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Moral Superiority Among Neocons and Nazis

Lucy Steigerwald
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We're finally in agreement – there were Nazis marching in Charlottesville last weekend. Enough with the alt- right euphemisms. Nazis were marching with Nazi symbols and Nazi chants. It's not a stretch to dub them as what they are.

President Trump, utterly unable to schmooze like a normal politician, did a dreadful job in condemning the men shouting slogans like "blood and soil" and "Jews will not replace us." He waited more than two days, and seemed unable to scorn one of the least socially acceptable group in the United States without qualification. At one point, Trump even referred to the original protesters as "us," causing many commentators and observers to suggest that Trump was identifying as an open white supremacist. Whether you believe that was a dog-whistle to supporters, or, as I suspect, a flailing, motor-mouthed attempt to keep his far-right supporters as he was pushed into condemning Nazis running over protesters, it came off as impotent.

Condemning Nazis is the right thing to do. Three prominent figures at the Charlottesville march once expressed support for libertarianism, and are now full white nationalists. Alt-right king Richard Spencer never seemed to be a libertarian, but he had enough overlap in their circles that he's distressing for believers in equal rights, and small (or no) government for all people.

However, a disturbing aspect of this rush to condemn Trump and his worst followers has popped up with renewed vigor since Charlottesville. Most of the mainstream Republican Party including former Gov. Jeb Bush, to Sens. Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio professed horror at the Trump

campaign. Trump's awfulness was gauche, but theirs was covered up by the "respectability" that a career in politics brings. This continues, and it's being once again embraced by the left.

Trump is bad. Nazis are bad. This doesn't mean that people opposed to both have clean hands.

After Trump fumbled again, people took the bold stance that condemning Nazis was good. Being against Nazis isn't a bold stance – no matter what the president says – but doesn't make it a bad one. It's good to be against Nazis. Unfortunately, that stance is being defended by

- Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright, who once said that US sanctions against Iraq killing up to half a million children was "worth it," and who backed the 1999 bombing of Serbia, thought that Trump's equivocating about Nazis and counter-protesters was "not American."
- US Army Chief of Staff General Mark Milley, who earnestly tweeted that "The Army doesn't tolerate racism, extremism, or hatred in our ranks. It's against our Values and everything we've stood for since 1775." Considering that the US Army brutally stamped out native Americans for decades, was only desegregated in 1948, and has engaged in myriad wars of aggression against non-white people all over the world even then, that seems like a bit of a stretch.
- Sen. Lindsey Graham, who has never met a potential war he didn't support, said that Trump's words are "dividing Americans, not healing them." Well, war is the health of the state. Tepidly scolding neo-Nazis is not the way to bring the people together – not like a war with North Korea might! Or Iran! Or anywhere! Graham is not picky.
- Angry, Waco-condoning, drug war backing Sen. Chuck Schumer was similarly offended by Trump.
- John Brennan, who used to be the director of the CIA, thinks Trump's words were "a national disgrace." The CIA has run its own drone assassination program under Obama, staged numerous coups, occasionally dosed people with LSD in the name of science, and engaged in other wholesome activities.
- Both Presidents George Bush released an official statement against hatred and racism post-Charlottesville. While they are probably sincerely opposed to overt Nazism, George H.W. Bush was once the head of the CIA, and W. invaded two countries, among his many other bloodstained decisions while president. Do we really want, or need their official PR statements against racism and hate?

The list of those attempting to distance themselves from Trump's inability to cleanly distance himself from a racist march could go on, and it does. It should be comforting to have much of the country against the president. Unfortunately, as Trump happily bombs the Middle East, arrests peaceful immigrants, and repeatedly praises law enforcement in an entirely unqualified manner, he is still mostly hated for what he says – maybe even how he says it – instead of continuing the worst aspects of executive power, but in a sloppier, more vulgar manner.

Trump and the Nazis in Charlottesville deserve the flak they're getting. Condemning the president and white nationalism, and the former's hamfisted tolerance for the latter is easy – and *it is also important.*

But as none of the above people, nor the liberals, libertarians, even anarchist who are happily sourcing them, seem to realize that the enemy of my enemy is still not my friend. The entirety of US foreign policy over the decades proves this, and the reaction of the wretched mainstream Republican party to Trump during the 2016 proved it again and again. Panicking about a few hundred white nationalists, who had months to come together and organize, and who had to come from across the nation to fill these sad, Tikki-wielding ranks, will not benefit anything except the state.

The heroic American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) is getting flak for its defense of free speech for the idiots in Charlottesville. My social media is covered with people who don't think that Nazi speech is protected, even though American case law says otherwise. Others are hungry to make the US into Europe, in terms of making a legal category for hate speech, or are just eager to stamp white nationalists groups with the label of terrorist. Warnings that this could backfire for antiwar protests, Black Lives Matter, or good causes are dismissed as softening the threat of white power groups.

It's easy to condemn the blatant racism of Nazi rallies. That kind of bald-faced hatred is not popular, and hasn't been since 1946. However, the kind of warmongering and police brutality that Trump AND the above people who are so offended by him support remains popular. The more nervous Americans feel, the more they cling to institutions they trust, such as the military and the police.

Overt Nazism is blessedly rare. The inherent racism and ethnocentrism of saying each American death is a tragedy, about which something must be done, no matter how dangerously hasty and ill-thought out, but hundreds of thousands of dead Iraqis is an awkward oopsy that is easily brushed away is a fundamental tenet of American, Western, and nation-state life.

The Richard Spencers of the world who occasionally profess to be against intervention are not to be trusted with the mantles of antiwar and free speech. Radical libertarians, leftists, and the doveish right have failed at these important caused too often – why would we think white nationalists would be able to keep a consistent principle beyond "white is right"?

Nazis make bad allies, no matter who else you're fighting. However, neither do career politicians, intelligence officers, and military people make good comrades simply because they prefer subtle nationalism, to blatant white nationalism, and wish the embarrassing president would go away and stop giving away their secrets.

Do join the thousands who scorn the rally in Charlottesville, and who think Trump is a dangerous joke, just don't fall for the deadly serious alternative that is mainstream American politics.