

Putin\222s Heritage
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I am a centrist liberal who respects intellectual conservatives, such as George Will, a former Republican who has given up on his party. Centrists are more often balanced and thoughtful than the passionate partisans on the far left and far right.

Just look at the passion storming mob rallies around the world about how Israel is a villain for bombing Gaza in its attempt to get at the Hamas, a real villain whose entire history is enmeshed in "anything goes," such as exterminating Israel.

Of course watching the results of bombing and the deaths of civilians is horrible, but cannot be compared with the cold-blooded assault on Israel on October 7. How quickly we forget our horror over slaughtering young people at a peace concert, sacking Israeli villages, decapitating even babies and hostages, hundreds of whom are now in Gaza. Hating Jews, however, has a long history.

Good, ordinary people shout in the streets in sympathy for Hamas and resurgent antisemitism against Jews. But Vladimir Putin is delighted. Putin wants to destroy the global world order, a lawful system established by the US after World War II. Putin no longer has a communist party to promote; he uses chaos and authoritarianism to fight against representative democracies.

Ukraine\222s Volodymyr Zelenskyy, is trying to save his country from Putin\222s uncalled for attack. The world\222s short attention span has weakened its previous support of Ukraine. The dying Republican party, toadies to Trump, admirers Putin, which horrifies George Will. His latest Washington Post column: "Are Republicans giving Putin a pat on the back for his barbarism?" puts his displeasure bluntly.

The Republican Party used to be hawks about the Russians. Now, copying their party leader, Donald Trump, they find nothing to dislike. History is not their thing.

In World War I, Germany was the first to use mustard gas in trench warfare and explored airborne bombing of civilian targets (blimps over London), a horror that morphed into aircraft bombing each other\222s cities into rubble. But the Nazis began it. Also submarine warfare was first used in the early World War I, followed by use by the Allies. Finally, they were the first modern state to use genocide, others following.

But bad as the Germans were, they feared the Russians more, for good reason. The worst punishment a Nazi soldier feared was being sent to the Russian front. Both enemies declined to sign the Geneva Accords, a set of international agreements trying to put some constraints on modern warfare, including protecting captive soldiers. Germany signed with Britain and the US, but not with Russia. The consequences are what one would expect, untrammled brutality to prisoners of war.

Putin has this heritage. In Ukraine, Russians bombed a theater housing children, the word "children" in large print on the ground. Perhaps 600 people, mostly children, died. They bombed railway stations, markets, places guaranteed to have civilians. Earlier, in their Afghan war, they deliberately maimed so that adults would have to care for them instead of fighting. They weaponized winter, trying to freeze the Ukrainians in their homes, barracks, and foxholes, destroying power stations, water treatment plants, and electrical grids. They now attack Ukrainian culture, kidnapping and brainwashing children, looting museums and art galleries, and targeting others for destruction.

Days into the war, they attacked Red Cross evacuation routes, then used thermobaric weapons that first disperse fuel into the air and then ignite it, sucking all the oxygen out of people\222s lungs. These are premeditated tactics in the war that George Will notes, some congressional Republicans seem eager to help Putin win.

Will notes that campus lefties have their own stupidity. They are justifying Hamas\222 savagery, despite a sneak invasion that murdered young Israelis at a peace concert, kidnapping and decapitating even babies, as justified because of the Palestinian loss of their territory. The Palestinians could have had a country by now if they had accepted the UN\222s division of Palestine into two countries, one Arab and one Jewish. They declined, not wanting to share, but to have it all and obliterate Israel and exterminate Jews.

George Will is not alone in his despair.

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