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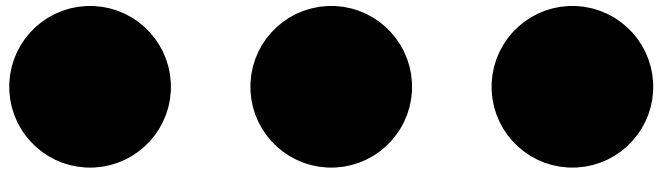
Moral Supremacy and Mr. Putin

Is Donald Trump to be allowed to craft a foreign policy based on the ideas on which he ran and won the presidency in 2016?

Our foreign policy elite's answer appears to be a thunderous no.

Case in point: U.S. relations with Russia.

During the campaign Trump was clear. He would seek closer ties with Russia and cooperate with Vladimir Putin in smashing al-Qaida and ISIS terrorists in Syria, and leave Putin's ally Bashar Assad alone.



With this diplomatic deal in mind, President Trump has resisted efforts to get him to call Putin a "thug" or a "murderer."

Asked during his taped Super Bowl interview with Fox News' Bill O'Reilly whether he respected Putin, Trump said that, as a leader, yes.

O'Reilly pressed, "But he's a killer, though. Putin's a killer."

To which Trump replied, "There are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What, do you think our country's so innocent?"

While his reply was clumsy, Trump's intent was commendable.

If he is to negotiate a modus vivendi with a nation with an arsenal of nuclear weapons sufficient to end life as we know it in the USA, probably not a good idea to start off by calling its leader a "killer."

Mitch McConnell rushed to assure America he believes Putin is a "thug" and any suggestion of a moral equivalence between America and Russia is outrageous.

Apparently referring to a polonium poisoning of KGB defector Alexander Litvinenko, Marco Rubio tweeted, "When has a Democratic political activist ever been poisoned by the GOP? Or vice versa?"

Yet, as we beat our chests in celebration of our own moral superiority over other nations and peoples, consider what Trump is trying to do here, and who is really behaving as a statesmen, and who is acting like an infantile and self-righteous prig.

When President Eisenhower invited Nikita Khrushchev to the United States, did Ike denounce him as the "Butcher of Budapest" for his massacre of the Hungarian patriots in 1956?

Did President Nixon, while negotiating his trip to Peking to end decades of hostility, speak the unvarnished truth about Mao Zedong — that he was a greater mass murderer than Stalin?

While Nixon was in Peking, Mao was conducting his infamous Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution that resulted in millions of deaths, a years-long pogrom that dwarfed the two-day Kristallnacht. Yet



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Mao's crimes went unmentioned in Nixon's toast to America and China starting a "long march" together.

John McCain calls Putin a KGB thug, "a murderer, and a killer."

Yet, Yuri Andropov, the Soviet ambassador in Budapest who engineered the slaughter of the Hungarian rebels with Russian tanks, became head of the KGB. And when he rose to general secretary of the Communist Party, Ronald Reagan wanted to talk to him, as he had wanted to talk to every Soviet leader.

Why? Because Reagan believed the truly moral thing he could do was negotiate to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

He finally met Gorbachev in 1985, when the USSR was occupying Afghanistan and slaughtering Afghan patriots.

The problem with some of our noisier exponents of "American exceptionalism" is that they lack Reagan's moral maturity.

Undeniably, we were on God's side in World War II and the Cold War. But were we ourselves without sin in those just struggles?

Was it not at least morally problematic what we did to Cologne, Hamburg, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki where hundreds of thousands of women and children were blasted and burned to death?

How many innocent Iraqis have perished in the 13 years of war we began, based on falsified or fake evidence of Saddam's weapons of mass destruction?

In Russia, there have been murders of journalists and dissidents. Yes, and President Rodrigo Duterte, our Philippine ally, has apparently condoned the deaths of thousands of drug dealers and users since last summer.

The Philippine Catholic Church calls it "a reign of terror."

Should we sever our treaty ties to the Duterte regime?

Have there been any extrajudicial killings in the Egypt of our ally Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since he overthrew the elected government?

Has our Turkish ally, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, killed no innocents in his sweeping repression since last summer's attempted coup?

Some of us remember a Cold War in which Gen. Augusto Pinochet dealt summarily with our common enemies in Chile, and when the Savak of our ally the Shah of Iran was not a 501(c)(3) organization.

Sen. Rubio notwithstanding, the CIA has not been a complete stranger to "wet" operations or "terminating with extreme prejudice."

Was it not LBJ who said of the Kennedys, who had arranged multiple assassination attempts of Fidel Castro, that they had been "operating a damned Murder Inc. in the Caribbean"?

If Trump's talking to Putin can help end the bloodshed in Ukraine or Syria, it would appear to be at least as ethical an act as pulpitering about our moral superiority on the Sunday talk shows.

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