

Rhetorical Strategies

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Mr. Trump, We Need an Answer

David Leonhardt JAN. 12, 2017

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“Mr. President-elect, can you stand here today, once and for all and say that no one connected to you or your campaign had any contact with Russia leading up to or during the presidential campaign?” *Rhetorical Question.*

The question came at the end of Donald Trump’s news conference yesterday, from Cecilia Vega of ABC News. He did not answer it. *Foil 2nd day*

The country needs a clear answer.

Top leaders of a hostile foreign government — Russia — approved an effort to influence an American presidential election. They did it by stealing emails from Hillary Clinton’s campaign, and they did it with the intention of helping Trump win. Given the closeness of the outcome, he may well have lost without the help.

The biggest unanswered question now is whether the Trump campaign played any role in Russia's effort. If it did, it committed a version of election interference that makes Watergate look meager by comparison. *Bandwagon*

Yet Trump declined to answer at the news conference (and his brief "No" later, while approaching an elevator, isn't sufficient). He instead ignored Vega's question of his campaign's involvement and focused on a question she tacked on, about Trump's message to Vladimir Putin. (Which is also a reminder that reporters often outsmart themselves, and let politicians off the hook, by asking multipart questions.)

Mr. President-elect, we need an answer.

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