

The May-Trump Special Relationship may be defined by how Donald Trump views women.

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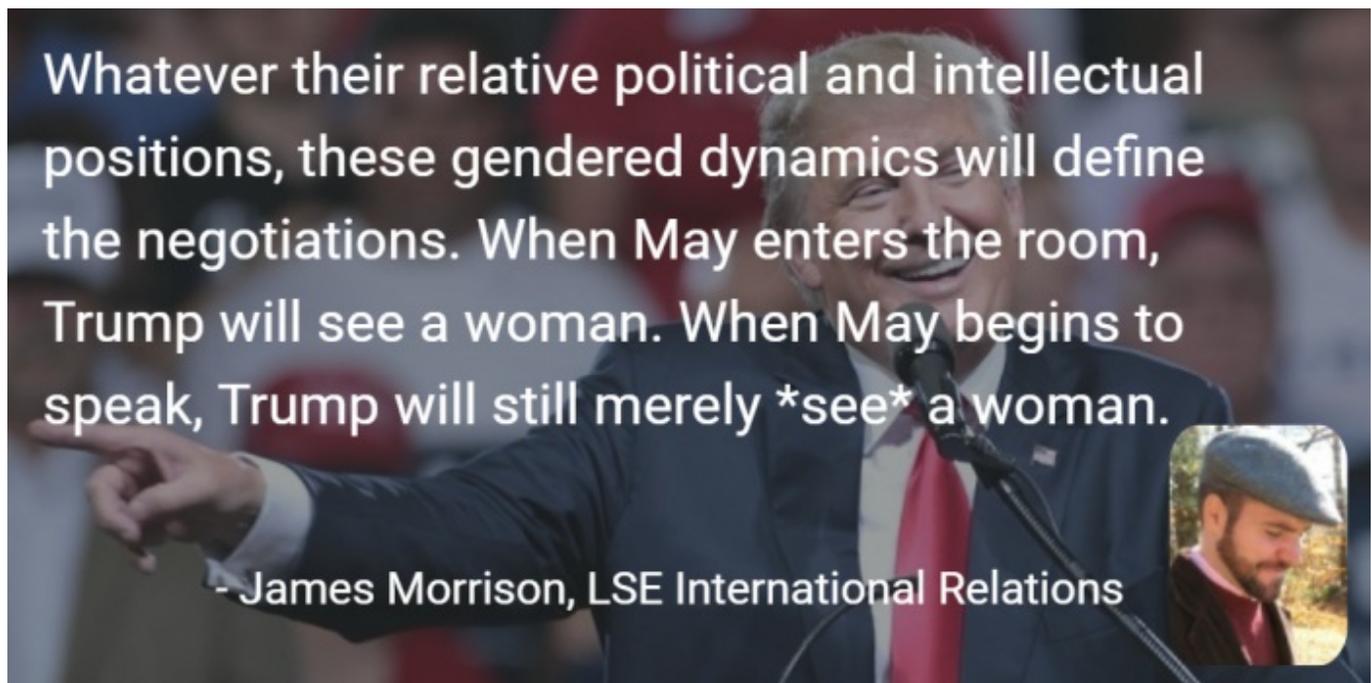
*This week, British Prime Minister Theresa May flew to the US to meet newly inaugurated President Donald Trump. **James Morrison** writes that rather than meeting as equals, Trump's misogynistic views on women will likely color their negotiations.*



Last week, hundreds of thousands of women descended upon Washington, DC to demand that the new president respect their rights. This week, the world's most powerful woman is visiting Mr. Trump to advance her country's interests. Ideally, the two leaders would be able to meet as the disembodied rational abstractions of their better natures. The inescapable reality, however is that President Donald Trump is an unrepentant misogynist; and British Prime Minister Theresa May happens to be a woman.

On nearly every question, Trump is predictably unpredictable. His attitude toward women, however, is the exception. From his predatory behavior to his unconscionable "bragging" about these "exploits," Trump has been uncharacteristically consistent. He measures all women—including political rivals like Carly Fiorina—along a single aesthetic dimension. His fixation on physical appearance so rules him that he deploys the adjective "beautiful" and its synonyms even for categories of objects—such as concrete walls—that could never be described as "beautiful."

Whatever their relative political and intellectual positions, these gendered dynamics will define the negotiations. When May enters the room, Trump will see a woman. When May begins to speak, Trump will still merely *see* a woman.



One can picture how Trump imagines the ensuing courtship. After May triggers Article Fifty, Britain will become "available" once again. As the divorce proceedings drag on acrimoniously, May will grow increasingly desperate to rekindle the "special relationship." Confident that no woman can resist his power, Trump will swoop in to save

Britannia from spinsterhood. The new deal will be consummated in a rose garden ceremony with all the pomp and circumstance of an estranged couple renewing their marriage vows.

But this is merely the fantasy of a man who underestimates women in general and Theresa May in particular. For her, the world is much bigger than Donald Trump. She offers a vision of “[a] country that reaches out to old friends and new allies alike. A great, global, trading nation. And one of the firmest advocates for free trade anywhere in the world.” Whereas Trump is fixated on renegotiating America’s longstanding relationships, May promises to form a host of new ones.

Theresa May’s appointment last July as Prime Minister renewed hopes that the glass ceiling can be punctured. Since then, however, three of the most powerful women in politics—Hillary Clinton, Dilma Rousseff, and Park Geun-hye—have tumbled from their perches. Another—Christine Lagarde—survived a trial in France, censured but not defeated. Each case is a fresh reminder that women face a different level of scrutiny than do their male colleagues. So too for May and Trump—who, as he assured his supporters, could get away with murder in broad daylight.

Brexit offers the biggest challenge to Britain since the dissolution of its empire. The US could prove indispensable to May as she charts Britain’s new course. And redefining Britain’s relationship with the world likely depends on how Ms. May defines her relationship with Mr. Trump.

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