



**Carl Golden, 6/16/2017 [Archive]**

## **Trump's Demeanor Shouldn't Be Surprising**

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**By Carl Golden**

Of all the rationales available to interpret President Donald Trump's private conversation with former FBI director James Comey, many of his defenders opted for the least compelling one - that the President is unschooled in the ways of Washington, a town where personal communication is based upon subtlety and nuance, rather than clarity of expression.

Trump, his supporters argue, was done in by his outsider status and his inability to grasp that what is left explicitly unsaid carries far more weight than what is articulated unambiguously.

It's not that Trump is ignorant of the protocols and customs which rule the wink and nod environment of Washington, D.C. He's aware of them; he just doesn't give a damn about them.

It's part of his appeal, both as a candidate and as president. He ran and has conducted himself in office as the consummate outsider, the non-politician who delights in kicking down the established order of things, no matter who it horrifies or infuriates.

It's the kind of behavior that draws a favorable response from millions of Americans who've grown tired and frustrated by a national government they see as uncaring and indifferent to their problems and concerns.

He spent much of his campaign time in a relentless assault on "political correctness," an affliction, he said, that contributed greatly to the nation's downfall. His pledge to "Make America Great Again" was a euphemism for driving "political correctness" out of the political marketplace.

He gleefully slapped the media around daily, accusing news outlets of deliberately misrepresenting events and engaging in disseminating "fake news."

He publicly scolded leaders of European nations for shortchanging their financial obligations to support the NATO alliance and threatened to tear up longstanding trade agreements because they placed the United States at an economic disadvantage.

In a Trump Administration, he said America comes first and he will deal with the rest of the world from that perspective.

Any doubts about his intentions were laid to rest when he withdrew the country from the Paris Climate Accords, saying: "I was elected to represent Pittsburgh, not Paris."

He understands the verbal tip-toeing and diplomatic language gymnastics which hold sway in Washington. But, he - like many Americans - believe they mask side deals and accommodations reached in secret.

When he told Comey that he hoped the FBI director could see his way clear to "let go" of the investigation of former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn, it was an expression of his desire to bring the probe to a conclusion and hopefully exonerate Flynn.

Given his rhetorical history, if Trump had wanted to halt the investigation, he would have directed Comey in specific terms to do so. That Comey interpreted the President's hope as a command is the former director's effort to portray himself as a stalwart, unbending defender of law enforcement independence.

Comey had one goal in mind when he testified before the Senate Intelligence Committee - protect James Comey. His demeanor, his responses and even his criticism of former Attorney General Loretta Lynch all were designed to burnish his reputation and suggest that he'd been fired to cure a political headache for the Trump Administration.

His testimony touched off the anticipated firestorm as dozens of legal scholars, academics, journalists and political strategists tripped over one another to secure bookings on the network and cable television talk shows to share their self-proclaimed expertise about what it all meant.

Predictably, Trump's critics howled that he was guilty of obstruction of justice and that the entire episode represented the worst case of corruption in high places since Watergate 45 years ago.

His supporters argued that Comey had assured the president he was not the target of any investigation and that no evidence has come to light to implicate him in any way in alleged collusion with Russian agents to influence the 2016 election.

Trump's defenders would have been better served if they had concentrated on the points Comey made concerning the president's absence of involvement in improper activity and that he is not the subject of an investigation.

Implying that Trump could have avoided the controversy if he had stuck to the accepted methods of imprecise language and open to interpretation communication undermined what should have been the fundamental thrust of the defense.

His campaign was arguably the most unorthodox in recent history and his governing style has been equally so.

He is not about to change and those advising him, no matter how well-intentioned, should understand and accept it.

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