

Plummeting in Polls, Will Trump ‘Wag the Dog’ with Iran, North Korea?

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[The Voice of America reports](#) that on Thursday, Trump met with US military leaders to discuss Iran and North Korea, then staged a photo opportunity with them. He asked the journalists,

“You guys know what this represents? . . . Maybe it’s the calm before the storm.”

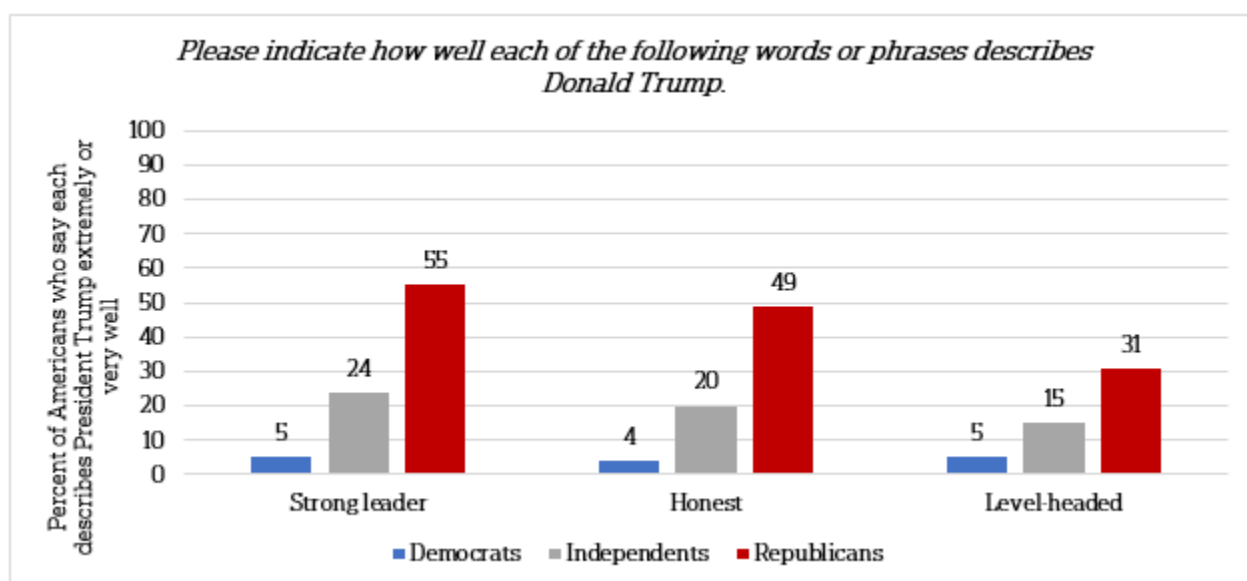
What storm?

“You’ll find out.”

Trump has menaced North Korea with “fire and fury” and is now said to be [determined to decertify Iran](#) on compliance with the nuclear deal (the International Atomic Energy Agency, which inspects Iran’s nuclear facilities, says Iran is in compliance).

Trump is a blowhard and you can’t pay too much attention to his bluster or you’d never get any sleep.

But what is worrying is that Trump’s poll numbers are cratering in a way unprecedented for any modern president, as a just-released [Associated Press poll makes clear](#):



In March, 42 percent of respondents approved of Trump's handling of his job.

In late September, only **32 percent** said they approved of Trump's job performance.

67 percent or over 2/3 say they disapprove. Let's just underline that a 2/3 majority is required in Congress to impeach a president.

Even among Republicans, his approval numbers fell from 80 percent last spring to 67 percent today. (Two-thirds of Republicans apparently wouldn't care if Bozo the Clown was president as long as he said he was a Republican).

The conjuncture of these two pieces of news- Trump making cryptic but dire threats and Trump's astonishing unpopularity-creates the threat of a wag the dog scenario.

Americans rally around the flag when the US goes to war, and presidents know this. The 1997 dark comedy film directed by **Barry Levinson**, "Wag the Dog," gave its name to this strategy (in the movie, a phony war with Albania is used as a means of distracting the public from a candidate's sex scandal).

George W. Bush was widely viewed as a buffoon before 9/11 and the Iraq War, and only in 2006 did the buffoon image return to some extent. The war likely saved his presidency, and that may be one of the reasons Bush launched it.

Trump is having the kind of fall from grace politically that typically tempts presidents into some sort of military action.

And that is why we should take his "calm before the storm" threat seriously.

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