



## For Pete's sake, the media need to get over Trump's weird handshakes

Kevin Glass

July 17, 2017

We're on Day Four of Trump Handshake Analysis, and it's unclear if the crisis is going to end any time soon.

For the uninitiated, on Friday, President Trump said goodbye to France and its president, Emmanuel Macron. Trump shook Macron's hand in an odd way and set off a media firestorm.

Let's get this out of the way first: The way that Trump shakes hands is weird. It's also one of the least-important things about him, considering that he is president of the United States, the leader of the free world, and possibly the most powerful person in the world.

The media has had a frenzy about this handshake. A piece in *The Atlantic* called it "a play in four acts."

"Shake hands like a normal person," exhorted *Esquire* writer Jack Holmes. An Associated Press report called it a "white knuckle handshake" and then separately broke down every single presidential handshake. CNN published a "second-by-second analysis" and spoke to "body language experts" to discuss the handshake.

None of these things matter. Trump is in the midst of a potential meltdown over the Republican healthcare bill, a campaign scandal involving his son, a "Made in America" week and more, while media expends undue effort on 30 seconds of pleasantries last week. The 24-hour cable and Internet news ecosystem makes the breadth of what the media can do almost infinite, but this stretches even those limits.

More than that, news coverage like this is actively harmful to our polity. It covers the president as a celebrity. Trump rose to prominence as a celebrity and got his political start due to name recognition. The media has long covered whoever is president as a pseudocelebrity and dropped the charade with the ascension of Trump.

The power of the office of the president has expanded exponentially in the last couple of decades, and the media's treatment of the person in the office has fed the conception of an all-important man. Cato Institute Vice President Gene Healy has termed this "The Cult of the Presidency," and while it has been a bipartisan exercise, the news media has played an important

role. Treating the president with the superficiality of a celebrity feeds the popular conception that the office itself is what matters, not what the office can do.

The number of handshakes the president will give over the course of his term is astronomical. Analyzing each one with a four-day news cycle would require bending the rules of time itself. Stop this madness.