it becomes easier—following the tragic drowning of a father and daughter trying to cross the Rio Grande—to blame migrants for their own desperation.

A broader definition of American identity does not require the decriminalization of all border crossings, or the abolition of the federal Immigration and Customs Enforcement agency. It does require the construction of a humane asylum system that treats oppressed and frightened people with respect. It forbids the dehumanization or cruel treatment of migrants under any circumstance. And it embodies the generosity of spirit on which American greatness depends.

(Washington Post Writers Group)

Traffic spills into neighborhood

To the Editor:

The underlined problem with increased traffic is obvious to me. You just need to look to find the culprit: River Road.

The increased traffic on River Road makes people look for other routes. I started to notice it years ago when coming back from the dog park in the early morning.

More people are using Windsor Island Road, Shoreline Drive, Rivercrest Drive and 5th Avenue in the morning and in the afternoon. Over the years as traffic grew peo-

letters

ple started driving further south on the back streets to avoid River Road. When you go this way you need to get to a street at a stop light at River Road. So now Glynbrook Street is the last light and that point you will soon be out of Keizer. Even to get out on River Road you need a stop light to make a left turn, otherwise you're taking your life into your hands. The town is more about things look nice than working right.

I had an epiphany and realized that Keizer is the Ozarks of Oregon but with a LA attitude.

Peter DeBeck
Keizer

Age is a factor in presidential hopefuls

Should there be a gathering of Americans including Bernie Sanders (77 years old), Joe Biden (76), Donald Trump (73), Elizabeth Warren (70) and this opinion writer.

It's argued that *Keizertimes* readers would judge us to be a group of older white guys who are close to the same age.

Now that fact may be of no importance to the reader, but it means a lot to me for several reasons. I was born without any problems, grew to maturity without physical or mental limitations. I suffered through the mumps, chicken pox and many a winter cold but went to a doctor to receive vaccinations against small pox and measles. Since this writer has no information on the others in my age group—save their ages and apparent ambulatory ability—I assume they were also mentally and physically healthy Americans during their formative years.

I have reached a point through my septuagenarian years where age has resulted in limitations that slow me physically, prevent a night's sleep without water closet visits, encourage rest after strenuous activity, and discourage sports like tackle football and sand lot basketball with people half my age. It's presumed that my age-related contemporaries are likely going through age changes with cautions and conditions similar to my own.

Less physical activity in general is common to the 70-plus set. Research on older Americans has also disclosed that cognitive abilities begin to fray dramatically after the age of

70. Age-related factors mean declining skill at concept formation, abstract thinking, mental agility, response time, and creative thinking.

Septuagenarians practice self-deception known as telling themselves they are as good at everything as they were when in their forties while

those with good phony-detectors know they are lying to themselves. They disguise their mid-sections by gut suck-ins to look thinner and must work diligently at good posture without slumping their shoulders. Every full day at activities brings fairly pronounced fatigue by 4 p.m., the need for a stiff drink, a soft chair and noise abatement.

Besides my fictitious group gathering of Biden, Sanders, Trump, Warren, and me, there are others on the slippery slope of 70, including Jay Inslee (69), Marianne Williamson (66) and John Hick-enlooper (67) who should take a long, hard look at themselves and stop the self-kidding. Others aspiring to be President of the United States are in what this opinion writer views as the prospect

range where the body and mind have experienced a lot but not enough to drain them by the constant demands of the presidency. Alphabetically ordered, my favorites are Michael Benet (54), Cory Booker (50), Kamala Harris (54), and Kirsten Gillibrand (52).

We're still months away from the first primary election in 2020, so there's a lot of time to listen and watch in order to choose wisely. I do not believe that any Democrat who expounds a full socialism menu can succeed at being elected at this time and it would seem that most voters in this country will be more leary of pie-in-the-sky promises.

Encouraged is the candidate who speaks with the Fireside Chat reassurances of a Franklin Roosevelt, the “I'll never lie to you” convictions of a Jimmy Carter, and the charming, while skillfully-delivered, humor of a Ronald Reagan.

(Gene H. McIntyre shares his opinion regularly in the *Keizertimes*.)



Keizertimes

Wheatland Publishing Corp. • 142 Chemawa Road N. • Keizer, Oregon 97303
phone: 503.390.1051 • web: www.keizertimes.com • email: kt@keizertimes.com



EDITOR & PUBLISHER
Lyndon Zaitz
publisher@keizertimes.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS

One year:
\$35 in Marion County,
\$43 outside Marion County,
\$55 outside Oregon

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY

Publication No: USPS 679-430

POSTMASTER

Send address changes to:

Keizertimes Circulation
142 Chemawa Road N.
Keizer, OR 97303

Periodical postage paid at
Salem, Oregon

