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Trump, Clinton, and "Nuclear Launch Codes"

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During the course of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, a recurring criticism is the possibility of a nuclear armed Trump administration. Media pundits, celebrities, and political officials alike have revived Cold War fears of a nuclear holocaust that would follow a republican victory. While campaigning with Hillary Clinton this past August, Vice President Joe Biden frantically proclaimed:

> "He is not qualified to know the code!"

and criticized Trump's positive comments on Russian president Vladimir Putin (1). Later that month, MSNBC anchor Lawrence O'Donnell delivered an ominous segment in which he asked viewers to

> "imagine team Trump in the middle of the night, facing what could turn out to be a false alarm or could turn out to be nuclear war" (2)

During a childish twitter scrap earlier this month, Harry Potter author J.K Rowling posted:

> "When a man this ignorant & easy to manipulate gets within sniffing distance of the nuclear codes, it's everyone's business" (3).

But if we take a closer look at the track records of Trump's political rivals, a republican victory in November could be the safest route for preserving global stability.

The Republican Primary debates presented a narrow spectrum of foreign policy approaches towards the Middle East. The only candidate who favored a limited military response to Syria and Iraq was libertarian senator Rand Paul, who dropped out early in the race.

Top candidates Ted Cruz and Donald Trump supported a relatively moderate approach, in which ground troops alone would be deployed to counter ISIS expansion. In typical neocon fashion, the majority of Republican candidates proposed the disastrous concept of both a ground offensive and a no-fly-zone (4), a combination that would push the US closer to a direct conflict with Russia.

Since September of 2015, Moscow has been maintaining a military presence in the Syrian War (5). Though Russia had been financially and diplomatically supporting the Assad regime since the war's beginning in 2011, a series of rebel advances prompted Putin's military

escalation. Both ground forces and air support are currently in active duty, most notably in the rebel held city of Aleppo. An American no-fly-zone in Syria would potentially mean downing Russian or Syrian aircraft, an event that could bring two nuclear armed states to war. During an interview on Fox News, former Republican candidate Chris Christie bluntly explained the process:

> "Well, the first thing you do is you set up a no-fly zone in Syria, and you call Putin, and you say to him, 'Listen, we're enforcing a no-fly zone, and that means we're enforcing it against everyone, and that includes you. So, don't test me" (6).

With this type of rhetoric plaguing mainstream republican thought, Donald Trump is easily among the safest choices for a party nominee.

Though Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton opposes a ground offensive, she too is in favor of a no-fly-zone over Syria. While Trump has been calling for renewed relations with Russia, Clinton and her supporters criticize his willingness to cooperate with a supposed adversary (7).

What is most puzzling is how the cultural elite paint Clinton as a safer choice despite her long history of pushing for war (8). In her early years as a senator, Clinton supported the Bush administration's call for an invasion of Iraq. As Obama's Secretary of State, Clinton played a starring role in NATO's destruction of Libya and even boasted about Colonel Gaddafi's death in a CBS interview (9). Clinton's most damaging position is her backing of the CIA's plan to fund Syrian rebels, an operation that has perpetuated the worst humanitarian crisis of the century thus far. With so much blood on her hands, it's hard to believe that Hillary Clinton could resist escalating the Syrian conflict into a global catastrophe.

So the next time you hear an A-list celebrity whine about a nuclear codes, consider the alternatives. Trump defeated the most powerful republicans in the country, most of whom casually spoke of downing Russian aircraft over Syria. Though he is inexperienced and buffoonish, he is the only candidate open to sharing a fair dialog with Russian officials. And though he repulsively bragged about sexually assaulting women, at least he didn't brag after murdering a world leader.

Notes

1 http://www.cnn.com/2016/08/15/politics/joe-biden-hillary-clinton-scranton/
2 http://www.msnbc.com/the-last-word/watch/imagine-trump-with-the-nuclear-codes-737794115604
3 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/10/11/jk-rowling-insults-donald-trump-on-twitter-after-being-told-to-m/
4 http://www.politifact.com/truth-o-meter/article/2015/dec/26/comparing-gop-candidates-isis-strategies-obamas/
5 https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/14/russias-military-action-in-syria-timeline
6 http://www.breitbart.com/video/2015/10/12/christie-establish-no-fly-zone-in-syria-shoot-down-russian-jets-that-enter-it/

7
http://www.marketwatch.com/story/trump-says-he-could-meet-putin-before-inauguration-companies-used-clinton-fundraisers-to-lobby-state-department-2016-10-18
8 http://www.huffingtonpost.com/jeffrey-sachs/hillary-is-the-candidate_b_9168938.html
9
http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2051826/We-came-saw-died-What-Hillary-Clinton-told-news-reporter-moments-hearing-Gaddafis-death.html

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