

**"POWERFUL."**  
-ANDREW COCKBURN

**"DETAILED."**  
-JOHN J. MEARSHEIMER

**"CRUCIAL."**  
-RON PAUL

# PROVOKED

HOW WASHINGTON STARTED THE NEW COLD WAR WITH RUSSIA  
AND THE CATASTROPHE IN UKRAINE

SCOTT HORTON



# **PROVOKED**

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## Advanced Praise for *Provoked*

“*Provoked* is manna from heaven for anyone who wants to know where the extreme Russophobia in the West came from, as well as the central role the United States played in causing the Ukraine war. Horton provides a detailed account of America’s foolish and dishonest behavior toward Russia in the years since the Cold War ended.”

—John J. Mearsheimer, R. Wendell Harrison Distinguished Senior  
Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago

“Scott Horton has become an invaluable chronicler of the destruction wrought by our interventionist foreign policy. With his new book *Provoked*, Scott blows the lid off the mountains of lies used to justify Washington’s waste of billions of dollars and countless Ukrainian lives in a futile proxy war with Russia. Truth is the greatest disinfectant and Scott Horton’s crucial account of this awful chapter in U.S. foreign policy is like a spring cleaning. Read this book and pick up copies for your friends . . . and adversaries!”

—Dr. Ron Paul, former Texas congressman, chairman and founder

Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity and co-host of *The Liberty*  
Report

“Scott Horton’s important new book traces America’s journey to war and intervention through a succession of presidencies and



builds a case that points to a frightening, potential final destination for the United States: isolation and alienation from most of the world. Scott's message is simple. Stop now before it's too late."

—Col. Douglas Macgregor, U.S. Army (ret.), CEO, Our Country  
C

"Scott Horton is a treasure. He is also the neocons' nightmare. He knows their deceptions and lies and he is fearless in exposing the disasters they have wrought. *Provoked* is the most thoroughly researched, rationally grounded, and compellingly presented assault on war and defense of peace written in English in the post-9/11 era. It will become the standard against which all similar works are measured, and indispensable reading for all who need to understand how the American government has time and again brought civilization to a terrifying precipice."

—Judge Andrew P. Napolitano, *New York Times* best-selling author and commentator, host of the *Judging Freedom Podcast*

"Scott Horton's new book is one of the rare literary works that is impeccably sourced, unimpeachable in its logical conclusions—and fearless in presenting the truth, regardless of how unpopular or inconvenient it may be. It's a hard read, though. Not because of its length—its very thorough—but for its revelations and implications: our country has some ugly warts that must be addressed and some sins for which it must atone. If we honestly look ourselves in the mirror and make necessary changes, we can

avoid some of the worst outcomes. Ignore Scott's sage observations, however, and we could be in for a rough future."

—Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis, U.S. Army (ret.), author of *Eleventh Hour*  
*2020 America: How America's Foreign Policy Got Jacked Up – and How the Next Administration Can Fix It*  
and host of *Daniel Davis – Deep*

"Delving deep into the record of how the U.S. national security machine lied and conspired to birth a new Cold War that grows hotter by the day, Scott Horton has once again done us a fantastic service. Never has the axiom that the devil is in the details been more powerfully demonstrated. His account, powerful because it is so detailed, covering the serial cynical maneuvers that expanded and transformed Nato into an instrument of aggression all the way to the promotion of the war that has destroyed Ukraine is a resource that apologists for these feckless policies will find it hard to answer."

—Andrew Cockburn, Washington editor, *Harper's Magazine*, author of  
*The Spoils of War: Power, Profit and the American War Machine*

"Scott Horton writes history like a thriller—leaving the reader to anxiously turn the page to see what happens next. Skeptics and fact-checkers beware, the history is meticulously researched; this volume packs in more than 6,000 footnotes leaving no doubt as to Horton's sources and methods. If you want to know why today's headlines are inevitable, read this post-Cold War story of the United States, Russia and Ukraine. Five stars!"

—Peter Van Buren, author of *We Meant Well: How I Helped  
the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi Pe*

“Scott Horton’s latest book, *Provoked*, gets placed on the shelf where the books are easiest for me to reach. Alongside it are Horton’s books on Afghanistan and the war on terrorism. All are authoritative masterpieces of modern military and political history. No other author writes about American foreign policy and war in the manner Horton does. I rely continually on his work. Yes, *Provoked* is a big and intimidating book. However, it’s not because of its size but because of the power of Horton’s authorship in telling accurately and precisely how and why U.S. policy, since the end of the Cold War, brought about the ruinous war in Ukraine. It is a damning work of history which should be required reading in universities, military academies and foreign affairs institutions world-wide.”

—Capt. Matthew Hoh, USMC (ret.), Associate Director, Eisenhower  
Media Net

“Scott Horton provides an incisive treatment of the multi-decade background to the Russia-Ukraine War. He demolishes the myth that Western policy bears no responsibility for the current tragedy.”

—Ted Galen Carpenter, Senior Fellow, the Libertarian Institute  
author of *NATO: The Dangerous Dis*

“The only excuse for those of us—and I include myself—foolish enough to think that the Ukraine War was the one that would

redeem the mayhem of four decades of stupid, disastrous adventures, was ignorance. Ignorance of causes, ignorance of local and international politics, ignorance of what actually happened and above all a failure to remember that our leaders are not our friends. There's no excuse now. Scott Horton has provided us with the one necessary, essential masterclass on how we got into this mess. *Provoked* limpidly clarifies that far from this being the 'good war,' it need never have happened and the usual suspects are to blame. The same people who brought on us all those other disasters. The Ukraine War is shaping up to be the worst one of all, the only conflict which threatens all of us directly and personally, wherever we are."

—Frank Ledwidge, former Royal Navy Reserve intelligence officer  
"Justice Advisor" to the UK Mission in Afghanistan's Helmand  
Provoked  
and author of *Investment in Blood: The True Cost of Britain's Afghanistan War*

"A fan of Scott Horton's previous books on U.S. foreign policy, I expected *Provoked* to be the definitive work on the tragedy and folly of America's Eastern European policy and involvement in the Ukraine war. I wasn't disappointed. Horton again proves to be a thorough and unerring guide through all the issues and questions related to the grim story he has to tell. To those who admire Scott for his lectures, interviews, debates and articles, I tell them you can't fully appreciate his brilliance unless you've read his books. *Provoked* is a good place to start."

—Gene Epstein, Director of The Soho Forum, for  
Economics and Books Editor of *Barron's Financial W*

“Scott Horton is perhaps the country’s most incisive and, without question, its most indefatigable, advocate for a sane U.S. foreign policy towards Russia. If you really want to know how we’ve arrived at this, the most dangerous point in relations with Russia since the Cuban Missile Crisis, then read this.”

—James W. Carden, former State Department adviser, senior consu  
to the American Committee for U.S.-Russia A

“Scott Horton has been a voice of reason against the bipartisan War Party for as long as I can remember, but with *Provoked* he takes his rightful place alongside the great revisionist scholars of the past hundred years. Then as now, that noble tradition of thought pursued world peace by exposing, without mercy, the lies of those who would foment war. Nobody who relies on the American news media for information about Russia and Ukraine will know the story Horton tells in this indispensable book, but thanks to him the truth may at last overtake the lies.”

—Thomas E. Woods, Senior Fellow at the Ludwig von Mises Ins  
and auth

*Diary of a Psychosis: How Public Health Disgraced Itself Di*  
*COVID M*



Provoked:

How Washington Started the New Cold War

With Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine

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*In memory of Daniel Ellsberg.*

*For my mom and dad.*

*And for Dr. Ron Paul.*

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# George H.W. Bush

“If in 10 years, all American troops stationed in Europe for national defense purposes have not been returned to the United States, then this whole project will have failed.”

—Dwight D. Eisenhower

“Out of these troubled times, a new world order can emerge: a new era—freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace.”

—George H.W. Bush

“The defeat and collapse of the Soviet Union was the final step in the rapid ascendance of a Western Hemisphere power, the United States, as the sole and, indeed, the first truly global power.”

—Zbigniew Brzezinski

“If not for America, who would lead the world?”

—Joe Biden

“You’re just angry because you don’t have an enemy anymore.”

—Katie McMaster

“Who controls the past controls the future. Who controls the present controls the past.”

—George Orwell

“I could not be silent in the face of . . . the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today: my own government.”

—Martin Luther King Jr.

# The Unipolar Moment

## Ending the Last Cold War

President Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) began negotiating an end to the first Cold War with the old Soviet Union in 1986.<sup>[1]</sup> Frightened by the prospect of nuclear war and inspired by a new generation of Soviet leaders,<sup>[2]</sup> especially the new reformist premier, Mikhail Gorbachev,<sup>[3]</sup> Reagan saw the opportunity to forge a permanent peace.<sup>[4]</sup> In the first year in office of Reagan's successor, George H.W. Bush (1989–1993), people began to flee from Soviet-occupied Hungary to neutral Austria. Gorbachev refused calls to crack down.<sup>[5]</sup> Next, the people of Berlin tore down the wall.<sup>[6]</sup> The USSR itself was soon gone, and our terrible post-World War II global confrontation with the Communists finally came to a mostly peaceful end.<sup>[7]</sup>

## Come Home, America

Jeane Kirkpatrick, Reagan's second ambassador to the United Nations, was until then a neoconservative hawk.<sup>[8]</sup> But she wrote in *The National Interest* in the fall of 1990—more than a year before the USSR itself finally unraveled—that it was now time for the United States to shed itself of “the dubious benefits of superpower status and become again a usually successful, open American republic . . . a normal country in a normal time . . . an independent nation in a world of independent nations.” Instead

of maintaining political and military dominance in Europe and Asia, America should come home “and take care of pressing problems of education, family, industry and technology.”[\[9\]](#) Was this not the reason the public was told we had fought the first Cold War, to preserve our way of life as free people in our constitutional republic once the emergency subsided?[\[10\]](#)

Along with a core group of non-interventionist libertarians and conservatives, many of America’s liberals, progressives and leftists also wanted to cash what they called the “peace dividend” following the Cold War, preferring to see the money spent on social welfare, education and infrastructure instead of militarism.[\[11\]](#)

## **The War Party**

But under President George H.W. Bush, at the end of the first Cold War, the American national security state and foreign policy community, led by the neoconservatives, adopted a doctrine of “global dominance.” Former leftists and Cold War Democrats, the neoconservatives were highly ideological about the beneficence of American military power and, in many cases, close to the nationalist Likud Party in Israel.[\[12\]](#) As neocon columnist Charles Krauthammer put it in *Foreign Affairs* in 1990, without the USSR in the way, it was America’s “unipolar moment” and opportunity to remake the world as our leaders saw fit.[\[13\]](#)

Popular television commentators simply call it “leadership”; neoconservative think tank ringleader and former editor of the *Weekly Standard*, Bill Kristol, and his writing partner Robert Kagan labeled it

“benevolent global hegemony.”[\[14\]](#) Zbigniew Brzezinski, the Jimmy Carter-era national security adviser from the “realist” school, called it “primacy,” “preeminence” or “predominance,”[\[15\]](#) while the technocratic liberal interventionist Michèle Flournoy, undersecretary of defense for policy in the Barack Obama years, referred to America’s political and military posture as “Full-Spectrum Dominance.”[\[16\]](#)

As Krauthammer put it in his rejoinder to Kirkpatrick in *The National Interest*, denouncing the more conservative Russell Kirk[\[17\]](#) and Pat Buchanan,[\[18\]](#) who urged a return to normalcy, the U.S. now ruled “a super-sovereign West economically, culturally, and politically hegemonic in the world. . . . I suggest we go all the way and stop at nothing short of universal domination.”[\[19\]](#) He later added, “We are living in a unipolar world. We Americans should like it—and exploit it.”[\[20\]](#) No, really, our politicians insist, it is all for the world’s own good: keeping the peace, spreading democracy, protecting the sea lanes and enforcing the “global rules-based liberal international order”[\[21\]](#)—but it takes an empire to do it.

Readers may be more familiar with the neoconservatives and their allies’ plans for increasing American hegemony in the Middle East over the last generation and the terrible consequences.[\[22\]](#) But the same men and women also led the charge to expand U.S. power and influence in Europe after the Cold War. There was a real question of what shape the new world would take. Edward Lozansky, founder of the American University in Moscow, tells an incredible story about what could have been at the dawn of the new era. In April 1989, Gorbachev’s senior adviser Alexander Yakovlev told prominent American officials that the Soviet leadership was



ready to abolish the Warsaw Pact, retreat from Eastern Europe and make a full rapprochement with the United States and the rest of the West. Conservative activist Paul Weyrich and Lozansky then held a series of meetings leading to a proposal for Russian “integration with the West,” which Weyrich presented to President H.W. Bush. “Bush listened attentively until his Russia adviser, Condoleezza Rice, walked into the Oval Office and dismissed these ideas out of hand,” Weyrich told Lozansky. The hawks prevailed. “[I]n his speeches Bush occasionally used some words like ‘building a new world security architecture from Vancouver to Vladivostok,’ but nothing moved further,” Lozansky wrote.[\[23\]](#) Rice would later become national security adviser, then secretary of state for Bush’s son, President George W. Bush (2001–2009). Essentially, instead of a new world order after the Cold War, the old order remained. As the instruments of U.S. power now grew without a counterweight, Washington ended up perpetuating the same crisis they had finally just averted after a 40-year nuclear standoff.[\[24\]](#)

The non-interventionist position, as represented most famously by former Representative Ron Paul of Texas,[\[25\]](#) was never at issue in these discussions. The debate was not over whether the U.S. would remain in Europe, but rather the degree of cooperation with the new post-Soviet Russia. Any form of unified northern military alliance or partnership with Moscow would have brought its own dangers. But that possibility was not taken much more seriously than the idea of just coming home. Worse, successive U.S. administrations beginning with H.W. Bush showed an avowed lack of concern over how the Russians viewed the expansion of the

Western alliance into the space where theirs used to be, while leaving them on the outside, and possibly still the object of its intentions.

## **DPG '94**

The Pentagon's post-Iraq War I "Defense Planning Guidance" (DPG) from 1992 defined foreign policy and military doctrine for the new decade and into the new millennium: the U.S. must remain the single global hegemon with enough strength to prevent any possible strategic rivals, such as Germany, Japan, Russia or China, from even considering a challenge to U.S. dominance or access to natural resources. Aside from America's great triumph over global Communism and its apparent success in the first Iraq war, Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Paul Wolfowitz and his staff wrote that the U.S. had also succeeded in "the integration of the leading democracies into a U.S.-led system of collective security and the creation of a democratic 'zone of peace.'"

They proposed expanding the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) military alliance into Eastern Europe, saying that "a substantial American presence in Europe will provide reassurance and stability as the new democracies of Eastern Europe and possibly some states of the former Soviet Union seek to be integrated into a larger and evolving security architecture."[\[26\]](#) An enthusiastic Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney told Wolfowitz aide Zalmay Khalilzad, "You've discovered a new rationale for our role in the world."[\[27\]](#) Cheney officially published the document as America's "Defense Strategy for the 1990s."[\[28\]](#) Beyond their practical implementation, these documents were much more important politically,

setting the boundaries of debate regarding America's place in the post-Cold War world, including an emphasis on continued dominance in the Middle East and expansion into Eastern Europe.[\[29\]](#)

As Wolfowitz told author James Mann, "What we were afraid of was people who would say . . . 'Let's bring all of the troops home, and let's abandon our position in Europe.' It's hard to imagine just how uncertain the world looked at the end of the Cold War."[\[30\]](#) By 2000, Wolfowitz boasted that his doctrine had become the mainstream consensus.[\[31\]](#)

## **PNAC**

After it was leaked to the *New York Times*,[\[32\]](#) causing a small controversy,[\[33\]](#) the DPG draft was rewritten[\[34\]](#) to include more multilateralism but remained essentially unchanged.[\[35\]](#) As those same neoconservatives wrote in their 1998 Project for a New American Century (PNAC) study, "Rebuilding America's Defenses," expanding the U.S. presence in the Middle East and the NATO alliance in Europe was at the core of their doctrine. "The region is stable," they wrote, "but a continued American presence helps to assure the major European powers, especially Germany, that the United States retains its longstanding security interest in the continent." They added, "This is especially important in light of the nascent European moves toward an independent defense 'identity' and policy; it is important that NATO not be replaced by the European Union, leaving the United States without a voice in European security affairs."[\[36\]](#)

## **The End of History**

In 1996, Kristol and Kagan declared the need to establish what they called “benevolent global hegemony.”[\[37\]](#) The realist-hawk Zbigniew Brzezinski, the neocons’ sometimes-ally, echoed their argument, recognizing that it was doubtful Americans “will wish to be permanently engaged in the difficult, absorbing and costly task of managing Eurasia by constant manipulation and maneuver backed by American military resources in order to prevent regional domination by any one power.” Therefore, the empire would have to instead be “a benign American hegemony.” The United States would rule the world—but never for anything but the highest-minded reasons of creating a “functioning structure of global cooperation . . . stability and peace.” That way, when the American people’s patience or money finally ran out, they would withdraw with a better world left in place to run itself. The first order of the project was to unite Europe under an expanded NATO alliance.[\[38\]](#)

Neoconservative theoretician and Iraq War II supporter[\[39\]](#) Francis Fukuyama wrote in a celebrated article in *The National Interest*, and later a book, that it was “The End of History”; all the dialectics had been resolved. Quasi-free markets and quasi-democracy were the unstoppable order of the day and the indefinite future. However, even Fukuyama had warned against the dangers of nationalism, ethnic and otherwise, to the larger globalist project.[\[40\]](#)

## **Not One Inch**

**Staying**

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, the status of then-divided Germany soon became the center of attention. The Soviets of course were concerned. Approximately 27 million of their citizens had been killed in World War II, or the Great Patriotic War, as they call it.[\[41\]](#) After occupying half of the nation for 43 years, the USSR was now going to withdraw and even approve East Germany's reunification with the West, as well as its integration into the American-led NATO alliance, which itself had been founded as an anti-Soviet (or Russian) bloc at the dawn of the last Cold War. As State Department officials wrote in 1990, keeping Europe in NATO and America in Europe was the Bush administration's highest priority. "The U.S. should seek to transform NATO however needed so that NATO retains its primacy among other Europe-only structures," they said. It was important to rally "the British, Italians and the smaller allies" to "press our interests . . . [and] to act as a balance to the larger powers of Europe, above all Germany."[\[42\]](#)

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher was opposed to German reunification. She told Irish Taoiseach Charlie Haughey, "I am sorry for Gorbachev. He doesn't want German unity. Neither do I."[\[43\]](#) The Bush administration resorted to going behind Thatcher's back to get the rest of NATO on board, only letting her know after it was too late.[\[44\]](#)

## **Handshake Deals**

The Soviets allowed reunification because the Allies had promised they would not expand NATO eastward, inside Germany or beyond. Of course, the various administrations and their partisans have lied about it since, at

times claiming this pledge either never happened, or that it only ever applied to NATO forces within Germany, but not the rest of Eastern Europe—or does not count because it was not in writing.[\[45\]](#) But in 2017 and 2018, the records were posted at George Washington University’s National Security Archive.[\[46\]](#) Anyone can see that the notes taken by the American and allied side in the negotiations prove Russian claims about the verbal assurances from the West. The *New York Times*, which refused to cover the documents when they were published,[\[47\]](#) later shifted the goalposts. They now say that since it was not written in a formal treaty, there was no agreement at all.[\[48\]](#)

Likewise, NATO’s website insists that “[n]o such pledge was made, and no evidence to back up Russia’s claims has ever been produced.” Further, even if they would admit the truth, they say, “Personal assurances from individual leaders cannot replace Alliance consensus and do not constitute formal NATO agreement.”[\[49\]](#) But that just proves how disingenuous their position is. America and the Soviet Union made informal, spoken, handshake-type deals all the time during the first Cold War. One prominent example would be when President John F. Kennedy promised to remove American Jupiter nuclear missiles from Turkey—and implicitly Italy too—and never to invade Cuba again, in exchange for the removal of the USSR’s nukes from Cuba to defuse the Missile Crisis of 1962, one of the most crucial deals of the entire Cold War. For decades that agreement was secret and deniable, yet they still abided by it. Everyone now knows that is how the crisis ended.[\[50\]](#)

As scholar Joshua Shiffrin wrote, informal agreements regularly underlie the relationships between nation-states. “Put simply, explicit and codified arrangements are neither necessary nor sufficient for actors to strike deals and receive political assurances.” In another example, he noted that in the first Cold War, the 1970s unofficial alliance between the U.S. and China against the USSR was based on unwritten agreements. He added that many scholars noting the February 1990 meetings ignore or have missed other assurances given later that year and in 1991, and said, “[S]imply arguing that the U.S. position later changed is not sufficient to show that a non-expansion pledge was compromised.”[\[51\]](#)

Marc Trachtenberg, professor of political science at UCLA, similarly wrote that “no one really thinks that the words high officials utter do not commit them to anything until they are put into a signed agreement; if that were the case, meaningful exchanges between top officials would scarcely be possible.” He added that “otherwise purely verbal exchanges could not play anything like the role they do in international political life.”

Trachtenberg wrote that in the strange case of the free half-city of West Berlin, wholly within Communist East Germany during the Cold War years, [\[52\]](#) the Soviets had promised to treat the deal they had made regarding Vienna, Austria, as also applying to Berlin, and the Americans then took them at their word. President Franklin Roosevelt wanted the agreement to be based on a handshake to avoid sending a signal of mistrust. That deal, struck in June 1945, lasted through the Cold War, [\[53\]](#) with the exception of the crises of 1948 and 1961.[\[54\]](#)

## **Bush**

The Soviets had every reason to believe President Bush and his men meant what they said. There is no question their promises were the basis of the greatest and gravest decisions Soviet leaders made to withdraw their forces from Germany, and eventually, the rest of the Eastern Bloc. Jack Matlock, the second-to-last ambassador to the USSR, recalled what he believes was the first real assurance the U.S. gave the Soviets on the issue, and it came directly from the highest level. President Bush told Gorbachev at their meeting in Malta in December 1989 that “if the countries of Eastern Europe were allowed to choose their future orientation by democratic processes, the United States would not ‘take advantage’ of that process,” referring to their potential choice to leave the USSR or its alliance. Matlock continued, “Obviously, bringing countries into NATO that were then in the Warsaw Pact would be ‘taking advantage.’”[\[55\]](#) He also wrote that “[w]e gave categorical assurances to Gorbachev back when the Soviet Union existed that if a united Germany was able to stay in NATO, NATO would not be moved eastward.”[\[56\]](#) Though the consensus, as President Bush put it, was that “the United States must and will remain a European power” after the Cold War,[\[57\]](#) the ambassador is adamant to this day that “there would have been no basis for the present crisis if there had been no expansion of the alliance following the end of the Cold War, or if the expansion had occurred in harmony with building a security structure in Europe that included Russia.”[\[58\]](#)

## **Genscher**



On January 31, 1990, West German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher gave a public speech in Bavaria taking the same stance on reunification. The U.S. Embassy wrote home to Secretary of State James Baker that though he said a reunited Germany would be a part of NATO, “Genscher makes it clear that the changes in Eastern Europe and the German unification process must not lead to an ‘impairment of Soviet security interests.’” He said, “Therefore, NATO should rule out an ‘expansion of its border towards the east,’ i.e.: moving it closer to Soviet borders.” He instead recommended “cooperative security structures” for all of Europe. “Genscher also stresses, however, that it is necessary for the alliance to define their roles more and more in political terms. Genscher also called for a ‘partnership of stability between East and West’ to be achieved through the CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe],” of which the USSR was already a member, rather than through the now-obsolete NATO alliance. Genscher promised reunification within the CSCE “so that there will be no shift in the relationship of forces and no destabilization in Europe.”[\[59\]](#)

On February 2, after meeting with Baker, the two held a short press conference. After Baker emphasized America’s preference, and German agreement for a reunited Germany’s continued membership in the NATO alliance, Genscher told reporters that “we were in full agreement that there is no intention to extend the NATO area of defense and the security toward the East.” He added that “[t]his holds true not only for GDR [German Democratic Republic], which we have no intention of simply incorporating, but that holds true for all the other Eastern countries. . . . [T]here is no

intention to extend our area—NATO’s area—of defense towards the East.” He said this was why “the CSCE process is so important . . . [T]hat body [is] an area within which things can be developed jointly.”[\[60\]](#)

Though he had the opportunity to have the final word, Baker did not object to this formulation.[\[61\]](#) A State Department document about the meeting reads: “Genscher confirmed . . . the new Germany would remain in NATO because NATO is an essential building block to a new Europe.” But it also said, “Genscher reiterated the need to assure the Soviets that NATO would not extend its territorial coverage to the area of the GDR nor anywhere else in Eastern Europe for that matter.” There is nothing in the document indicating the secretary disagreed with the foreign minister about this statement.[\[62\]](#) That same day, according to Genscher’s chief of staff, Frank Elbe, he met with Baker at his home in Washington and they quickly agreed that NATO would not expand farther east. “It was completely clear,” he confirmed in 2009.[\[63\]](#)

This shows that before the talks had even begun, Western leaders were already thinking ahead about how to handle the process without causing an unnecessary reaction from Soviet hardliners, and they were signaling that they intended to make it easier for the Russians to see through such large-scale changes with these sorts of upfront assurances.

On February 6, 1990, the West German foreign minister again, this time in a conversation with Secretary Baker, said that “when he talked about not wanting to extend NATO, that applied to other states beside the GDR. The Russians must have some assurance that if, for example, the Polish Government left the Warsaw Pact one day, they would not join

NATO the next.”[64] British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd agreed with him.[65]

While discussions on this subject with the Gorbachev government in February began with the question of the reunification of Germany and the future of its relationship with the NATO alliance, there were assurances throughout the talks which echoed Genscher’s public statements against membership for nations east of Germany as well.

## **Baker**

After discussing America’s preference for German reunification within NATO with Russian Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on February 7, in his notes Baker added asterisks and an exclamation point at the important part: “End result: Unified Ger. anchored in a \*changed (polit.) NATO—\*whose juris. would not move \*eastward!”[66]

President Bush and his national security adviser, Brent Scowcroft, admitted in their joint memoir: “Baker repeated Genscher’s formula of the status of the GDR: if Germany stayed in NATO there would be no movement of NATO’s jurisdiction or forces eastward.” They continued, paraphrasing Baker, “NATO would evolve into a more political and less military alliance, something the president had already spoken about in December at the NATO meeting in Brussels.”[67] This was the beginning of the narrative that NATO would now become more “political” and less of a security organization, as that would be negotiated primarily under the CSCE and later the so-called Partnership for Peace, to assuage the Soviets

over reunification and eventually over NATO expansion into the former Warsaw Pact nations and Soviet republics.

On February 9, in meetings in Moscow, Baker promised Gorbachev six times that if the Soviet Union would withdraw their troops and allow German reunification under America's NATO alliance, they would not expand it.<sup>[68]</sup> "We understand the need for assurances to the countries in the east," Baker told him. "If we maintain a presence in a Germany that is a part of NATO, there would be no extension of NATO's jurisdiction for forces of NATO one inch to the east." Raising the specter of an independent, nuclear-armed Germany, Baker asked Gorbachev, "Would you prefer to see a unified Germany outside of NATO, independent and with no U.S. forces, or would you prefer a unified Germany to be tied to NATO, with assurances that NATO's jurisdiction would not shift one inch eastward from its present position?"<sup>[69]</sup> Gorbachev answered, "Certainly any extension of the zone of NATO would be unacceptable."<sup>[70]</sup> Baker replied, "We agree with that."

Referring to joint negotiations between East and West Germany, the U.S., UK, France and the USSR, the secretary reiterated, "We consider that the consultations and discussions in the framework of the 2+4 mechanism should give a guarantee that the reunification of Germany will not lead to the enlargement of NATO's military organization to the East."

Baker repeated to Gorbachev that "neither the President nor I intend to extract any unilateral advantages from the processes that are taking place," and "not only for the Soviet Union but for other European countries as well it is important to have guarantees that if the United States keeps its presence

in Germany within the framework of NATO, not an inch of NATO's present military jurisdiction will spread in an eastern direction.”[71]

At a press conference later that day, the secretary of state confirmed they had agreed “there should be no extension of NATO forces eastward in order to assuage the security concerns of those of the East of Germany.” He said the USSR was “not likely to [allow reunification to] happen without there being some sort of security guarantees with respect to NATO's forces . . . or the jurisdiction of NATO moving eastward.”[72]

As Trachtenberg noted, “[T]here was no attempt to make it clear that he was just talking about what was still East German territory.” Further, he said that “assuaging the security concerns of those to Germany's east, meaning above all the USSR, could easily have been taken as ruling out NATO's expansion into countries like Poland.”[73]

After his meeting with Gorbachev, Baker wrote to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl in preparation for his meeting with the Soviet premier the next day. Baker told Kohl about his threat of an independent, nuclear-armed Germany compared to one dominated by the U.S. in NATO. Gorbachev then told him, as he related to Genscher: “‘Certainly any extension of the zone of NATO would be unacceptable.’ (By implication, NATO in its current zone might be acceptable.)”[74]

Professor Mary Elise Sarotte explains, “This statement was extremely significant to Gorbachev; indeed, he later recalled it as the moment that ‘cleared the way for a compromise’ on Germany. Based on it, he would make a big concession to Kohl the next day at the third bilateral [meeting].” She says this meeting was key. “Gorbachev thought he had a workable

deal. . . . [His] misperception would incline him toward generosity towards Kohl.”

Though he definitely made these statements, it is possible that Secretary Baker never meant what he said. That is his defense, anyway.[\[75\]](#) Lawyers, as Sarotte notes, say lots of things. But if it was not in a signed deal, at the end of the day it was only the word of an American politician.  
[\[76\]](#)

## **Gates**

However, that same day, Robert Gates, then Bush Sr.’s deputy national security adviser, offered the same deal to Vladimir Kryuchkov, the head of the KGB. They had a fascinating discussion about plans for the end of the Communist Party’s monopoly on power and the advent of multi-party democracy, private property ownership and impending declarations of independence by the so-called Soviet “republics” and other members of the Warsaw Pact alliance. Like Baker, Gates politely threatened that an independent, reunified Germany might seek nuclear weapons, but said that if it remained in NATO under U.S. control, “the Soviet Union would have no reason to fear.” Gates said the U.S. supported “the Kohl-Genscher idea of a united Germany belonging to NATO but with no expansion of the military presence to the GDR.” He asked Kryuchkov what he thought of the Kohl/Genscher proposal, in which reunited Germany would be in NATO, but alliance troops “would move no further east than they now were? It seems to us to be a sound proposal.”[\[77\]](#) Kryuchkov was noncommittal, but did say the USSR had “no enthusiasm” for German reunification and that

whatever was decided, they would need “guarantees” and “verification.” As Shiffrinson wrote, “Gates’s discussion with Kryuchkov . . . belies the notion that Baker’s offer was merely speculative,” instead showing it to have broad support in the administration.[\[78\]](#)

Baker made the same offer to Shevardnadze later on the 9th. “There would, of course, have to be ironclad guarantees that NATO’s jurisdiction or forces would not move eastward.” But the hawks cling to the following statement: there “might be an outcome that would guarantee that there would be no NATO forces in the eastern part of Germany. In fact, there could be an absolute ban on that.” Baker now claims he was walking back the promise.[\[79\]](#)

## **Special Status**

Since Baker’s idea that NATO would be confined to the western half of a reunited Germany did not make sense, the White House came up with a plan for a “special status” limiting the deployment of certain Western materiel, such as nuclear weapons, to the former GDR instead.

The next day, February 10, West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, though aware of the White House’s new position, still took the softer Baker line, telling Gorbachev: “We believe that NATO should not expand the sphere of its activity. . . . [N]aturally NATO could not expand its territory to the current territory of [East Germany].”[\[80\]](#) He did not mention Bush’s new plan for a “special military zone” in the East. At the same time, Genscher told Shevardnadze in a parallel session, “For us, it is clear: NATO will not extend itself to the East.”[\[81\]](#)

Gorbachev, believing he already had a deal with Baker, agreed with Kohl that “the German people” had the sole right to decide on reunification, without getting him to repeat Baker’s promise not to expand NATO in writing. Kohl immediately “pounced,” as Sarotte put it, announcing Gorbachev’s statement as official policy that night.[\[82\]](#) Somehow it did not matter in this case that Gorbachev had only spoken a sentence and not signed a deal. It was enough for the West.

The next day, the State Department sent a cable to the embassies explaining, “The Secretary made clear that . . . we supported a unified Germany within NATO, but that we were prepared to ensure that NATO’s military presence would not extend further eastward.”[\[83\]](#)

## **Alright Then**

It was after this meeting, and based on these assurances by Baker and Kohl, that Gorbachev gave the “green light” for the first steps toward reunification. As Scowcroft wrote, they “paved the way for the Soviet leader’s discussions with Kohl and Genscher and very likely predisposed Gorbachev to be sympathetic.”[\[84\]](#)

A week later, on February 12, 1990, at negotiations over the Open Skies treaty in Ottawa, Baker told Gorbachev that if they agreed a united Germany would stay in NATO, “we should take care about non-expansion of its jurisdiction to the East.”[\[85\]](#) Shortly after, they announced the creation of the 2+4 format for talks to resolve reunification under NATO.[\[86\]](#) As Shiffrinson wrote, “In short, within one week of meeting Baker, Gates and other Western leaders in Moscow, the Soviet leadership began



moving in the very direction sought by the United States on the basis of U.S.-West German proposals.”[\[87\]](#)

## **2+4 Notes**

And we know how those talks turned out. In a meeting between the political directors of the foreign ministries of the U.S., the UK, France and Germany on March 6, 1991, German representative Jürgen Chrobog said, “We made it clear in the two-plus-four negotiations that we would not expand NATO beyond the Elbe. We can therefore not offer NATO membership to Poland and the others.”[\[88\]](#) U.S. Representative Raymond Seitz agreed, saying, “We have made it clear to the Soviet Union—in two-plus-four talks and elsewhere—that we will not take advantage of the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe. NATO shall neither formally nor informally extend to the east.”[\[89\]](#)

## **Heresy**

As the German magazine *Der Spiegel* put it after reviewing relevant documents in 2009, citing, for example, Genscher’s promises to Shevardnadze, and his speech in Tutzing, that “there was no doubt that the West did everything it could to give the Soviets the impression that NATO membership was out of the question for countries like Poland, Hungary or Czechoslovakia.” Genscher had promised there would be no “expansion of NATO territory to the east, in other words, closer to the borders of the Soviet Union.” They also cited a previously secret document showing Hurd

and Genscher agreed the USSR should be given assurances about “the certainty that Hungary will not become part of the Western alliance if there is a change of government” after their upcoming elections.[\[90\]](#)

But soon after, Sarotte writes, “Kohl’s phrasing would quickly become heresy among the key Western decision-makers.” After Baker returned, “members of Bush’s foreign policy team exercised strict message discipline, making no further remarks about NATO holding at the 1989 line.”

On February 24 at Camp David, Bush Sr. railed to Kohl in preparation for the 2+4 talks, telling him not to give in on anything. He demanded a pledge from Kohl “that he will not allow Germany’s indispensable role in NATO to be weakened in any way.”[\[91\]](#) The days when the USSR had a say in these matters were over: “What worries me is talk that Germany must not stay in NATO. To hell with that! We prevailed and they didn’t. We can’t let the Soviets clutch victory from the jaws of defeat.”[\[92\]](#) Though the premier was still grumbling about it, he had already conceded that point more than a week before.

Baker restated his nine points he had recently presented in Moscow, including, “We agreed to support creation of pan-European structures, which we avoided earlier. We announced adaptation of NATO to [the] new situation by strengthening of its political component,” and “We assured the Soviet Union that during a defined period there would be no NATO troops in the GDR.”

By September 1990, Gorbachev had given in on the question of NATO forces in the eastern part of a reunified Germany in exchange for

restrictions on troop totals, nuclear weapons and a few billion Deutsch marks.[\[93\]](#) “If Gorbachev had been a more aggressive negotiator, and if he had not had so many other distracting balls in the air,” Sarotte wrote, “he might have pressed for written guarantees from either Baker or Kohl. But he did not and by the end of February it was clear he would never get them.” She added, “Gorbachev appears not to have understood this sequence of events at the time, although by the end of the year he would angrily turn on Kohl, saying to the chancellor that he felt like he had fallen into a ‘trap.’”[\[94\]](#)

## Using Context Clues

Robert Merry explained the reality beneath all the spin in *The National Interest*. “Baker clearly signaled to Gorbachev that the United States and the West would forgo eastward expansion in exchange for Russian acceptance of German reunification.” However, “Baker had committed a diplomatic gaffe, since NATO jurisdiction covering only part of Germany was unworkable. Western diplomats had to walk back the Baker framework so the alliance would protect all of Germany.” He said this was accepted by the Soviets, “but implicitly within the context of the earlier Baker assurance that NATO would not move ‘one inch eastward’ beyond the agreed upon shift to include the old East Germany.”[\[95\]](#) The final treaty did stipulate, “Foreign armed forces and nuclear weapons or their carriers will not be stationed in that part of Germany or deployed there.”[\[96\]](#)

Shiffrinson points out that contrary to those who conclude the final deal canceled any previous assurances about eastward expansion, Bush, in a

phone call with Gorbachev on February 28, weeks after Baker and Gates's Moscow meetings, "pledged that the United States would recognize the 'legitimate security interests' of all parties." Combined with their previous assurances, "the new terms could be interpreted as explaining how NATO would avoid expanding eastward if Germany reunited within NATO."[\[97\]](#)

In modifying the deal to keep forces out of eastern Germany (the former GDR), in a sense they were still respecting their promise for the time being. If the agreement had always been that they could move into Poland and the Baltics at their earliest convenience, then what difference would it make how many troops they stationed in eastern Germany? The 1997 Founding Act implies the same understanding dating back to February 1990.[\[98\]](#)

Professor Trachtenberg makes other compelling points about these particular discussions. In their February 9 meeting, Baker and Gorbachev were discussing the "fundamental question of what Germany's place in the post-Cold War world should be" when Baker gave his assurances. The specific question of NATO forces in the former GDR did not come up until later. When it did, it also showed, "incidentally, that Baker had no problem talking explicitly about East German territory when he wanted to." Again, Baker was threatening the Soviets with an independent, nuclear-armed Germany, saying this was why they should accept reunification within NATO instead, "to make it easier for them to go along with the idea he wanted to make it clear to them that that shift would not go too far." Genscher told them the next day, "For us, it's a firm principle: NATO will not be extended toward the East. . . . Furthermore, with regard to the non-

extension of NATO, that applies in general.” By “in general” he obviously was referring to the rest of Eastern Europe; otherwise, he would be repeating himself with no use for the “furthermore.”[\[99\]](#)

Analyst Ted Snider argues that these various pledges amount to more than a “promise,” since the Soviets then acted based on them. “Gorbachev seems to have understood the promise as a deal. If that is the case, then what the West offered Russia, even if verbally and never in writing, may have been more than a promise,” but a binding agreement.[\[100\]](#) The Americans made their assurances against eastward NATO expansion, and the Soviets made their decisions on that basis. At the very least, even the most partisan American hawk could see why the Russians thought all those promises of restraint in the face of their collapse meant something besides the president not dancing on the Berlin Wall.[\[101\]](#)

## **Brits**

As Svetlana Savranskaya and Tom Blanton from the National Security Archive wrote, “All the Western foreign ministers were on board with Genscher, Kohl, and Baker.”[\[102\]](#) On March 5, 1991, Thatcher’s successor, British Prime Minister John Major, when questioned about East European nations’ potential interest in joining the alliance, promised Soviet Defense Minister Marshal Dmitri Yazov, “Nothing of the sort will happen.”[\[103\]](#)

He and Hurd both promised the same to Gorbachev. The Soviet premier had questioned Major about renewed talk of a central role for NATO rather than its relegation to a more political organization in favor of pan-European security structures which would include them. “This does not

sound complementary to the common European home that we have started to build.” Major denied it. “I believe that your thoughts about the role of NATO in the current situation are the result of misunderstanding,” the prime minister told Gorbachev. “We are not talking about strengthening of NATO. We are talking about the coordination of efforts that is already happening in Europe between NATO and the West European Union, which, as it is envisioned, would allow all members of the European Community to contribute to enhance security.”[\[104\]](#)

The European Union (EU) is a political federation and free trade zone which began as the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) after World War II, then became the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market, then simply the European Community (EC). It eventually grew into something much more like a federal government for Europe, with a single currency, the euro, and only lacking in a serious joint armed force of its own.[\[105\]](#) Military security remains the province of the American-led NATO alliance.

Major assured the Russian defense minister that he “did not himself foresee circumstances now or in the future where East European countries would become members.”[\[106\]](#) Hurd told Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh on March 26, 1991, “[T]here are no plans in NATO to include the countries of Eastern and Central Europe in NATO in one form or another.”[\[107\]](#) On April 11, he told Gorbachev that the UK “recognized the importance of doing nothing to prejudice Soviet interests and dignity.”[\[108\]](#)

## **NATO’s Woerner**

In a speech in May 1990, Manfred Wörner, the German secretary-general of NATO, seemed to back away from the special military zone, reassuring the Russians that “[t]he primary task of the next decade will be to build a new European security structure, to include the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact nations. The Soviet Union will have an important role to play in the construction of such a system.” He added, “If you consider the current predicament of the Soviet Union, which has practically no allies left, then you can understand its justified wish not to be forced out of Europe.” Emphasizing that the USSR had nothing to fear from the West in the new post-Cold War era, Wörner said, “This will also be true of a united Germany in NATO. The very fact that we are ready not to deploy NATO troops beyond the territory of the Federal Republic gives the Soviet Union firm security guarantees.”[\[109\]](#) In Copenhagen on June 7, 1991, NATO passed a resolution declaring they would neither attempt to “gain one-sided advantage from the changing situation in Europe” nor “draw new dividing lines in the continent.” This statement was invoked by the Russians on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.[\[110\]](#)

In 2015, former Russian Foreign Minister Yevgeny Primakov published his memoir on NATO expansion, *Meetings at the Crossroads*. The National Security Archive posted an important excerpt: Primakov’s catalog of the Bush Sr. administration’s broken promises, which included all of the above, plus an assurance or two by French President François Mitterrand.[\[111\]](#)

## **Knowingly Misleading**

The key to understanding the situation is that H.W. Bush and his cabinet were lying to the Soviets, later the Russians, before President Bill Clinton ever came to Washington. His administration would then continue to do so into the new millennium.

In April 1990, Bush met with Shevardnadze and led him to believe that he agreed with the Soviets that the CSCE should now take the lead in a pan-European security arrangement, in place of the two former blocs. “I want to contribute to stability and to the creation of a Europe, whole and free or, as you call it, a common European home. A [sic] idea that is very close to our own.”[\[112\]](#)

On May 4, Baker reported on his meeting with Shevardnadze to President Bush: “I used your speech and our recognition of the need to adapt NATO, politically and militarily, and to develop CSCE to reassure Shevardnadze that the process would not yield winners and losers. Instead, it would produce a new legitimate European structure—one that would be inclusive, not exclusive.” Shevardnadze had responded positively, saying that “our discussion of the new European architecture was compatible with much of their thinking, though their thinking was still being developed.”[\[113\]](#)

Even though the White House had decided to cease any talk about future limits on NATO expansion, Baker again, on May 18, 1990, told Gorbachev, in response to a suggestion of an accusation from the premier, “Before saying a few words about the German issue, I wanted to emphasize that our policies are not aimed at separating Eastern Europe from the Soviet



Union. We had that policy before.” He continued, “But today we are interested in building a stable Europe, and doing it together with you.”[\[114\]](#)

When Gorbachev asked, “What is the purpose of NATO now?” Baker assured him it was no longer about keeping the Soviets out but the Germans down, again threatening that an independent Germany could get its own nuclear, or even biological or chemical weapons if not subsumed into America’s military order. While promising to build “pan-European security structures” over the long term, Baker again emphasized the danger of “having a separate, neutral Germany.”[\[115\]](#)

When Gorbachev objected that adding Germany to the alliance would “strengthen” NATO, Baker answered, “In the immediate, short-term, maybe. However, we are currently talking about a change, about adapting NATO, giving it a more political nature.” He told the Soviet premier, “We recognize the importance of reducing the *Bundeswehr* [West German army]. . . . We understand your concerns and we are taking them into account. I don’t think that we are trying to get unilateral benefits.” He again promised that “NATO will undergo an evolution to become more of a political organization,” and that “[w]e are making an effort in various forums to ultimately transform the CSCE into a permanent institution that would become an important cornerstone of a new Europe. This institution would include all the European countries, the Soviet Union and the United States.”[\[116\]](#)

Baker repeatedly used the phrase “from Vancouver to Vladivostok” to describe this future joint security structure.[\[117\]](#) As Brent Scowcroft later

wrote, “This gave Gorbachev the opportunity to argue to his Politburo that NATO had been transformed and was no longer a threat.”[\[118\]](#)

After proposing a possible France-like “special status” for Germany within NATO, or even “non-aligned” status, Gorbachev suggested the USSR would try to join the Western alliance, too. “After all, you say that NATO is not directed against us, that it is just a security structure that is adapting to the new reality. So we will propose to join NATO.”[\[119\]](#) Baker changed the subject.[\[120\]](#)

Bush also strongly implied to Premier Gorbachev on May 31 that the CSCE, which already included the USSR, would now be the primary security organization in “a new inclusive Europe,” replacing NATO, which, again, would be turned into a “political” organization. “[O]f course, we have no intention, even in our thoughts, to harm the Soviet Union in any fashion,” Bush told him. “That is why we are speaking in favor of German unification in NATO without ignoring the wider context of the CSCE, taking the traditional economic ties between the two German states into consideration. Such a model, in our view, corresponds to the Soviet interests as well.”[\[121\]](#) Bush also said a Conventional Forces in Europe treaty was “the gateway to developing a new political and security structure in Europe.” He did not want “winners and losers,” only to see the USSR “integrated . . . into the new Europe.”[\[122\]](#)

Thatcher also played her part in reassuring Gorbachev about the less-threatening role NATO was to play in the new Europe. “We must find ways to give the Soviet Union confidence that its security would be assured,” she told him. “CSCE could be an umbrella for all this, as well as being the

forum which brought the Soviet Union fully into discussion about the future of Europe.”[\[123\]](#)

In July, after Gorbachev’s final discussion with Kohl before reunification, Bush again implied agreement with the premier’s concept of a “common European home,” in which the USSR would be part of any new security arrangement, particularly under the CSCE. “The U.S.-Soviet confrontation is over. . . . [W]orking together, we’ll make a peaceful post-war world. . . . I hope you have seen the transformation of the NATO Alliance, and hope that is the way it was read in the Soviet Union,” Bush told Gorbachev. “We conveyed the idea of an expanded, stronger CSCE with new institutions in which the USSR can share and be part of the new Europe.”[\[124\]](#)

Shiffrinson notes how disingenuous this was. The administration was promising to sideline NATO in favor of a new Soviet-inclusive security arrangement while “privately planning for an American-dominated post-Cold War system and taking steps that would attain this objective.” He continued, “Baldly stated, the United States floated a cooperative grand design for postwar Europe in discussions with the Soviets in 1990, while creating a system dominated by the United States.” For example, “In July 1990, Secretary Baker referred to the inevitable expansion of NATO when he said that the CSCE could serve as a ‘half-way house’ for governments who want out of the Warsaw Pact . . . but can’t join NATO and EC (yet).”

As Shiffrinson politely put it, “Given that U.S. policymakers were simultaneously promising to emphasize NATO’s political nature so as to render NATO acceptable to the Soviet Union, Baker’s comment suggests

the dual nature of U.S. strategy.” Baker had even warned President Bush that the “real risk to NATO is CSCE.” The latter was to serve as a red herring only. Just as Germany began reunification that October, an interagency review stated that “the key U.S. interest was to ensure that NATO remains the central pillar of Europe’s security architecture.” A few days later, senior National Security Council (NSC) officials agreed on a policy of building up NATO to prevent the CSCE from becoming the center of new European security structures. They had to guarantee that NATO would remain the “central institution in providing for Europe’s defense.”[\[125\]](#)

State Department Counselor Robert Zoellick said they wanted to “give an impression of movement” regarding new structures, and offer Gorbachev “some things to make him more comfortable w[ith] the process” of the reunification of Germany.[\[126\]](#)

Just a few days after reunification was complete, the White House was already talking about expansion: “Should the United States and NATO now signal to the new democracies of Eastern Europe NATO’s readiness to contemplate their future membership?”[\[127\]](#)

In July 1991, the “Russian Supreme Soviet Delegation” reported back to the newly elected president of Russia, Boris Yeltsin, that NATO Secretary-General Manfred Wörner was dead set against the expansion of the alliance to include Poland, Romania, Hungary or Czechoslovakia. This was because: “[w]e should not allow the isolation of the USSR from the European community.” The Russians said that “[o]ne has to emphasize that democratic changes in Russia, the largest republic of the USSR, have the

potential to exert a serious impact on the reformation of NATO, where political cooperation is becoming the main function.” They concluded, “In principle, they are ready for active cooperation in this sphere with the USSR and the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic].”[\[128\]](#)

They had bought it. Before the Soviet Union was even all the way dead, on December 19, 1991, Yeltsin reiterated Gorbachev’s query about Russia creating a “close association” with, or even joining NATO,[\[129\]](#) at least “as a long-term political goal.”[\[130\]](#) Baker changed the subject again.  
[\[131\]](#)

In short, the only reason Gorbachev and the Soviets were so cooperative on withdrawal from Germany and the reunification of its halves, much less their further withdrawal of military forces from the rest of the Warsaw Pact and Soviet republic states, was entirely predicated on Bush, Baker, Gates, Kohl, Genscher, Thatcher, Major and the rest’s assurances that they would not take advantage of the situation, especially by expanding their military alliance eastward. And the U.S. administration was deliberately deceitful in leading them to believe it. As Shiffrinson noted, “Ultimately, if Europe was to be linked by a new set of security institutions while NATO was militarily constrained and had an increasingly political focus, then formal non-expansion guarantees were superfluous.”[\[132\]](#)

One may object that the deals were struck with the USSR, not post-Soviet Russia, and argue that countries which were still Soviet republics or in the Warsaw Pact could not have been up for consideration anyway, but that is incorrect. As shown above, nations such as Poland and Hungary

were brought up by name in the promises on NATO expansion in early 1990, along with more general references to Eastern Europe, while the Warsaw Pact was not dissolved until March 1991.[\[133\]](#) Also, they had all signed the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which guaranteed “the right to be or not to be a party to treaties of alliance,”[\[134\]](#) and Gorbachev was already raising the question of even the USSR itself joining.

## **State Dept. Warning**

The State Department drew up a strategy paper on the future of NATO in October 1990. They recommended denying membership to new Eastern European nations since the U.S. could not really protect them and does “not in any case wish to organize an anti-Soviet coalition whose frontier is the Soviet border. Such a coalition would be perceived very negatively by the Soviets and could lead to a reversal of current positive trends in Eastern Europe and the USSR.” They thought it of the highest importance to ascertain carefully “[h]ow . . . relations with these emerging democracies, combined with the new Western relationship with the Soviet Union, [could] be managed to avoid any hint of superpower condominium, anti-Sovietism or Eastern European containment.”[\[135\]](#)

## **Saving the USSR**

### **Chicken Kiev**

They may not have wanted them in NATO, but President H.W. Bush tried to save the Soviet Union. Really. He, Secretary Baker and National Security Advisor Scowcroft thought it would be preferable if Moscow could retain control of the Soviet republics, mostly over concerns about the USSR's nuclear weapons stockpile.[\[136\]](#) In 1990, Deputy National Security Advisor Gates had urged KGB director Kryuchkov to “develop a new federation as soon as possible,” to prevent large-scale, ethnic-based secession movements in Eastern Europe and, presumably, Central Asia.[\[137\]](#) They supported Gorbachev's proposed New Union Treaty, which would have replaced the USSR with a federation including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.[\[138\]](#)

On August 1, 1991, President Bush gave his infamous “Chicken Kiev” speech,[\[139\]](#) as *New York Times* columnist William Safire called it.[\[140\]](#) The address was written by Bush's NSC staffer Condoleezza Rice.[\[141\]](#) In the speech, Bush warned against Ukrainian agitation for independence from Russia on anything but the Kremlin's deliberate timetable, telling their central committee, “We will not try to pick winners and losers in political competitions between Republics or between Republics and the center. That is your business; that's not the business of the United States of America.” He added, “Some people have urged the United States to choose between supporting President Gorbachev and supporting independence-minded leaders throughout the USSR. I consider this a false choice.” He further warned that “[f]reedom is not the same as independence,” and that his administration “will not support those who seek independence in order to

replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism. They will not aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred.”[\[142\]](#)

The New Union Treaty was to be signed on August 20, but, in reaction against Communist hardliners’ failed coup of August 18–22—which had been heroically put down by new President Boris Yeltsin, with the help of tens of thousands of civilian Muscovites who came out to support him[\[143\]](#)—Ukraine ignored Bush’s advice and declared independence on August 24.  
[\[144\]](#)

On December 1, 90 percent of Ukrainians voted for independence, including with totals above 80 percent in favor in the predominantly ethnic-Russian eastern and southern regions of Kharkiv, the Donbas and Odesa.  
[\[145\]](#) Leonid Kravchuk, newly elected leader of Ukraine, switched sides and relabeled everything Communist as “nationalist” instead.[\[146\]](#) Much the same thing took place in Kazakhstan with former first secretary of the new nation’s Communist Party, Nursultan Nazarbayev, and with Askar Akayev in Kyrgyzstan.[\[147\]](#) After that, what was left of the Soviet Union was finally doomed. The Baltics and Uzbekistan declared independence a few days later.[\[148\]](#)

Yeltsin brought the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus to a meeting in the latter country where on December 8 they signed the Belovezh Accords to finally dissolve what was left of the Soviet empire and replace it with the powerless Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) trade pact.[\[149\]](#) The Ukrainian and Belarusian parliaments ratified the new deal on December 10 and the Russian parliament on December 12. Gorbachev resigned, and the Soviet Communist red flag with its yellow hammer and sickle, hated



symbol of totalitarian slavery, deprivation and mass murder,[\[150\]](#) was finally taken down from the Kremlin on Christmas Day, 1991.[\[151\]](#)

Bush's National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft confirmed this history: "The aim was to liberate Eastern Europe—to get Soviet troops out of Eastern Europe. We thought that would really mark the end of the Cold War. It was not to destroy the Soviet Union. . . . [T]hat was not our goal. It was rather to bring the Cold War to an end by getting their soldiers out of Eastern Europe."[\[152\]](#) The man even sounded wistful for the old days, and resentful of Yeltsin for wrecking the Evil Empire. "What became clear to me was that Yeltsin was maneuvering so that the Ukraine would be the proximate cause of the breakup of the Soviet Union." But he was just using them, "almost completely because it was the way Yeltsin could get rid of Gorbachev." The new Russian president made the old Soviet premier the leader "of a political entity that no longer existed." Scowcroft mused, "If there had not been that enmity, I think there still could have been some kind of Soviet Union today."[\[153\]](#) He also wrote that "[i]t was painful to watch Yeltsin rip the Soviet Union brick by brick away from Gorbachev, and then transfer most of them to Russia."[\[154\]](#)

In the conception of the Bush Sr. administration, the Soviet republics, including the Baltics, Belarus and Ukraine, were all east of Eastern Europe—though the U.S., which had never recognized Soviet sovereignty over the Baltics,[\[155\]](#) did support independence for Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia regardless. For all their scheming, they would have never considered extending NATO as far as Ukraine. As Bush and Scowcroft wrote in their joint memoir, "We had to be careful not to handle this so precipitously that

we encouraged the radical nationalists in Ukraine and Russia—where there was considerable resistance to losing Ukraine and its twelve million ethnic Russians. The last thing we needed was a confrontation between the two.”[\[156\]](#)

Though Bush was rightly mocked for trying to hold the USSR together in this federation under the new treaty, rather than favoring its outright destruction, his caution helped the Russian reformers see the fall of the regime through to the end without the U.S. provoking unnecessary backlash against their effort. So he unintentionally helped to destroy it anyway.

Bush’s speech also hinted at potentially dangerous nationalist forces in the former Soviet Union who could do themselves much more harm than good. Amb. Matlock has written that Bush’s denunciation of “suicidal nationalism based on ethnic hatred” was “inspired by Georgian leader Zviad Gamsakhurdia’s attacks on minorities in Soviet Georgia.”[\[157\]](#)

To his credit, when Bush called and the coup plotters of August 1991 tried to connect him to Acting President Gennady Yanayev, he refused, saying he would only talk to Gorbachev.[\[158\]](#)

## **Avoiding Armageddon**

Of course, the main reason the administration was interested in holding the republics together with Russia was concern over Soviet nuclear weapons, which were left behind in Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan by the thousands. Would loose nukes hit the black market if Moscow gave up control? They determined that the risk was not worth it, before events

simply got out of hand with the commies' failed coup and the final unraveling of the empire.[\[159\]](#)

Though President Bush launched America's "new world order"[\[160\]](#) of attempted global hegemony and our 30-year catastrophic war in the Middle East and beyond,[\[161\]](#) it should be noted that in one important way, he handled the end of the Cold War in what could even be called heroic fashion. During his presidency, the U.S. signed multiple treaties with the Soviets,[\[162\]](#) and then the successor Russian Federation,[\[163\]](#) to drastically reduce conventional military forces,[\[164\]](#) as well as both sides' stockpiles of nuclear weapons, from the tens of thousands to the much lower totals of today.[\[165\]](#)

Bush even went so far as to make drastic unilateral cuts, including removing all nuclear weapons from U.S. surface ships, submarines and land-based naval aircraft, and taking American strategic bombers and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs) off their high-alert posture. He did this simply in the hope that Gorbachev would reciprocate where he could, since there was no time for drawn-out negotiations. It worked. Gorbachev announced on October 5 that the USSR would destroy all tactical nuclear warheads for artillery, land-based missiles, surface ships and submarines.[\[166\]](#)

Bush also signed Senators Sam Nunn and Dick Lugar's Soviet Nuclear Threat Reduction Act that authorized American assistance in dismantling much of the former Soviet Union's nuclear weapons stockpile,[\[167\]](#) and in the very last days of his presidency, in the beginning of 1993, traveled to

Moscow to sign the START II nuclear weapons treaty[\[168\]](#) and the new Chemical Weapons Convention as well.[\[169\]](#)

## **Bosnia Begins**

### **What Is NATO For?**

The United States under President H.W. Bush also began intervention in the Balkan nation of Yugoslavia, which had started to break up as the Cold War came to an end. This culminated in two major bombing campaigns against the Russian-allied Serbs, their Slavic ethnic and Eastern Orthodox religious kin. The timing of the crisis worked out well for America's national security state, which seemed uncertain of its own future at the time.

The loss of Russia as an enemy was seen as a blow to the status quo in the arms industry and the Atlantic alliance. "Perhaps a third or more of the Pentagon budget is spent on an alliance that has lost its old mission of defense against external threat and has been unable to generate a convincing new mission," the *Washington Post* reported in 1993.[\[170\]](#)

NATO needed to go "[o]ut of area or out of business," the Pentagon's RAND Corporation[\[171\]](#) and Senator Lugar agreed.[\[172\]](#) The NSC had been discussing the possibilities in those terms since at least 1990.[\[173\]](#) "NATO Seeks Significance in Post-War Climate," read a headline in the arms industry magazine *Jane's Defence Weekly*. They said NATO was "searching for a new identity" in the absence of the Soviet Union and cited a threat from Senator William Roth that if they did not hurry up and find something to do, they would be in danger of losing their funding.[\[174\]](#) A

senior NATO representative told the *Los Angeles Times*, “NATO must be active in future peacekeeping operations, out of area, however complicated—because we alone have the capability. Otherwise, it is fair to ask: What is NATO for?”[\[175\]](#) As then-Senator Joe Biden put it, “Ironically, within the fruits of NATO’s unparalleled success lie the seeds for its possible demise. Alliances are formed to fight wars or to deter them. Once the adversary is gone, unless alliances adapt to meet changing threats, they lose their reason for being.” Rather than bringing the troops home, to guarantee “enlargement” of the alliance, they needed “a redefinition of NATO’s mission.” Referring to the mutual defense section of the Washington Treaty which created the alliance,[\[176\]](#) he said that after the Cold War ended, “[n]on-Article V missions like peacekeeping, sometimes in cooperation with non-NATO powers, have become possible. The . . . joint effort in Bosnia, with Russia and several other non-NATO countries I believe is an excellent example of this.”[\[177\]](#)

Professor Edward S. Herman and journalist David Peterson explained that these self-interested reasons were the primary purposes of the U.S. intervention in Bosnia: preserving NATO by finding busywork for it to do; establishing America, the UN Security Council and NATO’s authority to intervene, not just to reverse international invasions such as Iraq’s 1990 attack on Kuwait, but even in civil wars wholly within one so-called “rogue state”; reducing the potential new stature of the EU’s security structures in favor of NATO; and of course, bringing the former Yugoslavia under the political and economic control of Washington. “The pursuit of these goals required that certain agents within Yugoslavia be cast in the role of the

victims, and others as villains—the latter not just belligerents engaged in a civil war, but evil and murderous perpetrators of mass crimes which, in turn, would legitimate military intervention.”[\[178\]](#)

Professor David Gibbs says that during the Bosnian intervention NATO became rebranded as a “genocide prevention enterprise,” when in reality a major American motivation in pushing the policy at the time was the supposed threat that France and Germany would create their own army and pursue an independent foreign policy in their own interests. Bosnia gave the Bush and Clinton administrations an excuse to preempt that effort and preserve the dominance of NATO and the U.S. in Europe.[\[179\]](#) As *New York Times* reporter David Binder put it, “The Balkans have become hostage to an American power concept, which is to keep Europe down and America up.”[\[180\]](#) Gibbs added, “I think . . . the most pernicious feature of this” is that “it’s a justification for more war,” noting how the Bosnian “precedent” was later invoked during U.S.-led military campaigns in Kosovo, Iraq, Libya and Syria.[\[181\]](#)

## **Breaking Yugoslavia**

Yugoslavia (“union of the Southern Slavs”) was only created at the end of World War I. Before that the Balkans had been dominated by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After World War II, the Communist Josip Tito took power, and though he was a Red, kept the country out of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact. It was a collection of peoples, mostly Slavs, but deeply divided between Catholic Croats and Slovenes, Bosnian and Kosovar Muslims, Orthodox Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians, Catholic and

Protestant Hungarians and so on[\[182\]](#)—“a six-nation, eight-state confederacy, held together only by Tito’s balancing act,” as journalist Nebojsa Malic put it.[\[183\]](#)

## **IMF**

Antecedents to the war included a massive austerity regime foisted onto the country by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the 1980s, which destroyed the standard of living and created the circumstances in which the various ethnic and political subgroups began scapegoating each other as they fought over what was left. The people in the wealthier regions, Croatia and Slovenia, felt like they were being ripped off by the poorer regions like Macedonia and Kosovo, while the people in the poorer regions felt like they were being deprived of what the others still had. Further, the IMF insisted on the centralization of economic authority in the national government, essentially forcing it to rein in the autonomy of the provinces, which, even when change was minimal, still sparked outrage.[\[184\]](#)

## **Electing Secession**

In the elections of 1990, ethnic and regional nationalist-separatists won in Slovenia, Croatia and each of the three sections of Bosnia: the Croat, Serb and Muslim.[\[185\]](#) But the anti-separatist, Yugoslav nationalist and Communist Slobodan Milošević, then calling himself a socialist,[\[186\]](#) won big in Serbia.[\[187\]](#) The stage for conflict was set.

Despite the fact that the U.S. constantly invokes the absolute permanence of international borders, in the case of multi-ethnic Yugoslavia they did just about everything they could to break up the country. When the Soviet Union still stood, Washington preferred Tito's Communist, but independent, Yugoslavia. With both Tito (who died in 1980) long gone and the USSR disintegrating before their eyes, the Bush administration came to prefer the separatists in Slovenia and Croatia, and their aspirations to independence, regardless of the consequences, over the barely repentant leftists in power in Belgrade.[\[188\]](#)

But more than one-third of Yugoslavia's Serbs lived outside of Serbia, and had for centuries. What was supposed to happen to them?

## **Slovenia and Croatia First**

As early as January 1991, the U.S. forbade the central government from threatening to use force to disarm Slovenian and Croatian separatist militias, knowing good and well that they were importing weapons in violation of the embargo in preparation for war with the Yugoslav National Army (JNA).[\[189\]](#) At the same time, the State Department was joining the Germans in encouraging the Slovenian and Croatian leadership to secede.[\[190\]](#) While Croatian President Franjo Tudjman considered a European Community (or EC, the precursor to the European Union) compromise wherein the Serbian minority would be allowed to remain inside Yugoslavia, the Germans went ahead and announced that they would recognize their independence within Tito's former administrative borders anyway, killing the compromise.[\[191\]](#) Secretary Baker took contrary



positions, telling the eight members of the Yugoslav presidency not to do anything without the mutual consent of the other groups.[\[192\]](#) He later said he knew if they did so it would lead to war.[\[193\]](#) But Baker had also declared, inverting the Chicken Kiev formulation the administration had applied to the USSR, “If you force the United States to choose between unity and democracy, we will always choose democracy.”[\[194\]](#) His deputy—and later successor—Lawrence Eagleburger also gave them the green light,[\[195\]](#) one seen by the U.S. Embassy there as decisive,[\[196\]](#) even though the last ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, knew full well that hundreds of thousands of Serbs, already severely repressed by Croatian forces, would be “taken” out of Yugoslavia against their will and the potential for conflict that situation represented.[\[197\]](#)

## **Croatian Green Light**

As he acknowledged in his memoir, Zimmermann knew at the time that the Croats were proven to be arming up in violation of the embargo and for the purposes of “war with the JNA.”[\[198\]](#) But he still let President Tudjman know that the U.S. would do nothing to stand in the way of their secession either. Again, this was considered by all the American players to have been an invitation for them to do so.[\[199\]](#) Both Slovenia and Croatia seceded in June 1991.[\[200\]](#) In December, the EC, pushed hard by the Germans, who were then followed by the U.S., officially recognized the new nations’ independence and helped get them seats in the UN General Assembly. So much for national sovereignty. According to Zimmermann[\[201\]](#) and his boss Baker,[\[202\]](#) it was this move, particularly by Slovenia, which started

the war since their secession meant that the rest of Yugoslavia was cut off from Italy and Austria, a situation the national government would be bound to attempt to reverse.

## **Selfish Slovenes**

At a meeting with Zimmermann and Eagleburger in February 1990, when warned by the others that secession could lead immediately to war, Slovenian politician Peter Jambrek, from the pro-secessionist DEMOS coalition party, responded, according to Zimmermann's paraphrasing, that "there would be no bloodshed in Slovenia, which would be able to escape by walling itself off from the rest of Yugoslavia." Zimmermann complained, "In their drive to separate from Yugoslavia they simply ignored the twenty-two million Yugoslavs who were not Slovenes." And therefore, "They bear considerable responsibility for the bloodbath that followed their secession."[\[203\]](#) Of course, the leaders of the EC and the U.S. government, who encouraged and then almost immediately recognized their independence,[\[204\]](#) shared in that same responsibility.

## **Genscher's War**

Former American secretary of state and Bosnia negotiator Cyrus Vance declared the entire conflict "Genscher's War," due to the role the German foreign minister had played in pushing Slovenia and Croatia to secede, and sabotaging Vance's diplomacy.[\[205\]](#) The Germans had in fact been quietly promoting their separatism since the late 1960s,[\[206\]](#) and had been pouring

in arms despite the embargo, rendering it a “joke,” as one NATO official told retired U.S. Army Col. David Hackworth,[\[207\]](#) then reporting for *Newsweek*.[\[208\]](#) Hackworth traveled to Croatia and reported there was “no limitation” on the arms coming in to the Croatians.[\[209\]](#) However, the Slovenes were safe, separated on the other side of Croatia, so its ability to intervene was limited. After EC leaders made it clear they would recognize their independence soon enough, and faced with resistance by Slovenian militias armed by the Germans[\[210\]](#) following the short “Ten-Day War,”[\[211\]](#) Yugoslav Prime Minister Ante Marković ordered the Yugoslav National Army (JNA) to withdraw from Slovenia.[\[212\]](#) According to Zimmermann, after declaring independence, “Tudjman had made not the least effort, for example, to assure Croatia’s Serbian citizens that they would be safe in an independent Croatia.” He added, “Given the past year’s record of discrimination against Serbs in Croatia, the issue wasn’t academic, and Tudjman’s omission wasn’t an oversight.”[\[213\]](#)

## **Krajina Serbs Declare Independence from Croatia**

In August 1990, Croatian Serb militias took control of predominantly Serbian towns in Eastern Slavonia in far-eastern Croatia. In March 1991, they declared the new republic of Krajina, including Eastern Slavonia, independent from Croatia and loyal to Yugoslavia. Croatia’s declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in June led to a six-month war between Serbia and Croatia.[\[214\]](#)

The leadership in the Croatian Serb enclaves of Krajina and Eastern Slavonia invoked the Croatians’ atrocities in the service of the Third Reich

in World War II when the puppet *Ustaše* regime had murdered hundreds of thousands of Serbian, Jewish, Muslim and Roma civilians,[\[215\]](#) saying they were afraid that their rights would not be protected in the new country.[\[216\]](#) Though Tudjman had fought with Tito's Communist Partisans in the war,[\[217\]](#) he revived the *Ustaše* flag, currency and other symbols of the fascists and officially downgraded Serbian citizens' status to that of a minority.[\[218\]](#)

Tudjman, an "ethnic exclusivist," according to his ally Amb. Zimmermann, who had already vowed to Secretary Eagleburger that his regime would not protect the rights of the Serb minority he despised,[\[219\]](#) sent separatist militias, armed by the Germans, to lay siege to the Serb areas Krajina and Eastern Slavonia, as well as the national army barracks, attempting to starve out the soldiers and their families—30,000 people.[\[220\]](#) They committed mass atrocities against Serb civilians, executing hundreds of them[\[221\]](#) and driving tens of thousands from their homes, which were then destroyed by the thousands, in the first, although usually unnoticed, ethnic cleansing campaign of the war.[\[222\]](#) This led the JNA to intervene on the side of the Croatian Serbs.[\[223\]](#) The fighting included the brutal three-month battle of Vukovar in the summer and fall of 1991, where 3,000 were killed and ethnic Croats were then expelled by Serb forces.[\[224\]](#)

Milošević offered a deal to end the war whereby the Yugoslav government would give up its claims to Croatia in exchange for recognition of the self-determination of the Croatian Serb minority. They settled for UN peacekeeping troops to replace those of the JNA protecting them.[\[225\]](#)

## **Greater Serbia**

This became the basis for the accusation that Milošević was hell-bent on creating a new “Greater Serbia”: simply that he would not abandon the Croatian Serbs to the mercies of their new government which clearly meant to oppress, kill and even forcibly remove them from the new nation they found themselves stuck in against their will.[\[226\]](#)

The U.S. government and media blamed the entire war on the Serbs, which was a vast oversimplification. There was, however, plenty of blame to go around, including the Serbian Yugoslav President Milošević.

### **Badinter(vention) Commission**

The EC’s Badinter Commission, chaired by French lawyer Robert Badinter, completely ignoring Yugoslavia’s constitution and its court rulings,[\[227\]](#) declared that the country was “in the process of dissolution” on December 7, 1991. They further declared that the internal regional borders within Yugoslavia—which had been drawn arbitrarily by the Communists after World War II[\[228\]](#)—would now be considered sacrosanct sovereign borders of new states who have every right to secede from the central government.

However, invoking the recently-invented principle of *uti possidetis* (“As you possess, so shall you possess”)—which says that when a nation breaks apart during decolonization, the parts must not continue to break up, no matter how poorly this made-up law applies to any given situation—the Commission ruled that any smaller portions of those new states would be forbidden from doing the same. The only precedent for this ruling by the EC was a question regarding Mali and Burkina Faso following independence from the French after World War II. This was not exactly

based on a treaty signed, a paragraph in the UN Charter, a Security Council or General Assembly resolution, the Single European Act of 1987 which incorporated the EC, nor any other pretense of real authority. Nor did colonialism, or the end of it, have anything to do with what was happening in Yugoslavia.[\[229\]](#) *Uti possidetis* was really just Latin for “What we say goes.”[\[230\]](#)

The EC pronounced: “[T]he Serbian population in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . [does not] have the right to self-determination,” though it “is entitled to all the rights concerned to minorities and ethnic groups under international law.”[\[231\]](#) In other words, they left hundreds of thousands of people, more than a third of the Serbian population of Yugoslavia,[\[232\]](#) stranded on the “wrong” side of new international borders of ethnic-based states, leading almost immediately to war, just as the U.S. Embassy had known would happen since at least 1989.[\[233\]](#) The double standard was amazing. As explained by one of its primary practitioners, then-Ambassador Zimmermann, Slovenia for the Slovenes and Croatia for the Croats, was fine. They would nearly get engraved invitations to leave Yugoslavia and be recognized as independent states. And the same for Bosnia, where the mere-plurality Muslims ruled and refused to share power. But for Zimmermann, the idea that the minority Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia would have the right to decide not to simply secede from the new nations, but to remain in the old one, Yugoslavia, was a “dangerous doctrine,” unhinged ethnic nationalism at odds with America’s goal of seeing European multi-ethnic democracies solve those problems at conference tables. This was right as the U.S.A. was helping to break the country apart

along ethnic lines in two of three cases, Slovenia and Croatia, and when they knew that in the third case, Bosnia, their intervention was certain to hasten its bloody internal division.[\[234\]](#)

### **Izetbegović's Caution, Recklessness**

The new Bosnian president, Alija Izetbegović, a Muslim, actually tried to warn the EC against recognizing Croatia's independence, proposing instead, along with Macedonian politician Kiro Gligorov, the Izetbegović-Gligorov Plan, which would have held Yugoslavia together in a loose federation.

[\[235\]](#) This was because were Croatia to join Slovenia in secession, and were the Bosnian Croats to then join with the newly independent Croatia, it would leave the Bosnian Muslims in a Yugoslavia dominated by Serbia. Therefore they would also have to secede, and that, he said, could spread the war to Bosnia.[\[236\]](#) Even though Izetbegović had been participating in talks with moderate Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb leaders to seek a new power-sharing deal to avoid war, he betrayed them by going on television and denouncing his own Muslim negotiating partners as well as the Bosnian Serbs as being traitors to Bosnia.[\[237\]](#)

In an unconstitutional process that the Bosnian Serbs boycotted,[\[238\]](#) President Izetbegović then led the provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina in seceding from Yugoslavia early the next year.[\[239\]](#) Once the Muslims declared their intention to do so, the Bosnian Serbs withdrew from the coalition government and held a referendum which showed near-unanimous agreement to break away from Bosnia and remain part of Yugoslavia. War between the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs broke out soon after.[\[240\]](#)

## **Different Situation**

In Slovenia, the northernmost province, there was ethnic near-homogeneity and the fewest conflicts regarding secession. In Croatia, the Croats were a majority, but had a large Serbian minority which they would eventually remove in a massive forced march in 1995, though in the meantime were already a geographically separate group.[\[241\]](#) But in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Bosnian Muslims, intent on seceding from what was left of Yugoslavia, were only a plurality in their province, with substantial Croatian Catholic and Serbian Orthodox Christian minority populations spread in different areas throughout the province. Combined, the Christians were the majority, and they were determined to prevent themselves from being taken away by this new state, determined as it was to rule from a strong central state in Sarajevo, dominated by a Muslim government which was already refusing to step down and share power as the constitution mandated.[\[242\]](#) About this problem, Zimmermann claimed the “Serbs in Bosnia had an understandable grievance, though not a legitimate one.”[\[243\]](#)

## **Izetbegović's Fault**

Amb. Zimmermann insisted in his memoir that “[i]t was Milošević and Tudjman, in their desire to divide Bosnia along ethnic lines, who laid the philosophical groundwork for a separate Muslim entity [in Bosnia].” But he does not show this beyond speculation about a secret deal he thinks the Serb and Croatian leaders must have made to carve up Bosnia at the Muslims’ expense. Zimmermann continued, “And it was the besieged Izetbegović



who stood alone in advocating the preservation of Bosnia's multiethnic framework.”[\[244\]](#) But he does not demonstrate that either, and in fact acknowledged the opposite, that by seceding from Yugoslavia without the consent of the Bosnian Serbs, and with a substantial Croat minority in a country adjacent to the newly independent and ethnic-nationalist-run Croatia, Izetbegović was forcing the Croats and Serbs into a situation where ethnic war was much more likely.

Contrary to Zimmermann's narrative about a secret Bosnian Croat–Serb deal at the expense of the Muslims, the Bosnian Serbs were worried about a renewed World War II-era alliance of the Bosnian Croats and Muslims against them. After all, they had joined together to support the unconstitutional referendum on independence.[\[245\]](#) This was especially true after the attacks by Croatian forces on the Serbs of Krajina and statements by Muslim party leaders in Bosnia that Serbs and Croats would have to adapt their policies to the will of the Muslims, including signing up Bosnia for the Organization of Islamic Conference, signifying their intent to identify the new Bosnia as a Muslim country.[\[246\]](#)

Zimmermann quoted Croatian President Tudjman's concerns about Izetbegović's intentions as though they were the nonsensical ravings of a liar intent on exploiting pretended fears as a cynical excuse to seize land. Perhaps they were. But he was certainly as determined as Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić to prevent his ethnic and religious kin from being left a minority in the new Bosnia. Tudjman told Amb. Zimmermann, “The Muslims want to establish an Islamic fundamentalist state. They plan to do this by flooding Bosnia with 500,000 Turks.” He said the Muslim leader's

plan was “to reward large families so that in a few years the Muslims will be a majority in Bosnia,” and that “Izetbegović is just a fundamentalist front man for Turkey; together they’re conspiring to create a Greater Bosnia. Catholics and Orthodox alike will be eradicated.”[\[247\]](#)

Nevertheless, the Bosnian Croats and Muslims aligned together in opposition to the Bosnian Serbs, jointly sponsoring and passing a resolution on secession from Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia in the fall of 1991, with a referendum to ratify it, which the Bosnian Serbs boycotted, the following spring. The war broke out days later.[\[248\]](#) Within a year, Bosnian Muslim forces turned on the Croats, changing the whole situation into a three-way brawl, a situation which lasted into 1994.[\[249\]](#) According to the Dutch government investigation, this Bosnian Muslim–Croat war of 1993–1994 included some of the worst atrocities of the conflict, on all sides.[\[250\]](#) It got so bad that the Muslims entered secret talks with the Serbs to explore the potential of a new alliance against the Tudjman-backed Bosnian Croatian forces.[\[251\]](#) Instead, the Clinton administration intervened to heal the Bosnian Croatian–Muslim split to unite them against the Bosnian Serbs.[\[252\]](#)

Despite his overall narrative which blamed Milošević and his allies for virtually everything, Zimmermann concluded, “Izetbegović was playing a double game,” adding, “With the European Community supporting Bosnia’s independence, he seemed to think he could get away with it under the guns of the Serbs. Perhaps he counted on Western military support, though nobody had promised him that.” The ambassador continued, “Whatever his motives, his premature push for independence was a disastrous political

mistake. Serbia, Bosnia's vastly more powerful neighbor, now had the pretext it needed to strike—the claim that 1.3 million Serbs were being taken out of Yugoslavia against their will.”[253]

A more neutral observer might think, just as in Croatia, the EC, U.S. and Bosnian regime had given the Serbs actual reason beyond mere pretext, from their point of view, to intervene on behalf of their brethren stranded on the other side of this new international border. But no. Zimmermann wrote, “There was no debate in the U.S. government about the causes of the Bosnian war; everybody knew that Milošević and Karadžić were the guilty parties.” Simple as that.[254]

## **Bush Sr. Recognizes**

Throwing out their earlier position on preserving Yugoslavia's borders and recognizing the new nations of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia, the H.W. Bush administration joined the EC in claiming to recognize the independence of ethnic enclaves from the former Yugoslav state, but never ethnic minorities within the new states. Now that they had broken up one country, they called a halt. Any effort by Croatian or Bosnian Serbs to remain in Yugoslavia, or by Serbia to assist them in doing so, would be considered aggression. Baker told Serbian President Milošević, “We reject any claims by Serbia to territory beyond its borders. If you persist, Serbia will be made an outcast, a pariah.”[255] Scholars Robert W. Tucker and David C. Hendrickson noted the administration “once again insisted that the territorial integrity of the new states was something sacred and inviolable. Having defiled the principle of territorial integrity,” it had then

“immediately rediscovered it in all its purity. Thereafter, any suggestion that these new boundaries be changed was subsequently met by the insistence . . . that to do so challenged the very basis of world order.”[\[256\]](#)

Regarding the EC’s motives in issuing the edicts they had, journalist and author George Szamuely wrote that the leaders of the Badinter Commission must have thought their rulings would prevent the war. However, “By declaring administrative boundaries to be international frontiers, the commission ensured that any disputes about them would become international conflicts” and “trigger a mad rush for the exits in Yugoslavia and thus catastrophe.” The EC’s approval of Slovenia and Croatia’s declarations of independence, Szamuely wrote, “was bound to lead others to conclude that what counts for the so-called international community is the use of force to change the facts on the ground.” This decision was what had incentivized “the Balkan wars’ distinctive feature: ethnic cleansing, the purpose of which was to forge new territorial arrangements in anticipation of the next round of international arbitration.”[\[257\]](#)

Amb. Zimmermann knew at the time that the EC’s decision to recognize the independence of Slovenia and Croatia would lead directly to war in Bosnia. He wrote a cable back to the State Department saying war was “certain.” He added, “Let nobody believe that the ten thousand or so who have died so far [in Croatia] mean that violence has reached its peak. A war in Bosnia could increase that number tenfold.”[\[258\]](#)

General Colin Powell, who was then chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and later held the job of secretary of state in the George W. Bush’s

administration, admitted that “we were all too quick to recognize these individual republics as they declared their independence and asked for recognition. We failed to think through the history of this region and so it’s a little strange to have that political context and then ask the military to go solve the problem.”[\[259\]](#)

## **Public Choice**

Canadian Ambassador James Bissett later explained the internal, parochial politics in Germany which helped lead to the disaster. It was not the newly reunified country’s national interest that was at stake, but the political needs of the few individual men in charge of the government. Chancellor Helmut Kohl’s party needed to steal the issue from their political opposition. And since Foreign Minister Genscher had been slow to support Iraq War I in 1990–1991, his recognition of Slovenia and Croatia would demonstrate German capability in international affairs to make up for that supposed blunder. Recognition also changed the situation from an internal into an international affair and therefore their business.[\[260\]](#)

Of course, the EC was also a government program in need of a justification and even to grow into the European Union. As British Lord David Owen, a long-term negotiator on the Balkans under EC authority, explained it: negotiating the Balkans was considered to be “the virility symbol of the Euro-federalists,” and a way to establish the EC’s importance in the new global system.[\[261\]](#)

## **Lisbon Deal**

In July 1991, Serb Democratic Party (SDS) leader Radovan Karadžić and Adil Zulfikarpašić from the Muslim Bosniak Organization (MBO) signed the Zulfikarpašić-Karadžić agreement which would have kept the union between Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. However, as mentioned above, Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović initially supported but then opposed the deal, killing it. This process repeated itself early the next year, after the Badinter Commission, when, in February 1992, the Carrington-Cutileiro plan, or “Lisbon deal,” was struck by Portuguese Foreign Minister Jose Cutileiro between Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb representatives. The deal said that Bosnia-Herzegovina would remain united politically but would be divided into three ethno-religious cantons with a very weak central government in the capital city of Sarajevo. The supposedly intransigent Bosnian Serbs were represented at the meeting by Karadžić, who said, “Either we remain in Yugoslavia, or else we will get a sovereign state in Bosnia-Herzegovina which will form an alliance of states, that is a confederation, together with the other two states.” The Bosnian Serbs were willing to accept independence from Yugoslavia and reduce the proportion of land they controlled from approximately 60 percent to only 42.5 percent.[\[262\]](#)

Said by the U.S. to be the aggressors in this part of the war, the Bosnian Serbs were satisfied with this compromise. Zimmermann says “Karadžić was ecstatic” over this deal, which would give the Bosnian Serbs plenty of autonomy in a new system “based on three constituent nations and joined by a common government and assembly.”

Izetbegović had said he would support the arrangement,[\[263\]](#) originally accepting and signing the Lisbon deal; then, two days later, on American advice, he killed it, this time starting a war.[\[264\]](#) It was Amb. Zimmermann who was responsible. As recounted by State Department official George Kenney, then-head of the Yugoslavia desk, “Zimmermann told Izetbegović, ‘Look, why don’t you wait and see what the U.S. can do for you?’ meaning, ‘We’ll recognize you and then help you out. So don’t go ahead with the Lisbon agreement, don’t accept the Cutileiro plan, and just hold out for some kind of unitary Bosnian state.’”[\[265\]](#) Canadian Amb. Bissett added, “Upon finding that Izetbegović was having second thoughts about the agreement he had signed in Lisbon, the Ambassador suggested that if he withdrew his signature, the United States would grant recognition to Bosnia as an independent state.” Izetbegović was convinced. He then “withdrew his signature and renounced the agreement.”[\[266\]](#) Two days later, on March 30, he called for a referendum on secession. Just a few days after that, on April 4, he announced a full military mobilization. On the 6th he declared independence. The war was on.[\[267\]](#) Referring to the peace deal that finally ended the war two and a half years later, Damjan Krnjevic-Miskovic wrote: “One still hears it said that ‘the difference between the Lisbon and the Dayton agreements is simply two years of mass graves.’”[\[268\]](#)

Though he denied it in his book,[\[269\]](#) Zimmermann later admitted his error to the *Times*. “Our hope was the Serbs would hold off if it was clear Bosnia had the recognition of Western countries. It turned out we were wrong.” He confessed, “He said he didn’t like it. I told him, if he didn’t like

it, why sign it?” In retrospect, “the Lisbon agreement wasn’t bad at all.” That was too bad, because, as the paper said, “after talking to the Ambassador, Mr. Izetbegović publicly renounced the Lisbon agreement.”[\[270\]](#)

After citing another *Times* report which said the U.S. had intervened to ruin the Lisbon deal,[\[271\]](#) Tucker and Hendrickson wrote that “Izetbegović’s repudiation of the . . . agreement . . . was the immediate trigger for the war,” but that “[t]he war may have occurred in any event. The Lisbon formula was vague in crucial respects, and contained no agreement respecting the boundaries of the three cantons.” Still, they wrote, that “cannot detract from the judgment that American diplomats acted in an extremely irresponsible manner. . . . If war was to be averted, an agreement respecting cantonization was the last step at which it might have been.” The two also noted that even though the Bosnian referendum was necessary to satisfy the requirements of the EC and U.S., the referendum itself was unconstitutional. The constitution “had conferred a right of secession but made it dependent on the mutual agreement of the nations composing Yugoslavia. . . . [T]o move to secession without the consent of the Serbs was a plain violation of its terms.”[\[272\]](#)

They also showed that there is nothing in the international law that confers upon the United States or anyone else the authority to intervene or to take sides in civil wars or wars of secession in other sovereign nations, and that the U.S. recognition of Bosnia’s independence was “an illegal intervention in Yugoslavia’s internal affairs, to which Belgrade had every right to object.” Otherwise, “the contrary view may only be asserted on the



debased view that international law is whatever the United States and the Security Council says it is and that we are free, like an Alice in the grip of deconstructionism, to have words mean anything we like.”[273]

With the Germans making initial inroads in the newly independent Croatia and Slovenia, and taking a strong lead in the EC on the issue, the U.S. government wanted Bosnia to be their project along the same lines, [274] even though the intelligence agencies, and even the Germans, were warning that Bosnia would “blow up” into civil war.[275] David Binder wrote that Secretary Baker, by recognizing Bosnian independence, “literally created . . . Bosnia-Herzegovina . . . with the blessing of President Bush, with considerable input from Lawrence Eagleburger and Warren Zimmermann.”[276] Despite the warnings from leaders on every side of the issue, Zimmermann had gone ahead and recommended recognition of Bosnian independence.[277] Of course this led directly to war between the Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs. In his own defense, Zimmermann deployed the circular argument that the war he helped provoke would have happened anyway, since the Bosnian Serbs’ landgrabs, launched after Izetbegović’s declaration of independence, would have caused what up until then had not happened.[278]

Roger Cohen wrote in the *Times* that “[w]ith the precedent of 1991, when a much smaller Serbian minority went to war to resist joining a Croatian state, this international decision on Bosnia looks as close to criminal negligence as a diplomatic act can be.” He added, “Indeed, international recognition and the outbreak of the Bosnian war were

simultaneous: the world put a light to a fuse.”[\[279\]](#) He must have meant President Bush.

Once the war started, factions of the JNA stayed in Bosnia and merged with Bosnian Serb forces, making them better equipped than their new enemies and leaving open the argument that Serbian troops were participating in a deniable role as members of local Bosnian Serb forces, though the majority of them were still Bosnian.[\[280\]](#)

The Bush and Clinton administrations went on to sabotage a series of peace offers between 1992 and 1995, until Clinton finally signed the Dayton Accords in November 1995, which, as the *Times* conceded, looked much like the Lisbon deal from three years before, only with less land for America’s chosen Muslim allies and an indefinite NATO military presence.[\[281\]](#)

## **A Problem Called Ukraine**

### **Communist Legacy**

Future tensions in Ukraine were presaged by a short verbal conflict between Kiev and Moscow after they declared full independence from the USSR. As Professor Vladislav Zubok recounted, despite the fact that it was Russian President Boris Yeltsin who had engineered the final breakup of the USSR at the meeting in Belovezh, Belarus, he had thought Russia and Ukraine would sign some kind of new confederation deal. Spurned by Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk, Yeltsin had his spokesman announce that if Ukraine wanted true independence, then the Russian Federation would have

to assert its own territorial claims to the country's far-eastern Donbas region and Crimean Peninsula. After a Ukrainian journalist called this a continuation of Communist imperialism, the press secretary declared, "You don't want to live with Russia in a union? This is a Communist legacy for you? Then go, but return Crimea and Donbas to us! Because they became part of Ukraine because of the 'Communist legacy!'" For the next few weeks, it looked like there might be a war.

Finally, it was decided that Russia's new political and economic relationship with the West was more important, and that a conflict would put the new working relationship in jeopardy. Yeltsin believed Russia would have enough influence in Ukraine that it would not be a problem. So they put it off.[\[282\]](#)

## **Antecedents**

### **Mr. Republican**

On April 4, 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty (or Washington Treaty), the mutual-defense pact establishing NATO, was signed by the United States and 11 other nations—Canada, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Portugal, Italy, Norway, Denmark and Iceland. [\[283\]](#) No longer just a treaty, it is a military bureaucracy unto itself, headquartered in Brussels, Belgium, and with institutional interests of its own. And from the beginning, conservative American skeptics warned that its very existence could increase tensions and make World War III more likely.

Back at the dawn of the first Cold War, “Mr. Republican,” Senator Robert Taft of Ohio, tried to stop it. Predicting the eventual consequences of the creation of the powerful new alliance, Taft told the Senate, “Under the Monroe Doctrine we could change our policy at any time. We could judge whether perhaps one of the countries had given cause for the attack. Only Congress could declare a war in pursuance of the doctrine.” However, under the Washington Treaty which established NATO, “the President can take us into war without Congress.” Though the text does not say that, it was certainly the implication at the time, and President Truman did intervene in Korea without a declaration or even authorization from Congress, only on the UN’s authority, less than a year later.[\[284\]](#) “But, above all,” Taft said, “the treaty is a part of a much larger program by which we arm all these nations against Russia.” He continued, “I believe such an alliance is more likely to produce war than peace.” Warning of the existential threat of nuclear war not only to the nation, but to our entire civilization, Taft said that arming up all the countries in Russia’s near abroad could be counter-productive and provoke the war they were trying to deter. “How would we feel if Russia undertook to arm a country on our border; Mexico, for instance?” he asked. “Furthermore, can we afford this new project of foreign assistance?”[\[285\]](#)

Taft later elaborated on *Meet the Press*: “What I object to is undertaking, by contract, to arm about 20 nations all around the world, all around Russia, obviously an aggressive move, we say defensive, but it obviously could be used for aggression just as well.” He said we were unnecessarily risking nuclear war by “not just arming ourselves to defend

ourselves, but we're arming half the world against the other half of the world.”[\[286\]](#) Luckily that buildup did not cause another general war to break out in Europe. However, his criticisms were still quite valid, perhaps more so in our times, when the danger from Russia pales in comparison to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's Red Army in the aftermath of World War II.

Back then the hawks argued that if it was just the Russian empire, they would not think the U.S. should have to stay committed to post-war European security, but since Soviet Communism was considered a plot to enslave all of mankind, it was therefore different.[\[287\]](#) By the time the first Cold War ended, those arguments had been forgotten.

## **The EU Lags Behind**

Now the argument was that to prevent a Yugoslavia-type disaster, a violent attempt by European states to revisit their post-World War II borders, they all needed to be held together by the fledgling new European superstate, the EU. But the Western Europeans were hesitant to move forward too quickly on political and economic integration due to simple protectionism. Western European companies did not want to compete with Eastern European firms who paid lower wages, and the Western European labor unions did not want to compete with those same Eastern lower-wage earners in their home countries or in the West, since EU expansion would include opening their borders to floods of new immigrants from the East. So the United States had to expand its military commitments instead to hurry along the process of Eastern integration into the European Common Market.[\[288\]](#)

President Bush Sr.'s right-hand man and former National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft opposed NATO expansion in the 1990s. He later explained that one major reason they did it was that the Americans wanted to see Eastern Europe integrated with the West, and though he believed the European Union was the best vehicle for this, he said the French and the Germans were more reluctant: "We wanted to anchor Eastern Europe as closely to Western Europe as possible. Now, to me, the obvious way to do that is the European Union, but the Europeans didn't want to move that fast. So we pushed the expansion of NATO on the West Europeans, and they were so happy not to have us hector them about EU expansion that they went along with it."[\[289\]](#)

Former CIA analyst Paul Pillar agreed with Scowcroft: "The EU was the perfect instrument for leading the way in westifying the east, and surely the economic and cultural risks that the Union would take on should be considered no greater than the commitment represented by Article Five of the North Atlantic Treaty, which commits every member of the alliance to come to the defense of any other member under attack. But instead the order for the East Europeans became NATO first, EU second."[\[290\]](#)

Senator Sam Nunn, an expert on Russia and nuclear weapons,[\[291\]](#) also wanted to see EU expansion precede NATO expansion—even by 15 years.[\[292\]](#)

But they still had another choice, the Partnership for Peace.

# Bill Clinton

“It only remains for us to re-bury Lenin.”

—Boris Yeltsin

“NATO expansion is not anti-Russian. It’s not intended to be exclusive of Russia, and there is no imminent timetable.”

—Bill Clinton

“What is the point of having this superb military you’re always talking about if you can’t use it?”

—Madeleine Albright

“If disunity were ever to seize and paralyze the Party, the chaos and weakness of Russian society would be revealed in forms beyond description.”

—George Kennan

“We created a virtual open shop for thievery on a scale which I doubt has ever taken place in human history.”

—Wayne Merry

“Plenty of Russian reformers and democrats . . . worry—and warn—that NATO enlargement threatens to strengthen . . . reactionary forces. We believe that that risk is both exaggerated and manageable.”

—Strobe Talbott

“One should not enter into solemn treaty obligations involving the potential declaration of war, based simply on an assumption that one would never be called upon to honor such obligations.”

—Malcolm Rifkind

“The time has come for an attack on Russia.”

—Osama bin Laden



# **The Partnership for Peace**

## **Missed Chance**

President Bill Clinton (1993–2001) could have called off the new Cold War before things went too far. Instead, he committed the United States to a path of confrontation with Russia, expanding NATO in his second term over strenuous Russian objections.<sup>[1]</sup> Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic were officially inducted in 1999.<sup>[2]</sup>

Though the Russians had pulled their military out of Eastern Europe and cut its size by 70 percent by 1996,<sup>[3]</sup> the decision was made in June 1993 that NATO expansion would go forward.<sup>[4]</sup> True partnership with Russia in the CSCE or a similar arrangement was never truly on the table to be canceled. The administration argued that the Russians would not mind. Maybe they would join too, the Democrats said.<sup>[5]</sup>

## **Drunken Blunder**

In September 1993, Yeltsin wrote a letter to Clinton after returning home from Poland, where President Lech Wałęsa may have gotten him stinking drunk before persuading him to agree that Poland could join any alliance they wished.<sup>[6]</sup> The Poles said it was not the alcohol, but a threat by President Wałęsa to form an explicitly anti-Russian alliance with Ukraine if Yeltsin would not give in on their membership in NATO.<sup>[7]</sup> Either way, Yeltsin seemed to be trying to mitigate the damage by clarifying the

Russian position to the American president. Referring to Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, Yeltsin conceded that they wished to join NATO in part due to the “by-no-means-nostalgic sentiments of the East Europeans toward past ‘cooperation’ within the framework of the Warsaw Pact.” He added, “Overall, the impression is that they do have grounds for a certain amount of apprehension about their security.” Still, Yeltsin wrote, “I cannot help but express our uneasiness as well over the fact that the discussion of how NATO might evolve is centering with increasing frequency on the scenario of quantitative expansion of the alliance by adding Eastern European countries.”

He attempted to insist instead on a “truly pan-European security system, an approach predicated on collective (but not on the basis of bloc membership) actions to prevent and resolve the crises and conflicts that now have Europe in turmoil.” He said that even though he did not think expansion would “automatically lead to the alliance somehow turning against Russia,” they had to think carefully about the consequences for domestic politics. “Not only the opposition, but moderate circles as well, would no doubt perceive this as a sort of neo-isolation of our country in diametric opposition to its natural admission into Euro-Atlantic space.” And he reminded Clinton of the Bush administration’s promises, invoking “the spirit of the treaty on the final settlement with respect to Germany, signed in September 1990.” He pointed to its prohibitions against the deployment of foreign troops within the former East Germany, concluding this language “precludes the option of expanding the NATO zone into the east.” He continued, “In general, we advocate that relations between our country and

NATO be a few degrees warmer than those between the alliance and Eastern Europe,” and once again brought up at least the long-term possibility that Russia itself could join the alliance.[\[8\]](#) After Yeltsin’s blunder in Poland, Russia’s foreign minister, Andrei Kozyrev, told U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering that Russia was fine with NATO expansion, if they could be the first to join.[\[9\]](#)

After Yeltsin brought up President H.W. Bush’s promises, the State Department went back to see if it was true. Secretary of State Warren Christopher arranged a meeting with German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel, who had been Hans-Dietrich Genscher’s protégé and was still in contact with him, along with Dieter Kastrup, Kinkel’s top aide. Kinkel and Kastrup told Christopher that though it was not stipulated in the 1990 treaty, the Russians’ interpretation “had political and psychological substance that we had to take seriously.” Kastrup added that “the ‘basic philosophy’ of the agreement had been that NATO would not expand to the east,” and that he could see why “Yeltsin thought the West had committed itself not to extend NATO beyond its 1990 limits.”[\[10\]](#)

## **Fooling Yeltsin**

At the end of September 1993, after receiving advanced praise from the administration,[\[11\]](#) Yeltsin attempted to dissolve the Congress of People’s Deputies and parliament. When they refused and instead impeached and replaced him, his forces violently attacked the Russian White House (their parliament building), killing 144 people.[\[12\]](#) He then abolished the body

and forced through a new constitution which centralized more power in the presidency.

Clinton made it clear his administration endorsed Yeltsin's attack, telling him, "History is on your side."[\[13\]](#) In a speech at the Russian Academy for the National Economy, Secretary Christopher declared that "Russia is being reborn as a democracy," and called the democratically elected parliament the "last gasp of the old order in Russia." Christopher explained, "The United States does not easily support the suspension of parliaments, but these are extraordinary times. The steps taken by President Yeltsin were in response to exceptional circumstances."[\[14\]](#)

Soon after the attack, Christopher met with Yeltsin and his foreign minister in Moscow. The secretary assured him that the U.S. would not expand the NATO alliance, and would instead seek to integrate Russia and the entire former Warsaw Pact into a new organization to be called the Partnership for Peace (PfP). Though in truth the PfP was always meant to serve not as a separate organization but a pathway to NATO membership, [\[15\]](#) Ambassador-at-Large and Special Advisor to the Secretary of State on the New Independent States Strobe Talbott had cautioned in an internal memo that they should emphasize the PfP instead of NATO expansion for the time being. Talbott explained, "The key principle, as I see it, is this . . . An expanded NATO that excludes Russia will not serve to contain Russia's retrograde, expansionist impulses; quite the contrary, it will further provoke them."[\[16\]](#)

In a memo to Clinton, National Security Advisor Anthony Lake summed up the consensus of an NSC meeting where they had decided to

emphasize the PfP just three days before Christopher met with Yeltsin: “All your advisers agree that doing anything at this stage to indicate that NATO’s border will move closer to Russia and Ukraine without at the same time including those two states would have major negative consequences within both.” This was why they wanted to push the ruse of the Partnership for Peace, which, Lake told Clinton, was truly meant to be the “first step toward full NATO membership.” But Russia would not be allowed into the alliance. They would instead be led to believe the PfP would replace a new, more political NATO.[\[17\]](#)

The cable documenting Christopher and Yeltsin’s conversation reads: “Turning to the question of NATO expansion, Secretary Christopher explained the U.S. approach of establishing a Partnership for Peace, and stressed that the approach to future new membership in the alliance was inclusive and non-discriminatory.” Yeltsin was enthusiastic. He “called it a brilliant proposal, pledged his full support, and thanked President Clinton for his leadership on this issue which could have proved extremely difficult for Russia to handle.”[\[18\]](#) Christopher also told Yeltsin that the European allies were already agreed. “I am delighted with your approval and now I predict widespread acceptance of the idea.”[\[19\]](#)

They told him the PfP would be open to all members of the former Soviet Union, including Russia and the Central Asian Muslim “stans.” Christopher assured Yeltsin, “There would be no effort to exclude anyone and there would be no step taken at this time to push anyone ahead of the others.” Yeltsin interrupted to clarify if the secretary meant to say that all former Soviet states would be “on equal footing and there would be a

partnership not a membership.” Secretary Christopher told him, “Yes, that is the case, there would not even be an associate status.” Yeltsin replied, “This is a brilliant idea, it is a stroke of genius.” Yeltsin then said that “this serves to dissipate all of the tension which we now have in Russia regarding Eastern European states and their aspirations with respect to NATO. It would have been an issue for Russia particularly if it left us in a second class status.” He added, “Now under your new idea we are all equal and it will ensure equal participation on the basis of partnership. . . . It really is a great idea, really great. Tell Bill I am thrilled by this brilliant stroke.” Christopher said, “We will tell him that you bought his recommendation with real enthusiasm.” Yeltsin replied, “Of course, yes, yes.”[\[20\]](#)

Christopher and Talbott both later claimed that Yeltsin had misunderstood them, but as Brookings Institution scholar James Goldgeier pointed out, the meeting notes showed they had misled him. After getting an excited response from the Russian president over the Partnership for Peace proposal, Christopher seemed to add as an afterthought that they would be “looking at the question of membership as a longer term eventuality.” It does not appear that Yeltsin heard or understood this,[\[21\]](#) though Talbott blames him, saying he had drunkenly interrupted Christopher in his excitement and did not hear the bad news before shooping the two Americans out the door.[\[22\]](#)

It is also a fact that earlier that very same day, Christopher told Foreign Minister Kozyrev that the PfP would be “open to all,” rendering their denials implausible. According to State Department notes of the meeting, Christopher mentioned the possibility of NATO expansion in the long-term

future, but said that “no one would be excluded,” and instead stressed that “the Partnership for Peace would be open to all the NACC (North Atlantic Cooperation Council) countries.” When Kozyrev asked if there would be new NATO members now, the secretary said “no, that we were emphasizing a Partnership for Peace” instead.[\[23\]](#)

This lie was successful. As late as spring 1994, Kozyrev was confused about what was happening and was still boasting that he had helped to “prevent NATO’s expansion eastward to our borders.”[\[24\]](#) Even the Poles were deceived and thought they were being betrayed by the United States, which seemed to be favoring the PfP, which lacked a true security guarantee, over the NATO alliance.[\[25\]](#)

## **Betrayal**

Goldgeier, who believed Bush Sr. and Baker’s promises against expansion in 1990 had been overblown, said this betrayal of an explicit vow in October 1993 by Clinton’s secretary of state to pursue the Partnership for Peace instead of NATO expansion, guaranteeing “full [Russian] participation in the future security of Europe,” was much worse. “Unlike the 1990 meeting,” Goldgeier wrote, “which was focused on the status of Germany in NATO, this meeting was specifically about NATO’s future relationship with Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.” He added that “Yeltsin . . . thought he had dodged the NATO enlargement bullet at a time at which he was in a raging political battle against hardliners at home.”[\[26\]](#)

But then, in January 1994, as they were preparing the official launch of the PfP, Clinton began speaking of it as a “track that will lead to NATO membership” for Central and Eastern European states. On January 11, he admitted to Czech President Václav Havel, however, that “there is no consensus now among NATO allies to extend formal security guarantees for two reasons. First, it is not clear who could contribute to the common defense. And second, the reaction in Russia could be the reverse of what we want.” He went on to describe the PfP as simply the path toward joining the alliance without “drawing another line dividing Europe,” unless Russia did so first.<sup>[27]</sup> But the next day, just after the official launch of the Partnership for Peace, Clinton announced in Prague: “[T]he question is no longer whether NATO will take on new members but when and how.”<sup>[28]</sup> Yeltsin was outraged. The PfP had gone from the centerpiece of the new security system to more of a public relations tool, a distraction from the real effort, while at the same time providing a process toward full membership in the Atlantic alliance for some chosen countries. When Clinton had dinner with Yeltsin in Moscow in January 1994, the Russian said he was shocked by the statement in Prague that it was “not whether but when,” but insisted if that were the case, “Russia has to be the first country to join NATO.” Clinton refused to engage on the point.<sup>[29]</sup>

In July, Clinton again declared in a speech in Warsaw that NATO expansion was not a question of if but when. Yeltsin seemed resigned to expansion by that time, but again insisted that “Russia has to be the first” to do so, that way when the rest of Eastern Europe was integrated, Russia would not be last and potentially left out. He was only worried about how



China might react. In keeping with tradition, Clinton simply ignored his statement.[\[30\]](#)

Vice President Al Gore explained that it served administration interests to keep the long-term possibility of Russian membership open, if only to give Yeltsin some sort of talking point to cite when he was criticized by domestic opponents for letting a potential enemy encroach on Russia's historical sphere of influence.[\[31\]](#)

In late 1993, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service under director Yevgeny Primakov warned that the admission of former Warsaw Pact states “will be taken by a considerable part of Russian society as ‘the approach of danger to the Motherland’s borders.’” The service continued, “This expansion would bring the biggest military grouping in the world, with its colossal offensive potential, directly to the borders of Russia.” They judged that they would have to react. “If this happens, the need would arise for a fundamental reappraisal of all defense concepts on our side, a redeployment of armed forces and changes in operational plans.”[\[32\]](#) Defense Minister Pavel Grachev warned that it “would be unfortunate if the former Warsaw Pact states joined NATO in the near future, because this step would relegate Russia to a much more isolated position.”[\[33\]](#)

The *New York Times* said that the administration, “eager not to offend” the Russians, publicly promoted the PfP rather than NATO expansion because “Washington and NATO officials do not want to increase the influence of ultranationalists in Russia—and certainly not before scheduled parliamentary elections here on Dec. 12.”[\[34\]](#)

Amb. Pickering wrote a cable to Washington that in Russia, there was “strong domestic opposition across the political spectrum to early NATO expansion.” Yeltsin and Kozyrev were being criticized from their right as too “compliant to the West.”[\[35\]](#) Nicholas Burns, senior Russia director on the NSC, told Talbott that “we need to separate our understandable anger on the tone of the debate [from] Russia’s substantive concerns which we must take seriously.”[\[36\]](#)

## **Pentagon for Peace**

Some in the administration, led by Secretary of Defense William Perry, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Shalikashvili and then-Director of Strategic Plans and Policy on the Joint Staff General Wesley Clark, truly prioritized integrating Russia through the Partnership for Peace.[\[37\]](#) But in the hands of the hawks, the PfP turned out to be not much more than a scam. When the new Polish ambassador to the U.S. complained about the process, Talbott explained that the whole point was to fool the Russians into accepting NATO expansion, the same way their predecessors had done with their later-revised promises about not moving NATO into eastern Germany after reunification: “The Soviets initially refused to accept that the former East Germany would become part of the alliance. But over time and with effective reassurances we were able to bring themselves [sic] to agree.” They would now repeat the process with the entire former Warsaw Pact.[\[38\]](#) Lake was clear about his purpose as well, telling Christopher that “NATO expansion will, when it occurs, by definition be punishment, or ‘neo-containment’ of the bad Bear.”[\[39\]](#) In a memo to the Principals Committee,

Lake wrote that “neo-containment of Russia will be kept in the background only, rarely articulated. On the contrary, the possibility of membership in the long term for a democratic Russia should not be ruled out explicitly.” But in the same memo Lake made clear that was a lie. They would leave open the possibility of NATO membership even for Ukraine and the Baltics, but pursue a “parallel track” for an “alliance with the Alliance” for Russia, so they could consult, “but without giving them a veto over NATO decisions.”[\[40\]](#)

In September 1994, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke summoned senior Defense officials to his office and shouted them down. The PfP would not get in the way of NATO expansion. “The President has made the decision, and you’re being insubordinate!” Holbrooke reportedly yelled at them. The diplomats had out-hawked the warriors.[\[41\]](#)

## **Kissinger, Brzezinski Weigh In**

Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford’s National Security Advisor and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger criticized Clinton’s pretended hesitation to expand NATO right away since it “could create a self-fulfilling prophecy of future confrontation.”[\[42\]](#) He said this was essentially anti-American defeatism, even though three days after that statement the president had already overridden it, announcing his new NATO agenda.[\[43\]](#) Kissinger cited Secretary of State Dean Acheson from the era of NATO’s foundation: “Any nation which claims that this treaty is directed against it should be reminded of the biblical admonition that ‘the guilty flee where no man pursueth.’” If the Russians have a problem, then they are just paranoid, and

that is simply their problem, not ours. “The countries of Eastern Europe are terrified, not threatening,” Kissinger wrote. And besides, the U.S. can give Russia assurances “that no foreign troops would be stationed on the soil of new NATO members.” He concluded, “[E]ither the NATO guarantee will be extended or NATO will fall apart.”[\[44\]](#)

In the pages of *Foreign Affairs*, influential former Carter administration National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, born to a family of Polish aristocrats,[\[45\]](#) agreed, ridiculing the PfP’s inclusion of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as such overreach as to make the organization meaningless. “If all are eligible, then, as a practical matter,” he wrote, “none are admissible.” He demanded that Clinton proceed with NATO expansion at the PfP’s expense.[\[46\]](#)

Brzezinski made it clear that despite the high-minded claims of the promoters of NATO expansion, old power politics were still at the forefront of the allies’ thinking. Europe is “America’s essential geopolitical bridgehead on the Eurasian continent,” which “entrenches American political influence and military power directly on the Eurasian mainland.”[\[47\]](#) Meanwhile, Britain, he said, favored expansion to “dilute” European unity. France was hesitant to enhance German power over Central and Eastern Europe, while the Germans were happy to take up their new role as American subcontractor in the plan to dominate Central and Eastern Europe.[\[48\]](#)

## **I Told You to Forget It**

Hawks in the administration, led by Lake and Holbrooke, as well as NSC Senior Director for Europe Alexander Vershbow and his colleagues Nicholas Burns and Daniel Fried, were eager to begin so-called “enlargement.” Russia is never going to be allowed to join, they argued, so cut the pretense and start expanding the alliance immediately.[\[49\]](#)

When Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev proposed a “European Security Plan” that envisioned both NATO and the CIS as subordinate to an empowered OSCE (the newly renamed CSCE, changed from “Conference on” to Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe),[\[50\]](#) Talbott ridiculed the idea in a memo to Lake. The result would be “cumbersome in the extreme—and probably self-paralyzing.” Though this would give the Russians the “mantle of legitimacy” under Western supervision, he said it would also “severely hamstring NATO’s ability to act,” which was intolerable. Besides, the Russians’ problem is merely that “it sticks in their craw that NATO appears poised to dictate the terms of the new order and Russia has no choice but to accept.”[\[51\]](#)

Ukraine’s status was always central to the façade of the PfP. With a massive ethnic Russian population and a history tightly bound to that of their larger neighbor, the nation remained a central interest of the Russian Federation. If Kiev could be included in the new security architecture for Europe along with the United States and the rest of our allies, as well as Russia and the rest of theirs, then that would essentially guarantee Ukrainian neutrality. But with the PfP reduced to a ceremonial role, real questions were already being raised about Ukraine’s future status and the potential for violent conflict over it. When Talbott asked Holbrooke to

create a new interagency panel to play up the positive notes about NATO expansion, the latter conceded that “Ukraine is the most delicate issue,” and that, at best, the country would have to settle for the neutral buffer state status of Finland in the first Cold War.[\[52\]](#) Secretary Christopher thought they should slow down expansion because it was “hard to see how Ukraine can accept being the buffer between NATO, Europe and Russia.”[\[53\]](#)

But they proceeded with the policy and deception. On July 5, 1994, Clinton told Yeltsin, “I would like us to focus on the Partnership for Peace program” rather than NATO.[\[54\]](#) According to Talbott, Clinton told Yeltsin at dinner on September 27, “I’ve never said we shouldn’t consider Russia for membership or a special relationship with NATO. So when we talk about NATO expanding, we’re emphasizing inclusion, not exclusion.” All the American president wanted, he said, was “to work with you and others to maximize the chances of a truly united, undivided, integrated Europe.” Yes, NATO would expand, but “it would still take several years,” and he promised, “I want to work closely with you so we get through it together.” He reassured Yeltsin that “NATO expansion is not anti-Russian; it’s not intended to be exclusive of Russia, and there is no imminent timetable. And we’ll work together.” Ever the salesman, Clinton said, “I don’t want you to believe I wake up every morning thinking only about how to make the Warsaw Pact states part of NATO—that’s not the way I look at it. What I do think about is how to use NATO expansion to advance the higher goal of European security, unity and integration—a goal I know you share.” As Talbott explained, this entire line had been carefully designed to deceive. The main points that NATO would expand and Russia would have to accept

it had been practiced with the team, “but the tone and content were part of an approach that Clinton had worked out in his head during the lunch; every time he’d said that expansion was going forward, he’d add that it was part of a larger process including Russia.” When Yeltsin brought up the question of Russia joining the alliance, Clinton lied again “that U.S. policy would be guided by ‘three no’s’: no surprises, no rush and no exclusion.”[\[55\]](#)

The president broke all three promises at once, immediately. On December 1, the North Atlantic Council issued a statement announcing they “would expect and would welcome NATO enlargement that would reach to democratic states to our East.”[\[56\]](#) Though it had the requisite double-talk about a united Europe, Yeltsin was not buying it anymore. The Baltic nations also recognized the official policy change in the communiqué and worried if the game was NATO instead of the PfP, they would be left out of the first round, which turned out to be true.[\[57\]](#)

## **Budapest Blowup**

Three days later, on December 4, 1994, at a conference in Budapest, which was supposedly meant to mark the OSCE as a newly improved, more powerful player, Clinton announced, “NATO remains the bedrock of European security.” He added, “Last week we took further steps to prepare for expansion by starting work on the requirements for membership. . . . [N]o country outside will be allowed to veto expansion.”[\[58\]](#) (It was at this same meeting that the major powers and Ukraine agreed on the so-called Budapest Memorandum, wherein Kiev said it would return former Soviet nuclear missiles to Russia in exchange for certain security guarantees,

which had been a high priority of both the Clinton and Yeltsin administrations.[\[59\]](#))

Yeltsin confronted Clinton and the allies: “NATO was created in Cold War times. Today, it is trying to find its place in Europe, not without difficulty. It is important that this search not create new divisions, but promote European unity.” He complained, “We believe that the plans of expanding NATO are contrary to this logic. Why sow the seeds of distrust? After all, we are no longer adversaries, we are partners.” He warned that “Europe is in danger of plunging into a cold peace.” He lamented the true purpose of the expansion, written between the lines. It was “just in case there are undesirable developments in Russia. If the objective is to bring NATO up to Russia’s borders, let me say one thing: It is too early to bury a democratic Russia.”[\[60\]](#) Evidently, he felt especially betrayed because he misunderstood Clinton to mean they would go ahead with expansion almost immediately in 1995.[\[61\]](#) The *Times* noted the next day that even though the administration said no nation would be excluded, “both NATO and Moscow know that Russia remains the perceived enemy in Europe and would be at the bottom of the list.”[\[62\]](#)

Kozyrev later said this stunt caused a negative reaction in Moscow, where even the most moderate voices counseling tolerance for gradual expansion had to give it up. Everyone became opposed to all NATO expansion.[\[63\]](#) Clinton understood very well how the Russians felt about it—the entire population objected. He sent Vice President Gore to Moscow to visit President Yeltsin in his hospital bed, shake hands and promise him that no nations would be added in 1995, in the lead-up to Yeltsin’s desperate



reelection campaign.<sup>[64]</sup> But as soon as he got home, the principals met in the White House and decided once and for all that the Eastern European states' desire to join the alliance far outweighed any Russian concerns. They decided on a four-to-five-year timeframe for the first round of expansion. The State Department sent the U.S. Mission to NATO a proposed statement declaring that there would be "no second-tier security guarantees." The president then proclaimed the "inevitable expansion of NATO" in a reelection campaign speech.<sup>[65]</sup> The illusion of the PfP as a solution to European security was over.<sup>[66]</sup>

## **Bill Clinton's Shame**

According to William Burns, then-acting deputy chief of mission at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and later CIA director in the Joe Biden administration, President Clinton had already ruined the post-Cold War relationship with Russia before the end of 1994. Recalling his memos at the time, Burns wrote in his memoir: "I emphasized mounting Russian concern about expansion of NATO. I noted that Yeltsin's tough public statements in the fall of 1994 about NATO expansion 'were an unsubtle reminder of Russian angst about neglect of its interests in the process of restructuring European security institutions.'"

He had written in a State Department cable at the time that "the honeymoon in American relations with the new Russia that blossomed in the immediate aftermath of the breakup of the Soviet Union is now long past." They had already abused the friendship to the breaking point. "Two years ago, we could pretty much have it our way on a whole range of issues,

so long as we paid some minimal deference to Russian sensibilities. That is no longer the case.”[\[67\]](#)

Burns also wrote that the staff of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow unanimously opposed NATO expansion. They had proposed “other forms of cooperation” with the former Warsaw Pact nations and thought it would be wiser to create a new “treaty relationship” between NATO and Russia. In other words, they were trying to come up with any alternative to avoid the certain consequences of the president’s policy. This was because, Burns wrote just after Yeltsin’s “cold peace” outrage at Budapest, no fine-tuning of any bureaucratic process for doing so could change the fundamental problem that “[h]ostility to early NATO expansion is almost universally felt across the domestic political spectrum here. . . . The Russian elite is much more focused on outcomes now.” Since the U.S. refused to listen, “the process serves mainly to remind Russians of their own weakness.”[\[68\]](#)

He added that the embassy went out of their way to support including the Russians in the new “Contact Group” regarding the war in the Balkans and the G7 group of world economic powers, making it the “G8,” not because they had very much power and influence to wield, but they would someday. The idea was that these gestures would “help anchor a weak and floundering Russia in the respect and status that came with regular dealings with the G7 countries.”

Regarding NATO expansion, Burns said Yeltsin had “considerable justification” to believe Secretary Baker’s promises still applied after the fall of the USSR. “That commitment, however, had never been precisely defined or codified, and the Clinton administration saw its inheritance as

fairly ambiguous.” Burns pointed to Lake as the leading proponent of expansion in Eastern Europe, who sought to provide these smaller countries with “reassurance” against the return of aggression from Russia or the newly reunited Germany.[\[69\]](#)

The administration knew very well how badly the entire Russian political and military establishments were reacting. An “undivided Europe, whole and free” clearly meant without them. Talbott wrote a lengthy memo to Clinton in April 1995 rehashing the history of their diplomacy on that issue, and preparing him for their first meeting after Yeltsin’s “cold peace” statement in Budapest. The mission was to try to get Russia to accept NATO expansion and settle for working with the U.S. under the PfP. Talbott recognized, however, that Yeltsin feared NATO would announce new members during his reelection year in 1996, “subjecting him and reformers to withering, perhaps fatal attacks from the Communists and nationalists.” Talbott, having just returned from Russia, wrote: “Virtually all major players in Russia, all across the political spectrum, are either deeply opposed to, or at least deeply worried about, NATO expansion.”

Talbott advised Clinton how to deceive them. “[A]lmost as much as it fears NATO’s expansion, Russia fears its own isolation,” he wrote. “Moreover, the Russian military very much wants to cooperate as much as possible with NATO.” He said that since “Russia wants a relationship with NATO,” the president could propose an agreement which could, “for now at least, be defined in a way that finesses the question of how large a NATO we’re talking about.”[\[70\]](#)

Talbott explained Yeltsin's view, saying, "You can have an undivided Europe or an expanded NATO, but not both. NATO enlargement is inherently hostile to Russia's interests." He continued, speaking from the Russians' point of view, "Therefore, we'll cooperate on integration but resist on NATO enlargement. If you insist on bringing Central European states into NATO, you'll risk re-dividing Europe into two competing, potentially hostile blocs." Talbott said, "The implied warning: 'cold peace' could be a prelude to a new Cold War." However, he reiterated that there was nothing Yeltsin could do to change their minds. Expansion would proceed with or without further Russian participation in the PfP, so if they want to complain about it, they "will succeed only in isolating themselves." Still, Talbott warned that virtually every country in Europe, in and out of NATO, wanted to see the alliance work closely with Russia to avoid "provok[ing] spasms of paranoia and countermeasures by the Russians. They know from experience that there's nothing more offensive than a Russian on the defensive."[\[71\]](#)

In May 1995, when Clinton went to Moscow for celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of World War II, Yeltsin again stomped his foot, though he was helpless to do anything to stop the growth of the Western alliance. "For me to agree to the borders of NATO expanding towards those of Russia—that would constitute a betrayal on my part of the Russian people," he said. "I want to get a clear understanding of your idea of NATO expansion because now I see nothing but humiliation for Russia if you proceed." He asked Clinton, "How do you think it looks to us if one bloc continues to exist while the Warsaw Pact has been abolished?" He said,

“It’s a new form of encirclement if the one surviving Cold War bloc expands right up to the borders of Russia. Many Russians have a sense of fear. What do you want to achieve with this if Russia is your partner? . . . Why do you want to do this?” For a man who was said to be drunk most of the time, Yeltsin certainly appreciated what was at stake. “We need a new structure for Pan-European security, not old ones!” he insisted. “Let’s have no blocs, only one European space that provides for its own security.”[\[72\]](#)

As Talbott suggested, Clinton promised that he would hold off on NATO expansion until after the election of 1996 because he understood how deeply unpopular the policy was among not just the Russian establishment, but the citizens of the country as well.[\[73\]](#) Yeltsin had explicitly asked him for this favor, while Clinton commiserated about pressure from the Republican Congress and Midwestern voters pushing the other direction.[\[74\]](#)

A month after Clinton’s May 1995 visit to Moscow, Burns wrote that “nowhere are Russian sensitivities about being excluded or taken advantage of more acute than on the broad issue of European security. There is a solid consensus within the Russian elite that NATO expansion is a bad idea, period.” He later wrote, “Sitting at the embassy in Moscow in the mid-1990s, it seemed to me that NATO expansion was premature at best, and needlessly provocative at worst.” He said he understood why others would want to reassure Eastern European nations of their safety in the face of a potentially revived Russian power, but argued that they should focus on the Partnership for Peace. “It was wishful thinking, however, to believe that we

could open the door to NATO membership without incurring some lasting cost with a Russia coping with its own historic insecurities.”[75]

In another cable the embassy sent that fall, they explained why they opposed expanding NATO to include more former Warsaw Pact states after East Germany. They said that in looking to America’s “own long-term self-interest,” it should “seek to build a security order in Europe sufficiently in Russia’s interests so that a revived Russia will have no compelling reason to revise it.” This would ensure that “the ‘stab in the back’ theorists will have only limited room for maneuver in Russian politics.”[76]

Russian parliamentarian Aleksey Pushkov explained that the assumption that Yeltsin was only opposing their plans for domestic political reasons was completely incorrect. Even Anatoly Chubais, who was very close to the Clinton administration, had publicly said that he agreed with the Communists and nationalists on that point.[77]

Lake wrote to Clinton in July 1995 that “[d]espite Yeltsin’s agreement in May to join PfP and launch a ‘beyond PfP’ process with NATO, opposition to NATO enlargement appears to be hardening across the political spectrum among the Russian political elite.” He added, “Key Yeltsin advisors and members of the Duma argue that NATO enlargement and NATO-Russia cooperation are incompatible and are attacking Kozyrev for acquiescing in the West’s agenda.” He said that Yeltsin had reportedly approved a plan to delay or derail NATO expansion, “including by sowing divisions within the Alliance and appealing to opponents in publics and parliaments.” Lake continued, “[O]pposition to NATO enlargement is unlikely to yield in the near or medium term to some kind of grudging

endorsement; Russia's opposition is deep and profound," and concluded, "For the period ahead the Russian leadership will do its level best to derail our policy given its conviction that any eastward expansion of NATO is at root antithetical to Russia's long-term interests."

He warned they might be forced to choose between their Central European policy and their strategy regarding Russia, recommending transparency in the process and the "parallel track" deal as antidotes to the tension being raised.[\[78\]](#)

## **Eurocorps**

What were the other alternatives? Of course, American libertarians, paleo-conservatives and leftists recommended independence and neutrality, while everyone else on the political spectrum insisted on some form of foreign presence, especially in Europe. In 1998, in reaction to American mendacity in Bosnia,[\[79\]](#) the French and Germans expanded their small "Eurocorps" force to guarantee security on the continent with autonomy from NATO, [\[80\]](#) and even the British signaled their willingness to cooperate with this attempted new alignment.[\[81\]](#) In this case, NATO could have at least been relegated to a simple treaty, rather than its own massive, independent and expansionist military bureaucracy. However, the proposal was fiercely denounced by former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher as threatening NATO and therefore American predominance in Western military structures. "No, the real drive towards a separate European defense is the same as that towards a single European currency: namely the utopian venture of creating a single European super-state to rival the U.S. on the

world stage,” she warned.[\[82\]](#) President Bush,[\[83\]](#) the State Department[\[84\]](#) and Defense Department[\[85\]](#) all put out similar warnings.

It was certainly true that, as the French Foreign Ministry put it, they meant to dilute U.S. power in Europe.[\[86\]](#) But after American-led NATO intervention in the Balkans, U.S. dominance remained assured, as through the present day. Though the EU created a small-time rapid reaction force, it saw light duty and has not been a challenge to Washington and NATO’s hegemony in Europe.[\[87\]](#)

## **Early Warning**

### **My Guy**

The Libertarian Institute’s Ted Galen Carpenter not only warned against NATO expansion from the beginning, but also perfectly predicted what the result would be. In his 1994 book *Beyond NATO: Staying Out of Europe’s Wars*, Carpenter wrote, “It would be extraordinarily difficult to expand NATO eastward without that action’s being viewed by Russia as unfriendly. Even the most modest schemes would bring the alliance to the borders of the old Soviet Union.” He noted that “[s]ome of the more ambitious versions would have the alliance virtually surround the Russian Federation itself.” Expansion, Carpenter warned, “would constitute a needless provocation of Russia.”[\[88\]](#)

### **Go, Pat, Go!**



Pat Buchanan, the former Nixon and Reagan speechwriter and confidant, (first) Cold Warrior, presidential candidate and political commentator, warned in 1999 that every major political faction in Russia considered expansion to be in “bad faith” and exploiting Russia’s weakened position: “We soothingly reassure Moscow that NATO’s expansion is benign. But if the Russians gave war guarantees to Mexico and began arming and training Mexican troops, would any Russian assurance diminish our determination to run them out of our hemisphere?”

Buchanan also warned that “[i]f rising resentment in Russia leads to Yeltsin’s replacement with an anti-American nationalist, full blame must rest squarely with a haughty U.S. elite that has done its best to humiliate Russia.” He then demanded to know, “Why are we doing this? This is not 1948. Stalin is dead; the Soviet empire is dead; the Soviet Union is dead. European Russia is smaller than the Russia of Peter the Great.” He maintained that “[a] friendly Russia is far more critical to U.S. security than any alliance with Warsaw or Prague. If the United States has one overriding national security interest in the new century, it is to avoid collisions with great nuclear powers like Russia.”

Buchanan then predicted, “By moving NATO onto Russia’s front porch, we have scheduled a twenty-first century confrontation. . . . America will face a hellish dilemma: risk confrontation with a nuclear-armed Russia determined to recreate its old sphere of influence, or renege on solemn commitments and see NATO collapse.” Therefore, he said, “Offering NATO memberships to Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and, as some urge, Ukraine is rashness bordering on madness.” Referring to maps the Clinton

team must have ignored, Buchanan warned, “This would put the Russian base at Kaliningrad behind NATO lines and bring into a U.S.-led alliance three nations with huge Russian minorities.” Foreseeing future conflict, he observed that “Latvia is almost half Russian; eastern Ukraine, almost entirely Russian. America could neither defend nor liberate these nations without the risk of nuclear war.”[\[89\]](#)

## **Kennan’s Dissent**

But it was not just the libertarians and paleo-conservatives. In fact, a majority of the relevant government officials involved were opposed, including former and current cabinet secretaries, diplomats, military officers and experts.[\[90\]](#)

George Kennan was at that time considered to be the wisest and highest-ranking of the retired foreign policy graybeards. He had been the famous ambassador to the Soviet Union who helped to inaugurate the first Cold War back in the aftermath of World War II and coined the containment policy in his important “Long Telegram” cable in 1946, as well as an anonymously written article for *Foreign Affairs*, “On the Sources of Soviet Conduct,” signed by X, in 1947.[\[91\]](#) For generations after, Western leaders sought his advice on dealing with the Soviets.[\[92\]](#)

At a dinner at the Harriman Institute at Columbia University in October 1996, Kennan called NATO expansion a “strategic blunder of potentially epic proportions.”[\[93\]](#) He wrote a piece called “A Fateful Error” for the *New York Times* in 1997, denouncing the policy of NATO expansion. He said the decision was “the most fateful error of American policy in the

entire post-cold-war era,” which would “inflame the existing nationalistic, anti-western and militaristic tendencies in Russian opinion, restore the atmosphere of the cold war to East-West relations, and impel Russian foreign policy in directions decidedly not to our liking.”[\[94\]](#) He said he expected the result to be “a new Cold War, probably ending in a hot one, and the end of the effort to achieve a workable democracy in Russia.”[\[95\]](#)

Most quotably, Kennan complained to the *Times*’s Thomas L. Friedman in 1998:

I think [NATO expansion] is the beginning of a new Cold War. I think the Russians will gradually react quite adversely and it will affect their policies. I think it is a tragic mistake. There was no reason for this whatsoever. No one was threatening anybody else. This expansion would make the Founding Fathers of this country turn over in their graves. We have signed up to protect a whole series of countries, even though we have neither the resources nor the intention to do so in any serious way.

Don’t people understand? Our differences in the Cold War were with the Soviet Communist regime. And now we are turning our backs on the very people who mounted the greatest bloodless revolution in history to remove that Soviet regime.

Of course there is going to be a bad reaction from Russia, and then [the NATO expanders] will say that we always told

you that is how the Russians are—but this is just wrong.[\[96\]](#)

Kennan's prediction; our present. He even foresaw that once Russia does react negatively and takes steps to push back, the hawks would point to those actions as post-hoc justification for everything the U.S. did to contribute to the crisis in the first place.

Friedman had written back in November 1996, "For my money, NATO expansion is the most ill-conceived project of the post-cold-war era." Betraying a skepticism missing from his prognostications during the terror wars,[\[97\]](#) Friedman wrote that expansion proponents "insist it can be done without disrupting relations with Russia or orphaning those Europeans, like the Balts and Ukrainians, who will be left out. Well, let's see."[\[98\]](#)

## **Strobe's Yellow Light**

Nelson Strobridge "Strobe" Talbott III was Clinton's roommate when they were Rhodes Scholars at Oxford. He later became Clinton's primary adviser on Russia during the transition, then ambassador-at-large to the former Soviet states, and later, deputy secretary of state. According to the Wilson Center, he "sat in every Clinton-Yeltsin meeting and otherwise managed the Bill-Boris relationship."[\[99\]](#) Originally more of a "wooly headed one-worlder,"[\[100\]](#) Talbott had opposed NATO expansion when ambassador-at-large due to the presumed Russian reaction. He later wrote that he was "deeply riven" about it.[\[101\]](#)

But Talbott changed his mind by April 1994 after being promoted to deputy secretary of state.[\[102\]](#) He soon became one of the biggest

promoters of NATO expansion inside the administration. The decision to expand had been finalized in January 1994 at the NATO summit in Brussels. “At the urging of President Clinton, the leaders agreed that the Alliance should expand,” Talbott later wrote. He said that leaders of the new proposed member states were “ambivalent, skeptical or suspicious about the very idea of enlarging NATO. They worry that if they are not in the first group admitted, or the second, or the third, they will end up on the wrong side of a new Iron Curtain.” He acknowledged that “[i]n Russia, ultranationalists condemn the decision to expand as nothing less than the declaration of a new cold war; and many reformers fear that precisely this sinister view will strengthen anti-democratic elements in Russian politics.”

Arguing that NATO will help to promote democratic and economic reform in tandem with the European Union and citing Italian and German integration into the American-led order after the Second World War, Talbott still warned that “[o]ne of the most difficult challenges to enlarging NATO is its effect on Russia. Many Russians see NATO as a vestige of the cold war, inherently directed against their country.” They thought NATO should have been abolished along with the Warsaw Pact and see the plan to take in new members as a “Western vote of no-confidence in the staying power of Russian reform. It makes them feel as though Russia is still on probation—still subject to a thinly disguised policy of containment.” He said that “[i]f NATO adopted an anti-Russian rationale for taking in new members, it could tip the balance of forces in Russian politics in exactly the direction that we . . . most feared,” and that “[t]hese suspicions and warnings reverberate across the Russian political spectrum.” Since every kind of

reactionary was exploiting the issue, “the reformers who are committed to consolidation of Russian democracy and to Russia’s increasing integration into the West also tend to oppose NATO enlargement.” Talbott’s prescription to go ahead anyway was the beginning of a terrible self-fulfilling prophecy.[\[103\]](#)

In his memoir, Talbott wrote that Clinton had confronted him about Kennan’s opposition: “Why isn’t Kennan right? Isn’t he a kind of guru of yours going back to when we were at Oxford?” Talbott wrote that he believed Clinton was not just testing him for future public relations purposes, but “in this case, there was a hint of doubt about the policy itself—not the desirability of expanding NATO, but the feasibility of reconciling it with the integration of Russia.” Talbott wrote, “As the engineer in this locomotive, he was troubled by this latest forecast of a train wreck from a revered figure with a reputation for being prophetic about Russia.” But he dismissed Clinton’s newfound concerns. Sure, “Kennan had been and always would be someone I admired, but not as a source of all wisdom. Kennan had opposed the formation of NATO in the first place, I said, so it was no great surprise that he opposed its enlargement. . . . Clinton furrowed his brow and thought about my answer, then broke into a smile. ‘Just checking, Strobe. Just checking.’”[\[104\]](#)

In Talbott’s response to Kennan’s letter warning about his upcoming public dissent, the protégé assured his mentor that he had shown the *Times* piece to the principals and that while they appreciated the advice, he stressed the need to contain a potentially aggressive Russia and side-benefits like the incentive for countries to maintain civilian supremacy over

their militaries and overall stability for the continent, the “political element” of the alliance they were always talking about. As far as the Russians, Talbott wrote, “Once again for the President a profoundly difficult issue came down to a starkly simple choice[:] should Russia’s acute aversion to enlargement keep the process from going forward, Yes or no? The President decided the only right answer was no.” But they had no real answer to the problems that Kennan had raised. The Russians would just have to settle for “understandings and arrangements” to assuage their “legitimate political and security concerns,” he said, “thereby managing the difficulties in U.S.-Russian relations that inevitably arise over enlargement.” It was wishful thinking at best, epitomized by statements like: “The NATO that is getting ready to take in new members is already a new NATO, not the old Cold War model.” The only thing new was that the alliance was bigger and more powerful, while its primary enemy had been completely emasculated. Claiming it was anything but a military alliance still directed at Russia was just obfuscation.[\[105\]](#)

## **All Stars**

Many of the most respected Cold War hawks and experts at the State and Defense departments, Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) and academia warned against the policy and predicted what was likely to happen. They included President Bush Sr.’s former national security adviser and close friend Gen. Brent Scowcroft;[\[106\]](#) Bill Clinton’s Secretaries of Defense Les Aspin[\[107\]](#) and William Perry;[\[108\]](#) his Ambassador to Russia, Thomas Pickering;[\[109\]](#) George Kennan[\[110\]](#) and his one-time protégé and later

greatest professional rival Paul Nitze, the former deputy secretary of defense and special adviser to Ronald Reagan,[\[111\]](#) who had previously favored the more aggressive policy of “rollback” rather than just containment of Soviet power.[\[112\]](#) Warnings also came from Robert S. McNamara,[\[113\]](#) the secretary of defense during most of the war in Vietnam; former CIA Directors Adm. Stansfield Turner[\[114\]](#) and Robert Gates, who was later secretary of defense under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama;[\[115\]](#) Jack Matlock, the second-to-last ambassador to the USSR;[\[116\]](#) Senators Daniel Patrick Moynihan,[\[117\]](#) John Warner,[\[118\]](#) Sam Nunn,[\[119\]](#) Bill Bradley[\[120\]](#) and Paul Wellstone;[\[121\]](#) anti-Communist academics Richard Pipes and Edward Luttwak;[\[122\]](#) and dozens more of the highest-ranking generals, admirals and foreign service officers, including Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General John Shalikashvili and military adviser to the State Department Lieutenant General Barry McCaffrey.[\[123\]](#) All warned Clinton not to go through with it. According to Council on Foreign Relations and Columbia University scholar Kimberly Marten, the majority of Russia experts at the State Department also opposed expansion since, they argued, “Moscow would see expansion as being directed against it, and that this might create a self-fulfilling prophecy of a nationalist backlash.”[\[124\]](#)

In 1997, Matlock told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that if they approved the policy, “it may well go down in history as the most profound strategic blunder made since the end of the Cold War.” He warned that rather than improving security, “it could well encourage a chain of



events that could produce the most serious security threat to this nation since the Soviet Union collapsed.”[\[125\]](#)

Also in 1997, an open letter signed by former President Eisenhower’s granddaughter Susan, and 50 important foreign policy establishment leaders,[\[126\]](#) warned in part, “The current U.S.-led effort to expand NATO . . . is a policy error of historic proportions. We believe that NATO expansion will decrease allied security and unsettle European stability.” They warned that expansion would strengthen Russian hardliners and marginalize the democrats, provoke their reevaluation of the post-Cold War settlement, galvanize resistance to signing important nuclear treaties, and spread instability and fear throughout Europe by moving the line, but excluding for the time being many smaller countries who would be threatened by the Russian reaction. They also warned that NATO’s primary defensive mission would be diminished and that many of the nations in question had open issues with their borders and national minorities.[\[127\]](#)

Ted Sorensen, a former adviser to President John F. Kennedy, unequivocally denounced expansion: “Such a move would force the United States to defend these new members by both nuclear and conventional means, while harming relations with excluded Central and East European nations, especially Russia’s resurgent nationalists.” He mocked the mindlessness of the policy. “It is hard to imagine a more provocative decision taken with less consultation and consideration for the consequences. But, so what, let’s do it our way.”[\[128\]](#)

Olga Oliker, director of the Russia and Eurasia Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said that the Russians

took NATO expansion “as a sign that we were still against them. It was really hard to walk back from.” She added, “[F]rom there on out, we were doing things that . . . the Russians felt hurt them. We didn’t do it because we wanted to hurt them. We did it because we didn’t care if it hurt them.”

Oliker explained that American policymakers just could not understand the Russians’ point of view. “I was testifying on the Hill not long ago, and I was saying, ‘The Russians think they’re acting defensively.’ And the senators were like, ‘But we’ve explained to them over and over that we’re not a threat.’ Like, are you serious?”[\[129\]](#)

Even the *New York Times* editorial board was against it. They warned that expansion could “strengthen Russian nationalists opposed to Boris Yeltsin and his Western-oriented reformers. . . . Will the U.S. extend its nuclear umbrella to Eastern Europe? . . . Above all, how can Russia be included—or be reconciled to being excluded?” They argued that “[i]t would be far better for President Clinton to join his European counterparts in seeking more creative solutions for Europe’s problems.”[\[130\]](#)

Veteran diplomat Dennis Ross, who had been director of policy planning under Jim Baker in the H.W. Bush years, wrote a memo to Talbott warning that “the Russians . . . see NATO expansion through a political, psychological and historical lens. Unfortunately it tends to confirm the imagery that they lost the Cold War, their status as a great power is collapsing, they continue to be humiliated and worse they will face potential threats closer to their borders.” He said this was giving the nationalist right “a field day” and that the U.S. desperately needed to come up with an alternative bit of “counter-imagery” for how the question was

portrayed in Russia. Ross also reminded Talbott that they already had agreed that the Russians “feel they were snookered at the time of German unification. As you noted with me, Baker’s promises on not extending NATO military presence into what was East Germany were part of a perceived commitment not to expand the Alliance eastward.” He added, “[T]he 1991 promise to begin to transform NATO from a military alliance was part of the Soviet explanation for accepting a unified Germany in NATO. Today I believe the Russians feel both promises should have had more of a binding and precise character. As a result they are taking the lessons of 1991 and are trying to apply them now in the negotiations on NATO expansion.” He was not urging restraint on the policy, only caution on the politics. The U.S. needed to do the bare minimum to make sure that Yeltsin would have something he could “present to their public” to show their “needs were addressed and satisfied.”[\[131\]](#)

Kimberly Marten of the Council on Foreign Relations wrote that though the anti-expansion forces in the foreign policy community were prominent and large in number, they were too late, and had failed to win champions in the Congress. Kennan’s article and Eisenhower et al.’s letter were not published until 1997, long after the final, formal decision had already been made at the NATO ministers’ meeting in September 1996. “Enlargement opponents had missed the boat.”[\[132\]](#)

## **Senate Debate**

In 1998, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, one of the most respected intellectuals in the Senate at the time, and very close to the neoconservative set,[\[133\]](#)

warned that bringing Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic and possibly the Baltic states into NATO would “antagonize Russia,” saying the policy was akin to building an “iron ring” around them. “We’re walking into ethnic historical enmities,” Moynihan said. “We have no idea what we’re getting into.”

But then-Senator Biden, a leading voice for NATO expansion, would not have it. He began by accusing Moynihan of justifying Stalin’s seizure of the Baltics generations ago, which was not at all what Moynihan had said. A reporter from the *Times* was a witness: “Stalking the Senate floor, flailing his arms, Mr. Biden continued for 10 minutes.” Biden swore he had no idea what Moynihan was talking about. “If my friends are saying, anyone who votes for expanding NATO to include Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary, are tying this noose around a Russian neck, this iron ring, well, then I don’t quite get it,” he said. After Virginia Senator John Warner warned that expansion could see Americans dragged into other nations’ ethnic conflicts and no-win quagmires like Somalia and Vietnam, Biden ranted, “Vietnam and Somalia are not Central Europe, they’re not Poland, they’re not Hungary.”[\[134\]](#)

However, only a few months before, Biden had revealed that he understood what was at stake for the Russians. He told the Atlantic Council that he understood that unlike the Visegrád states (Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary), bringing in the Baltics would drive major “consternation” in Russia. “If there was ever anything that was going to tip the balance, were it to be tipped, in terms of a vigorous and hostile reaction in Russia, I don’t mean military, it would be that.” However, he assured the

crowd, “I once was told to be in this business you must be an optimist, some would suggest it is too optimistic a view. I believe with time, time meaning in the next several years, we will solve this.”[\[135\]](#)

Democratic Senator Paul Wellstone disagreed, saying he was “very worried” NATO expansion could mean a “redivision of Europe,” causing “a poisoning of relations with Russia and ultranationalists coming into power.”[\[136\]](#) The *Wall Street Journal* also said, “The most sensitive question is whether ever to admit the three Baltic States, a move certain to infuriate Moscow.”[\[137\]](#)

## **Dividing Lines**

President Clinton had said they would “build and secure a New Europe, peaceful, democratic and undivided at last.”[\[138\]](#) But he wasn’t uniting Europe. He was redividing it. Amb. Matlock warned that if they were to exclude Russia from the expanded alliance, it would necessarily be against them.[\[139\]](#) The last Cold War had ended more than two years before the final fall of the USSR, and now the U.S.A. was already on the path to restarting it again. Former Secretary of State Kissinger, a strong proponent of expansion, admitted this was so, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* that “the new members are seeking to participate in NATO . . . not to erase dividing lines but to position themselves inside a guaranteed territory by shifting existing NATO boundaries 300 miles to the east.”[\[140\]](#) His Democratic counterpart Brzezinski also acknowledged that “the delusion of a shared global status with America made it difficult for the Moscow political elite to abandon the idea of a privileged geopolitical position for

Russia not only in the area of the former Soviet Union itself but even in regard to the former central European satellite states.”[\[141\]](#)

Eugene J. Carroll Jr., a retired Navy rear admiral and deputy director of the Center for Defense Information, criticized advocates of NATO expansion, including Kissinger, in a 1997 essay in the *Los Angeles Times*. Referring to Kissinger’s acknowledgment that they were just moving the dividing line further east, Carroll wrote that this admission “also provided a clear picture of Moscow’s perception of a new NATO threat moved closer to its borders. This picture also reveals that, at its heart, NATO expansion is aimed at Russia.” He referred to new Secretary of State Madeleine Albright’s testimony to the Senate: “On the off-chance that in fact Russia doesn’t work out the way that we are hoping it will . . . NATO is there,”[\[142\]](#) adding, “It may be safe to treat Russia as a prospective enemy today when it is helpless to prevent NATO expansion but there is the longer-term danger. A hardline, anti-Western coalition will be strengthened in Moscow and give priority to anti-NATO measures in the future.”[\[143\]](#)

## **Experienced Ambassador Dean**

Jonathan Gunther Dean, a career foreign service officer and former ambassador to Cambodia and Lebanon, then senior arms control adviser from the Union of Concerned Scientists, wrote in 1995 that NATO expansion was the “worst mistake in U.S. policy towards Europe since the end of World War II.”[\[144\]](#) A long list of former officials and diplomats, including Matlock and Nitze, signed a letter to Secretary Christopher in support of Dean’s article.[\[145\]](#)

In 1997, Dean told Congress, “The Russian . . . political class in its entirety, with very few exceptions . . . opposes NATO enlargement and strongly.” He said that “[t]his is the group which will form the views of the Russian public . . . with the message that Russia is hostilely encircled and has been cheated by the same countries on the cold war outcome.” This would be especially true, he said, “if that enlargement includes the Baltic States bordering directly on Russia.” He cited the Duma’s reluctance to ratify the START II nuclear weapons treaty, and said that “the main thing that every one of these costs and these risks have in common is that they are completely unnecessary.”[\[146\]](#)

## **Foreign Friends**

In November 1996, French President Jacques Chirac warned Tony Lake, “We have humiliated them too much. One day there will be a dangerous nationalist backlash.”[\[147\]](#) On this same theme, Max Jakobsen, the former Finnish ambassador to the UN, warned, “Significantly, it is the ‘Westernizers’ who strenuously oppose a NATO expansion. They fear it would provide neoimperialist forces with fresh arguments to demand a remilitarization of Russian policy.”[\[148\]](#) In 1997, former Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating made a direct comparison to the catastrophe of Versailles after World War I, arguing that NATO expansion is “an error which may rank in the end with the strategic miscalculations which prevented Germany from taking its full place in the international system.”[\[149\]](#)

British experts Michael Clarke and Michael MccGwire warned in 1998 that the first announced round of NATO expansion to Poland, Romania and Hungary was already too much and that the alliance should stop before they created a crisis. They said keeping Russia cooperative on regional stability, nuclear limits and proliferation and their territorial ambitions was paramount, and that NATO expansion threatened all three because “[i]t is seen by all strands of Russian opinion as violating the bargain struck in 1990 and will likely lead to the withdrawal of cooperation.” They said that even though it was too late to rescind the invitations to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, in order to mitigate the consequences the West should from that point forward refrain from “integrating them into NATO’s military structure, by ceasing to insist that NATO membership is open to all and by perpetuating the de facto nuclear-weapons-free zone that presently exists in Central and Eastern Europe.”[\[150\]](#)

### **Kupchan’s Insight**

Council on Foreign Relations Senior Fellow Charles Kupchan, a promoter of the Partnership for Peace concept, was adamantly against NATO expansion in 1994. He wrote that Clinton was “resurrecting” Europe’s dividing lines and, despite the administration’s efforts to strengthen the CSCE and assurances to Moscow that they meant no harm, “enlarging the alliance would alter the balance of power on the continent and make Russia feel less secure.” That NATO was directed against Russia was precisely why the Eastern European states wanted to join, but he warned that an “expanded NATO would lead Russia to reassert control over its former



republics and to remilitarize. The chance to build a European security community that included Russia would be lost.” He quoted an adviser to President Yeltsin as well: “NATO expands eastward, Russia under any government will become a revisionist power striving to undermine the already fragile European order.” He also importantly predicted that expansion would help Russian hawks marginalize reformers: “Even if NATO held open the prospect of eventual membership for Russia, nationalists would react to Central Europe’s entry into NATO by charging that Russian reformers had sold out to the West and had jeopardized Russia’s security.”[\[151\]](#)

## **Mandelbaum’s Crystal Ball**

International relations scholar Michael Mandelbaum called NATO expansion “foolish and dangerous.” He told Congress that “Russia might some day become a threat to its neighbors, but it is not a threat now and, therefore, NATO expansion, as planned by the administration, is at best premature and at worst counterproductive.”

He complained that domestic politics was at the core of Clinton’s considerations, and mocked his 1996 campaign slogan about “building a bridge to the 21st Century.” Mandelbaum told Congress the “likeliest result” of this policy would be the “restoration of a tradition of European international relations that predates the Cold War, a tradition featuring great power rivalry, shifting alliances, and continuing concern with an unregulated military balance.” He predicted, “NATO expansion would

fulfill one 1996 campaign promise that Bill Clinton did not make. It would be a bridge to the nineteenth century.”[\[152\]](#)

Mandelbaum wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the policy was “at best premature, at worst counterproductive, and in any case largely irrelevant to the problems confronting the countries situated between Germany and Russia.” Dismissing arguments that the primary purpose of expanding NATO is the spread of democracy throughout Eastern Europe, Mandelbaum wrote that “it is a military alliance, an association of some sovereign states directed against others. The ‘other’ in this case is Russia.” Citing hawks like Kissinger protégé Peter W. Rodman,[\[153\]](#) who explicitly supported expansion for this very reason, he warned that the test would be what Russia does when the expanders eventually come for Ukraine’s neutrality.

If the true purpose of the expansion was now admitted to be “neo-containment” of the Russians, then bringing in Poland would not be enough. “The country most important to the West that is immediately vulnerable to a renewal of aggressive Russian behavior is Ukraine. Yet no one is suggesting that Ukraine join NATO. Indeed, discussions of NATO tend to treat Ukraine as marginal.” However, he said, the nation was the furthest thing from marginal. “So long as it remains independent it is a buffer between Russia and the rest of Europe. More important, an independent Ukraine is the best guarantee that Russia will remain a peaceful nation-state.” With great foresight he wrote, “It is not an exaggeration to say that NATO expansion will be good or bad depending on its effect on the peaceful coexistence of Ukraine and Russia.”

Mandelbaum said that the neo-containment policy would weaken Russian democrats who were already identified with the West and were desperate not to be associated with NATO expansion. He added that embarking on such a crucial policy regarding the future of Europe against Russia's wishes and without any real consultation would be certain to make Russian policymakers consider it illegitimate and induce them to do whatever they could to undermine it, thus putting our nations back at odds. [\[154\]](#)

### **Z.B.: Don't Listen to Me**

Even Zbigniew Brzezinski warned, "It is not even clear whether the Russians wish to be part of NATO. But if excluded and rejected, they will be resentful, and their own political self-definition will become more anti-European and anti-Western." He added, "The expansion of NATO should, therefore, not be driven by whipping up anti-Russian hysteria that could eventually become a self-fulfilling prophecy." He nonsensically argued that "NATO's expansion should not be seen as directed against any particular state, but as part of a historically constructive process of shaping a secure, stable, and more truly European Europe."

While Brzezinski acknowledged that Russia had "legitimate concerns" about NATO militarizing Central and Eastern Europe, he argued that "the formula of 'no forward deployment' of NATO forces in Central Europe would underline the nonantagonistic character of the expansion" and "mitigate" them. "There are other steps that should be taken to reassure

Russia, to propitiate its sense of status, and—most important—to engage it in a transoceanic and transcontinental security system,” he added.

The U.S. should adopt a strategy of “combining the expansion of NATO with new transcontinental security architecture embracing Russia,” as a “productive response to Russia’s concerns.” This advice was the basis for the eventual NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, discussed below. Brzezinski also correctly predicted the outcome of his preferred policy: Russia will react negatively and we will then return to Cold War or worse.

For one thing, there was the problem of Ukraine. As the country found itself in the middle of this new contest between the U.S. and Russia, the Americans needed to consider Russia’s sensitivity on the issue, but not at the expense of “the West’s broader interest in consolidating geopolitical pluralism in the territory of the former Soviet Union.” Since Ukrainian independence is “the most decisive and substantive expression of that post-Soviet pluralism,” it was in America’s interest to preserve it—which would make it not quite independence after all, but our country’s problem now and forever. Therefore, after the Baltics, he said America would also have to consider Ukraine for membership, even though, “[o]f course, a major disruption in European-Russian or Russian-Ukrainian relations cannot be ruled out.” It was, according to Brzezinski, “[t]he Russian obsession with big-power status . . . and the effort to limit the sovereignty of the Central European states [which] could produce a crisis with the West,” since NATO membership would preclude such Russian influence. But if expanding the anti-Russian alliance turns Russia back into an enemy, “[i]n such a case, an

enlarged NATO would have no choice but to become again a defensive alliance against an external threat.”[\[155\]](#)

Two years later, in his 1997 book *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski admitted that “many Russian democrats also feared that the expansion of NATO would mean that Russia would be left outside of Europe, ostracized politically, and considered unworthy of membership in the institutional framework of European civilization.” He said that this “cultural insecurity compounded the political fears, making NATO expansion seem like the culmination of the long-standing western policy designed to isolate Russia leaving it alone in the world and vulnerable to its various enemies.”[\[156\]](#)

## **Perry’s Regrets**

President Joe Biden claimed Russia’s actions in 2022 had nothing to do with NATO expansion, and that this was merely a thin excuse invoked by Vladimir Putin’s government.[\[157\]](#) But in 2016, former Secretary of Defense William Perry admitted to the *Guardian* that, although lately Putin had been making things worse, “I have to say that the United States deserves much of the blame. Our first action that really set us off in a bad direction was when NATO started to expand, bringing in Eastern European nations, some of them bordering Russia.” When he tried to explain the Russian point of view on the issue, he was told, “Who cares what they think? They’re a third-rate power.” Then, Perry wrote, “of course that point of view got across to the Russians as well. That was when we started sliding down that path.”[\[158\]](#) He said bringing Russia into the fold first was much more important to him. “I feared that NATO enlargement at this time would

shove us into reverse. I believed that a regression here could squander the positive relations we had so painstakingly and patiently developed in the opportunistic post-Cold War period.” Perry said he did agree that NATO should be expanded to Eastern Europe; however, he wrote, “I believed that we needed more time to bring Russia, the other major nuclear power into the Western security circle. The overriding priority was obvious to me.”

Lamenting his failure to persuade President Clinton and the rest of the National Security Council to delay expansion, or resign in protest, Perry wrote in his memoir that to this day, he blames himself for the deterioration of U.S.-Russia relations in the years since. “In the strength of my conviction, I considered resigning. . . . In the end, I decided not to resign, hoping that my continued involvement would help to mitigate the growing mistrust.” Apparently, the former secretary really beats himself up over it: “I regret that I didn’t fight more effectively for delay of the NATO decision.” He says he could have held one-on-one meetings with Talbott and Lake to try to change their mind, or written an essay to pass around the NSC. “Or I could have followed up on my consideration to resign. It is possible that the rupture in relations with Russia would have occurred anyway. But I am not willing to concede that.”[\[159\]](#)

So Clinton’s secretary of defense took personal responsibility for the entire “rupture in relations” with Russia. He lamented his failure to do every last thing he could to stop his boss from proceeding with such an obviously counterproductive policy as the expansion of the NATO alliance into the former Warsaw Pact states, much less the former Soviet “republics”—without also letting Russia join, or at least bringing them

close enough to have confidence that it was not at their expense. No one has attempted to argue that Perry was ignorant or wrong about this. The hawks simply ignore his open confession and move on with their narrative regardless.

Perry and the generals were simply outclassed in office politics by Richard Holbrooke and Strobe Talbott. While Perry still laments his failure to persuade at the December 1994 meeting, the argument had already been completely closed the previous September.[\[160\]](#)

Perry later added, “Before NATO expansion, our two nations were on track toward developing a relationship that could have resulted in a true global partnership.” He continued, “Russia expressed its objections . . . but its views were ignored. . . . The bitterness that emerged from dismissing Russia as irrelevant created a climate ripe for the rise of an autocratic leader who would instead demand respect and power through force.” Betraying an honesty found virtually nowhere else in Washington, Perry advised that “the first step in finding a solution is acknowledging the problem and recognizing that our actions have contributed to that hostility.”[\[161\]](#)

Secretary Albright conceded in her memoirs that “Yeltsin and his countrymen were strongly opposed to enlargement, seeing it as a strategy for exploiting their vulnerability and moving Europe’s dividing line to the east, leaving them isolated.”[\[162\]](#)

Clinton himself acknowledged the problem with the policy before pursuing it. Explaining his initial hesitance, he said there was no consensus among current members and added that “we don’t want to give the impression that we’re creating another dividing line in Europe after we’ve

worked decades to get rid of the one that existed before.”[\[163\]](#) They all knew better, but went ahead anyway. In early 1997, the State Department announced the official change in policy from containment to expansion.  
[\[164\]](#)

## **The Iron Triangle**

### **Lockheed Stock**

According to Secretary Albright, an informal poll of the members of the Council on Foreign Relations showed opposition to expansion by a margin of two to one.[\[165\]](#) If so many leaders of America’s foreign policy establishment were opposed to NATO expansion due to concerns about provoking a negative reaction from Russia, then how did the hawks win?

Representing the establishment consensus, George Kennan ironically, and wrongly, thought that “[w]ere the Soviet Union to sink tomorrow under the waters of the ocean, the American military-industrial complex would have to remain, substantially unchanged, until some other adversary could be invented. Anything else would be an unacceptable shock to the American economy.”[\[166\]](#) But Kennan was a diplomat and historian, not an economist. The end of American militarism would have been a shock to the arms manufacturers to the benefit of everyone else whose money they had been confiscating and destroying. With a peace dividend, all that wealth, material, labor and talent could be reinvested in improving the production of actual goods and services to benefit the public’s quality of life.[\[167\]](#)



But the vested interests were not going to give up without a fight. As Richard Cummings explained in his 2007 article “Lockheed Stock and Two Smoking Barrels,”[\[168\]](#) the 1990s-era U.S. Committee to Expand NATO (later renamed The U.S. Committee on NATO) was a project of Lockheed Martin Vice President Bruce Jackson. The policy was in large part a racket for selling jets either directly to the Eastern European states, or failing that, to force the American taxpayer to pick up the tab for them. Cummings wrote, “The objective of the committee was to push for membership in the NATO military alliance for former Soviet bloc countries including Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.”[\[169\]](#)

The *New York Times* reported in 1997, “[A]t night Bruce Jackson is president of the U.S. Committee to Expand NATO, giving intimate dinners for senators and foreign officials. By day, he is director of strategic planning for Lockheed Martin Corporation, the world’s biggest weapons maker.”[\[170\]](#)

Cummings explained the facts of life. The relationships between the neoconservatives’ think tanks, lobbying firms and defense industry amounted to an “iron triangle” that rules the capital city and virtually “always gets what it wants.”[\[171\]](#) Lockheed Martin and their contemporaries had a simple interest in mind: selling big-ticket weapons systems to the new allies to bring their militaries up to NATO standards. Poland got expensive new fighter jets[\[172\]](#) and missile systems.[\[173\]](#) It was a tax money goldmine.[\[174\]](#) Soon Jackson created the Committee for the Liberation of Iraq,[\[175\]](#) and worked hard behind the scenes with a lobbyist named Sally Painter[\[176\]](#) to publish the “Letter of 10,” signed by Eastern

European states in support of launching Iraq War II in 2003.[\[177\]](#) Jackson got his way there as well, though the degree of the Iraqis' liberation remains in dispute.[\[178\]](#)

In 1999, the epitome of corrupt American big business showered millions of dollars on NATO officials, foreign ministers and diplomats from across Central and Eastern Europe at a big party in Washington in celebration of NATO's 50th anniversary. Boeing, Motorola, Nextel, TRW, Honeywell, United Technologies, Ford, GM, Kodak and Raytheon along with various high-power lobbying firms were in attendance. The *Washington Post* quoted Gerald Robbins of 3Com Corp boasting about their contracts supplying equipment for NATO's AWACS surveillance and control planes flying missions over Kosovo. "NATO is a big customer," Robbins said.[\[179\]](#) The Military-Industrial Complex that President Ike Eisenhower helped to build and then warned about on his last day in office[\[180\]](#) has captured our government, in alliance with foreign states in the Middle East, Europe and Asia, and their allied domestic lobbies.[\[181\]](#)

The U.S. military is also a "self-licking ice cream cone," as American GIs called it in Vietnam, dedicated to its own perpetuation at any cost, and conveniently, continually creating the disasters which are said to require their next intervention.[\[182\]](#) Full-Spectrum Dominance[\[183\]](#) is a government program; as such it is the means and the end in itself.[\[184\]](#)

As a senior officer told journalist Mark Perry in 2016, "This is the 'Chicken-Little, sky-is-falling' set in the Army," adding, "These guys want us to believe the Russians are 10 feet tall. There's a simpler explanation: The Army is looking for a purpose, and a bigger chunk of the budget. And

the best way to get that is to paint the Russians as being able to land in our rear and on both of our flanks at the same time. What a crock.”[\[185\]](#)

## **Polish Votes**

Before the USSR had even dissolved, the Polish American Congress began a massive push to convince Washington to invite their old country into America’s NATO alliance. They were savvy enough to see the Partnership for Peace as “NATO lite” and a distraction from their real goal. They joined with other pressure groups and launched a sophisticated campaign targeting Polish-American businessmen and large Central and Eastern European communities in Pennsylvania and the Midwest.[\[186\]](#)

Amb. Matlock explained, “Look, Clinton wanted to get reelected. He needed Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois; they all have a very strong East European [base]. . . . Many of these [Eastern European-Americans] had become Reagan Democrats on East-West issues. They were insisting that [NATO] expand to include Poland and eventually Ukraine. Clinton needed those to get reelected.”[\[187\]](#) Clinton’s ambassador to Ukraine, Steven Pifer, [\[188\]](#) and his national security adviser, Anthony Lake,[\[189\]](#) agreed on the importance of these domestic politics to the decision to expand NATO.

The Republican Party, at that time led by House Speaker Newt Gingrich and Senator Trent Lott, was even worse than Clinton on the issue, and with the help of hawks like Senator John McCain, provided pressure on the president from the wrong direction, urging him to proceed faster and with even less regard for the consequences.[\[190\]](#) NATO expansion even made it into Gingrich’s famous Contract with America in 1994.[\[191\]](#)

Talbott convinced Clinton to attend the Budapest summit for the rechristening of the OSCE by telling him, “If we get this right—and at the right-time, which means very soon—we can seize control over this issue in a way that essentially takes it away from the Republicans in ’96.”[\[192\]](#)

## **Standing Taller**

Of course, we shouldn’t sell the American foreign policy establishment too short: they are not only greedy, but seem to truly believe their own public relations about how smart and moral and exceptional they are. As Secretary Albright explained in 1998, “If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see further into the future. And we see the danger here to all of us.”[\[193\]](#) Ironically, she was defending Clinton’s bombing of Iraq from bases in Saudi Arabia, a policy which was the principal motivating factor in turning the Arab mujahideen veterans of the 1980s covert Afghan war with the Soviet Union against the United States, getting 3,000 Americans killed in the September 11 attacks just three and a half years later,[\[194\]](#) and kicking off another generation of war in the Middle East.[\[195\]](#)

## **Gorby’s Admission**

### **Disassembling**

A major theme of the American War Party—the neoconservatives, liberal hawks, arms manufacturer-funded think tanks and the major news media—

over the years has been that Mikhail Gorbachev himself admitted that no one ever promised they would not expand NATO. A typical take along these lines is from Steven Pifer from the Strobe Talbott Center, writing for the Brookings Institution. Of course, he omitted the part that showed he was wrong.[\[196\]](#)

It is clear that the former premier was defending his record from the interviewer's accusation. "Why didn't you insist that the promises made to you—particularly U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's promise that NATO would not expand into the East—be legally encoded?" Gorbachev then answered defensively:

The topic of "NATO expansion" was not discussed at all, and it wasn't brought up in those years. I say this with full responsibility. Not a single Eastern European country raised the issue, not even after the Warsaw Pact ceased to exist in 1991. Western leaders didn't bring it up, either. Another issue we brought up was discussed: making sure that NATO's military structures would not advance and that additional armed forces from the alliance would not be deployed on the territory of the then-GDR after German reunification. Baker's statement, mentioned in your question, was made in that context.

The first part of this statement is simply not accurate, as shown above. It is likely the man was simply exaggerating his answer: He could not have neglected to get that important promise in writing if they did not make it.

He then went on to explain, correctly, that Baker's statement referred to foreign NATO forces inside Germany, that it was encoded in a treaty and that the West has abided by it since then. "So don't portray Gorbachev and the then-Soviet authorities as naïve people who were wrapped around the West's finger," he said, speaking in the third person. "If there was naïveté, it was later, [under Yeltsin] when the issue arose."

It should be no surprise that the Talbott Center scholar chose to omit Gorbachev's very next statement, where he in fact does seem to concede his negligence: "The decision for the U.S. and its allies to expand NATO into the east was decisively made in 1993. I called this a big mistake from the very beginning. It was definitely a violation of the spirit of the statements and assurances made to us in 1990."[\[197\]](#)

He should never have taken the Americans' word for it. As Gorbachev told the *Telegraph* in 2008, "The Americans promised that NATO wouldn't move beyond the boundaries of Germany after the Cold War but now half of Central and Eastern Europe are members. So what happened to their promises? It shows they cannot be trusted."[\[198\]](#) He also complained to *Der Spiegel* about the broken promise in 2009, saying, "One cannot depend on American politicians."[\[199\]](#)

As far as what it meant for the future, in 1997, Gorbachev said, "I believe it is a mistake. It is a bad mistake. And I am not persuaded by the assurances that we hear that Russia has nothing to worry about. You may not humiliate a nation, a people, and think that it'll have no consequences."[\[200\]](#)

## **Yeltsin's Men**

Anatoly Adamishin, a former deputy foreign minister who was then Russia's ambassador to Britain, complained to the *Telegraph* in 1997, "When we were told during the German reunification process that NATO would not expand, we believed it." He explained that "[i]t was extremely important for Western countries, and first of all for the United States and Germany, that the process should go smoothly . . . So we were given repeated assurances that NATO would not expand an inch eastwards." [\[201\]](#)

In 1998, the chairman of the committee on international affairs in the Duma, Vladimir Lukin, warned NATO expansion was "isolating Russia [and] will strengthen nationalist forces." [\[202\]](#)

In July 1996, former Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov gave an interview to the French newspaper *Le Figaro*. He told them, "What is unacceptable (about NATO enlargement) is if a new military infrastructure sets up on our borders." When this was interpreted to mean that he and the Yeltsin government were backing away from their opposition to expansion, he then clarified to the Russian paper *Izvestia* that just because the election was over, that did not mean that domestic pressure against expansion had been alleviated. He said their position "has never ruled out compromise, but it will not become softer, because NATO expansion is seen by us unequivocally as a minus." Primakov also added that year, 1996, that any attempt to bring Ukraine into the NATO alliance would cross a Russian "red line." [\[203\]](#) The U.S.-sponsored Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty [\[204\]](#) continued, paraphrasing him: "Assurances that NATO intends no threat to Russia are irrelevant . . . Suppose Russia were to conclude a military

alliance with Mexico, Venezuela and Cuba . . . Wouldn't that provoke a negative reaction in the United States?"[\[205\]](#)

## **Clinton's Bosnian War**

### **Bill Betrays Vance-Owen**

Before he had even been in office for a few weeks, President Bill Clinton deliberately killed a peace plan drafted by President Jimmy Carter's former Secretary of State Cyrus R. Vance and Lord David Owen, the British chairman for the European Community's Committee on Yugoslavia. Similar to the Lisbon deal,[\[206\]](#) this agreement would have required Bosnian Serb forces to withdraw from much of the territory they had taken and would have decentralized power over all of the most contentious cultural issues while still attempting to hold the new state together.[\[207\]](#) The diplomats had succeeded in getting the Serbs' allies the Russians to endorse it. While the Bosnian Serbs were reluctant to support the plan, the leaders of Serbia and Montenegro—what was left of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia—led by Serbian President Slobodan Milošević, demanded they negotiate seriously and ultimately forced the leaders of the Bosnian Serbs' self-proclaimed "Republic Srpska" to give in.[\[208\]](#) Owen said he is certain that if the Bosnians had signed, the Serbs would have as well.[\[209\]](#) He also believed if George H.W. Bush had been reelected, the issue would have been settled in early 1993, and without any U.S. troops being involved.[\[210\]](#) Former Amb. Zimmermann, who had ruined the previous Lisbon deal,[\[211\]](#) advised new Secretary of State Warren Christopher to support the



plan “since the Serbs had by then consolidated their hold on more than two-thirds of Bosnia” and it was only getting worse. He also happened to have seen Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović’s team’s enthusiastic reception of the plan and so was sure they would support it.[\[212\]](#)

But the Bosnian Muslims refused until getting the word from President Clinton, and even though his incoming National Security Advisor Tony Lake said they would support the deal and urge the Bosnians to sign,[\[213\]](#) Izetbegović never did.[\[214\]](#) “Why did Izetbegović not sign?” Owen asked. “In essence because he sensed that [Bosnian Serb leader] Karadžić might sign if he did and he felt encouraged by U.S. attitudes to hold out for a better deal.”[\[215\]](#) Just before the inauguration, Izetbegović came to the United States and met with Vice President-elect Al Gore, who assured him that he would have the military support of the new administration.[\[216\]](#)

The *Washington Post* reported, “The Clinton administration deflected pressure yesterday from top Bosnian-war mediators to win U.S. endorsement of their peace plan, saying it wants to consider other options before endorsing their proposals to end the bloody 10-month-old conflict.” They said Vance and Owen were pushing hard for the deal. Owen predicted that failure to support it would lead to worse war because the Bosnian Muslims would interpret it to mean the U.S. would take their side in the conflict. “Nevertheless, the administration continued to hold Vance and Owen at arm’s length.” They killed it in committee. Even though the negotiators virtually begged them to help stop the war, the administration decided to “make no decisions until it complete[d] an interagency study of

every aspect of the conflict in Bosnia and other former Yugoslav republics.”[\[217\]](#)

In the *New York Times*, Anthony Lewis accused Vance of appeasement just like that time when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain gave in to German Führer Adolf Hitler over Czechoslovakia at Munich in 1938, and warned incoming President Clinton that he had better not follow suit. “The Bosnian Muslims, the largest group in the country and the victims of Serbian aggression, are essentially being pressed to accept the results of the aggression, thinly disguised as a political solution,” Lewis claimed.[\[218\]](#) Yet in reality, under the deal, the Bosnian Serbs would have had to withdraw from approximately 40 percent of the territory they already owned or had taken in recent fighting, which at that time was more than 70 percent of Bosnia-Herzegovina—a huge concession when they were the ones in a position of strength on the ground.[\[219\]](#) This was especially true since they would be giving up control over major industrial areas taken in the early fighting.[\[220\]](#)

When Zbigniew Brzezinski, Vance’s old rival from the Carter years, [\[221\]](#) attacked his efforts in the *Post*,[\[222\]](#) the former secretary hit back, insisting, “Frankly, I am getting fed up with this mindless criticism that doesn’t face up to a central fact. In Bosnia, there is no viable alternative to a negotiated settlement.” Disputing the popular political moralizing about negotiation with evil men, he wrote: “I’ll leave that to the courts to decide. David [Owen] and I have been working round the clock to stop the slaughter of innocent civilians and keep alive the humanitarian effort. It’s

nonsense to say we are appeasers for talking to the people who can make a difference in our pursuit of a lasting settlement.”[\[223\]](#)

But it was too late. New Secretary of State Christopher had announced the administration’s refusal to support the Vance-Owen plan.[\[224\]](#) There was now “not a chance” that the Bosnians would sign on. Owen, who sympathized with the Muslims, wrote, “The Bosnian Serbs must have been laughing their heads off.”[\[225\]](#) Further, he complained that the Clinton administration “promised to come up with an alternative policy over the next few weeks, but in the meantime seemed intent on killing off a plan backed by all their allies and close to being agreed by the parties. It was by any standard of international diplomacy outrageous conduct.”[\[226\]](#)

*Times* reporter David Binder explained the thinking in Washington. “Vance-Owen was not made in America. The Clinton administration was coming in fresh with its own agenda and they, the Clinton folks, would decide what was good for Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the Balkans, for the world,” he said. “And I think that point of view pervaded the incoming Clinton administration.”[\[227\]](#)

But the administration was not just sabotaging peace; they were hurting those they were trying to help. For all their intransigence against these peace deals in the name of preventing ethnic separatism in Bosnia, Owen later noted, they were instead helping it to continue. While lamenting Clinton’s sabotage of his efforts, he said, “It is salutary to remember that the VOPP [Vance-Owen Peace Plan] gave the Serbs only 43 percent of territory in a unified state, whereas by 1994–1995 the Clinton administration as part of the Contact Group of nations were offering the Serbs 49 percent in a state

partitioned into two entities.”[228] Christopher was also stabbing his friend Cy Vance in the back. Christopher had been Vance’s deputy and protégé at the State Department back in the Carter years.[229] Now he was destroying his own mentor’s peace plan.[230]

Lord Owen wrote that by the end of April 1993, Milošević had given up on combining Serbia with the Serbian-populated areas of Bosnia or Croatia. From then on, he was working for the interests of Serbia and Montenegro only, having grown sick of and disillusioned with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić and his men. Milošević “argued for a settlement on terms a majority in the Security Council could have accepted, and through the next two years he did not waver in seeking such a solution.”[231]

## **Dead Deal**

Even though by the beginning of May 1993, Milošević was able to pressure Karadžić to sign the deal, it was too late. After the Bosnian Serb leadership decided to hold a referendum on the agreement, the Clinton administration took that as a deal-killer rather than a setback and moved on with separate talks with the UK, France and Russia, essentially signaling Vance-Owen’s defeat in favor of a new plan, which in fact abandoned the goal of rolling back of Bosnian Serb gains and accepted every bit of what they had taken thus far.[232] Owen complained that “the U.S. argument had changed completely in recent days: whereas they had originally argued that the VOPP was too generous to the Serbs, they were now saying it was unrealistic to expect the Serbs to give up so much territory.”[233]

Then-Senator Joe Biden ridiculed the Vance-Owen peace plan for Bosnia, saying, “I can’t even begin to express my anger for a European policy that’s now asking us to participate in what amounts to a codification of a Serbian victory.” He continued, “European policy is based on cultural and religious indifference, if not bigotry, and I think it’s fair to say this would be an entirely different situation if the Muslims were doing what the Serbs have done.”[\[234\]](#) That was in May 1993. The war lasted another two and a half years. As Owen put it, in the meantime, the “Bosnian Muslims had now been ethnically cleansed from Zepa and Srebrenica [Bosnia] and the Croatian Serbs from the Krajina [Croatia]. There was no longer any talk, or hope, of reversing ethnic cleansing.”[\[235\]](#)

The same thing happened in late 1993, with the Bosnian Muslims again rejecting the “EU Action Plan,” which divided Bosnia into separate ethnic enclaves, with all sorts of connecting corridors, ironed out over months in the smallest detail. But without U.S. support for the deal, and with continuing diplomatic support from the administration for their intransigence, the Bosnian Muslims decided instead to press their luck, ultimately losing more land to the Croats and Serbs for the delay.[\[236\]](#)

## **Owen-Stoltenberg**

The next push was called the “Invincible plan,” after the British aircraft carrier HMS *Invincible*, where negotiators met in the Adriatic Sea, or “Owen-Stoltenberg”[\[237\]](#) after Lord Owen and Norwegian Foreign Minister Thorvald Stoltenberg, who had replaced Vance as co-chair of the International Conference on Yugoslavia (ICFY). After soft partition had

been ruled out, the Bosnian Serbs and Croats' positions hardened. Now they would insist on a "union of three republics" in a new Bosnian confederation.<sup>[238]</sup> It fell apart over the Bosnian Muslims' and Croats' inability to agree on the final map and access to the Adriatic,<sup>[239]</sup> with the State Department again pressuring the Muslims to hold out for more territory. Secretary Christopher assured Izetbegović that the U.S. would support his refusal to sign.<sup>[240]</sup> Though the Muslims' territorial percentage had been slightly reduced since the last deal, they still would have controlled most of Bosnia's population centers and heavy industry.<sup>[241]</sup> Stoltenberg complained that "this time everyone around the table agreed, and then it came as a deep disappointment when we got to the television [and saw] that the Americans advised against accepting this."<sup>[242]</sup> Owen wrote, "The Muslims had clearly chosen to continue with the war, believing that sanctions would soften up the Serbs, and on the advice of their military commanders, that they could defeat the Croats in central Bosnia."<sup>[243]</sup>

## **The Contact Group**

The next peace plan was put out by a new organization called the Contact Group, which included the United States. It may well have been designed to provoke Serbian rejection. The map they developed included continued Muslim control of areas of far-eastern Bosnia when the Serbs and Muslims had already tentatively agreed on land swaps in exchange for Serbian withdrawal from areas they controlled near Sarajevo. The West also insisted the town of Brcko had to go to the Muslims, even though this would permanently separate the eastern and western Serb enclaves.<sup>[244]</sup> Under

the threat of bombing and more sanctions, the Yugoslav government signed the deal, cut off all political and economic ties with the Bosnian Serbs' Republic Srpska and sealed the border.[\[245\]](#) Though the Bosnian Serbs would not give in on the deal, they did agree to a ceasefire that went into effect on the last day of 1994. At this point the Bosnian Muslims could have taken the opportunity to negotiate with the Serbs in these land swaps which both sides wanted. Instead, they broke the ceasefire, launching a massive spring offensive.[\[246\]](#) Canadian Major General Lewis MacKenzie said, "There was an obvious short-term advantage in perpetuating the fighting in some areas in order to encourage the world to intervene. I don't think that's an illogical deduction at all, and I think most people would agree with that."[\[247\]](#)

NATO now escalated as well, launching airstrikes against Serbian forces across Bosnia.[\[248\]](#) Clinton administration principals Christopher, Perry, Holbrooke and Talbott all emphasized the institutional interests of the NATO alliance and maintaining America's dominant military posture in Europe as a primary reason for their intervention in Bosnia.[\[249\]](#) As State Department historian Derek Chollet wrote, "The costs of a failed Bosnia policy would destroy the Clinton administration's ambitions for the NATO alliance."[\[250\]](#)

## **We Owed Them One**

In his study of the intelligence agencies' involvement in the war, Dutch government investigator Cees Wiebes wrote that since America had waged Iraq War I in the Arab world, even though this was supposedly in defense of

Saudi Arabia,[\[251\]](#) the U.S. then owed a favor to the Saudis and their kept mujahideen mercenaries. “After the Gulf War it was payback time for the United States: there was an expectation in the Arab world (especially Saudi Arabia) that Washington would support the Bosnian Muslims.”[\[252\]](#)

Amb. Bissett also wrote that one explanation for American intervention on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims was that “the United States wished to demonstrate to the Muslim world that it could support Muslim causes. After the Gulf War, it is suggested, the U.S.A. was anxious to find a Muslim position with which it could ally itself.”[\[253\]](#)

Though Iraq War I had allegedly been fought to protect the Saudi monarchy, Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda had been enraged at the king’s rejection of their offer to liberate Kuwait from Iraq in favor of his allowing the Americans to station their mostly white, Christian combat forces on holy Arabian soil to do so.[\[254\]](#) So as “payback,” the U.S. would back their Arab allies from the Soviet-Afghan War of the 1980s[\[255\]](#) in another war, this time in Europe.

President Clinton wrote that “standing up for the Bosnians had another benefit to the United States: it would demonstrate to Muslims the world over that the United States cared about them, respected Islam, and would support them if they rejected terror and embraced the possibilities of peace and reconciliation.”[\[256\]](#)

This goes to show Clinton’s vastly displaced priorities and hypocrisy. If he wanted to score points with his predecessors’ International Islamic Brigades, he could have stopped constantly bombing Iraq from bases in Saudi Arabia, supporting Arab dictatorships and the Israeli occupations of



the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Lebanon, and the rest of al Qaeda's list of grievances against the United States about policies which were questionable at best in the first place.[\[257\]](#) Instead, he would just support the terrorists on another battlefield and apparently hope they would forget about their other complaints. And what was this about rejecting terror? The administration was counting on the bin Ladenites to get the job done.

## **Arab-Afghans**

Osama bin Laden's men sure took advantage of the situation. Since so many of them could not go back to their home countries without being arrested or shot, having no other skills and finding themselves kicked out of Pakistan, their leaders started sending them to Bosnia to fight beginning in 1992, after they finally finished overthrowing the Communists in Kabul.[\[258\]](#) Author Evan Kohlmann estimated that approximately 5,000 of them moved on to Bosnia to fight the second wave of their jihad on the side of Bosnia's military, the *Armija Bosna i Hercegovina* (ABiH).[\[259\]](#) The *Times* and Lieutenant Colonel John Sray both reported that "many" were Arab veterans of the CIA-backed Afghan war against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s,[\[260\]](#) including hundreds of Afghans.[\[261\]](#) Al Qaeda took the lead in organizing the training and transfer of fighters, and maintained important positions of leadership in the new war.[\[262\]](#) The conflict also became an opportunity for new recruits, who had missed the war in Afghanistan, to gain experience and credibility.[\[263\]](#)

John Shindler, a U.S. Naval War College professor and former chief National Security Agency analyst in Bosnia, wrote: "The neglected truth is

that in the 1990s, Bosnia played an identical role in the global jihad to that of Afghanistan in the 1980s, serving as a convenient place to wage war against the infidels while providing sanctuary and training for the next generation of militants.” The unreported story was that “[f]or Osama bin Laden’s holy warriors, Zenica and Travnik proved every bit as satisfying and transforming as Jalalabad and Khost had been a few short years before.” A major organizational hub of the jihad was none other than “the headquarters of the ‘blind sheikh’ Omar Abdel-Rahman, whose men bombed the World Trade Center in 1993.”[\[264\]](#)

Ayman al-Zawahiri, Rahman’s comrade in Egyptian Islamic Jihad and later co-founder of al Qaeda with his partner bin Laden, visited Bosnia regularly beginning in 1992. He was even reported to have been placed in charge by the Saudi sheik.[\[265\]](#) For years his brother Mohammed ran the International Islamic Relief Organization charity as cover for support for mujahideen fighters across the region.[\[266\]](#) The Americans took advantage of them too, working with Britain, Germany, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and even Iran, to provide money—ultimately more than \$2 billion[\[267\]](#)—weapons and training.[\[268\]](#) And the jihad spread from there. Chechen terrorist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev admitted that his men had also gone to Bosnia to fight.[\[269\]](#)

Evan Kohlmann chronicled many major battles they participated in during the Bosnian war, including in Tesanj, Sarajevo, Travnik, Mount Bandera and Guca Gora, where they destroyed the local Catholic church and monastery and tortured and murdered innocent civilian captives.[\[270\]](#)

The *Post* wrote about the terrorist connection at the start of the war in 1992, reporting that “young Muslim men eager for battle are filtering in from the Middle East and Asia. . . . Scores of volunteers from countries that include Turkey, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Syria and Saudi Arabia have taken up arms and are fighting in central Bosnia.” They also described the “golden chain”[\[271\]](#) of Gulf money pouring in. “Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd personally donated \$8 million for relief aid to be funneled through the al-Ibrahim Foundation, a private Saudi charity.” They said the Muslim mayor of the town of Konjic, near Sarajevo, was thankful for arms shipments from Turkey, smuggled through Croatia. An adviser to the Bosnian government said they had received shipments of weapons from Pakistan as well.[\[272\]](#) The *Post* covered it again in 1995[\[273\]](#) and 1996, in the latter case writing that in an operation “modeled in some respects on the Afghanistan experience in the 1980s,” Saudi Arabia had paid for \$300 million in weapons for Izetbegović’s forces since 1993 “with the knowledge and tacit cooperation of the United States.” The only real difference from the 1980s operation, they said, was the alleged lack of matching funds by the U.S. for Saudi Arabia’s effort, though the Saudis said that the American government “was more than just turning a blind eye to what was going on. . . . It was consent combined with stealth cooperation. . . . American knowledge began under [President George H.W.] Bush and became much greater under Clinton.”[\[274\]](#)

In another piece in 1996, the *Post* reported that the so-called charities arming and transporting mujahideen to Bosnia had direct ties to Rahman and bin Laden,[\[275\]](#) who by then had long been known to be financing

attacks against the U.S.[\[276\]](#) and had openly declared war.[\[277\]](#) They said the Saudis used charities like the Third World Relief Agency (TWRA) to finance the war in Bosnia, and blamed the embargo for forcing Izetbegović's alliance with international terrorist movements—"contacts," they said, "that continue to haunt the U.S.-led Balkan peace process." The group raised money from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Turkey, Brunei, Malaysia and even Iran. However, the *Post* reported, international terrorists had also used the charity to finance the Bosnian Muslim regime, "including," they said, "the wealthy Saudi Arabian emigre Osama bin Laden, a suspected sponsor of militant Islamic groups around the Middle East." They noted that "[b]in Laden, a resident of Sudan until last year, is reportedly now in Afghanistan, where he has issued statements calling for attacks on U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf." This Saudi sheik did not sound like a very good ally.

The *Post* also tied the supposed relief agency to Rahman. U.S. officials complained that these mujahideen were "the core of a radical Islamic movement that has resisted U.S. attempts to exert influence over the [Bosnian] army and security services." A senior Western diplomat told the paper that "the Clinton administration knew about the Third World Relief Agency and its activities beginning in 1993," but they did nothing to intervene. "We were told [by Washington] to watch them but not interfere," the diplomat said. "Bosnia was trying to get weapons from anybody, and we weren't helping much. The least we could do is back off. So we backed off." Austrian and German authorities also looked the other way.[\[278\]](#)

The *Post* quoted officials calling them “hard-core terrorists” in one breath and praising them as “very brave fighters” in the next. A Defense Department official told them, “They have taken large casualties. They have taken on some important operations and are willing to take some tough action.”<sup>[279]</sup> Journalist Chris Deliso wrote, “In December 1992, King Fahd met with Izetbegović and promised to open Saudi coffers wide; a special board was soon established (the Supreme Committee for the Collection of Donations for the Muslims of Bosnia) and overseen by Riyadh’s governor, Prince Salman bin Abdul Aziz.” They used seven major charities, including al Qaeda’s World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), to fund their army. “Between 1992 and February 1996, the Supreme Committee provided some \$356 million to the Bosnian Muslims, of which \$103 million came from King Fahd himself,” Deliso reported. He also described the El Mujahid division of 750 fighters that was attached to the Bosnian army based in the Travnik-Zenica area in central Bosnia. The group had been created by the army but was run by Algerian Abdelkader Mokhtari, a.k.a. Abu El Mali, whom U.S. officials later called “a junior Osama bin Laden.”<sup>[280]</sup>

Journalist Brendan O’Neill added that the Pentagon had actually “assisted with the movement of thousands of mujahedin and other Islamic elements from Central Asia into Europe, to fight alongside Bosnian Muslims against the Serbs.” It was an important milestone for the international jihadist movement. “In moving to Bosnia, Islamic fighters were transported from the ghettos of Afghanistan and the Middle East into Europe; from an outdated battleground of the Cold War to the major world conflict of the day; from being yesterday’s men to fighting alongside the

West's favoured side in the clash of the Balkans.”[\[281\]](#) If Western intervention in Afghanistan had created the Arab-Afghan mujahideen, O'Neill said, then Western intervention in Bosnia had then globalized the bin Ladenite terrorist movement.[\[282\]](#)

Kohlmann described in detail how, as he put it, “Bosnia’s unique geographic position directly between Western Europe and the Middle East was the ideal jumping off point for organizational expansion of the movement into Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Canada and the United Kingdom.” Calling it “the birthplace of al Qaeda,” he wrote that the war had served an extremely important role in solidifying the multi-generational permanence of the international jihadist movement after the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War. “[A]fter six years of researching Usama bin Laden and Al-Qaida starting in the mid to late 1990s, I could not help but notice the particularly enduring influence of the legends of jihad and martyrdom persisting from, of all places, the Bosnian civil war.” Kohlmann said “the stories of the men who lost their lives fighting in a supposed Muslim ‘holy war’ against European ‘Crusaders’ are much more telling of the history and goals of Al-Qaida” than the writings and statements of their leaders.[\[283\]](#)

Clinton’s chief Balkans negotiator, Richard Holbrooke, later wrote, “Parts of Bosnia were becoming a sanctuary for Islamic terrorists, some of whom belonged to an organization whose name was still unknown in the West, Al Qaeda.”[\[284\]](#) He later told the *Los Angeles Times*, “I think the [Bosnian] Muslims wouldn’t have survived” without this help from the Arab mujahideen veterans of the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War.[\[285\]](#) But the fighters also needed Western help, in the form of covert arms shipments.

“Thank God the decision was made,” Holbrooke told them. “In retrospect, I still think [the decision] was absolutely correct.”[\[286\]](#) The bin Ladenite terrorists of the Bosnia war were not limited to those veterans. A new generation of holy warriors would fight there as well.

The same was true of the man himself. As Shindler wrote, bin Laden had always been overshadowed by Abdullah Azzam back in the days of the Afghan war. “It was only in the 1990s, in Bosnia that ‘the Che Guevara of Islam’ really came into his own, developing al-Qa’ida into the flexible, well-funded, multinational jihadi organization it became.”[\[287\]](#) Bin Laden personally visited and sent his close associate Abdelkader Mokhtari to command mujahideen forces. The London Sunday *Times* reported that “in June 1993 . . . secular Bosnian Muslim officers had grave reservations about the foreign mujahedeen, many of whom were sent by Al-Qaeda and commanded by Abdelkader Mokhtari, one of Osama bin Laden’s top lieutenants.” In this case, it was the terrorists’ allies complaining about them. Colonel Stjepan Šiber, then-deputy commander of Izetbegović’s army, argued that the Islamist units were the ones that “commit most of the atrocities. . . . They have been killing, looting and stealing.”[\[288\]](#)

Though their forces may not have been decisive in the war, Western governments were very wrong when they concluded, as Dutch intelligence had in 1996, “the threat from these mujahideen should not be overestimated.”[\[289\]](#) When the official Dutch investigation into the Srebrenica massacre was published in 2002 and revealed Western intelligence agencies’ cooperation with international terrorists supporting

the Bosnian Muslims,[\[290\]](#) the scandal was so great the government had to resign.[\[291\]](#)

After September 11, the *Los Angeles Times* reported on a secret State Department document from 2000 detailing the threat of bin Ladenite terrorist blowback from the Bosnian war. “Bosnia-Herzegovina is ‘a staging area and safe haven’” for terrorists, a former senior State Department official told them. “The White House leaned on Bosnia and its then-president, Alija Izetbegović, to do something about the matter, but nothing happened,” according to the official, who added that the terrorists “would travel with impunity and conduct, plan and stage terrorist acts with impunity while hiding behind their Bosnian passports.” The *Times* noted that “President Clinton’s secretary of State, Madeleine Albright, personally appealed to Izetbegović to oust suspected terrorists or rescind their Bosnian passports,” adding this was not until “the last days of the administration.”[\[292\]](#)



## Famous Veterans

Yossef Bodansky, a former investigator for the U.S. congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare, reported that bin Laden himself visited Bosnia three times between 1994 and 1996.[\[293\]](#) According to Agence France-Presse and the *Wall Street Journal*, the Bosnian government had even given the terrorist leader a passport.[\[294\]](#) Renate Flottau, Balkan correspondent for the German newspaper *Der Spiegel*, met bin Laden in Izetbegović's office in Sarajevo in 1993.[\[295\]](#) He showed her his passport from Bosnia-Herzegovina, issued by the embassy in Vienna, and told her he was bringing in fighters from outside of the country.[\[296\]](#) Eve-Ann Prentice of the London *Times* saw him there too.[\[297\]](#)

Other veterans of the jihadists' war in Bosnia included the men who trained Ahmed Ressam, the Algerian national arrested at the Canadian border in 1999 after planning to bomb Los Angeles International Airport on New Year's Eve;[\[298\]](#) eventual September 11 ringleader Khalid Sheikh Mohammed[\[299\]](#) and Flight 77 hijackers Nawaf al-Hazmi and Khalid al-Mihdhar;[\[300\]](#) as well as Mohammed Haydar Zammar, who recruited Flight 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta and his friend Ramzi bin al Shib into the plot.[\[301\]](#) The same was true for Saud al-Otaibi and Abdel Karim al Meyati, the organizers of the Madrid train bombings of March 2004[\[302\]](#) and Abdul Azizi al-Murqrin, the later-founder of al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula,[\[303\]](#) who was responsible for at least two attacks in the George W. Bush era,[\[304\]](#) and whose group carried out multiple successful and attempted attacks against the West in Barack Obama years.[\[305\]](#)

After the London train bombings of July 7, 2005, British MP Michael Meacher explained that it was blowback from U.S.-UK intervention in the Balkans, saying the policy was still so twisted that an American federal prosecutor credibly accused MI6 of protecting the man who may have been behind the attack. “[T]he U.S. wanted to raise another jihadi corps, again using proxies, to help Bosnian Muslims fight to weaken the Serb government’s hold on Yugoslavia. Those they turned to included Pakistanis in Britain,” Meacher said. Further, he cited a recent Indian report that Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, at the request of the Clinton administration, sent a contingent of 200 men from the Harkat-ul-Ansar (HUA) terrorist group, which had been trained by their Inter-Services Intelligence agency (ISI), to fight in Bosnia “with the full knowledge and complicity of the British and American intelligence agencies.” Meacher complained, “For nearly a decade the U.S. helped Islamist insurgents linked to Chechnya, Iran and Saudi Arabia destabilize the former Yugoslavia.” He said that after the war, thousands of fighters moved on to Kosovo, then Austria, Germany and Switzerland.[\[306\]](#)

And then it turned out Omar Saeed Sheikh, the al Qaeda member alleged to have wired \$100,000 to lead hijacker Mohamed Atta before the September 11 attack and was convicted of murdering *Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl in Pakistan in 2002 (he was later released),[\[307\]](#) was also a veteran of the war in the former Yugoslavia.[\[308\]](#)

## **The Ayatollah**

Interestingly, the Iranian government under President Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, which was seeking to ease tensions with the United States, as mentioned above, got on board the effort to back the mujahideen in Bosnia,[\[309\]](#) with the Sunni-Shi'ite divide and international arms embargo[\[310\]](#) notwithstanding.[\[311\]](#) In fact, Iran's rivalry with Saudi Arabia was likely a motivating factor in their intervention.[\[312\]](#) After the U.S.-forged Croatian-Bosnian Muslim coalition was created in early 1994, the ambassador to Croatia, Peter Galbraith, pushed hard for the policy. It was approved by Anthony Lake, Strobe Talbott and President Clinton, resulting in Galbraith and Special Envoy Charles Redman[\[313\]](#) giving Tudjman the "green light," allowing them to proceed[\[314\]](#) with what was called "the Croatian Pipeline."[\[315\]](#) In fact, the pipeline may have begun as early as November 1993.[\[316\]](#) The Turks participated under U.S. supervision as well. "Black Flights" of their C-130 Hercules heavy transport planes were also involved while American AWACS air control planes would turn a blind eye.[\[317\]](#) The *Post* also reported that Iranian so-called Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Al-Khamenei contributed \$3.3 million to the Sarajevo government.[\[318\]](#) Galbraith admitted his role in testimony to Congress.[\[319\]](#) Ultimately they provided more than 5,000 tons of weapons to Muslim fighters in Bosnia between 1994 and 1996.[\[320\]](#) A CIA official confirmed the Iranian arms shipments separately to Dutch investigator Wiebes, telling him, "That is politics." Wiebes added that the Americans were also directly delivering arms to the Izetbegović regime in violation of the embargo. U.S. C-130s were seen dropping equipment, and within days the Bosnian Muslim army

were walking around in new uniforms and carrying American M-16 automatic rifles.[\[321\]](#)

While the American-supported arms pipeline began in 1993,[\[322\]](#) a 2001 BBC investigation concluded that the U.S. military itself had begun air-dropping massive amounts of sophisticated arms to the Bosnian Muslim forces in early 1995. They included: “[a]nti-tank guided weapons to counter Bosnian Serb armor, Stinger surface-to-air missiles to ward off helicopters, night vision goggles and, most importantly, Motorola radio sets to allow the ABiH to operate more efficiently in large scale offensive operations.”[\[323\]](#)

Republican Senator and 1996 presidential nominee Bob Dole and Representative Chris Cox even argued that the Iran weapons pipeline was a compelling reason why they ought to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and Croatia. Dole complained to the Senate that Clinton was instead using the Iran arms transfers as an excuse not to lift the embargo. “From statements made by State Department officials to the press, one gets the impression that Iran is the Clinton Administration’s preferred provider of weapons to the Bosnians.” Granting their opposition for argument’s sake, he challenged, “If the Administration has a problem with Iran arming Bosnia, it should be prepared to do something about it”—meaning send the weapons themselves to replace their efforts.[\[324\]](#)

The Republican position was that Clinton’s green light to Iran was a terrible idea when, after all, they knew the administration had at least discussed “asking friendly countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan to move weapons and support to the Bosnians. The model for such aid,” they insisted, “existed before in the 1980s when Saudi Arabia served

as the conduit between the U.S. and the anti-Soviet Afghan insurgency.”[\[325\]](#) A Saudi official whined to the *Post* that Iran was getting too much credit when the Kingdom had done so much more, telling them, “Tehran had ‘the loudest mouth’ but did not contribute nearly as much money to the Muslim cause as Riyadh.”[\[326\]](#)

Though the CIA complained to the Congress and media about Iran’s support for Bosnian President Alija Izetbegović and presence of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in Bosnia after the war, they were satisfied that the government cut ties with Iran by 1996[\[327\]](#) and nothing much seemed to come of their relationship in the long term.[\[328\]](#)

## **Serbs Fought Dirty Too**

On the other side, there is no question that Milošević was himself a demagogue who demonized Yugoslav Muslims. And the Bosnian Serb army and allied militias committed numerous atrocities in their various cleansing campaigns as well. The army commander Željko Ražnatović (a.k.a. Arkan) was widely reported to have committed war crimes against civilians during the war, including mass murder and ethnic cleansing.[\[329\]](#) Amb. Zimmermann, like the rest of the government and media consensus, was certain that Milošević, president of Serbia and nominal leader of what was left of Yugoslavia, was responsible for all of this and “cooperating closely” with Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadžić and the rest. However, his case seemed to be mostly circumstantial. He said that Milošević’s contempt had given militias license, and his slogans and avowed chauvinism were indirect incitement. The only part there that would seem

to hold up to scrutiny is that when the JNA withdrew from newly independent Bosnia, they left troops and heavy weapons with the new Bosnian Serb forces. But whose fault was that? Izetbegović's and Bush's. The JNA had left many arms and even their Bosnian arms factories in the hands of the Muslims as well.[\[330\]](#)

## **The Siege of Sarajevo**

For almost four years beginning in May 1992, Bosnian Serb forces laid siege to the capital city of Sarajevo, more or less constantly blasting it with shells and sniper fire. More than 11,000 people were killed,[\[331\]](#) including 1,200 children.[\[332\]](#) They were not trying to cleanse and take the city, only terrorizing the population in a vain attempt to pressure Izetbegović to come to terms.[\[333\]](#)

## **Public Relations**

The Washington War Party was in business. Center-left liberals pushed for “humanitarian interventionism,” while the neoconservative faction dominated the Republican Party’s messaging on the subject, over the virtually unanimous objection of their constituents as represented by American AM talk radio audiences out in the country.[\[334\]](#) The neocons created the Balkan Institute, American Committee to Save Bosnia (ACSB) and Action Council for Peace in the Balkans, whose members included future Iraq War II ringleader Richard Perle, neoconservative godfather Norman Podhoretz and President Reagan’s former ambassador to the UN,

Jean Kirkpatrick, along with Council on Foreign Relations “realists” such as Zbigniew Brzezinski and Reagan’s former Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci.[\[335\]](#) Its leaders included Stephen W. Walker, who resigned from the State Department in protest over Clinton’s alleged inaction in the war. [\[336\]](#) They launched a massive public relations campaign in favor of intervention, including lobbying Congress, TV and radio interviews, a speaking tour, bumper stickers, news specials, student networks, efforts to specifically target Jewish and Catholic groups and all the propaganda money can buy.[\[337\]](#)

Numerous officials from the U.S. civilian and military intelligence agencies, as well as those from allied European states, repeatedly questioned American bias against the Serbs in all cases, even when the Bosnians or Croats were the ones causing trouble, including torture, mass murder and ethnic cleansing.[\[338\]](#) After immediate Western recognition of the independence of Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia led to catastrophe for their favored factions, they needed someone to blame. Instead of being honest about the situation, the Croatian and Bosnian Serbs were in and their desire to remain under the Belgrade government, or at least independent from Sarajevo, the Americans and their allies simply embellished their heroes-versus-villains narrative, blaming the entire conflict not on their disastrous diplomacy, but on the evil Communist nationalism of Milošević and his ideological crusade to create a “Greater Serbia” at any cost.[\[339\]](#)

The Bosnian Muslim government hired the American firm Ruder Finn Public Affairs to spin the war for them. They decided to cast the entire thing

in World War II terms: the Serbs, whose fathers had fought the Germans<sup>[340]</sup> and rescued 500 downed American pilots,<sup>[341]</sup> were now the Nazis, and the sons of the Croats and Muslims who had allied with the Third Reich and murdered hundreds of thousands of civilians in the Holocaust were now the Jews<sup>[342]</sup>—and this was America’s chance to go rescue them in time before the worst took place. It was, very much in the Bosnian Muslims’ interests to push this narrative to convince the West to come to their aid. But for the liberal Democrats in Washington, D.C., this was their chance to do something big and important.<sup>[343]</sup> Of course, the Clinton administration would need to forget all the causes of the wars, especially the role they had played in Bosnia, and instead, as George Szamuely put it, “reverse cause and effect,” and spend the next few years pretending the consequences of the war—mass killing, war crimes and ethnic cleansing—were the reasons for their intervention, rather than the result of it.<sup>[344]</sup> He picked out Roy Gutman of *Newsday* and David Rhode and John Burns of the *Times* for extra criticism since they actually won Pulitzer Prizes for phony stories alleging death camps, mass graves and massively inflated casualty estimates.<sup>[345]</sup>

U.S. Air Force General Charles G. Boyd, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the U.S. European Command from 1992 to 1995, complained in *Foreign Affairs* in 1995 that “[t]he linchpin of the U.S. approach has been the underinformed notion that this is a war of good versus evil, of aggressor against aggrieved.” Since the issue was black and white and the U.S. on the side of good, any bending of the rules was justified. The administration twisted UN resolutions to favor the Muslims, created “safe areas” for



Muslim forces to use against their enemies, labeled potential Serbian negotiating partners “war criminals” to preclude compromise, used humanitarian aid to bolster Muslim forces and supported a government in Sarajevo which “has become increasingly ethnocentric in its makeup, single-party in its rule, and manipulative in its diplomacy.”[\[346\]](#) Gen. Boyd noted CNN star Christiane Amanpour’s silence when Serbian civilians were killed and their villages burned to the ground, and the West’s blind eye turned toward Muslim and Croat atrocities against each other since reality blurred the simple story.[\[347\]](#)

Investigator Cees Wiebes wrote in his study for the Dutch government that though the Serbs’ atrocities were greater than those of their enemies, “[u]nwelcome issues with respect to the activities of the Bosnian Muslims and Croats were only reported to a limited extent, if at all,” while “the deeds of the Bosnian Serbs came fully into the spotlight.”[\[348\]](#) This was true even when the Croats’ victims were Bosnian Muslims, including when they seized Muslim territory or when they committed the most horrific crimes, such as massacres of women and children. To Western governments, only crimes by Serbs were worth focusing on.[\[349\]](#)

David Owen later wrote that he received the strongest resistance against making peace from Ejup Ganic, the vice president of Bosnia and member of the Muslim Party of Democratic Action (SDA). “A quiet Sarajevo was, he almost admitted, not in his interests, and he preferred a continuation of the [Serbs’] siege.” Ganic had “one central policy objective, namely to involve the U.S. Army as a combatant in the Bosnian fight to defeat the Serbs.” To that end he had mastered the art of Western public

relations. “His message is simple—‘We are the victims’—and like all good propagandists, he [did] not shrink from repeating the message over and over again.” Owen wrote that to drive home Muslim victimhood, “they needed the elderly and the children to stay.” When he asked Izetbegović why he would not let Muslim women and children leave the warzone, “he retorted that the British would never have let them leave London during the Blitz and seemed genuinely surprised when I told him how Churchill’s government arranged for children to not only leave London, but go as far afield as Canada.”[\[350\]](#)

Lieutenant Colonel John Sray, a U.S. military intelligence officer assigned to the UN in Sarajevo, also showed how the Bosnians’ choice to hire major public relations firms—such as the infamous Hill and Knowlton, the same firm who had packaged and sold the hoax about Iraqi soldiers throwing Kuwaiti babies from their incubators to drum up support for Iraq War I in 1990[\[351\]](#)—helped to bend American media coverage toward the Bosnian Muslims, ignoring their offensives and atrocities while playing up their suffering, and the opposite when it came to the Bosnian Serbs.[\[352\]](#)

Ted Galen Carpenter noted the major media’s theme at the time that the Serbs had “taken” 70 percent of Bosnian land, when they had already owned more than 60 percent of it in the first place. They made it seem as though the Bosnian Serbs had invaded from Serbia, when in fact their descendants went back hundreds of years to times before our country existed.[\[353\]](#) Amb. Zimmermann, representing the ostensibly capitalist West, found it beyond absurd that the Serbs could think they had property rights. He ridiculed Milošević’s contention, as he put it, “that Serbs ‘living

on' 64 percent of Bosnia's land had the right to control it by force and to deny it to others." Was this not exactly the theory upon which the U.S. and its allies had recognized the independence of the three nations they had helped break off from Yugoslavia thus far?

Gen. Boyd explained that the common U.S. TV narrative about Serbian land grabs was just wrong. "What is frequently referred to as rampant Serb nationalism and the creation of a greater Serbia has often been the same volatile mixture of fear, opportunism, and historical myopia that seems to motivate patriots everywhere in the Balkans." He noted, "Much of what Zagreb calls the occupied territories is in fact land held by Serbs for more than three centuries, ever since imperial Austria moved Serbs to the frontier (the Krajina) to protect the shopkeepers of Vienna (and Zagreb) from the Ottomans." He pointed out that "[t]he same is true of most Serb land in Bosnia, what the Western media frequently refers to as the 70 percent of Bosnia seized by rebel Serbs." There had only been 500,000 more Muslims than Serbs there at the time of independence, with the Serbs tending toward rural land ownership. "In short, the Serbs are not trying to conquer new territory, but merely to hold on to what was already theirs."[\[354\]](#)

In January 1993, *Newsweek* claimed the Serbs had been responsible for between 30,000 and 50,000 "rapes committed explicitly to impregnate Muslim women and hold them captive until they give birth to the unwanted Serb babies," even though they also said that "[w]hen pressed, Bosnian officials concede that their estimates are extrapolations based on a relatively small number of testimonies."[\[355\]](#) Szamuely noted that beside the fact

there was no evidence for these claims, the accusations made no sense, “[s]ince there is no ethnic difference between Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Muslims, the only result of forcible impregnation would be to increase the number of people brought up in the Islamic faith.”[\[356\]](#) A year later, the UN released a study showing that in Sarajevo they found “126 victims, 113 incidents, 252 alleged perpetrators, 73 witnesses,” implying that even where systematically implemented as part of the war—clear war crimes—the victims numbered in the hundreds or thousands, not tens of thousands.[\[357\]](#) This is not just academic, but an important distinction. The narrative at the time was that the Serbs were committing atrocities on a Hitlerian scale. Just imagine the massive Imperial Japanese-type so-called “comfort” facilities[\[358\]](#) which would be required to allow such atrocities to even be possible. America’s political and media establishment did. Bosnian Serbs believed the same sort of propaganda about the other side as well.[\[359\]](#)

Other rapists in the war included mercenaries from the American military contractor DynCorp. They enslaved women and young girls, raped them and prostituted them out for other men to rape.[\[360\]](#)

Declassified intelligence files from Canadian peacekeepers who were part of the UN Protection Force (UNPROFOR) show that in secret they blamed the Muslims far more often than the Serbs for intransigence in negotiations, saying the “insurmountable” objective of “satisfying Muslim demands will be the primary obstacle in any peace talks.” Also, appearing to refer to the U.S. or NATO, in September 1993 they complained that “outside interference in the peace process” was not helping. They could not achieve a final deal “if outside parties continue to encourage the Muslims to

be demanding and inflexible in negotiations,” or embolden Izetbegović “to hold out for further concessions,” adding that “clear U.S. desires to lift the arms embargo on the Muslims and to bomb the Serbs are serious obstacles to ending the fighting in the former Yugoslavia.”[\[361\]](#)

## **Genocide**

The overall war casualties were also inflated by two or three times, from an actual 100,000 killed on all sides to a count of 250,000–300,000 killed, mostly Bosnian Muslims.[\[362\]](#) This turned a terrible and unfortunately violent breakup of a state into a genocidal extermination campaign committed by a group of evil madmen.[\[363\]](#) George Kenney, former deputy chief of Yugoslav affairs at the State Department, wrote that he believed the total count had been wildly inflated by the Bosnian Muslim government, and that the death toll from violence by all sides was between 25,000 and 60,000, saying, “Bosnia is not the Holocaust or Rwanda; it’s Lebanon.”[\[364\]](#) Red Cross officials told him they believed the total was even lower than that. However, a 2005 study found that approximately 102,000 had been killed, about 55 percent civilians and 45 percent combatants.[\[365\]](#) This was still less than half of what Western audiences had been told was the minimum number killed just on the Muslim side for years.[\[366\]](#) Among civilians, they found approximately 38,000 Muslims and Croats, and 16,700 Bosnian Serbs. For combatants the numbers were 28,000 in the Bosnian Muslim army, 14,000 Serbs and 6,000 Croats.[\[367\]](#)

Journalist Roy Gutman infamously won a Pulitzer Prize for his fake news stories referring to Serbian prison camps holding Bosnian Muslim

prisoners, as “death camps,” which he directly compared to Auschwitz in World War II.<sup>[368]</sup> He had no evidence, only victim testimony.<sup>[369]</sup> Intelligence officials dismissed his claims, with later-Ambassador Peter Galbraith saying there was “no evidence of a concerted plan to kill systematically the Muslim population.”<sup>[370]</sup> State Department official George Kenney said, “We can be fairly certain that there hasn’t been mass killing in the concentration camps. There’s just no evidence of that whatsoever.”<sup>[371]</sup>

Amazingly, Izetbegović himself admitted the purpose of these lies in an interview in 2003. When asked by a friendly interviewer whether he was aware that his claims about the death camps were false, Izetbegović replied, “Yes, I thought that the claims would help trigger a bombing campaign [by the West against the Bosnian Serbs] . . . I tried, but my claims were false. There were no extermination camps, even though the conditions were terrible.”<sup>[372]</sup>

James Harff, president of the public relations firm Ruder Finn, later boasted that he “outwitted” three major American Jewish groups—the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress—with Gutman’s lies about the Serb-run death camps in Bosnia. He helped them create “a simple story of good guys and bad guys,” with the Serbs in the role of the German Nazis in the morality tale, and convinced these groups to hold major protests and publish an ad in the *Times*, helping to establish in the public debate an “emotional charge . . . so powerful no one could go against it.”<sup>[373]</sup>

## **Bosnian Croats Turn on Muslims**

After fighting with Muslim forces against the Bosnian Serbs in the early part of the war, in 1993 Tudjman betrayed them in his own attempt to create a Greater Croatia, incorporating newly expanded areas of Croatian Bosnia. His forces committed mass atrocities against Muslim civilians, including a brutal siege on the town of Mostar. But when he saw the advantage in allying with the Muslims and the United States against the Serbs, he switched sides again, taking full advantage by inviting Americans to come and train his army.[\[374\]](#) Clinton promised to support Croatia if Tudjman would make the Bosnian Croats realign with the Bosnian Muslims.[\[375\]](#) On March 18, 1994, they signed a deal in Washington solidifying their new confederation.[\[376\]](#)

## **Srebrenica**

Even after all that, some of the worst ethnic cleansing and mass murder of the war still could have been avoided. In May 1995, American Special Envoy Robert Frasure again struck a deal with Milošević which the administration then “disowned” since they would not have the authority over reimposition of sanctions if the deal fell through. Owen wrote, “To cover their tracks, the U.S. publicly blamed Milošević; this he took uncomplainingly, and did not in public reveal the details of the package.”[\[377\]](#)

Just two months later, the *Vojska Republika Srpska* (VRS), the militia of the Bosnian Serbs, perpetrated the Srebrenica massacres of July 1995, which has been called “genocide” by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY).[\[378\]](#) It was certainly a massacre—or two.

As Serb forces took the town—a supposed UN “safe area”—a column of mostly civilian men and boys, along with soldiers from the ABiH’s 28th Division, evacuated on foot to the town of Tuzla.

An international investigation found that while the Serbs wanted to take that territory, they were trying to negotiate a trade for other nearby land, and that “there was no intent to capture and kill the Muslims in general,” or to “destroy the population of Srebrenica in any physical sense.” Instead, they reported that the Serbs had given an ultimatum to the Muslim fighters to disarm and evacuate, an operation which the Serbs meant to be overseen by the United Nations. While the Muslims left, they kept their weapons, leaving open the argument that they were still a military target.

[\[379\]](#) The investigators wrote, “[T]he column was formed by about 7,000 soldiers and officers . . . up to 6,000 reserve members . . . and a number of civilians, some of whom were women. Some soldiers were unarmed, some civilians were armed.” They found that since “there were strong military elements within the column . . . it was not possible for the VRS to distinguish between civilians and soldiers. Therefore, the classification of the column by the VRS as a military column is to be supported.”

Furthermore, “an intention to kill all able-bodied civilian men from Srebrenica cannot be found in relation to attacks on the column.” They also found that the column “included . . . foreign Islamic fighters who had no ethnic roots in that area. An attack on these military figures would not have had any impact on the population of Srebrenica.” They concluded: “There is no indication that the attacks on the column have not been justified under



international law or that they had any other intention than to reduce a military threat during a military conflict.”[\[380\]](#)

Still, the Bosnian Serbs’ attack on the retreating column, as portrayed in the report, sounds much like President George H.W. Bush, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney and Gens. Colin Powell and Barry McCaffrey’s “Highways of Death” massacres against retreating troops in southern Iraq in 1991.[\[381\]](#) Even if it wasn’t illegal to bomb them, if the evacuating Muslim fighters were using those civilians as human shields, then that also should have remained shameful and illegal, but effective.

The massacres of prisoners are even worse. The number of executions may have been exaggerated,[\[382\]](#) as they were combined with those killed in the shelling of the column.[\[383\]](#) Also, thousands of Muslim fighters did get out and make it to safety.[\[384\]](#) However, thousands of prisoners were taken from the Dutch UN Peacekeepers’ base[\[385\]](#) or hunted down in the woods and killed by the invading Serb forces.[\[386\]](#) Nearly 7,000 bodies have been discovered, more than 2,000 of which have been positively identified through DNA analysis.[\[387\]](#) More than 3,000 of them seemed to have been killed in the fighting, which would still leave as many as 4,000 likely executed[\[388\]](#)—clear war crimes, though only half as sensational as the Clinton administration’s claims at the time, and possibly even fewer than that since some of the bodies exhumed may have been from earlier battles.[\[389\]](#)

And still, the American government and CNN’s morality play about the purpose of their intervention in Bosnia was wildly distorted. This is especially true considering the fact that the U.S., British, German and Dutch

intelligence services knew about the Bosnian Serbs' preparations for the attack but did nothing to warn the people of the town,[\[390\]](#) deciding instead to “sacrifice” them for the sake of the inevitable land swaps they had refused to negotiate in good faith. As the *Guardian* revealed in 2015, the “endgame” for Western pressure to resolve the war began not as a reaction to the massacres, but before. The fall of the city was integral to the plan—not that they had predicted the massacres, though they should have. The Clinton administration “vetoed” Dutch plans to reinforce their troops, having decided that the maintenance of the safe areas was untenable. But instead of finally relenting on the issue in the negotiations, which would mean admitting that the Serbs had a point along with allowing a peaceful transfer of the populations, they decided to let the facts on the ground play out instead. And even though American and allied intelligence officials could see the executions taking place on their live satellite feeds, no attempt was made to intervene.[\[391\]](#)

Unfortunately, the typical American TV media narrative never explained the background to these events. There was the odd and unfortunate circumstance of this predominantly Muslim population in far-eastern Bosnia, deep behind Serb lines. There had also been negotiations over land-swaps between Serbs in Sarajevo and Muslims in Srebrenica, which could have solved this problem much earlier if any of the previous major peace plans had been supported by the United States.[\[392\]](#) In essence, the people of Srebrenica were “sacrificed in a political horse deal,” in the words of one survivor, essentially describing an arrangement which could have been reached peacefully long before. Izetbegović had pulled out

the bulk of his forces while leaving the civilians behind. While the women and children were evacuated to the UN base, the men and boys were left to fend for themselves.[\[393\]](#)

Muhamed Sacirbey, Izetbegović's foreign minister, told former UN High Representative to Bosnia Carl Bildt that since they knew they would end up losing the town anyway, "what happened made things easier," Bildt paraphrased.[\[394\]](#)

Nor did the people hear much about previous war crimes committed by Muslim forces in Srebrenica, including mass murders, torture and beheadings of civilians.[\[395\]](#) There were also massive transfers of weapons into the UN's Srebrenica[\[396\]](#) "safe zone" and the knowingly doomed Muslim offensive launched just as the Croatian military was beginning Operation Flash in the Krajina, meant to provoke a reaction by the Serbs and hopefully a NATO counter-reaction on the Muslims' behalf.[\[397\]](#) That strategy was ultimately successful after a few more months of provocations.

Former NSA analyst Shindler said the U.S.-approved Iranian arms shipments were the "proximate cause" of the operation that led to the Bosnian Serbs' seizure of Srebrenica and its attendant massacre. General Mladić had repeatedly protested to the leaders of the UN mission there about the flights, "but they were powerless to stop it because . . . the airspace was under the control of NATO which meant de facto under U.S. control." So he moved his forces in to solve the problem himself.[\[398\]](#) These Iranian arms were also used by Croatia in their final cleansing of Serbs in the Flash, Storm and Mistral operations.[\[399\]](#)

## **Operations Flash, Storm and Mistral**

As discussed above, in March 1994, at the urging of the United States, the Croatian Serbs formed a new alliance and federation with the Muslim government of Bosnia created by the Framework Agreement for the Federation, a.k.a. the Washington Agreement.[\[400\]](#) The U.S. then started training them for war against the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs.[\[401\]](#)

In May 1995, Croat forces began Operation Flash against Croatian Serbs in the Western Slavonia section of the Krajina, essentially destroying the last of their military power and setting the stage for Operation Storm that August, launched by Croatian President Franjo Tudjman to complete the ethnic cleansing of the Serb minority in Krajina. The remainder of the population was force-marched into Serbia.[\[402\]](#) Tudjman complained that the Krajina Serbs were refusing to negotiate, leaving him no choice. But that was not true. They were only insisting that the UN protection force which stood between them and the Croat army would have its mandate renewed before talks began.[\[403\]](#)

The way *Times* reporter Roger Cohen wrote about the crisis, you would think the Serbs had moved a population of 13,000 civilians into the Krajina after 1991 when the war broke out and that now the Croatians were correcting that aberration, when in fact the Austro-Hungarian empire had moved them in 300 years before. Still, Cohen admitted the Croat government used a local conflict on the highway as a “pretext” to start the campaign when the true purpose was to “capture the whole enclave,” and that they had driven out at least 5,000 Serbian civilians. He also conceded that the Croatian Serbs had been in the middle of negotiating with Zagreb and had completed a recent deal over an oil pipeline with them. In other

words, it was a cynical surprise attack to seize territory, not self-defense in any way.[\[404\]](#) Former Amb. Zimmermann called this pogrom “Tudjman’s recapture of the Serbian-held areas of Croatia,” land they had “seized”—like Cohen, dishonestly implying that the Serbs or JNA had recently invaded and conquered that territory, which was now simply and rightfully being reversed.[\[405\]](#)

Denouncing the Croatian Serbs’ retaliatory attacks on Zagreb, Ambassador Galbraith said, “Sending a rocket full of cluster bombs into a European capital is a repugnant act clearly intended to kill many people. It’s an act that can only be intended to provoke a full-scale war.” The *Times* continued, paraphrasing Galbraith, “But he added that the United States had warned Croatia that such attacks might occur in response to the Croatian offensive in Western Slavonia.”[\[406\]](#)

The *Times* later reported that the West “applauded” when Tudjman “launched a pitiless military campaign that drove some 200,000 Serbs out of Croatia and, in coalition with Muslim forces, tens of thousands more out of central Bosnia.” They pointed out that “[t]oday, some of Mr. Tudjman’s generals stand accused of war crimes in these campaigns. But at the time, the West looked the other way because the battlefield victories forced Mr. Milošević to sue for peace.”[\[407\]](#)

Robert Frasure, deputy assistant secretary of state in the bureau of European and Canadian affairs, wrote to Richard Holbrooke, “Dick: We ‘hired’ these guys to be our junkyard dogs because we were desperate. We need to try to ‘control’ them. But it is no time to get squeamish about things.”[\[408\]](#)

President Clinton made it clear the offensive was fine with him, his only reservation being that the Croats “exercise restraint” because their attack was so “comprehensive, it runs the risk of a wider war.” The *Los Angeles Times* noted that “conspicuously, he did not condemn the action outright.”[\[409\]](#) In his memoir, Clinton wrote that during the purge he was “rooting for the Croatians.”[\[410\]](#) The *Post* also said “senior U.S. officials expressed cautious support for the move.”[\[411\]](#)

In this offensive, Croat forces cleansed all the Serbian civilians stuck on the wrong side of the new international border in the districts of Krajina and West Slovenia[\[412\]](#)—approximately a third of Croatia, mostly on the Bosnian border, where their families had lived for centuries, and which had never before been ruled by Zagreb.[\[413\]](#) In 2001, the Croatian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights said 677 civilians were killed, mostly elderly people who could not or refused to flee.[\[414\]](#) The German news agency DW cited estimates as high as 2,500.[\[415\]](#) Amnesty International counted almost 3,000 “disappeared.”[\[416\]](#) Milošević’s forces, some of whom remained in Krajina, refused to intervene, and he instead withdrew his troops along with the refugees.[\[417\]](#) According to the official investigation by the Dutch government, U.S. intelligence also knew about this massive pogrom in advance, and did nothing.[\[418\]](#)

Worse, retired Army generals from the group Military Professional Resources Incorporated (MPRI), who had been hired as mercenaries under authorization from the Defense Department, helped plan the entire operation at secret meetings held on the island of Brioni in the Adriatic Sea.[\[419\]](#) They also trained the troops who carried it out.[\[420\]](#) Then-Defense

Intelligence Agency Director Lieutenant General James Clapper had his men supply all the intelligence the Croats required to launch their attack.

[\[421\]](#)

According to the BBC, “[a] team of retired U.S. officers planned the bloody Croatian ‘liberation’ of the Krajina and the subsequent invasion of western Bosnia by the Croatian Army in the summer of 1995.” They also provided real-time targeting intelligence from their new surveillance drones offshore,[\[422\]](#) while NATO launched airstrikes on Croatian Serb radars, rendering them vulnerable to Croatian air assaults.[\[423\]](#)

Gen. Boyd, the former deputy commander of NATO, confirmed this, saying, “Croatia would not have taken its military offensives that it has taken either in Sector West [in Operation Flash] or throughout the north and south throughout the Krajina [in Operation Storm] without explicit approval of the U.S. government.”[\[424\]](#) Roger Cohen in the *Times*, again implying that the Serbs had invaded the Krajina rather than lived there for centuries, still discovered that everyone in the know understood that Americans had helped to plan the pogrom.[\[425\]](#)

At a meeting after the offensive, Richard Holbrooke enthused to Tudjman that he was the “father of modern Croatia.”[\[426\]](#)

The *Times* admitted, four years later, that the attack “was carried out with the tacit blessing of the United States by a Croatian Army that had been schooled in part by a group of retired American military officers.” The U.S. was withholding documents from the war crimes tribunal, “adding to suspicion among some there that Washington is uneasy about the investigation.” They speculated that this was in part because two Canadian

officers had already testified that the Croats had indiscriminately shelled civilian areas during the attack. They noted the campaign seemed to help bring the war to an end, but said that “there was a darker side to Operation Storm, one largely overlooked in the West, which had little [love? sympathy? humanity?] for the Serbs. The Croatian Army drove more than 100,000 Serbs from their ancestral homelands, forcing them to flee on carts and in small cars jammed with their possessions.” They belatedly noted, “In terms of sheer numbers, it was the largest single ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the war, though it was not as brutal as the worst of Serb treatment of Bosnian Muslims during the war.”[\[427\]](#)

“Largest ethnic cleansing”; “largely overlooked.” It depends whether one’s favored group is ethnic cleansing in support of the liberal, rules-based world order or is on the side of chaos.

After Operation Storm was over, President Tudjman sent his forces into Bosnia to link up with the Bosnian Muslim army’s Fifth Corps and launch Operation Mistral, a massive assault on Serb territory in the west, which won back much of the land the Serbs had taken and then some, including territory which had belonged to Serbs all along. Thousands of civilians were killed, and hundreds of thousands of refugees were driven from their homes.[\[428\]](#)

## **Operations Black Lion, Miracle and Badr**

Between May and September 1995, the mostly Arab bin Ladenites were used by the Bosnian Muslim army in three major assaults, beginning with



Operation Black Lion near Vozuća, in which they succeeded in taking the peaks of three mountains and destroying Serbian artillery positions.

Just after the Srebrenica massacre in July, they launched Operation Miracle, a failed attempt to take Mount Ozren, then Operation Badr that September. Badr was a successful attempt by the mujahideen to take Mount Pocerjevo, Mount Paljenik and the towns of Vozuća and Maglaj from the Bosnian Serbs.[\[429\]](#) With the American-engineered alliance between the Bosnian Muslims and Croats and this help from the terrorists, the Serbs were dealt major setbacks in the last months of the war.

## **False-Flag Attacks**

It should be no surprise that the incident used to precipitate major U.S. military intervention, including the largest air campaign of the war, was a terrible and bloody hoax.

False-flag attacks by Muslim forces against the civilians they were supposed to be protecting had become a regular occurrence. As Gen. Boyd explained, Bosnian Muslim soldiers would regularly bomb the Sarajevo airport to drive up sympathy and black-market prices for the goods they were smuggling. This included the deliberate Orwellian tactic of keeping the population in desperate need of basics like food and water, for the payoffs and public relations. During the winter of 1993–1994, Boyd said the municipal government schemed to deny water to the civilian population. “An American foundation had implemented an innovative scheme to pump water into the city’s empty lines, only to be denied permission by the government for health reasons.” However, he wrote, “The denial had less to

do with water purity than with the opposition of some Sarajevo officials who were reselling UN fuel donated to help distribute water.” As an added benefit, “the sight of Sarajevans lining up at water distribution points, sometimes under mortar and sniper fire, was a poignant image.”[\[430\]](#)

They had pulled off major successful false flags in the infamous Sarajevo breadline massacre of 1992,[\[431\]](#) in the Markale marketplace in Sarajevo in February 1994[\[432\]](#) and during the siege of Gorazde[\[433\]](#) in April 1994.[\[434\]](#) As the Dutch government investigator Cees Wiebes found regarding the Markale attack, “Eleven artillery specialists subsequently spent nine days studying the shell attack. The official final assessment was that the attacks were executed by the VRS [Army of the Republika Srpska], but there were serious doubts about this within the Western intelligence community.” In fact, “[v]arious staff of intelligence and security services from Canada, the UK, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Belgium and the Netherlands established independently of each other that this was an act by the ABiH to show the Bosnian Serbs in a bad light.”[\[435\]](#)

Then-UN Ambassador Madeleine Albright wanted to believe the lie. She told CNN that “although we do not know exactly yet what the facts are, it would seem to us that the Serbs and the Bosnian Serbs are the ones that probably have a great deal of responsibility.”[\[436\]](#)

Republican Senator Bob Dole, the majority leader, visited the market as part of his criticism that Clinton was not interventionist enough in Bosnia.[\[437\]](#) British negotiator David Owen wrote that Western military and diplomatic leaders knew that Izetbegović’s forces had done the attack

and had threatened to release the findings of a secret UN report if he did not at least show up at the negotiations, but was too late.[\[438\]](#)

The February 1994 market attack had helped lead to the death of the Owen-Stoltenberg plan, since the Western powers all reacted to the bombing by threatening the Serbs with airstrikes and demanding they pull back their guns from positions in the Serbian suburbs around Sarajevo, convincing the Muslims to again hold out for more help since Washington was on their side.[\[439\]](#)

Owen wrote about an even earlier incident when a Bosnian Muslim army squad temporarily set up and fired mortars from a hospital's grounds, then took off before a news crew arrived to record the Serbs' retaliatory strike. "I asked General Morillon why the UN had not gone public on the issue," Owen wrote. "He wanted the truth out, but said, 'we've got to live here.'" [\[440\]](#) Gen. Morillon described the same in a documentary as well. [\[441\]](#)

A Canadian military cable revealed that "Muslim troops masquerading as UN forces" had been seen wearing blue UN helmets and "a combination of Norwegian and British combat clothing," driving white vehicles with UN markings and causing their leaders concern that they would be targeted by the Croats. "This may be exactly what the Muslims intend, possibly to provoke further pressure for airstrikes on the Croats," they wrote.

"We know that the Muslims have fired on their own civilians and the airfield in the past in order to gain media attention," one concluded. A later memo observes: "Muslim forces outside of Sarajevo have, in the past, planted high explosives in their own positions and then detonated them

under the gaze of the media, claiming Serb bombardment. This has then been used as a pretext for Muslim ‘counter-fire’ and attacks on the Serbs.”[\[442\]](#)

A 1994 Canadian cable said: “The Muslims are not above firing on their own people or UN areas and then claiming the Serbs are the guilty party in order to gain further Western sympathy.” It also added, “The Muslims often site their artillery extremely close to UN buildings and sensitive areas such as hospitals in the hope that Serb counter-bombardment fire will hit these sites under the gaze of the international media.”[\[443\]](#)

*Newsweek*’s Col. Hackworth described a staged incident after British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd met with Izetbegović and was taken to safety in a bunker when moments later Muslim forces launched artillery nearby to scare him and blame it on the Serbs.[\[444\]](#)

Just a few weeks before the second market attack, the *Times* reported on a French marine investigation which concluded that the Bosnian Muslim government was killing its own people with sniper rifles in Sarajevo. “We find it almost impossible to believe, but we are sure that it is true,” a senior French officer told the *Times*. “French officers who conducted the investigation adamantly defend their findings,” they wrote. They said they thought government forces were trying to “increase international sympathy,” but added, “We know who is responsible, for certain,” a French officer said. “But we are not sure of the reason.”[\[445\]](#)

Shortly after this came the “second Markale Massacre” of August 28, 1995. This was a false-flag artillery attack staged by the Bosnian Muslims at the same marketplace in Sarajevo they had attacked in February 1994,

which killed 37 and injured 90.[\[446\]](#) They were “shelling themselves,” as one intelligence officer told Dutch investigators.[\[447\]](#) The former head of intelligence in Sarajevo, Lieutenant Colonel John E. Sray, also told the truth about the incident in an article for the U.S. Army’s Foreign Military Studies Office.[\[448\]](#) American intelligence officers admitted the false-flag story was true to Dutch government investigator Wiebes.[\[449\]](#) An administration official and military officer conceded the same to *Times* reporter David Binder,[\[450\]](#) who said he had deeply studied both marketplace massacres, including at the scene, and had talked with the various international government investigators, and had no doubt they were both false-flag attacks by Bosnian Muslim forces against their own civilians.[\[451\]](#) British and French experts who examined the scene agreed.[\[452\]](#)

## **Deliberate Force**

Regardless, two days after the attack, Clinton and NATO launched a massive, nearly three-week airstrike and artillery campaign against the Serbs—Operation Deliberate Force—from August 30 to September 14, then invited them to the negotiating table in Dayton, Ohio. State Department historian Chollet later explained that Clinton had said “the United States had to restore the credibility of NATO’s air power.”[\[453\]](#)

Decorated Vietnam War Army officer Hackworth was scathing. The U.S. and NATO were flying as the Bosnian Muslims’ “air force” against the Serbs based on an attack Izetbegović’s forces had done themselves — “[w]hich, by the way,” he emphasized, “is the oldest trick of war. And we fell for it.”[\[454\]](#)

“Deliberate Force infused NATO with a new sense of strength and vibrancy,” the *Washington Post* enthused. They all but conceded the intervention was based on a lie. “[T]his shell was the proverbial last straw. Pretext or not, it would serve. The UN scientific report remains classified. And neither NATO military nor civilian authorities reviewed the evidence before committing the alliance to a massive counterpunch.”[\[455\]](#)

Forget about anything like a declaration of war from the United States Congress, as the Constitution requires, or even an “authorization” for the president to consider, as has been the practice—mostly—since the Korean War in 1950.[\[456\]](#) Clinton launched the assault on his own and NATO’s pretended authority. He did not even try to get a resolution authorizing the strikes from Congress, where the populist right would have shot it down, or the UN Security Council, where Boris Yeltsin’s Russia would likely veto the resolution.

*Time* magazine’s cover story in their September 11, 1995, issue featured a massive explosion in an otherwise pristine small-village setting under the caption, in big, bold, yellow, all-capitals font: “Bringing the Serbs to Heel.” However, author Kevin Fedarko wrote that Milošević had already succeeded in getting the other major Serb leaders to sign a deal giving him the power to negotiate on all of their behalf before the strikes even began, instead attributing the move to pressure from UN sanctions and the Croats’ recent advances on the ground.[\[457\]](#)

The BBC reported: “Senior European negotiators believe that with U.S. backing the war could have ended two years earlier, but the U.S. desire to see the Serbs punished meant that they instead encouraged the Bosnian

government to continue fighting.” That sounds right. “The price in human terms? Over 15,000 dead and nearly 600,000 refugees.”[\[458\]](#)

For all their years of obstruction on behalf of the Bosnian Muslims, at the end of it all, the Americans settled for a 51–49 percent division of the new country, with the Bosnian-Croatian alliance getting the bare majority.

## **Dayton**

In November 1995, the principals met at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio. But it was not the bombing campaign that ended the war. The Bosnian Serbs had not been defeated and brought in on their knees to sign on to the victors’ terms. They had survived the attack just fine. What had happened instead was the Clinton administration finally dropped their insistence on keeping a unified state and holding the Serbian government responsible for everything the Bosnian Serbs had done. Instead, they would now accept partition of the new country—including the land swaps they had always opposed, such as their ceding Srebrenica and Zepa to the Serbs—and offering to lift sanctions on Belgrade if Milošević would pressure the Bosnian Serbs to quit while they were ahead, which the U.S. had previously refused to consider.[\[459\]](#)

Since the UN had indicted Mladić and Karadžić for war crimes, the Bosnian Serbs had no representation at the conference. Milošević was left to deal in their place, and accepted the Americans’ offer. He agreed to give up all of Sarajevo to the Muslims and even conceded they keep the city of Gorazde, deep inside Serbian territory in eastern Bosnia, as well as an eight-mile corridor which led to it. Still, Izetbegović and his men were

incensed at this climb-down by the Americans, but they were in no position to do anything about it. Again, the U.S., in this case in the form of then-Amb. Holbrooke, were the ones who had finally relented and told Izetbegović that he would have to as well. Under the Lisbon deal, Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg, the Muslims would have kept the cities of Srebrenica and Zepa. Under Dayton, after years of U.S. assistance for the Izetbegović regime and their refusal to negotiate, they were lost to the Bosnian Serbs. The territories won by the Muslims and Croats during the allied bombing campaign would have gone to them anyway under the previous plan—now accepted as the result of NATO bombing, which had not actually accomplished anything in terms of helping to forge the peace or establishing facts on the ground.[\[460\]](#)

President Bush's former ambassador to Yugoslavia, Warren Zimmermann, the man who had destroyed the Lisbon deal and caused the Bosnian war, later admitted it “would probably have worked out better for the Muslims than any subsequent plan, including the Dayton formula.” He added that the Bosnian Serbs “achieved at Dayton their primary political aim—their own republic within Bosnia, ‘Republika Srpska.’ None of the earlier Western proposals had offered them such a giant concession.”[\[461\]](#) When it was all over, Tudjman and Izetbegović both denounced the deal after begrudgingly signing it. Only Milošević had anything hopeful to say about the possibility of peace for the future.[\[462\]](#)

But the accords solidified the EU's humiliation and the Americans' dominance in European affairs. This alleged victory helped to build the political capital that made future NATO expansion possible.[\[463\]](#) The



NATO alliance, not the UN or EU, was awarded the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia that lasted through 2004.[\[464\]](#)

## **Proof of Concept**

Holbrooke wrote in his memoir, “Suddenly, the war was over—and America’s role in post-Cold War Europe redefined.” He added, “Criticism of President Clinton as a weak leader ended abruptly, especially in Europe and among the Muslim nations. . . . [E]ven those who chafed at the reassertion of American power conceded, at least implicitly, its necessity. . . . After Dayton, American foreign policy seemed more assertive, more muscular. This may have been as much perception as reality, but the perception mattered.”[\[465\]](#)

Ronald Asmus, the deputy assistant secretary of state for European affairs at the time, also explained that “NATO enlargement would never have happened absent the U.S. and NATO’s all-out and eventually successful effort to stop the war raging in Bosnia.” It was essential to proving the credibility of their claim to be the guarantors of a Europe “whole and free,” and at peace. “It reinvigorated NATO and reestablished the Alliance’s, and thereby Washington’s, primary role in European security.”[\[466\]](#) Asmus said, “The success at Dayton in the fall of 1995 not only brought peace to Bosnia, but also paved the way for NATO to enlarge,” adding, “It restored a sense of purpose and confidence in the Alliance and reassured Washington’s allies that it could credibly extend new security guarantees to Central and Eastern Europe.” Above all, he said, the administration thought that “the U.S.-brokered deal on Russian

participation in NATO's Implementation Force (IFOR) moved the idea of NATO-Russian cooperation from theory to reality." That turned out to be foolish optimism, but it was enough at the time to help convince the administration they were on the right track.[\[467\]](#)

## **Russian Blowback**

After NATO launched their air war against the Serbs, it became clear to the Russians that NATO could indeed be seen as an offensive threat, even without its old Warsaw Pact adversary to confront. Amb. William Burns wrote that "[w]hile often frustrated by the brutality and venality of the Serbian leadership, Yeltsin couldn't ignore the natural affinity of Russians for Slavic kinsmen in Belgrade and among the Bosnian Serbs." Instead of working with the Russians as true partners to solve the problems, the U.S. marginalized them. "As NATO stepped up its air campaign, and as Holbrooke accelerated American diplomacy, the Russians resented their secondary role," Burns wrote.[\[468\]](#)

The NATO expanders all agreed that the war itself represented the alliance simply "expanding integration and stability in Europe eastward," and not at all as a "strategic response to a specific military threat from Russia." The Red Army was long gone. Officials felt no imminent need to put military forces, including nuclear weapons, in the new NATO states for this reason.[\[469\]](#) But they insisted the Russians would just have to accept the pure defensiveness of this steadily encroaching military alliance based only on American reassurances, since their lying eyes might say otherwise.[\[470\]](#)

Yeltsin warned after the bombing: “This is the first sign of what could happen when NATO comes right up to the Russian Federation’s borders. . . . The flame of war could burst out across the whole of Europe.”[\[471\]](#) Burns wrote in a June 1995 cable that “it is very clear that the Russian elite sees NATO expansion . . . and Bosnia as parts of a whole—with concerns about NATO’s role in Bosnia deepening Russian suspicions about NATO and its enlargement.”[\[472\]](#)

The U.S. still maintains a base in Bosnia. As the neoconservatives warned in their seminal “Rebuilding America’s Defenses,” in 1998, if U.S. forces withdrew from Bosnia, the other NATO nations would be unable to handle the job alone. They added that “conversely, such a withdrawal would provoke a political crisis within NATO that would certainly result in the end of American leadership within NATO; it might well spell the end of the alliance itself.”[\[473\]](#) This was an overblown threat, of course. President George W. Bush ended up turning over the army’s Camp Eagle in 2007.[\[474\]](#) A small NATO contingent does however remain in Sarajevo.[\[475\]](#)

## **Neoconservatism**

In the official editorial for the December 11, 1995, issue of Bill Kristol’s *Weekly Standard* magazine, opinion editor David Tell, a former aide[\[476\]](#) to neoconservative William J. Bennett,[\[477\]](#) wrote that the only considerable dissent against intervention in Bosnia was the “populist ‘conservative street’”—meaning working-class conservatives who listen to talk radio—and assured their readers that they need not worry about the ignorant views of these rabble in flyover country. “Republicans did not take control of

Congress last fall by pandering to populism's least sophisticated, most crudely nativist impulses," he assured readers. There were plenty of domestic issues to attack Clinton over, he said. And "when the 'conservative street' is wrong, it should be corrected—or ignored." Then he got to the business of solving the war. "Diplomatic niceties aside . . . the Serbs do not put down their guns because they trust America will treat them fairly. They do so because they know we sympathize with Bosnia, and they trust only that we will kick their skulls in if they break the peace." If NATO would not intervene directly, they should at least support arming Izetbegović's army. "Here, too, Republicans should give the president cover, justifying and strengthening his determination to pursue an American-led rearmament effort," Tell wrote.[\[478\]](#) This was after the Dayton deal had been signed.

## **Ungrateful Terrorists**

If the Clinton administration really thought they were going to buy some goodwill with the jihadists by intervening on their behalf in Bosnia, they were wrong. The terrorists remained unimpressed by Washington's efforts on their behalf. Al Qaeda leadership in Bosnia denounced the NATO bombing campaign and Dayton negotiations. They expected their sacrifices of the previous months to lead to a whole new Muslim offensive and total victory. They declared the U.S., Britain and France enemies and vowed to destroy us.[\[479\]](#) As Osama bin Laden, by then back in exile in Afghanistan, said in his first declaration of war against the United States in 1996, addressing President Clinton, "[T]he sons of the land of the two holiest sites

had come out to fight against the Russians in Afghanistan, the Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and today they are fighting in Chechnya. Allah granted them victory and He came to their aid. They have been made victorious over your allies, the Russians.” He added, “I tell the Islamic youth of the world who fought in Afghanistan and Bosnia-Herzegovina with their money, lives, tongues and pens that the battle has not yet ended.”[\[480\]](#)

Washington got the message. The Dayton Accords mandated that all foreign fighters would have to leave Bosnia. Special Envoy Holbrooke pressured Izetbegović to round up the Arab-Afghans and get rid of them before NATO troops arrived. Some did leave. Many were given asylum in Europe, where they continued to carry out terrorist attacks, or moved on to Chechnya or Afghanistan.[\[481\]](#) Izetbegović gave the rest Bosnian papers and passports.[\[482\]](#) Only after the September 11, 2001, attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon was Izetbegović, disgraced by his association with the mujahideen, forced from power.[\[483\]](#)

## **Failed State**

After the accords kicked in at the beginning of 1996, 100,000 Serbs were cleansed from predominantly Muslim areas of Bosnia by gangs of armed thugs while the police stood by.[\[484\]](#)

Bosnia ended up not being a sovereign nation at all, but some new form of internationally occupied and administered basket case. According to Ted Galen Carpenter, Bosnia is now nothing more than an “international colony” and a “dysfunctional international ward.” He says that “Bosnia to

this day is a joke. A pretend country. Without all the international financial inputs and the international bureaucrats running a lot of the affairs, this country would not function at all.”[\[485\]](#) U.S. troops, whom Clinton promised would be home by Christmas 1996, stayed until 2004, when EU troops finally took over for NATO.[\[486\]](#)

In early 2024, leaders of the Republic Srpska threatened again to secede in protest against overreach by the Muslim-dominated government in Sarajevo.[\[487\]](#)

## **Shock Therapy**

### **The Troika and the Harvard Boys**

On top of the insult and danger of Western incorporation of former Warsaw Pact states into the NATO alliance, was the “shock therapy” economic policy of the “Harvard Boys” from the Harvard Institute of International Development (HIID) working on grants totaling tens of millions of dollars from USAID.[\[488\]](#) These included Undersecretary of the Treasury Larry Summers, his protégé World Bank economist Andrei Shleifer, their rival professor Jeffrey Sachs and his friends David Lipton and Anders Åslund, Rhodes Scholar Jonathan Hay, and Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin—eventually under the command of the “troika” of Vice President Al Gore, Summers and Strobe Talbott. They helped to totally destroy the Russian economy in the 1990s.[\[489\]](#)

Gore and Viktor Chernomyrdin, a former director of the Russian state energy giant Gazprom, co-chaired the U.S.-Russia Commission on

Economic and Technological Cooperation, the main mechanism for organizing the new relationship between the U.S. and Russia.[\[490\]](#) Talbott chaired the Former Soviet Union Policy Steering Group,[\[491\]](#) while Summers became undersecretary of the treasury for international affairs.[\[492\]](#)

Under Clinton's predecessor, President George H.W. Bush, Secretary of State James Baker and even the self-proclaimed "Prince of Darkness," neoconservative hawk Richard Perle, then on the Defense Policy Board, thought that the U.S. could cut Yeltsin a little bit of slack on the Soviet Union's old debts—\$65 billion worth, of which \$2.8 billion was held by the United States.[\[493\]](#) But Bush Sr.'s Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady had won that argument.[\[494\]](#) The Russian Federation would begin its new reign from the bottom of an economic pit.

Then, instead of being a good sport at the end of a world-historic peaceful victory, the U.S. under Bill Clinton kept kicking them while they were down. The Soviets' command-based economic plan had been a disaster, with distortions, mis-incentives and imbalances all over the place. To wind all that down and transform the country into a market-based economy was never going to be easy. But following the Harvard Boys' advice, the government induced hyperinflation, destroying all available capital for real investment, then implemented "voucher" and "loans-for-shares" schemes that handed over entire industries to connected gangsters and oligarchs. The consequences for the economy and civilian population were devastating.

## **Versailles**

Comparisons to the chaotic peace at the end of World War I, caused not just by the defeat of the Central Powers, but by the overly punitive Versailles Treaty, are worth considering. American intervention was what had put the Allies in the position to dictate the seizure of Germany's outlying territories and demand war reparations to the Allies. This destabilized German society, helping to lead to the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s.[\[495\]](#)

Russia had been left in much the same position after the first Cold War. When the USSR fell apart, Russia ended up losing lands they had conquered centuries before,[\[496\]](#) including with ethnic Russian populations in the tens of millions which were being left behind now-foreign state lines, particularly in Latvia,[\[497\]](#) Estonia,[\[498\]](#) Ukraine,[\[499\]](#) Kazakhstan[\[500\]](#) and Uzbekistan.[\[501\]](#) Previous Russian and Soviet leaders, especially Catherine the Great[\[502\]](#) and Joseph Stalin,[\[503\]](#) had moved large numbers of ethnic Russians into these countries for political purposes in the first place. Now they were being abandoned. And their economy had completely fallen apart.

Most Americans raised in the post-World War II era were taught that the U.S. had wisely decided to rebuild and befriend our German and Japanese enemies at the end of that war to avoid making the same mistake. After the end of the first Cold War, the U.S. government and its Western allies treated Russia in much the same way as the British and French treated the Germans of the 1920s, if to a lesser degree. Instead of learning from Versailles and making a friend out of Russia, America's politicians and national security establishment decided to press their advantage.



At various times, the Bush Sr. and Clinton administrations both invoked this same parable.[\[504\]](#) They both betrayed its lessons.

## **Hyperinflation**

In 1990, Secretary of State James Baker, by trade a lawyer who represented international oil companies and who had previously been secretary of the treasury, had warned Mikhail Gorbachev in their all-important meeting of February 9 that before they moved to a free pricing system, “First you have got to absorb the ruble overhang. You plan to sell apartments, devalue the currency, issue gold back [sic] bonds, etc., which may help. But you have got to do it before you go [to] the price system or inflation will be in the thousands percent.”[\[505\]](#)

The “ruble overhang” Baker mentioned was the artificially high value of the Russian currency on global exchanges, as they had it pegged to the U.S. dollar. The fact of their monetary expansion, along with the predictable economic contraction they were sure to suffer during the transition, all equaled out to far too much currency in circulation. The government had been expanding the money supply for years, but price controls disguised the effects on the shelves, instead causing shortages as to what was available. [\[506\]](#) Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan recommended selling savings bonds, with part of the interest being guaranteed in convertible currencies or gold in order to incentivize buyers, along with slashing budgets and selling off government property to absorb all the money that had been previously pumped into the system.[\[507\]](#)

*Wall Street Journal* reporter Anne Williamson wrote that Russian free-market economist Larisa Piyasheva had a brilliant plan to truly privatize property in Moscow and the rest of Russia. An important aspect of the plan was that they would auction off government-owned property for rubles. The privatization itself was, first of all, necessary to create the basis for a real free market, but the plan was also meant to help absorb extra rubles in circulation, which would be destroyed by the government, rather than re-spent, to combat the danger of wild price inflation once controls were lifted. Her sound advice was ignored. The government decided to free prices before privatizing state assets. However, once it came to lifting the price controls, Piyasheva noted to Williamson that Deputy Finance Minister Yegor Gaidar “freed prices only for consumer goods and services, but not for raw materials, minerals and real estate, thereby preserving the nomenklatura’s choicest bites while simultaneously robbing the people of their savings.” As Piyasheva explained, “Gaidar is, in fact, a Communist. As a Communist, he can’t consider private property to be of principal importance and even said it was too early for privatization, that first financial stabilization should be achieved.”[\[508\]](#)

So the new government did not try or was unable to compensate by somehow “absorbing” all that extra money before price controls were lifted. Gaidar himself complained that he would have preferred to limit the central bank’s money printing, but that question was simply outside of his jurisdiction.[\[509\]](#) Their rapid monetary expansion led to price inflation of 2,500 percent in 1992,[\[510\]](#) devastating Russian society, wiping out the savings of virtually everyone. Real gross domestic product shrank by 50

percent in four years. More than 100 million people were sent into poverty. *Forbes* reporter Paul Klebnikov wrote that Russia was devastated: “Eventually Russia would sink below the level of China, India, Indonesia, Brazil and Mexico on a per capita basis. Russia would become poorer than Peru.” In this partially induced depression, “[d]ecades of technological achievement were lost. Renowned scientific institutions fell apart. The Russian cultural establishment disintegrated and the country’s assets were sold off.”[\[511\]](#)

Gaidar, who had come from a Communist background and promised Yeltsin he could create a free-market system in 18 months, was motivated, but, like Yeltsin,[\[512\]](#) had no idea what he was doing.[\[513\]](#) Gaidar had summoned the young economists Anatoly Chubais and Dmitri Vasiliev to come work for him. The latter two had already worked on moving privatization forward in the newly again-renamed St. Petersburg, no longer Leningrad. By the end of 1991, he had hired Jeffrey Sachs and David Lipton to advise him as well.[\[514\]](#) Though Sachs was credited with quickly ending the massive hyperinflation in Yugoslavia,[\[515\]](#) and had been praised for his handling of Poland’s transition to a market economy, the situation in that nation was far different. A much greater percentage of Russia’s economy was owned by the state, and the heavy industries were used to running massive deficits and being bailed out by the central government. Since scaling back the money-printing would have deepened the recession in the short term, the central bank simply shoveled endless amounts of money to the new private banks in an attempt to prop up government employees and other wages, even as the inflation they were causing made

everything unaffordable anyway. Lastly, unlike in Poland where they were able to set a fixed exchange rate in the middle of their shock therapy program, when Gaidar tried it in Russia, it simply led to a large increase in the demand for dollars, a further collapse of demand for their endlessly printed rubles and massive capital flight of billions of dollars out of the country.[\[516\]](#)

American free-market economist Murray N. Rothbard urged the absolute and total privatization of everything in the old Soviet system immediately. Half-measures, he said, would only prolong the pain of the change. Like Williamson, Rothbard cited the great success that was the end of the famous Marshall Plan in Europe.[\[517\]](#) West German Minister of Economic Affairs Ludwig Erhard had gone on the radio on a Sunday in June 1948, and announced that all wage and price controls were over and a new currency would be issued. Contrary to the commonly taught history of those events, it was this action, against the wishes of all the Keynesian central planners, that allowed for the miracle of the rebuilding of the West German economy after the war.[\[518\]](#)

Instead, the Russians lifted some price controls, kept others, continued massively expanding the money supply through negative real interest rates[\[519\]](#) and caused a hyperinflation crisis that wiped out the savings of anyone whose wealth was denominated in rubles, as Baker predicted. This was an almost immediate fatal blow to the capitalist system before it ever had a chance to start.[\[520\]](#) Much of this was due to American pressure on Gaidar and his team to make the transition to market capitalism “irreversible” based on the myth that the shattered and discredited

Communist Party could somehow rise from the dead and take the country back over again if the process took too long.[\[521\]](#)

“Chubais didn’t understand a thing he was doing, he never so much as read an article on privatization,” one Russian close to the process told Williamson. He called Russian privatization a “bamboo tractor,” referring to an attempted Chinese invention of the 1950s, “meaning something invented out of local resources, because for whatever reasons the natives can not follow other procedures, so they have to be very domestic in their approach.”[\[522\]](#)

The problem with the way they implemented privatization was that it did not come before the unleashing of prices. Letting people spend all their saved-up rubles would have been a perfect way to transfer state property to private citizens and companies, while allowing the government to destroy all that inflationary money as they received it, killing two birds with one stone. Williamson later said that the Harvard Boys did not want to absorb all those rubles in the hands of regular Russians. Accepting their money in exchange for state property would create a “competing claim,” in the words of one Harvard economist, on industries they wanted under the control of chosen winners.[\[523\]](#)

This massive inflation meant that money had, in a sense, ceased to exist. The economy, even among large-scale producers, had been reduced to a barter system of exchange more primitive than the Marxism they had just thrown off.[\[524\]](#) Fuel for transportation and running farm equipment and other machinery became unaffordable.[\[525\]](#) Agriculture, mining and other capital-intensive industries were devastated. Their workers were driven into

the lowest depths of poverty.[\[526\]](#) When Williamson asked if further lending by the IMF and the World Bank would be helpful, Russian chief auditor Venyamin Sokolov answered, “Giving more loans to the Yeltsin government is comparable to giving a drug addict a fresh supply of narcotics. Any new loans will only go to the realm of financial speculation and to prop up support for Boris Yeltsin.” What Russia truly needed, he said, was “loans only for the purchase of new equipment or the restructuring of enterprises, and such funds can be attained from the private sector.”[\[527\]](#)

## **Vouchers**

In 1992, Anatoly Chubais, the head of the state property committee, on advice from HIID’s Swedish associate Anders Åslund,[\[528\]](#) began issuing vouchers for 10,000 rubles to every Russian to buy stock in new companies taking over old state-owned firms. The whole thing turned out to be a disaster. Western financial institutions did the same thing they had done in Germany after World War I: they sent agents to link up with some unscrupulous locals and offered them U.S. dollars and British pounds to go buy up vouchers for practically nothing.[\[529\]](#) The hyperinflation induced desperate people to sell their nearly worthless vouchers for shares of industrial stock at massive discounts just to try to stay alive. Because there were price controls on stocks, which most regular people did not understand, the few connected rich bought up entire companies’ worth of vouchers for the price of a few crates of vodka.[\[530\]](#) The later infamous

Russian oligarchs became such by seizing control of this process and thereby the entire Russian economy.

Matt Bivens of the *Moscow Times* explained that regular people who kept their vouchers ended up stuck with shares of some brick factory in the Arctic Circle while industries of high value were divided up separately.

[\[531\]](#) Klebnikov added that most sold their vouchers for a few dollars or put them into pyramid schemes that later collapsed. “Instead of creating a broad class of shareholders, Chubais’s privatization gave away Russia’s industrial assets to corrupt enterprise managers or to the new Moscow banks.” [\[532\]](#)

Another problem was that when property was being sold off at such artificially low prices, they went to people who did not have the skills to run the businesses they had taken over, so high-producing ventures were replaced by lower-producing ones. Klebnikov cited a car factory and a scientific research center that were both closed down since there were much easier ways for the new owners of the property to recoup their investment by simply renting out the space to someone else. [\[533\]](#)

Klebnikov criticized Chubais for putting everything up for auction all at once: oil, metals, mining, timber, automobiles, machine tools, shipping fleets and ports. This flooded the market and massively depressed prices for the most valuable parts of the Russian economy. If they had meant well or knew what they were doing, he said, they would have auctioned off the property starting with smaller businesses first, with the major firms being carefully spun off into the market to suit economic conditions as had previously been done in Eastern Europe. [\[534\]](#) Perhaps if they had truly privatized so quickly it would have worked out once prices settled, but the

economy remained heavily politicized, with the national government retaining ownership of major portions of important firms and preventing market pricing from ever truly getting a chance to kick in.

Rothbard, the Austrian school economist, had again thought all this through.[\[535\]](#) Rather than giving everyone vouchers to buy stock in all former state-owned businesses, they should have simply turned them over to the individuals who already worked at each company, in other words, let them “homestead” the assets. “After this one mighty stroke of universal privatization,” Rothbard wrote, “prices of ownership shares on the market will fluctuate in accordance with the productivity and the success of the assets and the firms in question.” He said that opponents of the idea usually decried it as an unfair “giveaway” of “windfall gains.” On the contrary, he said, “the homesteaders have already created or taken these resources and lifted them into production, and any ensuing gains (or losses) will be the result of their own productive and entrepreneurial actions.”[\[536\]](#)

But it was not to be. A House committee led by Republican Chris Cox of California stated that the voucher scheme “was devised by troika partner Anatoly Chubais’s U.S.-funded Russian Privatization Center and Harvard Institute for International Development, along with the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).” Thomas Dine, the USAID Assistant Administrator for Europe and the New Independent States, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that “USAID expert advisers helped Russian counterparts in designing and implementing the voucher system.”[\[537\]](#)

By handing massive industrial concerns to the well-connected for essentially nothing, they had given control to men who were not real



businessmen, and had no access to permanent flows of capital to keep their machines and men working. So they just liquidated whatever assets they could and spent the profits on luxuries and entertainment for themselves instead of reinvesting in the businesses they had come to own through virtually no effort or even expense of their own.[\[538\]](#)

Writing that Sachs and his allies had put far too much emphasis on the rapidity of the transformation from state to private ownership of major industries, compared to establishing a rule of law, liberal economist Jamie Galbraith—John Kenneth’s son and Amb. Peter’s brother—assessed the that entire enterprise amounted to sabotage of the Russian economy. He quoted Georgi Arbatov, who was then a member of the foreign policy council of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation, saying many Russians believed shock therapy was “a conscious design to undermine Russia completely as a great power and transform her into a kind of Third World country. The actual results of shock therapy have not been far from this goal.”

Galbraith concluded that nothing could change “the responsibility of leading American economists, diplomats and politicians—well-meaning liberals, in many cases—for the role that they played, in good faith or in bad, in one of the great economic tragedies of a generation.”[\[539\]](#)

Comparing the Harvard Boys with Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal Brain Trusters who pushed through the remaking of American economic governance in 1933,[\[540\]](#) Anne Williamson wrote: “Choosing favoritism over the hard slog of institution-building, the Harvard crowd sold themselves by overselling their Russian contacts whose importance and

competence they exaggerated to USAID officials.” Instead of working to create a real free-market system, the Harvard Boys convinced USAID to focus their efforts on helping the individual young “go-getters” they had picked, “rather than to risk fragmentation in attempting to build a consensus or to assist in engineering compromises between different social and political groups.”[\[541\]](#)

Williamson described another form of shock the Russian people had to suffer, finding out the prices at which massive industries had been sold during the voucher privatization. “The public sneered when it became known Russia had collected twice less than the revenues from privatization in Hungary, a country that would hardly constitute a particularly large Russian oblast or province.” She listed just a few of the daily outrages: “the Hotel Cosmos with its \$10 million annual net profit sold for \$23,500,000, the national electric company United Energies sold for \$650,000,000, ZIL Automobile Works’ one billion in assets went for \$4 million.” She continued, “Gazprom, representing approximately a third of the world’s natural gas, was valued at \$230,000,000. Ports, oil companies, high-tech factories of the military sector, all sold for a pittance.”[\[542\]](#)

Elsewhere she described the results of the new voucher system as the opposite of privatization. The national government had found a way to ensure its continued partial ownership, and influence over important firms by rigging the auctions so they would maintain a controlling portion of the shares.[\[543\]](#)

**‘Bullshit!’**

Professor Janine Wedel wrote in 1996 that the Clinton administration's policy when it came to foreign aid was simply to give it all to Deputy Prime Minister Chubais and the "St. Petersburg mafia," as an HIID report called them, including Maxim Boycko, Dmitri Vasiliev and Ruslan Orekhov, who then passed around the aid to chosen cronies to consolidate their own wealth and power. The voucher system itself was built on a \$58 million grant from USAID, which spent almost \$8 million on salaries for 10 advisers to the State Property Committee. There is no point diminishing the Americans' part in all this. They were happy to take credit back then. When USAID's Thomas Dine was asked in 1996 if his organization had "helped propel Chubais into top positions in Russian government," he answered, "As an observer, I would say yes." And by picking this one small group of reformers to support, they were, Wedel concluded, "thus alienating other parties and avoiding other processes that clearly had to be brought on board if legal and regulatory reforms were to take place."[\[544\]](#)

The CIA warned the vice president about Chernomyrdin's and Chubais' corruption, but Gore refused to listen, reportedly scrawling "Bullshit!" across the margin of one intelligence report on the issue.[\[545\]](#) He later denied the charge that he had written on it, but essentially confirmed the rest of the story, telling NBC News's Tim Russert about the intelligence report, "You talk to the people who were in charge of that division and what they'll tell you was that they absolutely agreed that it was a very sloppy piece of work." Russert asked Gore if he thought Chernomyrdin was corrupt. "I have no idea," the vice president insisted.[\[546\]](#) As prime minister, the man had sold himself and his friends the

massive oil and gas firm Gazprom for less than a thousandth of its market value,[\[547\]](#) moved billions of dollars out of the country and was worth at least \$5 billion himself.[\[548\]](#) But Clinton and Gore were not sure if he was corrupt.

However, Chubais himself was not so reluctant to admit the truth. As he told journalist Alexander Gentelev, “There are now 40 million people who hate Chubais. And they have good reason to hate me.”[\[549\]](#)

The Russians surely were in a difficult position. They needed to privatize their industries quickly. At the end of 1991, there were 225,000 state companies.[\[550\]](#) Something had to be done with them. And they needed men who could figure out how to run such large firms, but no one had the money to invest. Billions had already left the country in a massive flight of capital from the new, unstable situation.

The Soviets’ previous central plans had been a disaster, necessitating Gorbachev’s attempts to decentralize with his Perestroika program. But in many cases, this had only made things worse. The government had devolved decision-making away from the central committees to the managers of the major factories, but did not transfer ownership, which would have created incentive to preserve the firms for the long term. In essence, officials had given the new bosses the ability to simply strip the factories of anything useful and split, cannibalizing and hollowing them out from the inside. In that sense, the Communists’ attempted reforms had only sped the collapse of their system.[\[551\]](#)

After the fall of the USSR, Russia’s heavy industries were turned over to these incompetent oligarchs at deep discounts, so they had no incentive

to exert real effort to get the businesses back up and running. Like the Communist Party's managers before, they would often simply run off with anything immediately valuable for short-term gains, then move the money out of the country.

The level of criminality in the Russian government and big business was beyond belief. One scam simply had fake banks send each other phony wire transfers that the central bank would always honor. More than half a billion dollars—equivalent to one third of the IMF's loans to Russia for that year—was stolen this way in 1992–1993 in what Klebnikov called “one of the biggest disasters of the ‘reformist’ government of Acting Prime Minister Yegor Gaidar.”[\[552\]](#)

In July 1993, the Russian central bank suddenly announced that all previously printed banknotes would be considered worthless in two days' time while people would have two weeks to trade in up to 35,000 rubles for new currency. This led to a massive panic as citizens rushed to unload their now completely worthless currency for goods of any kind. Pensioners were wiped out. Travelers were stranded with no way to buy plane or train tickets home. The arbitrary nature of the decision and the lack of any clear lines of authority behind it helped to reinforce the public's conception of the lawlessness and corruption of the new system. Those with political influence could have what they wanted, while regular people would not even be left the scraps.[\[553\]](#)

## **Sachs Blames D.C.**

For his part, Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs blamed Washington for ham-stringing his efforts to help the Russians get the transformation right. His advice had worked in Bolivia, Slovenia and Poland, where he had been advising since the late 1980s.[\[554\]](#) Sachs says his focus was on trying to end the inflation and create a working currency, and that while he supported the voucher system, privatization was actually his colleague Andrei Shleifer's department.[\[555\]](#) As far as the inflation is concerned, Sachs wrote that he stands by his advice to Gaidar to immediately lift price controls first, and that it really did only cause a "one-time jump" in prices, and worked quickly to end shortages. However, he argues, they would not listen to him when it came to other central parts of the program, including his call for tens of billions in Western loans, tight fiscal and monetary policy to beat inflation and new public healthcare and pension systems to solidify political support for the overall changes.[\[556\]](#) He argued at the time that the H.W. Bush administration was not doing enough to help.[\[557\]](#)

The hyperinflation, as ever, was the central bank's fault.[\[558\]](#) In this case, it was under the control of Viktor Gerashchenko from the ancien régime, who was not part of the Gaidar team. Sachs also warned about this at the time.[\[559\]](#) On top of that, the IMF continued to insist the Russian ruble remained the common currency for the 15 former Soviet states, incentivizing each of their central banks to continue inflating on their own.[\[560\]](#)

Gaidar was fired at the end of 1992. The incoming Clinton administration had no more interest in helping Russia than the Bush Sr. government did. Though the new finance minister, Boris Fyodorov, said

that he and his advisers produced quality reports on the economic situation, he did not have enough influence over Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. “I never once recommended the privatization of the oil and the gas sector by vouchers, or giveaways, or loans-for-shares deals, and to this day regard these actions as abominable missteps,” Sachs wrote in 2012.[\[561\]](#)

Though it is hard to see how tens of billions of dollars of IMF loans would have done any good, rather than just being embezzled away like the rest of it, by 1994 Sachs had concluded the Clinton administration was refusing the debt relief and short-term IMF loans he believed Russia needed, amounting to \$150 billion over five years,[\[562\]](#) due to a deliberate choice to prevent Russia’s recovery. He concluded that they wanted to see it weakened.[\[563\]](#) Sachs and Åslund resigned just one year into Clinton’s presidency, after Chernomyrdin announced in January 1994 that the central government would continue massive state support for industry and agriculture, which the two predicted would cause worse monetary and price inflation.[\[564\]](#)

Finally, in October 1994, Yeltsin fired Chubais from his job running the National Privatization Committee (GKI).[\[565\]](#)

## **That’s Not Real Capitalism**

Then-New York University professor Peter J. Boettke is an Austrian school economist who took an early interest in the Soviet Union’s and then Russia’s transformation into a capitalist economy. His take is that shock therapy did not go far enough. Back in January 1993, he lamented Yeltsin’s firing of Yegor Gaidar. Though he was “not the perfect architect,” Gaidar’s

dismissal represented the beginning of the end of any real attempt to reform the country along free-market lines. Like Anne Williamson, he cited the Russian free-market liberal Larisa Piyasheva, who, as discussed, had tried to insist they privatize government property before lifting all price controls, which would have been a superior way to transfer state assets into the market as well as soak up all the circulating rubles causing the inflationary pressure.

Boettke wrote that “[s]hock therapy, if by shock therapy we mean the liberalization of the economy from state control, simply did not take place.” With slow and partial privatization and mass money-printing to prop up failing but connected businesses, only small businesses and crime thrived. “These aspects of Russian reality are not the consequence of free-market reform, but the result of the lingering of state control over the economy and the unstable political and legal environment.” He concluded, “In other words, it is not free-market reforms that generated Russia’s problems, but their absence.” Only by abolishing arbitrary government intervention in the economy would Russia see prosperity.[\[566\]](#)

Unlike Sachs and the Harvard neo-liberals, Boettke denounced all foreign government and IMF loans as counterproductive. Like Sachs, he lamented the rise of Chernomyrdin and predicted the worst for Russia. This was just 11 days after Clinton had been sworn in.[\[567\]](#)

In 1998, noting the decline in living standards and life expectancy in Russia, Boettke concluded that the problem was not the changeover to market processes, but the difficulty in getting the state to adjust to allowing markets to work. Russia’s economic woes were “a problem of the



institutional infrastructure, and not something inherent to the pursuit of self-interest and wealth through market exchange.”[\[568\]](#)

In other words, they needed something approaching a real rule of law and institutions that would protect property rights and enforce contracts. He did not mean a powerful central state, but one with just enough permanent rules for people to rely on. Instead, the Russians still had a politicized economy, with the central government owning and controlling large percentages of the most important firms, inflationary money and arbitrary political decision-making on economic questions. “The Yeltsin reform team has failed to negotiate the trade-off between the administrative costs of law and economic performance in any way that credibly commits the regime to keep their promise of protection of private property, freedom of contract and market expansion in general.” It was this failure that opened the door for various mafia organizations to provide security and contract enforcement instead.[\[569\]](#)

In 1998, Boettke also wrote that the U.S., its Western allies and associated international organizations had given or loaned the Russian Federation \$90.5 billion, and that “there was little to show” for it. This was because of continual inflation by the government to prop up zombie companies, along with counterproductive taxation and regulatory schemes that forced businesses to operate in the underground, black-market economy to survive.

Boettke defended shock therapy as “the path to the cure” for the Russian economy, not the cure itself. He disputed the arguments that the Western economic model was inappropriate for Russia or applied too

quickly. Societies may organize any number of ways, but if they want to be an advanced industrialized society, they need market capitalism. Central planning just will not get the job done. Massive and immediate steps were needed to break Russia away from its old Communist system. Like with actual shock therapy where the analogy originates, it is not considered the answer to long-term problems, just a method to snap a person out of the depths of psychosis. Actual reform to a prosperous economy is a much longer and more difficult process. “To restate the analogy, the Soviet economy was structured in a manner so far from the reality of market competition that only an immediate step into the market context could initiate a process of social transformation.” More capitalism is generally better, but in a way certain to frustrate those on the political left especially, Boettke explains that a whole-package approach is needed, since every state intervention creates its own vicious cycle of distortions and economic problems. They needed to stop printing money so they would not spend too much propping up connected companies and freezing out new entrants to the marketplace. None of these things could realistically be stopped without the others. Boettke concluded the real problem was: “Shock therapy has not failed as much as it has not been tried.”[\[570\]](#)

The obvious issue here is that President Clinton was a center-left, neo-liberal Democrat. What he called “free markets and democracy” meant America’s extremely mixed economy circa 1993–2001[\[571\]](#)—Francis Fukuyama’s End of History. It was the same for the Harvard Boys. They were market-oriented, but not libertarian enough. Of course, the attitudes of

Yeltsin and his Russian partners and planners often made things even worse.

## **1993 Coup**

Clinton, Gore and the economists' preference for dealing with Viktor Chernomyrdin, Anatoly Chubais and Boris Yeltsin helped to ensure their power at the expense of the parliament. Rule would continue to be by decree and not law.[\[572\]](#)

While Western readers may prefer to believe that responsibility for these horrible choices belonged to the Russians alone, in fact Bill Clinton and his government played a major role, including in the constitutional crisis that led to Yeltsin's attack on the parliament in 1993. In December 1992, the parliament, which had been elected in 1990 and was full of Communist opponents of Yeltsin, removed Deputy Prime Minister Gaidar. In what reporter Jonathan Steele called "an extraordinary piece of arm-twisting which might have caused an explosion of resistance in a more established parliament," the U.S. then threatened to withhold a \$24 billion loan package unless Gaidar remained in his position.[\[573\]](#) Yeltsin then granted himself new emergency powers, leading the parliament to attempt to impeach him, which failed. In September, he tried to reinstate Gaidar as deputy prime minister. After the parliament rejected his appointment, Yeltsin attempted to dissolve the body.[\[574\]](#)

The Constitutional Court ruled he was out of order, after which the parliament again attempted to impeach the president. They declared that the vice president, Aleksander Rutskoy, would take Yeltsin's place.[\[575\]](#) On

October 4, Yeltsin responded by laying siege to the Russian White House (again, their parliament building) and eventually deployed the army to attack with tanks and troops.<sup>[576]</sup> At least 187 people were killed, possibly as many as 2,000.<sup>[577]</sup> Yeltsin declared victory over the “Communist-fascist” plot and abolished the parliament and Constitutional Court, as well as 88 smaller councils across the country.<sup>[578]</sup> The Clinton administration heartily endorsed his actions.<sup>[579]</sup>

President Yeltsin was able to push through a new constitution that December, one which granted the presidency far more power and replaced the parliament with a new two-chamber body, with the lower house named the “Duma” after the old legislature under Tsar Nicholas II. Still, the opposition Communist and nationalist parties did well in the concurrent snap elections. But Gore’s group still refused to engage with the legislators to encourage them to pass laws to create the basis for a capitalist system. If things were not going their way in the new parliament, they would just go around it too. The Democrats’ views on executive power had been summed up in another context by Clinton White House aide Paul Begala: “Stroke of the pen, law of the land. Kind of cool.”<sup>[580]</sup> Dealing with the pushover Yeltsin and having him decree whatever they wanted was much easier than engaging with the rabble.

As the diplomat Thomas Graham wrote, they were happy to see that the new constitution granted broad emergency powers to the president to rule by decree. “Again, people were thinking in practical terms, how do we move this process forward? And we decided that we could focus on the executive branch, we could work with reformers, we could develop the

legislation.” However, he said, “If that couldn’t be passed by the Duma because of Duma resistance, then Yeltsin could sign a decree, and that would be sufficient to unleash the process.” He added that because they worked so hard to emphasize the economic transition compared to the democratic one, and since the former turned out to be a corrupt disaster, “many Russians drew the conclusion over time that this was, indeed, the intended result of American policy.”[\[581\]](#) After all, HIID’s general director Jonathan Hay and his staff wrote many of the decrees themselves.[\[582\]](#)

### **E. Wayne Merry**

E. Wayne Merry, chief political analyst at the U.S. Embassy from 1990 to 1994, elaborated on the claim that the United States under President Clinton worked hard to destroy Russian democracy.[\[583\]](#) He explained how the real fear and desperation of the Russian working class after the disaster of Yeltsin’s economic policies had led to his faction’s defeat in the Parliamentary elections of 1993, and surprising support for the “Liberal Democratic Party” of notorious right-wing nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky—who blamed deliberate American sabotage for Russia’s economic woes.[\[584\]](#) He then described the decision made by the Clinton administration that the expressed will of the people would have to be further suppressed. Even though, as Merry put it, “the people have spoken” in “the most legitimate national demonstration of popular preference that had ever been held in Russia in a thousand years . . . since from Washington’s point of view the wrong guys won.” The president decided they should tell the Russians, “Let’s basically ignore the election and get on with the program.”

Merry said that decision “created the basis for really the next two years in which American policy was to help create parallel governmental structures directly under the Kremlin to conduct policies that would not be accountable to the national legislature in any way.” He compared the new American-inspired system directly to the way the Russian government and economy had worked under Soviet Communism, with official and then parallel structures implementing the actual policies. Merry worried that “there was a huge cost on the long-term development of rule of law and constitutional government in Russia for making that choice.” [\[585\]](#)

Regarding Vice President Gore and the U.S. government’s ties with Chernomyrdin—the Communist bureaucrat-turned-billionaire, oligarch and gangster—Merry said, “I think our very close association with the government of Viktor Chernomyrdin did us very great harm in terms of the legitimacy we had in . . . Russian public opinion,” since everyone knew he was a world-class crook. The people understood Gore’s relationship with the man to mean that “the Americans were basically interested in dealing with people in power in order to serve American interests rather than a commitment to the long-term democratic development of Russia.”

Merry says that inside the U.S. government there was a contest for influence between business interests and the Russia hands, and argued then in a “dissent channel” cable at the State Department that America’s focus on transforming their economic system was undermining the far more important goal of keeping a positive relationship with the country in the future. He foresaw that “we would so alienate the Russian electorate, the Russian political elite, that it would be impossible for us then to cooperate

with them on the world stage,” adding this was “a reversal of real American priorities.”

Again, Merry was chief political analyst at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow at the time. In 2000, he said that “the United States played an important role and we created a virtual open shop for thievery at a national level and for capital flight in terms of hundreds of billions of dollars, and the raping of natural resources and industries on a scale which I doubt has ever taken place in human history.” Again, it was there not here, and every Russian who was involved in this corruption is responsible for what they have done, but the U.S. government and its agents had not stayed out of it. As Merry said, “I think our policies had a great deal to do with creating the oligarchs.” Contrary to what he called the “recent tendency by the spokesmen from the IMF, from the U.S. Treasury to claim that this was really all things Russia did to itself.” But, he said, the Treasury and IMF had played an important part in deciding “what kinds of economic policies would be created, what kind of winners and losers there would be,” referring to the oligarchs who emerged from the wreckage as kings. “The idea that we in the West, we Americans or the international financial institutions or some of the big European financial institutions have clean hands in this matter,” Merry said, “I think, is simply wrong.”[\[586\]](#)

## **Yabloko**

A report issued by the Cox Committee, chaired by Republican Rep. Chris Cox, complained about this neglect of Russia’s legislature and the administration’s reasoning that the Communist Party was still such a major

force there, but ignoring other potential alternatives to Yeltsin's corrupt crew, such as the Yabloko party, led by Grigory Yavlinsky. This was because, they concluded, "recognizing that a democratic party could oppose policies of the Yeltsin government would have called into question the administration's embrace of both Yeltsin and Chernomyrdin as the personifications of Russian democracy" and the administration's "repeated assertions that it had no choice in its Russia policy except to depend exclusively on Yeltsin."[\[587\]](#)

Williamson explained that by pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into the Harvard Boys' favored Gaidar-Chubais faction, "[c]redible and capable people, classical liberals like Larisa Piyasheva, Grigory Yavlinsky, Boris Fyodorov and democratic socialists like Boris Kagarlitsky, were simply shouted down by American money."[\[588\]](#)

Graham admitted that U.S. officials deliberately ignored the corruption of Chubais and his cronies, preferring to pretend it was the businessmen who were corrupt, not their favored supposed technocrats. It was too late to admit it because "by then, we had become increasingly wedded to Chubais and his group of reformers as the agents of change in Russia."[\[589\]](#)

## **Davos Deal**

In 1996, Boris Yeltsin, the drunken puppet of the oligarchs, had an approval rating of 6 percent after the previous five years of economic catastrophe. [\[590\]](#) It looked like Gennady Zyuganov—the Communist—might win the election of July 1996. At that year's Global Economic Forum meeting in Davos, Switzerland, Hungarian-American international financier George



Soros met with a small group of Russian oligarchs who had come out on top in the voucher scam and warned them that Yeltsin was sure to lose. “Boys, your time is up,” he reportedly said. Soros himself confirmed this story, but disavowed all responsibility.[\[591\]](#) So the oligarchs made a pact to support Yeltsin’s reelection campaign, in exchange for the creation of another major fraud on the Russian people, loans-for-shares.[\[592\]](#) Chubais was made campaign manager and received a significant payoff.[\[593\]](#) The Yeltsin team ultimately spent a billion dollars on a massive propaganda campaign, maybe two.[\[594\]](#)

## **Collusion**

President Clinton also sent an army of consultants and others to finance and run Yeltsin’s campaign for him, while the oligarchs who owned Russia’s television, radio stations and newspapers did their part to make sure he won, arranging billions of dollars in last-minute loans for passing out bribes, a massive propaganda operation and sophisticated ballot-box stuffing campaign to secure Yeltsin’s reelection.[\[595\]](#) The Clinton administration pressured the OSCE election monitors to stay silent about the fraud.[\[596\]](#) They again promised to stop talking about NATO expansion until the next year, since Yeltsin’s inability to prevent it hurt him politically.[\[597\]](#) The IMF pumped in a \$10.2 billion loan in March 1996 “that provided liquidity not only for the Russian central government but for the Yeltsin campaign,” according to the Cox Committee.[\[598\]](#)

*Time* magazine later ran a cover story boasting about their intervention called “Yanks to the Rescue.” They said a “crucial reason” for Yeltsin’s

success in the election was that “[f]or four months, a group of American political consultants clandestinely participated in guiding Yeltsin’s campaign.” The director of Intercapital Trust, Felix Braynin, told *Time* that “[s]ecrecy was paramount. Everyone realized that if the Communists knew about this before the election, they would attack Yeltsin as an American tool. We badly needed the team, but having them was a big risk.”[\[599\]](#)

The *Los Angeles Times* went with “Americans Claim Role in Yeltsin Win.” George Gorton, who worked on Pete Wilson’s 1994 campaign for California governor, said, “I don’t have candidates generally who are as responsive as Boris Yeltsin.” They worked in secrecy in an expensive hotel downtown for six weeks before finally venturing out to help conduct focus groups with Russian voters.[\[600\]](#) Richard Dresner, a political consultant from New York, said, “We actually tested the two in polls and focus groups. More than 60 percent of the electorate believed Yeltsin was corrupt; more than 65 percent believed he had wrecked the economy. We were in a deep, deep hole.”[\[601\]](#)

Clinton got his political adviser Dick Morris to help. They poured in millions of dollars to arrange for in-depth polling, focus groups and propaganda campaigns, including putting pressure on state TV to soften their attacks against the president’s record. They even made a movie about it called *Spinning Boris* with Jeff Goldblum. Remember how badly Americans reacted to accusations of Russian meddling in our election in 2016.[\[602\]](#) Imagine how they must have felt when the Americans were so open about their successful intervention in Russia’s election that they even made a Hollywood movie gloating about it.

Campaign manager Chubais had made a smart deal whereby the oligarchs would give the government back some of its money through auctions, but the controlling stakes would not be handed over to them until after the 1996 election, thus guaranteeing their loyalty.[\[603\]](#) Oligarch and gangster Boris Berezovsky, who by then had seized power over Russia's all-important Channel 1 television network, boasted, "We and the group of . . . [Russian media mogul Vladimir] Gusinsky were the first who realized how the mass media could assist the different steps we wanted to take."[\[604\]](#)

Thomas Graham explained the U.S. Embassy's thinking at the time was that once they got Yeltsin reelected, problems of corruption and property rights would all get worked out later. "The problem ultimately is that we never got to that stage," he said.

Donald Jensen, second secretary at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow from 1993 to 1995, admitted they would just smear all opponents as wanting to return to Soviet slavery: "The choice was always black or white. The choice was always reform or going back to the Soviet past and that I think was over simplified, did not reflect what was going on in Russia."[\[605\]](#)

The conservative Cox Committee report denounced this entire scam, writing that the Clinton administration rationalized its intervention in the election in the name of defeating the Communist. "But opinion polls show that both General Alexander Lebed and Yabloko's Grigory Yavlinsky were also credible candidates at the time," they wrote. "Zyuganov was hardly the exclusive alternative to Yeltsin, who had single-digit approval ratings at the beginning of the year."[\[606\]](#) Amazingly, Gen. Alexander Lebed had

actually been brought in to split the vote,[\[607\]](#) and said the Communist Party candidate, Zyuganov, was also a ringer in the election. Their groups were secretly backed by the Yeltsin government as well, and did not really try to seek victory in the race.[\[608\]](#)

Evidently, all rigging aside, Yeltsin's men apparently did have to just outright steal the election too. There were widespread reports of ballot-box stuffing and fraud across the country, especially in Chechnya.[\[609\]](#)

The deed was done. Berezovsky admitted, "It is no secret that Russian businessmen played the decisive role in President Yeltsin's victory. It was a battle for our blood interests."[\[610\]](#)

## **The Payoff**

As demanded by the billionaires, Yeltsin appointed nickel oligarch Vladimir Potanin as minister of the economy and deputy prime minister, and the thievery only grew.[\[611\]](#)

Alexander Lifshitz, the new finance minister, later told journalist Alexander Gentelev he was summoned to a meeting with the oligarchs. They told him, "We brought Yeltsin to power. The country belongs to us and you'll do what we tell you to." He asked them, "What is it you want from me?" He said, "They gave me a list of their demands, which included consultation with them about all decisions, the appointment of ministry personnel only with their consent and so on." He says he then asked what would happen if he did not do as instructed. They answered, "You'll no longer be a minister."[\[612\]](#)

Boris Berezovsky was a powerful gangster and oligarch, winner of the Great Mob War of 1993–1994[\[613\]](#) and owner of ORT TV, Sibneft oil, Aeroflot airlines and the Logovaz auto dealership cartel. After paying Yeltsin millions for his second book, he became the highest-ranking oligarch in the Kremlin, “a favorite of the president’s family,” in the words of Yeltsin right-hand man Gen. Alexander Korzhakov.[\[614\]](#) Gen. Lebed, the ringer the oligarchs had brought in to split the anti-Yeltsin vote,[\[615\]](#) later explained the reasons behind the seemingly odd decision of Berezovsky to abandon his billion-dollar businesses to go work as deputy secretary of the Kremlin’s Security Council. “One was to wipe the slate clean of earlier unsavory businesses, and the other was to create the conditions for new ventures like the oil pipeline through the Caspian and Chechnya, which demanded a huge investment.” He told the story of being accosted by Berezovsky for negotiating a settlement to end the First Chechen War in 1996, which he said threatened his business interests.[\[616\]](#)

Once the cabal was in place, they implemented the loans-for-shares scam, offering stock in 84 of the 286 most important state-owned industries as collateral for bank loans to the national government, and often far more collateral at stake than the loan would justify. But the deal said that if the government could not pay back the loan, the banks would have the right to auction off the shares—to themselves and their friends. When the government defaulted, they seized control of massive industries at huge discounts.

Onexsimbank, owned by Potanin, one of the architects of the loans-for-shares scheme, bought 38 percent of Norilsk Nickel, which had \$1.2 billion

in profits in 1995 alone, for \$170.1 million in a loans-for-shares auction even though a competing bank bid twice as much. “In the end, shares in twelve companies described as ‘the crown jewels of Soviet industry’ were sold off,” the Cox report said. “The firms included not only Norilsk Nickel, but also the massive oil companies Sibneft, Yukos, and Sidanko and other key enterprises.”[\[617\]](#) The banks that financed these sweetheart deals themselves got all their money for free from the Russian central bank in the first place since it essentially paid them to borrow and loan money with negative real interest rates. They bought these companies, but the people paid for them.[\[618\]](#)

Boris Fyodorov, former Russian finance minister from 1993 to 1994, admitted this was simply “stealing.” He said, “Loans For Shares unleashed a wave of corruption like never before, and the West, especially IMF, kept quiet.”[\[619\]](#) According to Donald Jensen, “They were essentially giving them a cut rate . . . initially as collateral for loans to the government, which was badly in need of money. But, of course, a lot of us knew at the time that they would be allowed to keep them.”[\[620\]](#)

Since the likes of Berezovsky, his partner Roman Abramovich and Yukos’s Mikhail Khodorkovsky—gangsters, not real businessmen—seized control of these firms for a song, they put almost nothing back into them, instead stripping them of their productive capacity and moving the money out of the country.[\[621\]](#)

Just before the election, Yeltsin had another heart attack and was essentially absent from the presidency for most of the following year. So Chubais and the billionaires took over and grabbed what they wanted.[\[622\]](#)

In 1996, then-journalist Chrystia Freeland reported in the *Financial Times* that seven businessmen were meeting weekly and working directly with Chubais, who had been made Yeltsin's chief of staff. "Its members portray themselves quite openly as the main force shaping Kremlin policy," and boasted that the small group itself controlled half of the Russian economy, she wrote. They took credit for Yeltsin's victory after financing his campaign and pressure on Lebed to endorse Yeltsin in the second round of voting, and bragged about their growing media cartel.[\[623\]](#)

Berezovsky later told journalist Alexander Gentelev, "The scale of corruption in Russia matched the scale of change. No more, no less. A state official could determine with one signature what belonged to whom." Berezovsky continued, "I've never denied that the most profitable investment for a wealthy person in Russia is an investment in politics. I've never tried to pass myself off as [having] altruistic motives."[\[624\]](#) Other powerful oligarchs included Mikhail Chernoy (aluminum), Leonid Nevzlin (oil), Alexander Smolensky (banking) and Roman Abramovich (Berezovsky's former partner and owner of the Sibneft oil company).

Underground black markets had thrived for years during communism as the only way to acquire many important goods, especially for connected bureaucrats. So when the USSR fell apart, these networks of gangsters and mid-level pencil pushers were in position to guarantee maximum corruption. One Moscow prosecutor complained, "The main way the mafia penetrates into the economy is via the bureaucrats. They are our main enemy. The mafiosi are only the second enemy."[\[625\]](#)

Jensen wrote up a 10-page memo that named the guilty, but the other diplomats at the embassy prevented him from sending it back to Washington.[\[626\]](#) He later said this was only because if their policies had helped to wreck Russia, then that would mean they were wrong and what they had done was wrong. They simply refused to hear it.[\[627\]](#)

In 1997, they held another round of loans-for-shares auctions just as corrupt as the first. They deliberately ran the companies they already controlled to the point of bankruptcy, excluded competition from the auctions and so on. Berezovsky won control of the rest of Sibneft oil for a bargain while sitting as deputy secretary of the Security Council. “Berezovsky . . . is not satisfied with stealing,” Lebed told Klebnikov. “He wants everybody to see he is stealing with impunity.”[\[628\]](#)

## **The Money Plane**

In 1995, investigative reporter Robert I. Friedman discovered that Republic National Bank and the U.S. Federal Reserve were shipping \$100 million in new untraceable notes per day to Russia, \$40 billion worth at least, in a money laundering operation for Russian gangsters who would then buy the dollars with rubles from their various criminal enterprises. They used this money to consolidate their criminal empires and buy up property across the West.

Yet, as a New York State regulator explained, “at least part of the federal government sees nothing wrong with it.” When New York investigators took the issue to the FBI and CIA, they were told, “Yeah it looks like we’ve got a potential problem here, but you know what? It’s not



our problem.” The Fed said to ask Republic Bank, which replied that they did not know anything about money laundering. The Fed also said this was a great way to prop up the ruble and help Russia join the global free market. [\[629\]](#)

## **The Crash of '98**

In the crash of August 17, 1998, Russia defaulted on its national debt, causing another massive devaluation of the ruble. Prices rose by 36 percent in a week. That year, the Russian stock market lost 90 percent of its value. The country was devastated more, again, with an even worse unemployment and healthcare crisis than before. Ben Aris, reporter for the *Telegraph* at the time, wrote, “It’s hard to exaggerate the scale and shock of the 1998 crash. The whole Russian economy fell to pieces at a stroke. . . . The crisis led to the collapse of the entire top tier of the country’s largest private banks.” Insured deposits still lost a third to a half of their value to inflation. “Pensioners’ life savings were wiped out again.” [\[630\]](#)

The Cox Committee credibly accused the previous regime of massive IMF loans for preventing the earlier reforms that would have avoided the collapse. They had given them \$6.8 billion in April 1995, a \$10.2 billion loan in 1996 and provided \$4.8 billion more on July 20, 1998, just before the crash. A dozen oligarch-owned banks were saved at U.S. taxpayers’ expense, while everyone else was hung out to dry. [\[631\]](#)

Chubais admitted to lying to the IMF in an interview with Berezovsky’s outlet *Kommersant*: “In such situations, the authorities have to do it. We ought to. The financial institutions understand, despite the fact

that we conned them out of \$20 billion, that we had no other way out.”[\[632\]](#) He later added, “We ripped them off.”[\[633\]](#) And “conned” is right. As journalist Richard Paddock showed, the \$4.8 billion was simply handed over to Russian bankers who first moved it to the Isle of Jersey, off the northern coast of France,[\[634\]](#) then into their own private Swiss bank accounts.[\[635\]](#) Paddock wrote, “Sometimes, the Central Bank spent \$500 million in a single day to buy unwanted rubles—in effect subsidizing banks and investors seeking to unload Russian currency.” Corruption investigations in New York showed that at least \$7 billion of this money was simply stolen by Russian politicians, businessmen and gangsters.[\[636\]](#) The *Times* said it was as much as \$10 billion.[\[637\]](#)

When the crash came, hundreds of billions of dollars were destroyed. The population again got soaked.[\[638\]](#) Thomas Graham later said that many Russians “drew the conclusion that, in fact, the West had achieved what it wanted, which was the weakening of the Russian state.”

## **Stop, Thief!**

In the end, even the U.S. Justice Department decided their opportunity to prosecute was too good to pass up. They accused Larry Summers’s protégé Andrei Shleifer and his assistant Jonathan Hay of a conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government and sued Harvard for breach of contract, but only because of Shleifer and his wife’s personal corruption and profiteering during it all, in which Hay was involved. They settled for \$31 million, the largest lawsuit payout in Harvard’s history.[\[639\]](#)

## Excess Deaths

Bill Clinton and Boris Yeltsin's men hit Russia like Stalin and the NKVD.

[\[640\]](#) It is hard to believe, but the numbers do not lie. As Boettke reported in 1999, "From the 1960s to the 1980s life expectancy had declined from 67 to 62 for men, [and] since 1992 the decline has continued so that life expectancy for a Russian male is now in the mid- to upper-50s."[\[641\]](#)

Steven Rosefielde, professor of comparative economic systems at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, estimated 3.4 million premature Russian deaths between 1990 and 1998.[\[642\]](#) That does not count all the hardship from the second major economic crash that hit in August 1998.

Swedish journalist Dan Josefsson recounted that "[b]etween 1991 and 1997, Russian GNP—i.e., the value of all goods and services that Russia produces—went down 83 percent. Agrarian production decreased 63 percent. Investment decreased 92 percent." He added, "70,000 factories were closed down. This led to Russia producing 88 percent fewer tractors, 76 percent fewer washing machines, 77 percent less cotton fabric, 78 percent fewer TV sets—the list is endless." Thirteen million people had lost their jobs, the rest lost half their purchasing power. Life expectancy for men had fallen by six years.[\[643\]](#) The USSR had been a centrally planned monstrosity with malinvestments and distorted prices and systems beyond imagination. The correction to natural price structures in a genuinely free market was destined to be difficult. But the U.S. not only did not help them, but actively made it worse.

*Forbes*'s Paul Klebnikov concluded, "Both the Yeltsin clan and the crony capitalists remained in power, but they presided over a bankrupt state and an impoverished population." In the end, he wrote, "[t]he young democrats were supposed to clean up Russia, devise a proper legal system and foster a market economy. Instead they presided over one of the most corrupt regimes in history."[\[644\]](#) On the demographic collapse, he wrote, "Between 1990 and 1994 male mortality rates rose 53 percent, female mortality rates 27 percent, male life expectancy plunged from an already low level of 64 years in 1990 to 58 in 1994." That meant that "men in Egypt Indonesia or Paraguay could now expect longer lives than men in Russia. In the same brief period, female life expectancy fell from 74 to 71. The world had seldom seen such a decline in peacetime."[\[645\]](#)

Journalist and historian David Satter wrote in the *Journal*, "In the period from 1992 to 1998, the Russian gross domestic product fell by half. This had not happened even under Nazi occupation." He said that "[b]etween 1992 and 1994, the rise in the death rate in Russia was so dramatic that Western demographers did not believe the figures. The toll from murder, suicide, heart attacks and accidents gave Russia the death rate of a country at war." The excess death rate had been determined to be "between five and six million persons."[\[646\]](#)

Oxford Professor Christopher Davis similarly noted that "[t]he crude mortality rate rose from 11.2 deaths per 1,000 in 1990 to a peak of 15.7 in 1994, declined to 13.6 in 1998, and then rose to 15.3 in 2000."[\[647\]](#)

Nobody knows how much money was stolen, but it was in the hundreds of billions of dollars, much of it siphoned out of the Russian

economy into foreign bank accounts as regular Russian people were literally starving to death and dying from a lack of basic necessities. Another almost \$30 billion in IMF loans disappeared along with it.[\[648\]](#)

Murder, suicides, a broken healthcare and pension system, massive alcoholism and drug abuse—Yeltsin’s hyperinflation and gangster state destroyed Russia.[\[649\]](#) Just imagine, the fall of a Communist regime and Marxist economy leading to the *lowering* of life expectancy by more than six years. That was the reality of the result of the corruption and bad faith of the neo-liberal economic advisers Bill Clinton sent to Russia, their bosses back home and the “family” of criminals they supported in power.

Former Premier Gorbachev lamented, “Shock therapy did irreparable harm. Most dangerous are the social consequences—the sharp drop in standards of living, the enormous inequality of incomes, the decline in life expectancy—not to mention impoverishment of education, science and culture.”[\[650\]](#)

## **Paradise Lost**

By the end of the century, American-style freedom had been discredited in Russia. Instead of putting the long-term interests of humanity first, the Bush and Clinton administrations kicked the Russians while they were down, ruining them economically and humiliating them in foreign policy.

Journalist Mark MacKinnon wrote that by the turn of the century, “Russians had come to see the words ‘freedom’ and ‘democracy’ as synonyms for poverty and helplessness.”[\[651\]](#) Vitaly Tretyakov, an old journalist from the reformist Moscow News back in the Gorbachev days, who had founded

*Nezavisimaya Gazeta (Independent Newspaper)*, complained to MacKinnon: “‘Democracy’ now means the same thing as ‘corruption.’ ‘Liberal’ means ‘thief,’ and ‘friendly toward the West,’ means ‘robber of the country.’”[\[652\]](#)

Anne Williamson’s September 1999 congressional testimony explained the full scale of the tragedy and how they got away with it, from hyperinflation to the endless corruption of voucher privatization and loans-for-shares. She told them that a better way to transform the Russian economy to capitalism was available at the time, designed by Larisa Piasheva and based on the free market principles of the Austrian school. But the Russian capitalists never had a chance against the American liberals. “[W]here, in a land in which today more of the people die each year than are born, lies the gain?” Williamson asked. “History’s yardstick will measure out the answer, and I suspect it will not suit us.”[\[653\]](#)

## **The Founding Act**

### **Trust Me**

Though he immediately contradicted himself, then-Senator Joe Biden, in a speech at the Atlantic Council in 1996, said that no one in Russia believed the “first round” of NATO “enlargement” posed a threat to them. This was the case, he said, because of NATO’s “Three Nos”: The Alliance had “no reason, intention or plan, in the current and foreseeable security environment, permanently to station nuclear weapons or substantial combat forces of current members on the territory of new member states.”

Biden then related the story of Communist opposition leader Gennady Zyuganov and Gen. Lebed telling him how much they and everyone else actually opposed NATO expansion because “it’s ‘not in their security interest,’ and on and on, and ‘if you do that, then we may have to look to China.’” He says he then mocked them and replied: “Good luck. If that doesn’t work, try Iran.” He continued, “And they know. I knew they knew; everybody knows that is not an option. And everyone knows, every one of those leaders acknowledges and needs—and they resent it—but they need to look west.”[\[654\]](#) Twenty-six years later, it would be President Biden who oversaw Russia’s major break with the West and turn toward China.[\[655\]](#)

In order to attempt to allay the Russians’ fears once expansion began, the Clinton administration tried to placate them with the Russia-NATO Founding Act of 1997, and putting that pledge in writing; well, not really. It would be “politically,” but not legally, binding.[\[656\]](#) The *New York Times* reported that the Americans proposed a “charter.” The Russians countered that they would like a signed “agreement.” The result was “a legally non-binding agreement at the highest political level.” In it the alliance assured the Russians they would not deploy nuclear weapons or “substantial” numbers of foreign troops on the new NATO nations’ territory.[\[657\]](#)

The Founding Act said, in part, that “NATO will carry out its collective defense and other missions through interoperability, integration and capability for reinforcement,” rather than stationing troops in the east. Though the act created the NATO-Russia Council, they openly stated that “[w]hile Russia will work closely with NATO, it will not work within

NATO. The Act makes clear that Russia has no veto over alliance decisions and NATO retains the right to act independently when it so chooses.”[658]

But the Yeltsin government had been led to believe otherwise during the negotiations. Russia expert Dimitri Simes told the Congress, “If the Russian interpretation had been followed, Moscow would have gained a de facto veto over NATO actions.” But the Clinton administration’s interpretation was followed, making it “inevitable that Russia would feel misled by false promises of a genuine role in NATO deliberations.”[659]

The NATO-Russia Council was always a joke. The Americans were simply not willing to share power with their vanquished enemy. Russia is just too big and too independent to be a partner. They would have a say. As Strobe Talbott explained to Secretary Albright, “all we’re really promising them is monthly meetings.”

Albright emphasized to the U.S. Senate, “I can assure you that the Permanent Joint Council will never be used to make decisions on NATO doctrine, strategy, or readiness. The North Atlantic Council is NATO’s supreme decision-making body, and it is sacrosanct.” She added, “Russia will not play a part in the NAC or NATO decision making and it will never have a veto over NATO policy. Any discussion with Russia of NATO doctrine will be for explanatory, not decision making, purposes.”[660] Zbigniew Brzezinski and Anthony Lake also emphasized the lack of influence the Russians would have under the new agreement in a piece in the *Times*. [661]

But as Alexey Pushkov had warned, “What Russia seeks is an arrangement that would assure its full participation in European affairs,



rather than its isolation from, or marginalization in, Europe. This is the crux of the matter.” Russia, unlike the United States, is actually in Europe, after all. He cited the Americans’ promises not to expand NATO eastward, but also said that when the USSR withdrew from the Warsaw Pact states, “Moscow was privately assured by their leaders that these states would not seek membership in NATO. All of these promises lay broken three years later.”[\[662\]](#)

Declassified documents show that in Helsinki in March 1997, Yeltsin told Clinton, “Our position has not changed. It remains a mistake for NATO to move eastward. But I need to take steps to alleviate the negative consequences of this for Russia. I am prepared to enter into an agreement with NATO, not because I want to but because it is a forced step. There is no other solution for today.” Still, he insisted, “Decisions by NATO are not to be taken without taking into account the concerns or opinions of Russia. Also, nuclear and conventional arms cannot move eastward into new members to the borders of Russia, thus creating a new *cordon sanitaire*.” He also asked Clinton for a “gentlemen’s agreement” that the West would not integrate the former Soviet republics, “especially Ukraine,” since, “If you get them involved, it will create difficulties in our talks with Ukraine on a number of issues.” But Clinton refused, again, like H.W. Bush claiming his intent to “redirect” NATO’s mission to a more political, rather than military role, and arguing that if he accepted any limits, that would be a tacit admission that the purpose was to contain Russia, when he again disingenuously claimed he was attempting to build an “integrated,

undivided Europe.” That would undermine the PfP, he said, even promising to “leave open the possibility of Russia in NATO.”[\[663\]](#)

In a 1997 interview with Madeleine Albright, NBC News’s Katie Couric asked, “If this new NATO is a collective security organization designed to promote peace and friendship among the member nations, why not include Russia as a full-fledged member?” Albright answered, disingenuously, that if they made the proper reforms, “it is open for Russia, if Russia wants to join and it is ready to join.” Perhaps inferring that this was a distant possibility, Couric asked about the widely discussed concern that expansion could cause a “nationalist backlash in Russia.” Albright responded, “We don’t see that,” citing the recently signed Founding Act that was supposed to allow them “to be part of a European system. So we see it as being not outside and isolated but as a part of the international community.”[\[664\]](#)

But Albright knew what she was doing. Twelve years later, in 2009, she said, “To [the Russians], NATO’s very existence served as an unwelcome reminder of the Cold War. From what I’ve been able to observe in the past decade, this mindset has not changed.”[\[665\]](#) In her memoir, she wrote, “Yeltsin and his countrymen were strongly opposed to enlargement, seeing it as a strategy for exploiting their vulnerability and moving Europe’s dividing line to the east, leaving them isolated.”[\[666\]](#) She did it anyway.

When in 2021 Putin demanded the U.S. abide by the 1997 agreement in his proposed new treaty in the lead-up to war, particularly the promises about the deployment of Western weapons in the new Eastern NATO member nations’ territory, this was treated by the media and its experts to

have been an insane overreach, as though he was bringing up some ancient agreement from 1897 instead.[\[667\]](#) As the *Washington Post* put it in January 2022, “Parts of the texts were so unrealistic that many Western lawmakers dismissed the Russian approach as unserious. Among other things,” they said, “Russia demanded the United States and its Western European military allies agree not to put weapons or forces in any of the former Warsaw Pact countries that are now members of NATO.”[\[668\]](#)

The Founding Act was never worth the paper it was printed on. It might as well have been a solemn vow from H.W. Bush and James Baker. President Clinton himself mocked the Russians for believing him. “What the Russians get out of this great deal we’re offering them is a chance to sit in the same room with NATO and join us whenever we all agree to something, but they don’t have any ability to stop us from doing something that they don’t agree with.” Clinton continued, “And for their second big benefit, they get our promise that we’re not going to put our military stuff into their former allies who are now going to be our allies, unless we happen to wake up one morning and decide to change our mind.”[\[669\]](#)

Some would prefer we forget all that and simply presume, as TV does, that history began this morning and none of this matters. But that would be foolish because it does matter, obviously very much.[\[670\]](#) Gen. Scowcroft later told an interviewer, “They complained, but they acquiesced. And I think I underestimated what it was really doing to Russian attitudes. I think we all did. We were humiliating Russia, not intentionally, but nevertheless that was the net result.”[\[671\]](#)

## **Messing With Ukraine**

In July 1997, NATO and Ukraine signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which promised to “develop relations” and “broaden and strengthen their cooperation” with the Western alliance. Though they said that “no state should pursue its security at the expense of that of another state,” this evidently was a reference to Russia’s presumed wish to prevent such association rather than any sort of recognition of their concerns. It also promised the beginning of planning to work towards “NATO-Ukraine military cooperation and interoperability” as well as military training under the auspices of the PfP.[\[672\]](#)

In August, U.S. and Turkish warships held a week-long joint exercise named “Sea Breeze 97,” which involved troops from Ukraine, Georgia, Bulgaria, Romania, Turkey and the United States. Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeyev denounced the exercises, while deputies in the parliament threatened to leave the PfP.[\[673\]](#) They were going to have the marines land in Crimea to practice intervening in an ethnic conflict. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that “the theoretical events were taken as a NATO warning to the Kremlin of what would happen if it sought to recover Crimea.” This caused an immediate reaction from the Russians, so the U.S. altered the scenario to earthquake relief. Thousands of demonstrators still turned out to protest “what they saw as a show of force against Russia.” The *Times* noted that “what was intended to enhance Ukraine’s military preparedness may actually hurt security by provoking new problems with Russia.”[\[674\]](#)

Yeltsin complained about this training in his meeting with Clinton in March 1997, saying, “[Y]ou are conducting naval maneuvers near Crimea.

It is as if we were training people in Cuba. How would you feel? It is unacceptable to us. We are not going out to seize Sevastopol.”[\[675\]](#)

In his book *The Grand Chessboard*, published that year, Zbigniew Brzezinski explained that though Yeltsin would have no choice but to give in on NATO expansion to Poland, Hungary and Romania in 1999, “[b]y contrast Russia will find it incomparably harder to acquiesce in Ukraine’s ascension to NATO, for to do so would be to acknowledge that Ukraine’s destiny is no longer organically linked to Russia’s.” He continued, “[I]f Ukraine is to survive as an independent state it will have to become part of Central Europe rather than Eurasia, and if it is to be part of Central Europe then it will have to partake fully of Central Europe’s links to NATO and the European Union.” But Brzezinski did not explain why neutrality towards Europe and Russia would not suffice to protect Ukraine’s independence and national interests. He simply insisted this was so, and said that if the cost of his policy was to push Russia further away, that would just be too bad. “Russia’s acceptance of these links would then define Russia’s own decision to also truly be a part of Europe. Russia’s refusal would be tantamount to the rejection of Europe in favor of a solitary ‘Eurasian’ identity and existence,” he wrote.[\[676\]](#)

# Kosovo

## Background

The southern Serbian province of Kosovo presented its own set of problems and opportunities for U.S. and NATO intervention in 1999. The controversy over majority ethnic Albanian and Muslim Kosovo had begun much earlier in the 1980s, as Albanian separatists began a dirty war against local Serbs, murdering people and desecrating Orthodox churches there with the goal of breaking off what they called an “ethnically pure” Kosovo from Serbia and joining in a new state with neighboring Albania.[\[677\]](#)

While Serbian civilization actually began in Kosovo, the Ottoman Turks had driven out the majority of the Serbs in 1389 and ruled there for more than 500 years until the First Balkan War of 1912, just before World War I. The Albanian majority then expelled much of the Serbian population with Italian assistance during World War II. After the war, Communist dictator Josip Tito had refused to let the refugees return, leaving it a supermajority Albanian Muslim state since.[\[678\]](#) Another 150,000–200,000 Serbs were forced out between 1961 and 1981.[\[679\]](#)

But while Albanians were 85 percent of the population, the other 15 percent—200,000 people—were Serbs and Montenegrins. The Communists at first leaned toward the Serbs, but after the 1960s decided instead to favor the Albanian population at their expense. With the austerity of the post-Tito 1980s, ethnic Albanian scapegoating of the Serb minority soon intensified, followed by a brutal campaign of torture, murder and ethnic cleansing.[\[680\]](#)

Slobodan Milošević began his rise to power demagoguing against these widespread and unpunished crimes and reasserting Serbian government control over the province to put an end to the attacks.[\[681\]](#)

David Binder reported in 1987, “Slavic Orthodox churches have been attacked, and flags have been torn down. Wells have been poisoned and crops burned. Slavic boys have been knifed, and some young ethnic Albanians have been told by their elders to rape Serbian girls.” Twenty thousand Serbs had already been forced to flee to the north. Milošević deposed the Serbian Communist Party secretary in the name of the emergency.[\[682\]](#)

Throughout the 1990s, the Serbian-dominated government of Yugoslavia then repressed the Albanian majority in response, including torture and brutality at the hands of the police, purging them from government jobs and promotion of Serbian over the Albanian language in schools.[\[683\]](#) The Kosovar Albanians, led by the pacifist President Ibrahim Rugova, embarked on a program of mass civil disobedience and non-cooperation with the Yugoslav government and made their own, democratically run shadow regime and social service network in its stead. However, after the Kosovars’ exclusion from the Dayton Accords, Rugova’s League for Democracy in Kosovo was weakened, helping lead to the rise of the militant Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).[\[684\]](#)

Yugoslavia’s constitutional court rejected the Kosovar Albanians’ claim to a constituent republic based on ethnic nationality. As author George Szamuely explains, “Whether one considers this ruling fair or not, it was nonetheless the decision of Yugoslavia’s highest court, the membership

of which was divided equally between the republics. It was not the diktat of the Serbs.”[\[685\]](#)

The fight had stayed in the background through most of the 1990s, as the rest of Yugoslavia was falling apart, but by 1998, real war was breaking out. While the Serbian government was willing to negotiate autonomy up to but not including secession, the Kosovar Albanians refused to negotiate at all unless the talks were to be agreed beforehand to be “unconditional” and under the auspices of international authorities.[\[686\]](#) According to English Lord David Owen, who had been an EC negotiator during the Bosnia war, they had decided years before that autonomy would not be good enough. They were “ready to wait until they [could] join up with Albania.”[\[687\]](#) Szamuely wrote, if the U.S. and its allies really meant to “intervene in a genuinely evenhanded way . . . the West would have had to weigh Serbia’s historical claims against the Albanians’ demographic claims.”[\[688\]](#) But they did not want to do that.

To convince Congress that the security of Europe and the world was at stake, Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Walter Slocombe told them the fighting was likely to spread to Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey if the U.S. and NATO did not get in there first.[\[689\]](#)

## **Illegal**

On March 12, 1999, Poland, Hungary and Romania were officially admitted to the supposedly purely defensive NATO alliance. Just 12 days later, NATO launched a 78-day air war against Serbia to guarantee the independence of Kosovo. That war—called “Operation Allied Force”—was



based on the outright lie that the Serbs had massacred 100,000 Kosovar Albanian civilians and the threat that they were sure to obliterate the rest. [690] In launching that war, Clinton sided with the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA or UCK for *Ushtria Clirimtare e Kosove* in Albanian), a violent insurgent group, which had been founded by Communists and the sons of the fascist militias supported by Italy in World War II, [691] though by 1998 they were better described as heroin dealers [692] and bin Ladenite terrorists. [693]

President Clinton bypassed the UN Security Council, where Russia had inherited the USSR's seat and veto power, and instead waged the war on his own and NATO's pretended authority. Clinton did not even bother to seek authorization from Congress, much less an official declaration of war, as required by the U.S. Constitution, [694] before launching the bombing campaign. Where H.W. Bush began Iraq War I in 1991 to enforce UN resolutions demanding the reversal of Iraq's illegal invasion of the separate, sovereign state of Kuwait, [695] and reluctantly obtained an "authorization" from Congress, [696] Clinton was launching a war with no authority from anyone [697] less than a decade later, choosing sides in a civil war wholly within the borders of one nation, Serbia. The only license he had was the U.S. military's willingness to obey his illegal orders. [698] The war was also completely contrary to the Badinter Commission's rulings that the internal borders of the former constituent republics of Yugoslavia were sacrosanct. There was no such internal administrative border between Serbia and Kosovo. So the West had previously held that the Kosovar Albanians could not secede for the same reason the Bosnian and Croatian Serbs could not.

But since that most dire principle of just-now made-up international law that had been worth a massive war a few years ago was now contrary to the administration's wishes, they just threw it out.[\[699\]](#)

The president's pretended excuses amounted to a new "Clinton doctrine," which he described as: "Whether within or beyond the borders of a country, if the world community has the power to stop it, we ought to stop genocide and ethnic cleansing."[\[700\]](#)

This was all fine according to the circular reasoning of the man who ran the war, U.S. Army General Wesley Clark, then supreme allied commander of NATO forces in Europe, who insisted that bombing another nation's armed forces without legal authorization does not count as an illegal war, since, as he put it, "It wasn't a war. There was no declaration of war. It wasn't legally a war. And we weren't going in there to conquer territory. It was simply one plank of the diplomatic strategy."[\[701\]](#)

After the hawks failed to pass a belated authorization,[\[702\]](#) some antiwar congressmen and senators tried to take the president to court, accusing Clinton of violating the War Powers Resolution of 1973. The courts kicked them right out, saying they had no standing to sue.[\[703\]](#)

## **Public Choice**

Officials told the *Washington Post* that the war against Serbia was not only the president's "finest hour," but his chance to personally make up for avoiding the draft during Vietnam and for his generation to make up for not having a great moral crusade to fight like World War II.[\[704\]](#)

For the Brits' part, Prime Minister Tony Blair explained that the war was fought for the institutional interests of the Western alliance. If they had lost, he said, "We would have dealt a devastating blow to the credibility of NATO and the world would have been less safe as a result of that."

John Norris, a former communications director for Strobe Talbott, explained another motive for the war, which had nothing to do with saving the Kosovars. "As nations throughout the region strove to reform their economies, mitigate ethnic tensions, and broaden civil society, Belgrade seemed to delight in continually moving in the opposite direction." He said, "It is a small wonder that NATO and Yugoslavia ended up on a collision course. It was Yugoslavia's resistance to the broader trends of political and economic reform—not the plight of Kosovar Albanians—that best explains NATO's war." Norris added, "Milošević's repeated transgressions ran directly counter to the vision of a Europe 'whole and free,' and challenged the very value of NATO's continued existence. . . . Failure would have cast doubt on the future of NATO as an organization and deeply compromised its ability to expand the community of democracies and open markets eastward."[\[705\]](#)

As then-Vice President Joe Biden said at a meeting with the Serbian prime minister in 2016, "I have for the last three decades viewed Croatia and all the rest of our neighbors—Kosovo, Montenegro, everyone in the neighborhood—as an essential part of what I think is needed for a Europe that is whole and free and united for the first time."[\[706\]](#)

Just as they had done with Manuel Noriega in the 1989 war against Panama,[\[707\]](#) Saddam Hussein in the 1991 war against Iraq[\[708\]](#) and David

Koresh in the 1993 FBI and military[\[709\]](#) attack on the Branch Davidians, [\[710\]](#) the U.S. regime demonized the leader while writing the innocent civilians around him out of the story entirely. Barbara Ehrenreich, author of *Blood Rites: Origins and History of the Passions of War*, observed, “It’s the one-man theory of the nation-state. And its effect is to eliminate both the psychological impact of nationalism and the guilt produced by civilian casualties since civilians don’t fully exist under this theory.”[\[711\]](#)

This is the same thing they later did in the case of Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan,[\[712\]](#) Saddam Hussein again in Iraq War II,[\[713\]](#) Muammar Gaddafi in Libya[\[714\]](#) and Bashar al-Assad in Syria,[\[715\]](#) where millions ultimately paid the price for their sins, real and merely alleged. It is the same way they discuss Vladimir Putin and Russia today.[\[716\]](#)

## **The Bin Ladenites**

Speaking of Osama bin Laden, the U.S. certainly knew that the KLA was supported by the terrorist and his al Qaeda group, which had declared war on the United States in 1996, but was tied to attacks against Americans as early as 1992.[\[717\]](#) Journalist Chris Deliso said President Clinton’s Balkans interventions were a “gift” to out-of-work jihadis and stateless terrorist forces, who found a safe haven in Bosnia and Kosovo.[\[718\]](#)

Back in 1996, just a year after the Bosnian conflict ended and three years before the Kosovo War began, Yossef Bodansky wrote that the Saudis and Bosnians had aimed to break off Kosovo from Serbia all along, with Riyadh spending a million dollars on a base for the mujahideen there in 1993. He said they planned to commit terrorist attacks in the name of the

ethnic Albanians and to provoke a Serbian reaction, which the Izetbegović government in Sarajevo hoped would “induce Western military intervention against Yugoslavia itself.”[\[719\]](#)

The KLA were terrorists and drug dealers, and the Clinton administration and their British counterparts knew it.[\[720\]](#) Hundreds of “Arab Bosnian” terrorists who had stayed there after the last war began streaming into Kosovo for the next one.[\[721\]](#) In February 1998, the KLA had been dismissed by Ambassador Robert Gelbard, then-special representative of the president and later the secretary of state for implementation of the Dayton Peace Accords, as “without any questions, a terrorist group.”[\[722\]](#) Jamie Rubin, a former adviser to Senator Joe Biden[\[723\]](#)-turned-State Department spokesman, had denounced “terrorist action by the so-called Kosovo Liberation Army” in March.[\[724\]](#) The same month, British Foreign Minister Robin Cook told parliament, “We strongly condemn the use of violence for political objectives, including the terrorism of the self-styled Kosovo Liberation Army.”[\[725\]](#) Perhaps he had read Chris Hedges’s piece in the *New York Times* about his “trek” embedded with the KLA and meetings with its commanders from March 2. Hedges wrote that “[i]n the last few months the rebels have overrun more than a dozen police stations, carrying away scores of automatic weapons.” He added, “They have attacked many police patrols and checkpoints and claim responsibility for the assassinations of more than 50 Serbian policemen and officials, as well as of ethnic Albanians suspected of collaborating with the Serbian authorities.”[\[726\]](#)

In February 1998, Secretary Albright removed the KLA from the State Department's official list of international terrorist groups.<sup>[727]</sup> Gelbard and Holbrooke met with them in June while officials denigrated the position of Kosovo's pacifist president, Ibrahim Rugova.<sup>[728]</sup> Rubin "was also careful not to refer to the KLA as a terrorist organization, reflecting the new American view that it is 'an insurgency,'" a senior administration official told the *Times*.<sup>[729]</sup> But they were still terrorists. After al Qaeda's attack on the U.S. Embassies in Dar es Salam, Tanzania and Nairobi, Kenya that August, killing 224,<sup>[730]</sup> officials told the *Post* they were worried the bombings were revenge for the CIA's involvement in the violent arrest of four of bin Laden's men in Albania a few weeks before.<sup>[731]</sup> Deliso explained that they had every reason to think so. Two days before the bombings, a bin Ladenite newspaper in London had threatened to respond to the arrests in a "language they will understand." Deliso wrote that even though the embassy bombings had obviously been planned earlier, their reference to the arrested Albanians was revealing because "Al Qaeda had always put great importance on symbolism, and, thus, in their minds at least, there was a clear and immediate relationship between the street justice their people got in Tirana and the street justice they handed out in Tanzania and Kenya."<sup>[732]</sup>

In November 1998, Fatos Klosi, the head of Albanian intelligence, told the London *Times* that a joint operation run with the CIA had uncovered bin Laden's network operating inside Albania and was sending units into Kosovo and throughout Europe. Seeming to confirm it, a French national named Claude Kader, convicted of murder, admitted in court that he was a

member of bin Laden's group in Albania. He said that bin Laden himself had visited his fighters there. "Egyptians, Saudi Arabians, Algerians, Tunisians, Sudanese and Kuwaitis—they come from several different organisations," Klosi told them.[\[733\]](#)

That was four months before Bill Clinton launched a massive NATO air war on behalf of those same terrorists.

## **KLA Provocations**

To get the war started, just as Bodansky had predicted three years before, the KLA ambushed Serbian police patrols, killing cops in hit-and-run raids. They were trying to provoke a reaction, and succeeded. KLA leader Hashim Thaçi admitted to the BBC, "Any armed action we undertook would bring retaliation against civilians. We knew we were endangering a great number of civilian lives."[\[734\]](#) Dugi Gorani, a Kosovar Albanian negotiator, told the British news channel the KLA understood perfectly well that civilian deaths were in their interest: "There was this foreign diplomat who once told me, 'Look, unless you pass the quota of five thousand deaths you'll never have anybody permanently present in Kosovo from the foreign diplomacy.'" [\[735\]](#)

The KLA succeeded in provoking a response, a brutal massacre by Serb forces of a KLA commander, Adem Jeshari, and 52 members of his family at Prekaz in March 1998. This resulted in new recruitment gains for the KLA.[\[736\]](#) However, that summer, Serb government forces took back almost all of the territory the KLA had gained, which partially reinforced

the narrative of unmitigated Serbian violence, but also undermined the narrative that the KLA was a viable fighting force worth supporting.[\[737\]](#)

In October, Holbrooke and Gen. Clark went to Serbia to demand a ceasefire in Kosovo, at the threat of a bombing campaign by NATO, led by the United States. Humiliated, Milošević nevertheless complied with the American edicts, withdrawing his military forces, as verified by the OSCE and UN.[\[738\]](#) But then the KLA used the one-sided ceasefire to stage a new wave of attacks against Serb police.[\[739\]](#) Since the KLA was not a party to the deal, only Serb forces were in violation when they responded to KLA provocations.[\[740\]](#) The OSCE verification team was led by William Walker, a former deputy assistant secretary of state and ambassador to El Salvador during the Iran-Contra scandal, who had been credibly accused of misleading Congress into believing that atrocities committed by U.S.-backed death squads there were the work of the Communists.[\[741\]](#) His real job was to stir up trouble.

As a Canadian military officer assigned to the verification team said, Walker was part of a policy that “had vilified Slobodan Milošević, demonized the Serbian Administration and in general was providing diplomatic support to the UCK or KLA leadership.”[\[742\]](#) In a later meeting, Clark and German General Klaus Naumann did promise to pressure the KLA to cease their attacks and agreed that Serb forces would have to reenter the province otherwise, but since this part of the deal was kept secret, when Serb forces did return, it was spun by Washington and Brussels as a massive violation by Belgrade, rather than the agreed-upon remedy for the problem the former two had promised to solve.[\[743\]](#)



The Kosovar city of Pec is the original home of Serbian Orthodox Christianity, known as the “cradle of Serb identity” from the 7th century. The population there was half Serb. The KLA began ambushing local Serbs, including a group of unarmed young men drinking at a bar in December 1998, in order to provoke a response from the Serb government. Again, it worked. Milošević cracked down with a massive raid that finally caused a real refugee crisis. This then became the pretext for U.S. demands that Serb forces withdraw from the province entirely. The *Post* said that U.S. intelligence agencies were clear from the beginning that KLA strategy was to “draw NATO into its fight for independence by provoking Serb forces into further atrocities.” Their recent assassination of a small-town mayor and the incident in Pec were making it difficult to convince the Europeans that everything was Milošević’s fault.[\[744\]](#)

The BBC’s Allan Little obtained secret minutes of a meeting of the North Atlantic Council, where OSCE chief Walker admitted the KLA was “the main initiator of the violence” and said, “It has launched what appears to be a deliberate campaign of provocation.” German General Naumann told Little, “Ambassador Walker stated in the NAC that the majority of violations were caused by the KLA.”[\[745\]](#) On Christmas Eve 1998, taking advantage of the Serbian police’s withdrawal, the KLA seized an important road between Belgrade and Pristina. The Yugoslav army then attacked them, drawing Western condemnation.[\[746\]](#) Secretary Albright knew what was going on. She later admitted in her memoir that the KLA “seemed intent on provoking a massive Serb response so that international intervention would be unavoidable.”[\[747\]](#)

## Račak Massacre

It turned out the January 1999 Račak massacre, which had been Clinton's pretext for starting the war<sup>[748]</sup>—Albright called it a “galvanizing event”<sup>[749]</sup>—was as fake as the rest of the claimed “genocide” there.<sup>[750]</sup> Any American or British skepticism toward the KLA due to their provocative tactics was erased and reversed by this lie.<sup>[751]</sup>

In a statement from the Oval Office, the president declared, “Make no mistake, if we and our allies do not have the will to act, there will be more massacres. In dealing with aggressors in the Balkans, hesitation is a license to kill. But action and resolve can stop armies, and save lives.”<sup>[752]</sup> He later added, “We’ve seen innocent people taken from their homes forced to kneel in the dirt and sprayed with bullets. Kosovar men dragged from their families; fathers and sons together lined up and shot in cold blood.”<sup>[753]</sup>

However, Christophe Châtelot, reporter for *Le Monde*, was there and debunked the lie in real time.<sup>[754]</sup> Walker claimed 45 innocent people “obviously were executed where they lay.” But the dead were fighters and had not been massacred.

The fight started when the KLA ambushed four police officers in a deliberate provocation. The Serb army then came and killed approximately 15 KLA fighters in a battle that lasted for hours. International observers came and went, noting nothing unusual. The Serbs left. The KLA then retook control of the village and the next morning they brought Walker on his sightseeing tour.<sup>[755]</sup>

A Finnish forensic investigation proved that the bodies were fighters with gunpowder residue on their hands, that they had all been shot from a

distance and that there were no pools of blood or spent bullet casings at the scene. They had simply been moved and dumped in a ditch in the night.

[\[756\]](#) The major media, led by the *Post*,[\[757\]](#) spun the report the other way anyway.[\[758\]](#) CNN Headline News breathlessly repeated the government's lies to the American people on the half-hour.[\[759\]](#)

Walker later admitted to the Sunday *Times* that the CIA had infiltrated his OSCE team, while the agency confessed to a secret mission to bolster the KLA, including equipping them with satellite phones and GPS systems to aid in targeting. "Several KLA leaders had the mobile phone number of General Wesley Clark, the Nato commander," they reported, elaborating, "European diplomats then working for the OSCE claim it was betrayed by an American policy that made airstrikes inevitable. Some have questioned the motives and loyalties of William Walker, the American OSCE head of mission." A European diplomat told them, "The American agenda consisted of their diplomatic observers, a.k.a. the CIA, operating on completely different terms to the rest of Europe and the OSCE."[\[760\]](#)

This faked Račak massacre became Secretary Albright's big chance. As Allan Little explained, "'Spring has come early,' U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told her colleagues. . . . Mrs. Albright decided it was time for action. She told her European counterparts that she was coming to no more of the diplomatic meetings which would result in no action." With everyone outraged by the massacre, she would insist that the U.S. "would now enter a peace process only if diplomacy was backed by the explicit and credible threat of force against Belgrade."[\[761\]](#) She got it.

## **Rambouillet**

The bombing campaign was launched on a preposterous pretext when Albright presented the Serbian government with an offer they could not possibly accept, the Rambouillet “peace deal.”[\[762\]](#)

Little explained that the Serbians accepted the vast majority of the terms, including “wide-ranging autonomy for Kosovo.”[\[763\]](#) But then, alarmed that the Serbs might give in completely and avoid war, the Americans hurriedly added a new condition to the supposed “agreement” which went much further.[\[764\]](#) They demanded total surrender on Serbia’s part, their recognition of Kosovo’s full autonomy and permission for NATO troops to occupy not only Kosovo, but even all of Serbia itself. Albright demanded, among many other things, that “NATO personnel shall enjoy, together with their vehicles, vessels, aircraft, and equipment, free and unrestricted passage and unimpeded access throughout the FRY [Federal Republic of Yugoslavia] including associated airspace and territorial waters.”[\[765\]](#)

This “Appendix B” was kept secret from the British parliament, the Russian government and the Western press.[\[766\]](#) Instead, they lied to the people that the Serbs were completely intransigent and Milošević refused to sign any of it.[\[767\]](#)

“Under an annex of the Rambouillet accord, a purely NATO force was to be given full permission to go anywhere it wanted in Yugoslavia, immune from any legal process,” the *Times* finally admitted months later.[\[768\]](#)

Henry Kissinger denounced the pretended peace deal, saying, “The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout

Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing.” That settles that argument. But he went further: “Rambouillet is not a document that an angelic Serb could have accepted. It was a terrible diplomatic document that should never have been presented in that form.”[\[769\]](#) British Foreign Office Minister Lord Gilbert later admitted to a House of Commons defense committee that the portion of the proposal that required the occupation of Serbia by NATO troops was a deliberate poison pill, meant to be rejected by the Serbs to justify the war.[\[770\]](#) A “senior State Department official” also told the press that they “deliberately set the bar higher than the Serbs could accept.”[\[771\]](#) Humorously, the Kosovar Albanians, represented by KLA leader Thaçi, refused to sign on to the deal for three weeks, since it fell short of promising a referendum on full independence. It took a while for the Americans to convince him that it was the other guy who was getting screwed and that the deal was just a phony pretext for war on their behalf anyway, so just sign the damn thing.[\[772\]](#)

The goal of the whole process, Assistant Secretary of State Jamie Rubin admitted, was to create “clarity” where before there was ambiguity, “and that meant the Kosovar Albanians agreeing to the package and the Serbs not agreeing to the package.” He continued, “Obviously, publicly, we had to make clear we were seeking an agreement, but privately we knew the chances of the Serbs agreeing were quite small.”[\[773\]](#) Albright added, “If the Serbs would not agree, and the Albanians would agree, then there was a very clear cause for using force.” They were talking about lying the American people into war like it was just another Thursday. Far from a controversial and revisionist take, this is the simple truth, as Thomas

Hutson, a State Department official from the Yugoslav embassy in Belgrade explained: “There was never a choice. This was a diktat to which [neither] the Yugoslav government, nor any other sovereign government could ever agree.” He resigned in protest.[\[774\]](#)

Kissinger complained at the start of the war that “Rambouillet was not a negotiation—as is often claimed—but an ultimatum. This marked an astounding departure for an administration that had entered office proclaiming its devotion to the U.N. Charter and multilateral procedures.”[\[775\]](#)

For those less familiar, Kissinger, while having held the job of national security adviser and secretary of state under Republican Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford in the 1960s and 1970s, and for all his various sins committed within those roles and without,[\[776\]](#) the man has never been a partisan fighter. These criticisms were coming from a theoretician of American grand strategy, rather than some “Republican consultant” head-in-a-box on cable TV news. Of course, Kissinger concluded that Clinton should escalate the war he should never have started: “Now that the credibility of the Atlantic Alliance has been staked, we must persist—with ground troops if necessary—until Serb military forces leave Kosovo and the refugees are allowed to return.” Still, for him to outright accuse his successor of such treachery, and rightly so, was remarkable. But the world order Kissinger had in mind required cooperation with Russia under the UN system. Clinton using NATO to launch a war without the proper procedures, and to change international borders in Europe no less, was, he feared, sowing the seeds of his life’s work’s demise.[\[777\]](#)

Senator Joe Biden was a leading voice for intervention in Kosovo, waging a campaign all through 1998 and the beginning of 1999, pushing for Clinton to intervene and arguing for the failed Authorization to Use Military Force in the Senate. “NATO’s credibility is on the line,” he insisted.[\[778\]](#)

## **Quick and Easy**

Announcing the bombing campaign in an Oval Office address, President Clinton claimed it would “advance the cause of peace.”[\[779\]](#) Other lies and exaggerations in his war speech included that Milošević had suppressed the Albanian language, stripped Kosovo of autonomy, attacked Slovenia and refused to negotiate, while claiming Russia was in agreement with the U.S. on the Rambouillet accord. Clinton also falsely stated that both world wars had begun in Yugoslavia and falsely implied Serbian responsibility for the Holocaust. He then went on to claim, going back to Bosnia before, that the Serbs were simply exterminating others out of ethnic hatred in Hitlerian fashion, since the alternative would be to sacrifice an important talking point and acknowledge his predecessor’s and his own role in starting that war.[\[780\]](#)

The administration had no idea what they were doing. Army Colonel Douglas Macgregor, then-chief of strategic planning and director of the Joint Operations Center, Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers, Europe, noted that Milošević’s popularity was at its lowest point in 1998. Serbian police and soldiers were insubordinate, refusing to deploy to Kosovo. But

American intervention changed all that.[\[781\]](#) War is the health of the state.  
[\[782\]](#)

Kissinger explained, “Before the start of the bombing, it was conventional wisdom in Washington that Serbia’s historic attachment to Kosovo was exaggerated and that Slobodan Milošević was looking for a pretext to get rid of the incubus it represented—which a few days of bombing was supposed to supply.”[\[783\]](#) They were wrong.

The administration also promised the war would be over quickly. Col. Macgregor wrote that NATO’s political leadership ignored warnings from General Klaus Naumann, the chairman of the NATO Military Committee, that airstrikes without ground operations would be indecisive. Thinking back to the short air campaign of late summer 1995, and ignoring the differences on the ground, they convinced themselves it would be easy.  
[\[784\]](#)

Albright told PBS *NewsHour*, “I don’t see this as a long-term operation. I think that this is something—the deter and damage is something that is achievable within a relatively short period of time.”[\[785\]](#) U.S. Air Force Lt. Gen. Mike Short was told, “You’re only going to bomb for two or three nights. That’s all the Alliance can stand. That’s all Washington can stand.” Administration officials also told the press they thought the war would be over in days, a week at the most. After two weeks, Albright announced: “We never expected this to be over quickly.”[\[786\]](#)

The war ended up lasting 78 days—two and a half months. “Without the ability to shape events in Kosovo,” Macgregor relates, “the air operation



began to focus primarily on punishing the Milošević regime, which required identifying new targets for attack throughout Yugoslavia.”[\[787\]](#)

## **Civilian Targets**

Reporter Philip Hammond wrote, “This was not a purely military operation: NATO also destroyed what it called ‘dual-use’ targets, such as factories, city bridges, and even the main television building in downtown Belgrade, in an attempt to terrorize the country into surrender.”[\[788\]](#) NATO bombed civilian water supplies and electricity infrastructure in Belgrade, and also targeted the power grid in Niš and Novi Sad.[\[789\]](#) Journalist James Bovard detailed how “NATO dropped more than 1,300 cluster bombs on Serbia and Kosovo. . . . Bomb experts estimated that more than 10,000 unexploded bomblets . . . maimed children long after the ceasefire.”[\[790\]](#) On April 12, a NATO plane bombed a train twice, they said accidentally, while it crossed a bridge they were targeting. Between 12–20 innocent people were killed. Two days later, NATO pilots mistakenly bombed Albanian refugees at Djakovica, killing more than 70, an attack which they initially blamed on the Serbs, only admitting the truth five days later. They then lied, releasing audio of a pilot who claimed he saw some Serbs lighting villages on fire and so made an understandable mistake when he bombed the refugees. However, Bovard noted, “this gambit backfired when high-ranking military officers protested that NATO, at General Clark’s urging, had released the tape of a pilot who had nothing to do with bombing the refugee column.” The audio was just “a red herring to distract attention from the carnage inflicted on the refugees.”[\[791\]](#) After a series of attacks killed 32 innocent

civilians, NATO spokesman Jamie Shea dismissed their importance to the BBC: “There is always a cost to defeat an evil.”[\[792\]](#)

## **RTS TV**

The Serbian TV station Radio Television Serbia (RTS) showed pictures of the aftermath of NATO strikes, which, according to the BBC, “had an impact around the world.” But President Clinton did not like that, so he personally ordered the bombing of the TV station too,[\[793\]](#) killing 16 innocent people,[\[794\]](#) including a young woman named Kasenja Bankovic, a local technician working the night shift.[\[795\]](#) Amnesty International called it a blatant war crime.[\[796\]](#)

Clinton’s ally in the war, British Prime Minister Tony Blair, explained that without censorship-by-airstrike, they could have lost public support. “This was one of the problems about waging a conflict in a modern communications and news world. . . . We were aware that those pictures would come back, and there would be an instinctive sympathy for the victims of the campaign,” he said.[\[797\]](#)

But the attack accomplished nothing but murder. The station had a backup transmitter and returned to the air in three hours.[\[798\]](#) Gen. Clark admitted, “We knew that when we struck it there would be an alternate means of getting out the Serb television. There’s no single switch to turn off everything. But we thought it was a good move to strike it and the political leadership agreed with us.” And they lied about it, claiming at first that RTS facilities “are being used as radio relay stations and transmitters to support the activities of the FRY military and special police forces, and therefore

they represented legitimate military targets.” However, NATO spokesmen later backed down from that and settled for the excuse that RTS was a propaganda organ for the Serbs.[\[799\]](#) This is notable, since Gen. Clark’s excuse when confronted about the massacre years later by journalist Jeremy Scahill was to still insist the station was part of Milošević’s “command and control systems” and therefore “a legitimate target.”[\[800\]](#)

Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Joseph W. Ralston admitted that at least 1,500 civilians were killed by NATO—mostly American—airstrikes.[\[801\]](#)

## **Covert Support**

The *Telegraph* revealed that British Special Air Services (SAS) and MI6, along with American special operations forces and CIA, got right to work undercover with the KLA to help identify targets in the air war, as well as providing them other intelligence and advice.[\[802\]](#) The *Sunday Herald* added, “Despite government denials on both sides of the Atlantic, SAS and U.S. Delta Force instructors were used to train Kosovar volunteers in weapons handling, demolition and ambush techniques, and basic military organization.”[\[803\]](#) The Brits armed the KLA with their best rifles and electronic gear to help NATO planes with their targeting, and gave “field advice” to their fighters during the war.[\[804\]](#)

Regardless of this support, NATO’s attack initially caused Yugoslav forces to rally around Milošević and make major gains against the KLA.[\[805\]](#)

## Kosovar Albanian Cleansing Instigated

The war actually instigated the temporary so-called “cleansing” of ethnic Albanians from the province as they fled from the violence of the war, such as in the village of Chirez.<sup>[806]</sup> The OSCE’s Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), sent to monitor the implementation of the October 1998 agreement, reported no “ethnic cleansing” campaign in their March 1999 assessment, instead describing flight by civilians on both sides after the collapse of Rambouillet and the imminent outbreak of war with NATO. They also documented small-scale fighting between Yugoslav forces and the KLA, mostly instigated by the latter (at least once even accidentally attacking the KVM mission itself), and a buildup of the “defensive capabilities” of the Yugoslav army in the border areas in response to increased assassinations and other attacks by KLA forces. They also noted that the majority of murders of Albanian civilians were at the hands of KLA death squads meting out “punishment shootings” for those who would not toe the line, rather than by Milošević’s forces.<sup>[807]</sup> The administration knew the Serbs were prepared to launch a massive ethnic cleansing campaign “if NATO began bombing,” as Strobe Talbott aide John Norris admitted. “With the onset of NATO military operations on March 24, Yugoslav army, police and paramilitary forces” launched the operation.<sup>[808]</sup> As Szamuely noted, “the flight of refugees began *after* NATO launched its bombing. There was no humanitarian catastrophe in Kosovo on March 24, 1999, certainly not one that could justify NATO’s massive and deadly attack.”<sup>[809]</sup>

Macgregor related that Clark’s orders were first not to lose any of their own planes, and “only in second place came the directive to stop the

Yugoslav army and police aggression against Albanians.”[\[810\]](#)

Bill Clinton, repeatedly, disingenuously compared the Serbs to the Nazis in World War II[\[811\]](#) and claimed he was trying to stop the killing, but General Henry Shelton, then-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, admitted, “The one thing we knew we could not do up front, was that we could not stop the atrocities or the ethnic cleansing through the application of our military power.”[\[812\]](#) They went ahead anyway. Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee NATO’s bombing campaign, though those numbers were exaggerated too.[\[813\]](#) Professor Noam Chomsky, noting reports of cleansing by Serb groups in the border lands after the NATO bombing campaign began, wrote, “Under the doctrine of retrospective justification, the heinous crimes that ensued are now held to be, perhaps, ‘enough to justify’ the NATO bombing campaign.”

The Americans and Brits just lied. What else could they do? They claimed Milošević would never have signed the agreement, even without the deal-killing Appendix B, that his forces were already expelling Albanians from the province by the hundreds of thousands, and that their bombing had no relation to the refugee crisis.[\[814\]](#)

## **Blaming Albright**

Ivo Daalder, who had been director for European Affairs on the National Security Council during the Bosnia war, described the Clinton administration’s common reaction to the reality of the war they had started: “Shock. In many ways, the team that led the President into this decision was shell-shocked. They never thought that this was going to happen. . . . There

was a sense that in fact [Albright] had led the Administration down this path and had failed.” Staffers started jumping ship and calling it “Madeleine’s War.” She had convinced people it would take 10 or 12 days before Milošević would surrender. “They never considered that in fact, rather than giving in or even hunkering down, it would escalate to these massive proportions.”[\[815\]](#) Civil rights activist, former presidential candidate and Clinton adviser Jesse Jackson also blamed Albright for pushing the U.S. into war, claiming the president was distracted by his impeachment scandal when the secretary was preparing what the *Post* politely described as her “unworkable peace plan.”[\[816\]](#)

## **Genocide Hoax**

James Bovard collected administration and allied claims about the war, and showed how their hyperbole about their enemies grew along with the number of civilians they themselves killed.[\[817\]](#) Defense Secretary William Cohen said, “This is a fight for justice over genocide, for humanity over inhumanity, for democracy over despotism.” He later added, “This is no ordinary conflict. . . . What is convulsing the United States and our NATO allies is the face of evil, an ethnic and religious nationalism that has at its core a hatred of everything our great democracies treasure.”[\[818\]](#) State Department spokesman Jamie Rubin claimed a Serbian-inflicted “genocide” against the Albanians had begun. He told the *Times* he needed no confirmation of this, “because we can clearly say crimes against humanity are being committed.”[\[819\]](#) Tony Blair said the war represented “the battle between good and evil, between civilization and barbarity.”[\[820\]](#) As in

Bosnia, the Brits especially pushed claims of massive Serbian rape camps, which were completely unsubstantiated and clearly fictional.[\[821\]](#)

Claims about the death toll among Kosovar civilians kept growing too. Jamie Shea, the NATO spokesman, alleged 225,000 men were missing and that they had confirmed at least 6,000 men killed in summary executions and 10 mass graves.[\[822\]](#) He did not mind lying. As Shea later admitted in a speech, “One thing we did well during the Kosovo crisis was to occupy the media space. We created a situation in which nobody in the world who was a regular TV watcher could escape the NATO message.” They had as much contempt for their media industry middlemen as they did for the public. Shea explained, “It was essential to keep the media permanently occupied and supplied with fresh information to report on. That way, they are less inclined to go in search of critical stories.”[\[823\]](#)

NATO spokesman Brigadier General Giuseppe Marani claimed the Serbs had pressed Albanian men into “grave-digging chain gangs” going around burying their countrymen in 40 different mass grave sites.[\[824\]](#)

After the war was over—with the U.S. eventually climbing down on several important terms[\[825\]](#)—the FBI went to Kosovo to find the mass graves and document the genocide. It turned out the 100,000 murdered civilians claimed by Clinton and his administration[\[826\]](#) were as fake as Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein’s chemical weapons a few years later.[\[827\]](#)

In the end, it was found that fewer than 3,000 people had been killed, evidently by the Serbs, before the war.[\[828\]](#) They were virtually all fighting-age males, as Washington calls them. Though some may have been executed, many were apparently killed in battle. Their deaths were surely

not representative of any actual genocide taking place there, like in the War Party's claims. The FBI was sent to investigate "the largest crime scene in the FBI's forensic history," as journalist John Pilger wrote. "Several weeks later, having not found a single mass grave, the FBI went home." Pilger added, "The Spanish forensic team also returned home, its leader complaining angrily that he and his colleagues had become part of 'a semantic pirouette by the war propaganda machines, because we did not find one—not one—mass grave.'" The International War Crimes Tribunal finally settled on 2,788 total killed in the war. "This included combatants on both sides and Serbs and Roma murdered by the Albanian Kosovo Liberation Army," Pilger reported.[\[829\]](#)

*Wall Street Journal* reporter Daniel Pearl, later kidnapped and murdered by bin Ladenites in Pakistan,[\[830\]](#) also debunked the story before the end of the year: "By late summer, stories about a Nazi-like body-disposal facility were so widespread that investigators sent a three-man French Gendarmerie team spelunking half a mile down the [Trepča] mine to search for bodies." None were found. They examined a furnace where bodies were said to have been immolated. Investigators found no teeth or other evidence of human remains. While Milošević's forces were guilty of expelling civilians and other war crimes, "other allegations—indiscriminate mass murder, rape camps, crematoriums, mutilation of the dead—haven't been borne out in the six months since NATO troops entered Kosovo." Confirming Bovard's observation from afar, Pearl said a NATO official admitted to him, "As the war dragged on . . . NATO saw a fatigued press



corps drifting toward the contrarian story: civilians killed by NATO's bombs. NATO stepped up its claims about Serb 'killing fields.'"[831]

Spanish pathologist Emilio Perez Pujol, leader of a group sent to find the bodies, counted only 2,500 dead "at the most," adding, "This includes lots of strange deaths that can't be blamed on anyone in particular. . . . We had found a total of 187 bodies. Four or five had died from natural causes." [832] The *Post* finally conceded in January 2000 that investigators could only find 2,108 bodies, "the overwhelming majority of them ethnic Albanians." There were no remains in the mine. Alleged "mass graves" contained "either a handful of corpses or none." They admitted Western claims of Serbian rape camps were lies, "and poorly sourced allegations in some publications that the Serbs were engaging in the mutilation of the living and the dead—including castration and decapitation—all proved to be false." [833] They were only a year too late to stop the war.

Carla Del Ponte, prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunals for the former Yugoslavia, likely still embellishing, admitted more than a year and a half later that they had only found 4,000 dead. She did not even claim to believe they must have been civilians. [834]

Walter Rockler, who served as a prosecutor at the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunals after World War II, said, "The attack by a coalition of parties led by the United States to me is outright aggression. The Yugoslavs, the Serbs in particular, did not attack any NATO country whatever and didn't threaten any of them." He also condemned them for deliberately attacking civilian targets. [835]

## **Chinese Embassy Attack**

An important side story to the Kosovo catastrophe is that the U.S. bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade on May 7, killing three and wounding more than 20 people.[\[836\]](#) Though the official explanation was that a CIA analyst used the wrong map, some have speculated that the Serbs had given them the remains of an F-117 stealth fighter-bomber they had shot down using World War II-era long-wave radar, and that the Americans were trying to destroy it before Chinese engineers could take the remaining pieces. Others thought it may be a warning for China to stop supporting the Serbian military.[\[837\]](#)

Regardless of the true motive or cause, it has been reported that the reaction in Beijing was to embark on another level of revolution in military technology and armaments in an effort to shore up their own deterrence against U.S. military power, just as they had done after seeing the video presentations of precision American airstrikes in Iraq War I in 1991[\[838\]](#) and after the Taiwan Strait Crisis of 1995–1996.[\[839\]](#)

Kissinger complained that Clinton's recklessness threatened the entire American-Chinese relationship, post-Sino-Soviet split, which he and President Nixon had so deftly exploited, potentially "leaving China's neighbors torn by the need to choose between the world's most populous country, whose 5,000 years of history give it a special place in Asia, and America, the world's only superpower."[\[840\]](#) It was just a little collateral damage between the world's two most important countries over others that do not affect U.S. national interests in any way.

The same night the U.S. hit the Chinese Embassy, the Brits listed the Hotel Yugoslavia as a potential target, then bombed it shortly afterwards—

killing one civilian.[\[841\]](#) The *Post*'s Daniel Williams rushed the administration's justification into print: The Bosnian Serb military leader Zeljko Ražnatović [a.k.a. Arkan] was part-owner of a casino there.[\[842\]](#)

## **Blair's Invasion Plan**

Evidently we all were very lucky that the war was not nearly as bad as it could have been. In 2024, journalist Kit Klarenberg revealed a secret document[\[843\]](#) that showed Prime Minister Tony Blair's government had come up with a plan for a full-scale invasion of what was left of Yugoslavia by British and American ground forces and their overthrow of President Milošević. Ministry of Defense Policy Director Richard Hatfield urged the government to pass the plan on to the Clinton administration as soon as possible to try to overcome their "reluctance and skepticism" on the issue. This was necessary, the UK planners believed, because the air war had so far been a bust. Airstrikes on the capital had "demonstrated to Belgrade citizens just how vulnerable their city is, but achieved little else." Further, they were afraid that Serb forces would defeat the KLA. So PM Blair proposed a "coalition of the willing" to invade. Blair demanded that NATO forces strike civilian targets: "We must strengthen the targets. Media and communication are utterly essential. Oil, infrastructure, all the things Milošević values . . . is clearly justified. . . . What is holding this back?" The worse the war went, the more he wanted to escalate. "I have little doubt we are moving towards a situation where our aim will become removing Milošević."[\[844\]](#) The administration put the Brits off by agreeing to have NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana review their options for the use of

ground forces possibly after their big summit in late April. Gen. Clark, bolstered by Sen. John McCain and Secretary Albright, also wanted to send in ground troops, but was delayed by Defense Secretary William Cohen on Clinton's behalf. After weeks of failure though, the president came very close to launching a ground invasion.[\[845\]](#)

According to the *Times*, Clinton was on the verge of ordering the invasion, "coming much closer" to doing so "than is commonly understood," and "despite his vow . . . on the first day of the war that 'I do not intend to put our troops in Kosovo to fight a war.'" Luckily, instead of invading, he dropped his demand to be allowed to occupy all of Serbia, [\[846\]](#) and the Russians talked Milošević into signing the rest.[\[847\]](#)

## Cease Fire

Without Russia's support, the Serbs knew their cause was lost.[\[848\]](#) They passed a message to Milošević through Swedish financier Peter Castenfelt that it was time to "exit now." By the time Chernomyrdin got to Belgrade, he had already decided to quit.[\[849\]](#)

Professor Alan Kuperman, then at the Brookings Institution,[\[850\]](#) pointed out that Albright and Clinton were the ones who had surrendered. They dropped their demand for the right to occupy all of Serbia, accepted that Kosovo would remain officially part of Serbia for at least another three years, agreed to submit further plans to the UNSC, where Russia had a veto, and also to allow a limited number of Serb troops to stay to guard the border and certain cultural and religious sites. Kuperman wrote, "Milošević accepted this deal the first time it was offered to him." Invoking Albright's

deliberate sabotage with the poisoned pills of the Rambouillet accord, he concluded, “This is botched diplomacy, plain and simple. Madeleine Albright must be held accountable.”[\[851\]](#)

The *Guardian* noted that the Serbian parliament had passed a resolution asking for an “international presence in Kosovo immediately after the signing of an accord for self-administration in Kosovo which will be accepted by all national communities . . . to be decided by the Security Council.”[\[852\]](#) This was essentially what the final peace settlement demanded. The Yugoslavs had already given in that much before Clinton started the war.[\[853\]](#)

Despite all their claims about the success of America’s space-age, superpower ability to coerce behavior with precision strikes, a post-war study by the military determined that despite dropping tens of thousands of bombs on Kosovo and Serbia, NATO had only destroyed 14 tanks, 18 armored personnel carriers [APCs] and 20 artillery pieces—58 “successful strikes” out of more than 20,000 bombs dropped.[\[854\]](#) Clark’s air forces had been completely fooled by Serbia’s cardboard tank forces deployed to distract them.[\[855\]](#) As Bovard noted, “At the end of the war, the Serbian military largely was unscathed—but the country’s civilian infrastructure was in ruins. NATO bombs were far more effective against women, children, hospitals, and retirement homes than against soldiers.”[\[856\]](#)

The American foreign policy establishment still thinks they are heroes for all this. As Philip Hammond noted, “NATO’s Kosovo campaign was held up as a supposedly successful model by those arguing for military action against Iraq in 2003, Libya in 2011, and Syria in 2018.”[\[857\]](#)

## **Pristina**

At the end of the war, Milošević asked NATO to go ahead and occupy Kosovo in order to fill the power vacuum that would be left after the JNA withdrew its troops. But NATO forces wasted time at the Albanian-Kosovo border, opening an opportunity for Russian forces to seize the airport at Pristina and an air base in Slatina, Kosovo.[\[858\]](#) The Russian prime minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, had come up with the peace plan. According to the deal, the Russians thought they were to be assigned a sector of Kosovo, but came to understand this was not the way the U.S. saw it. Believing they were being cheated in the deal, Yeltsin decided to order his troops to roll out of their base in Bosnia toward Pristina. Clark ordered 500 British and French paratroopers to prepare an attack.[\[859\]](#) He also negotiated with neighboring states to deny the Russians overflight rights to prevent them from resupplying their troops.[\[860\]](#)

Famous British singer James Blunt, then a colonel in the British army, allied with his superior, Lieutenant General Sir Michael Jackson—seriously[\[861\]](#)—to thwart NATO commander Clark’s order to send Apache attack helicopters to occupy the runway. “I’m not going to start World War III for you,” Jackson is reported to have told Clark,[\[862\]](#) instead threatening to resign.[\[863\]](#) When the Russians decided not to send reinforcements, the episode was allowed to blow over.[\[864\]](#)

## **Hillary’s Choice**

Clinton's wife made him do it. As author Gail Sheehy told *Dateline NBC*, the first lady had refused to speak to her husband for eight months after the humiliation of his cheating scandal.[\[865\]](#) The silence was not broken until she called him to demand he bomb Serbia. Sheehy wrote in her book *Hillary's Choice* that both Secretary of Defense William Cohen and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Hugh Shelton were opposed to starting the war. "You can't control a territory with airplanes," they told Clinton. But Hillary knew better. She told journalist Lucinda Franks, "I urged him to bomb; I supported him. You cannot let this go on at the end of a century that has seen the major holocaust of our time."[\[866\]](#)

Defining "us" as broadly as humanly possible and nonsensically comparing the fighting to the Holocaust and World War II, she demanded, "What do we have NATO for if not to defend our way of life?" After hearing that a last-minute meeting between Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević and U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke had failed to produce an agreement, she told the president, "You've got to bite the bullet." The next day, he declared that force was necessary, and three days later began the attack.[\[867\]](#)

The U.S. continued to support KLA terrorist forces for years, long after they started attempting to cleanse areas of Serbia and Macedonia of non-Albanians to create a "Greater Kosovo."[\[868\]](#)

## **Serbs Cleansed**

President Clinton swore to the Serbian people that NATO "only agreed to serve with the understanding that they would protect Serbs as well as ethnic

Albanians and that they would leave when peace took hold.”[\[869\]](#) That did not last. During the war, and after it was over, Serbian civilians then became the victims of the same cleansing policy at the hands of the Albanian KLA, [\[870\]](#) which had refused to disarm after the war as they had promised Gen. Jackson, handing over only old World War II-era rifles and keeping everything of value. The *Times* reported the KLA was “carrying out random kidnappings and executions and burning Serb villages.”[\[871\]](#) KLA terrorists[\[872\]](#) forcibly drove more than 200,000 of them from their homes. [\[873\]](#) If NATO had tried to force the issue, they would have had a whole new war on their hands.[\[874\]](#)

A Clinton administration official admitted to the *Post* just two months after the peace deal was signed that the U.S. government under the authority of President Clinton was the accomplice of, not defender from, mass murder and ethnic cleansing: “It looks like it’s over for the Serbs. We can talk about peace, love and democracy, but I don’t think anyone really knows how to stop this.” They told the story of a little old lady who had been slaughtered by the KLA in her apartment in Pristina: “Ljubica Vujovic, 78, was a lifelong resident of Kosovo. She was also a Serb, and in the new Kosovo that is enough to get you killed.” The U.S. and NATO had protected civilian-butchered terrorists in the name of humanitarianism. “Every day since NATO-led peacekeeping troops assumed authority in this Serbian province, a Serb or Gypsy has been killed, tortured, beaten, kidnapped or threatened.” The *Post* continued, “Serb- and Gypsy-owned homes have been burned, looted or seized; state-owned or private Serbian businesses have been occupied and their operators expelled; Serbian



Orthodox holy places have been bombed or desecrated”—and 75 percent of Kosovo’s prewar Serbian population had been forcibly expelled.[\[875\]](#)

Deliso wrote that “[s]cores of Serbian Orthodox churches, some 700 years old, were destroyed by the KLA.”[\[876\]](#) Bovard noted that by the end of September 1999, more than 60 churches and other religious sites “had been blown up, burnt, ransacked, or otherwise ruined. Many of the detonations of the churches were very skilled, with massive amounts of explosives—clearly the work of the KLA, which NATO claimed had disbanded months earlier.”[\[877\]](#)

Pilger denounced this actual ethnic cleansing—which took place after the deal was signed and NATO troops occupied the province. “More than 200,000 Serbs, Roma, Bosniaks, Turks, Croats and Jews have been ethnically cleansed by the KLA, with NATO forces standing by.” Clinton and his men were exactly the evil they were pretending to oppose. “The courts are venal,” the journalist added, going on to quote a UN narcotics officer: “You shot an 89-year-old Serb grandmother? . . . Good for you. Get out of jail.”[\[878\]](#)

Before the end of the summer, Human Rights Watch reported about the effects of the war they had tacitly supported:[\[879\]](#) “More than 164,000 have left Kosovo altogether. Many others have moved to Serb or Roma enclaves under KFOR protection within Kosovo.” They said there had been a “wave of arson and looting of Serb and Roma homes throughout Kosovo that has ensued and . . . harassment and intimidation, including severe beatings, to which remaining Serbs and Roma have been subjected.” They added, “Most seriously, there has been a spate of abductions and murders of Serbs since

mid-June, including the massacre of fourteen Serb farmers on July 23.”[\[880\]](#) Amnesty International reported at the year’s end that “[v]iolence against Serbs, Roma, Muslim Slavs and moderate Albanians in Kosovo has increased dramatically over the past month,” including “murder, abductions, violent attacks, intimidation, and house burning . . . on a daily basis.”[\[881\]](#) According to a later investigation by the European Union, the KLA committed “unlawful killings, abductions, enforced disappearances, illegal detentions in camps in Kosovo and Albania, sexual violence, forced displacements of individuals from their homes and communities, and desecration and destruction of churches and other religious sites.”[\[882\]](#) Bovard noted that “[b]y 2003, almost 70 percent of the Serbs living in Kosovo in 1999 had fled, and Kosovo was 95 percent ethnic Albanian.”[\[883\]](#) This was approximately 200,000 Serbs and 120,000 Roma. Many Serbs had at least been able to flee elsewhere in Serbia. The Roma were scattered to the wind, their lives destroyed.[\[884\]](#) George Robertson, the British secretary-general of NATO from 1999 to 2003, told the House of Commons that the “KLA were responsible for more deaths in Kosovo than the Yugoslav authorities had been” in the period leading up to NATO’s intervention.[\[885\]](#) Canadian Maj. Gen. Lewis MacKenzie said, “The Kosovar Albanians played us like a Stradivarius violin. We have subsidized and indirectly supported their violent campaign for an ethnically pure Kosovo.”[\[886\]](#)

## **Greater Kosovo**

Not only that, but the KLA started what the *Los Angeles Times* called a “terror campaign,” kidnapping, beating and murdering their less-extreme opposition among the Kosovar Albanians, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK).[\[887\]](#) And they were just getting started. Renamed KLA forces—now NLA for “National Liberation Army”—began attacking inside Serbia and Macedonia, attempting to push their luck and create a “Greater Kosovo.” The *Guardian* reported in the spring of 2001, “‘CIA’s Bastard Army Ran Riot in Balkans,’ Backed Extremists.” They said, “The accusations have led to tension in K-For [international peace-keeping force in Kosovo] between the European and U.S. military missions.” This was because “European officers are furious that the Americans have allowed guerrilla armies in its sector to train, smuggle arms and launch attacks across two international borders.” The *Washington Times* reported in June 2001, based on Macedonian military documents, that bin Laden was the main financier of the NLA.[\[888\]](#) U.S. support for these murderers continued right up through August 2001, and they had seized as much of a third of Macedonia before the Macedonian army surrounded a group of them and United States forces evacuated them back to Kosovo. After this they decided to finally change the Clinton policy and negotiate.[\[889\]](#)

In the city of Pec, “cradle of Serbian identity,” after September 11, when people came out to hold a candlelight vigil in honor of the American victims, a group of young, bearded bin Ladenites showed up, blew out their candles, told them to go home, and when the locals refused, beat them up.  
[\[890\]](#)

A month later, U.S. intelligence arrested Arabs plotting a suicide attack against American troops stationed at Camp Eagle in Bosnia. They said one of the men had the phone number of Abu Zubaydah—al Qaeda’s travel agent,[\[891\]](#) whom President George W. Bush and the CIA later ruthlessly tortured[\[892\]](#)—saved in his phone.[\[893\]](#)

## **Organs**

It later became clear that KLA terrorists were also specialists in stealing people’s organs and selling them on the black market.[\[894\]](#) In addition to promoting terrorists, the Western powers put a psychopathic mafia boss in charge of Kosovo. Hashim Thaçi was such a prolific criminal, he remained more interested in running his organized crime ring than governing the new mini-state. “He’s involved in drug smuggling, weapons smuggling, slave trade and illegal organ trade from either voluntary or involuntary donors,” according to journalist Nebojsa Malic.[\[895\]](#)

In 2010, Vice President Biden called Thaçi “the George Washington of Kosovo.”[\[896\]](#) A few months later, a Council of Europe investigative report tagged Mr. Thaçi as an accomplice to the body-parts trafficking operation.[\[897\]](#) That means stealing the organs from the bodies of still-living Serbian prisoners.[\[898\]](#) He was finally indicted in 2020 for crimes against humanity and is facing trial in The Hague.[\[899\]](#)

## **Heroin**

Clinton must have known the KLA were heroin dealers. The *San Francisco Chronicle* had a full write-up on the issue during the war. They quoted a 1995 DEA report saying that “certain members of the ethnic Albanian community in the Serbian region of Kosovo have turned to drug trafficking in order to finance their separatist activities,” and a 1997 Interpol report which said, “Kosovo Albanians hold the largest share of the heroin market in Switzerland, Austria, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Norway and Sweden.”[\[900\]](#)

On the KLA’s role in the European drug trade, the *Guardian* reported in 2000, “International agencies fighting the drug trade are warning that Kosovo has become a ‘smugglers’ paradise’ supplying up to 40 percent of the heroin sold in Europe and North America.” They said that under NATO’s watchful eye, “the smugglers are running the ‘Balkan route’ with complete freedom.”[\[901\]](#)

A Congressional report found that “between 30 and 50 percent of the KLA’s money comes from drugs.” Terrorism expert Michel Koutouzis said, “The KLA owes a lot of debts to the traffickers and holy warriors. They are being pressured to assist other insurrections. [We have] reports of KLA weapons being routed to the newest Muslim holy war in Chechnya.” An anonymous “Congressional expert” on international drug trafficking told *Mother Jones* magazine, “There is no doubt that the KLA is a major trafficking organization. But we have a relationship with the KLA, and the administration doesn’t want to damage [its] reputation. We are partners. The attitude is: The drugs are not coming here, so let others deal with it.” But that was not true. As *Mother Jones* reported, KLA’s trafficking included

sales to black markets in Philadelphia and New York.[\[902\]](#) Ever since then, Kosovo has consistently scored near the top of the rankings for criminality in Europe.[\[903\]](#)

## **Regime Change**

Just like in Iraq, the Clinton administration continued the economic punishment of Serbia's civilian population after the war was over, and like in Iraq,[\[904\]](#) for the explicitly stated purpose of making the people so miserable that they would overthrow the president for them. The *Orlando Sentinel* reported that "American officials have said they fear that the assistance could shore up Mr. Milošević by alleviating public discontent, which they hope could lead to protests in Yugoslavia, early elections, or even Mr. Milošević's ouster or resignation." Jamie Rubin, the State Department spokesman, denounced calls by America's European allies to lift the sanctions. "We're concerned about proposals that may have appropriate humanitarian goals but may lead to developments that directly or indirectly support the regime," he said.[\[905\]](#)

## **PR Stunt**

NATO was not very good at war. Through Bosnia and Kosovo, the Americans were concerned that the alliance's military inadequacies were being exposed in front of the Russians and others. So Clinton pushed expansion even harder. As always, personal and institutional interests had overridden any concept of the true national interest. Jenonne Walker,

Clinton's ambassador to the Czech Republic, later said, "Our inaction was making NATO look weak and irrelevant. And the line in the halls of power in Washington was, 'We have to enlarge NATO to save it, to make it look as though it were dynamic and on the move and not stagnant.'" [\[906\]](#)

## **Russian Reaction**

Former Russian diplomat Boris Bondarev later wrote that Russians' views of the U.S. and its allies "took another major hit after NATO's 1999 campaign against Serbia. To Russia, the bombings looked less like an operation to protect the country's Albanian minority than like aggression by a large power against a tiny victim." [\[907\]](#) Russian Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov canceled planned talks and turned his plane around over the Atlantic Ocean in protest upon receiving word from Vice President Al Gore that the bombing was to begin shortly. [\[908\]](#)

The attack humiliated and enraged President Yeltsin and severely set back U.S.-Russian relations. In a phone call before the war, the Russian president ranted at Clinton for 12 minutes before angrily hanging up on him. [\[909\]](#) In another call, he complained that despite "how difficult it was for me to try and turn the heads of our people, the heads of the politicians, toward the West, toward the United States," we would "now lose all that" over America and NATO's intervention. "[T]here will not be such great drive and great friendship that we had before. That will not be there again."

Former acting prime minister and American friend Yegor Gaidar called from Rome, where he was about to meet with Pope John Paul II, and asked Talbott to tell the pontiff that America was interested in his intervention to

broker a peace, and that the administration would offer a pause in the bombing to help facilitate it. Talbott replied, “Absolutely not. A pause would be tantamount to surrender.” Gaidar then told Talbott, “[I]f only you knew what a disaster this war is for those of us in Russia who want for our country what you want.”[\[910\]](#) Anatoly Chubais warned American diplomats, “You’re not just bombing Milošević, but Russian liberals as well.”[\[911\]](#)

In yet another call, Yeltsin castigated the president, saying that instead of stopping an atrocity, “what has been achieved is a giant humanitarian catastrophe, and significant damage has occurred to U.S.-Russian relations.” He warned Clinton that the “anti-American and anti-NATO sentiment in Russia keeps growing like an avalanche,” and that he was staving off demands that he send Russian forces into the war on Serbia’s side. He asked the president to halt the bombing and offered to bring the Serbs to the table. Clinton promised that the Russians could come to protect the Kosovar Serbs, that Serbia’s territorial integrity would be protected under autonomy for Kosovo and that the KLA would be disarmed, none of which was true. But he got Yeltsin’s help pressuring Milošević to give in and withdraw.[\[912\]](#)

Yeltsin then suspended participation in the new NATO-Russia Council and threatened to have the parliament withhold ratification of the important START II nuclear weapons treaty. He also retargeted nuclear missiles at the U.S. and its NATO allies.[\[913\]](#) In the end, START II was ratified, but all the negotiations behind START III were thrown away.[\[914\]](#) One NATO official said that “everything he rooted his presidency on—getting the major



benefits of Western cooperation with minimal humiliation—was about to go out the window.”[\[915\]](#)

Viktor Chernomyrdin, the former prime minister who was named Russia’s special envoy for Kosovo in April, wrote in the *Post*, referring to the U.S.-NATO policy of intervening in civil wars and without authorization from the Security Council, that the war had set back U.S.-Russia relations “by several decades.” He cited opinion polling showing that before the war, 57 percent of Russians viewed the U.S. favorably. After the war, that number was down to 14 percent, while 63 percent blamed the U.S. and NATO for the conflict. He denied this was about “so-called Slavic fraternity,” and instead insisted the bombing “clashes with international law, the Helsinki agreements and the entire world order that took shape after World War II.” He lamented the bolstering of reactionary forces inside Russian politics and warned, “The world has never in this decade been so close as now to the brink of nuclear war.”[\[916\]](#)

Stratfor is a well-known, Austin, Texas-based “private intelligence firm,” or “shadow CIA” which consults with the federal government, big business and other customers about international politics. Their founder and director George Friedman explained in a memo to his customers that besides the fake casus belli and the illegality of starting a war without UN Security Council approval (never mind a constitutional declaration), the war especially unsettled Russia because of the precedent it would set in Europe. The post-World War II status quo unraveling could be used as “a precedent for dismembering Russia. In fact, they suspected that was the point of Kosovo.” He added that though Russia was too weak to stop the war, it

“served as a catalyst for Russia’s leadership to try to halt the country’s decline and regain its respect.” Part of the consequences of the Kosovo War, then, was the rise of Vladimir Putin and the return to prominence of the old Russian intelligence services.[\[917\]](#)

In fact, the Kosovo conflict set a precedent that Putin’s Russia invoked in Ukraine in the 2020s: where an ethnic minority is claiming persecution, a great power can move right in and change their sovereign status through unilateral force, international law be damned.

Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev pointed out that when Putin attacked Kiev in February 2022, the initial strike at the TV tower was obviously a direct callback to Clinton’s attack on the antenna in Belgrade in the 1999 war against Serbia, just as he had quoted from Kosovo’s declaration of independence when his forces seized the Crimean Peninsula in 2014.[\[918\]](#) Few, if any, Americans noticed.

After Kosovo, Henry Kissinger warned, “In Russia, an outraged sense of humiliation over NATO’s actions has spread from the elites to the population at large and threatens to blight U.S.-Russian relations for years to come.”[\[919\]](#) He continued: “The transformation of the Alliance from a defensive military grouping into an institution prepared to impose its values by force occurred in the same months that three former Soviet satellites joined NATO.” This, he said, “undercut repeated American and allied assurances that Russia had nothing to fear from NATO expansion, since the Alliance’s own treaty proclaimed it to be a purely defensive institution.” He wrote that the war had highlighted Russia’s decline and “generated a hostility toward America and the West that may produce a nationalist and

socialist Russia—akin to the European Fascism of the 1930s,” and that “Russia’s image of itself as an historic player on the world stage must be taken seriously. This requires less lecturing and more dialogue . . . less sociology and more foreign policy.”[\[920\]](#)

In 2000, Putin said he thought the most important aspect of the conflict was the wanton violation of the UN Charter, which forbids aggressive war without UNSC—including Russian—approval. The U.S. was trying to “supplant” the international law with NATO. “We must not agree to that,” he said.[\[921\]](#)

Harvard’s Mark Kramer wrote that the Kosovo War and NATO expansion prompted the Russian Security Council to rewrite the country’s “Concept on National Security” with “more aggressive language and militaristic posture.” No longer “partner,” the United States was now again officially considered an adversary. “The perceived slights, combined with the displays of Western air prowess, prompted a major reassessment in Moscow of the country’s strategy—and provided the catalyst for redrafting the doctrine.” He warned that “[i]t also provides somewhat looser conditions for the possible use of Russian nuclear weapons, warning that a nuclear attack by Russia might be forthcoming to ‘repel armed aggression if all other means of resolving a crisis have failed.’” Kramer added that the Russians were “vehemently opposed to the admission of the three Baltic states—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania—which U.S. officials claimed last year [1999] was ‘inevitable.’”[\[922\]](#) In response to the question of Russia attempting to join NATO, Putin, at that time, seemed cold to the idea and insisted cooperation could only take place when the U.S. would treat them

as equals, which he predicted they would not.[\[923\]](#) Though Yeltsin's government officially cut off contact with NATO afterwards, Putin restored relations upon taking office.

Michael Mandelbaum, professor at Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the Kosovo War was a strategic disaster for the United States. The people of the Balkans, he said, were worse off, the precedent set in international law was destabilizing, and America's relationship with both Russia and China had been severely set back. Mandelbaum predicted the consequences of Clinton's decision to invade a sovereign nation in the name of protecting one side in a civil war and in violation of the UN Charter in 1999, "giving, for example, the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States the right to intervene in Ukraine if it believes ethnic Russians there are being mistreated—which is unacceptable to NATO."

The professor also noted the role the Kosovo War played in the deteriorating relationship between the U.S. and Russia, since Clinton had broken Bush and Baker's promise, and those he had made to ameliorate that fact: that they would make NATO into a political organization, that its military role would remain defensive and that Russia would be treated as a full partner in questions of European security. "The war in Yugoslavia gave the lie to all three: NATO initiated a war against a sovereign state that had attacked none of its members, a war to which Russia objected but that Moscow could not prevent," he said. "Whereas NATO expansion had angered the Russian political class, the bombing of Serbia by all accounts

triggered widespread outrage in the Russian public . . . and signaled a shift in the politics of Russian foreign policy in a nationalist direction.”[\[924\]](#)

Congressman Ron Paul denounced the strikes on the House floor, saying, “This policy of nation-building and interference in a civil war totally contradicts the mission of European defense set out in the NATO charter.” He noted that “[w]ithout the Soviet enemy to justify the European military machine, NATO had to find enemies and humanitarian missions to justify its existence.”[\[925\]](#)

Kosovo finally officially declared independence in 2008, enraging the Russians, but as Philip Hammond pointed out, “this was ‘supervised independence’ under the auspices of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX).” More than 4,000 NATO troops and hundreds of EU, UN and OSCE staff members still occupy the country, and the U.S. and EU still dictate Kosovar policies.[\[926\]](#) Organized crime centered on heroin[\[927\]](#) still thrives under international supervision.[\[928\]](#) After a quarter of a century, Western nations have completely failed to build a functioning nation in Kosovo. In 2016, Carlotta Gall of the *New York Times* complained that the war had made Kosovo a “font of extremism,” saying it was now “fertile ground for ISIS” terrorists. Saudi money had turned once moderate Muslims into Wahhabi extremists, transforming their whole society. “In some cases, centuries-old buildings were bulldozed, including a historic library in Gjakova and several 400-year-old mosques, as well as shrines, graveyards and Dervish monasteries, all considered idolatrous in Wahhabi teaching.”

“Over the last two years,” Gall reported, “the police have identified 314 Kosovars—including two suicide bombers, 44 women and 28 children—who have gone abroad to join the Islamic State, the highest number per capita in Europe.”[\[929\]](#)

## **Pipeline Wars**

### **Black Gold**

Pakistani journalist Ahmed Rashid coined the term “the new Great Game” in 1997 to describe the competition among the regional and global powers over the control of oil and natural gas pipeline routes out of the West Asian Caspian Basin.[\[930\]](#) America is a major player in this contest.

The U.S. government and connected oil companies began eyeing the Caspian Basin in 1989, just as the Soviet Union was breaking up.[\[931\]](#) At President Bush’s urging, the USSR signed their first deal with Chevron to develop the Tengiz oil field in northwestern Kazakhstan in the summer of 1990.[\[932\]](#) James Baker, Bush Sr.’s first secretary of state and powerful Houston, Texas, attorney for major oil firms, traveled to the country to normalize relations in 1992.[\[933\]](#)

Though initial estimates of Caspian oil supplies were overly optimistic, [\[934\]](#) there were still billions of dollars to be made and national competitors to be eliminated.

### **Azeri Coup D’état**

In 1993, British Petroleum (BP) and Amoco oil company overthrew Azerbaijani President Abulfaz Elchibey, a former Soviet dissident and leader of the elected government of the small Caspian Basin nation, in a military coup. In his place they installed Haydar Aliyev, a former KGB chief and first secretary of the Communist Party under the Soviet Union. [\[935\]](#) The people of the country had only just held free and fair elections and voted in Elchibey the year before. But what was left of the old British Empire quickly put an end to this nascent Azeri democracy. [\[936\]](#) Aliyev's son Ilham, who seized power in 2003, [\[937\]](#) is dictator to this day. The U.S. and UK governments openly welcomed Aliyev's illegal takeover because they wanted to cut the Russian Federation out of the Caspian oil game and make a ton of money taking it over for themselves. [\[938\]](#) One of Aliyev's first acts was to sign a \$5 billion deal with BP. Five years later, Tony Blair hosted him in London, where he signed another \$13 billion worth of contracts with BP and other British oil firms. "BP has close links to British intelligence and employs several former MI6 officers," the London *Times* noted in 2000. [\[939\]](#)

However, according to *Forbes*'s Paul Klebnikov, the Russians also supported the coup and used their influence with the new regime to secure a portion of the deal for the new Russian oil firm Lukoil. [\[940\]](#)

## **Dual Containment**

The American companies in Azerbaijan wanted to build a pipeline through Iran or to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. It would be shorter

and cheaper. This policy was supported by Zbigniew Brzezinski as a way to help reopen Iran to the United States.[\[941\]](#)

But the Israel Lobby in America was insisting on the “dual containment” policy,[\[942\]](#) which mandated permanent Cold War against both Iraq and Iran, including a massive sanctions regime against both countries enforced from U.S. air bases in Saudi Arabia. Any deal including Iran was out.[\[943\]](#) The pipelines would have to go east and west out of the Caspian, not north or south. Though Talbott was again initially somewhat reluctant to stick it to the Russians this way, Clinton’s Deputy Secretary of Energy Bill White, new National Security Council Caspian region desk chief Rosemarie Forsythe, NSC director for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasian Affairs, energy expert and Russia hawk Sheila Heslin,[\[944\]](#) and the rest of the State Department were enjoying their opportunity to dance on Russia’s shallow grave.[\[945\]](#)

The policy was explicitly anti-Russian, rather than profit-driven, in its origin. Brzezinski, later, after conceding defeat on his previous plans to work with Iran,[\[946\]](#) explained that Azerbaijan “is the cork in the bottle containing the riches of the Caspian Sea basin and Central Asia.”[\[947\]](#) Russia wants “control,” while the U.S. and its allies simply want to help guarantee the “independence” of these nations—from Russia.[\[948\]](#) This is especially true, he said, because in the case of Russia, any attempt by their government to assert an imperial role in their near abroad would necessarily destroy their experiment in self-government. Precluding the attempt by asserting American dominance instead would help to preserve their democracy and potential for future “Europeanization,” he claimed.[\[949\]](#)



The trio of White, Forsythe and Heslin succeeded in classifying the Caspian Basin region as an issue of national security and part of America's effort to continue containment of Russia. They would expand NATO to Eastern Europe, and in the Caspian Basin, and while refraining from stationing troops there, would work politically to freeze out Russian influence, particularly through the use of oil pipelines.[\[950\]](#)

Talbott considered Russia a far more important country to America's national interests than Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Georgia, and fought to limit the hawks' goals. Marc Grossman, the new ambassador to Turkey, then intervened. While President Eduard Shevardnadze was pushing hard for Georgian inclusion as a way to secure the new nation's independence from Russia, Grossman knew the Turks wanted in on the action too. Working with the NSC's Forsythe and Heslin, they succeeded in an end-run around Talbott by implying they would include the Russians in their plans while instead establishing that U.S. efforts would go into the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (that is, Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey a.k.a. BTC) pipeline.[\[951\]](#) After leaving the NSC, Heslin urged the administration and international oil firms to push through the BTC pipeline as soon as possible, to cut out the Russians: "From a strategic perspective, the first generation of pipeline development should proceed along a western route, notably the Baku-Ceyhan route."[\[952\]](#) Heslin wrote in the *Times* that the closing of the deal to create the BTC and preclusion of any new pipelines through Russia or Iran was a "dire" national security concern. Failing her favored policy, Russia would be sure to dominate all the lands of the former Soviet empire

through their control of one proposed pipeline from Azerbaijan to Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, she said.[\[953\]](#)

Brzezinski, then working for the oil company Unocal on a supposed “humanitarian” mission to Azerbaijan, delivered a letter to President Aliyev from President Clinton promising support for a dual-pipeline plan that the Americans never meant to live up to in order to convince Aliyev to resist Russian pressure against the Georgian pipeline plan, promising that theirs would come soon after.[\[954\]](#) Clinton closed the deal in November 1999.

[\[955\]](#) The BTC pipeline was completed in June 2006.[\[956\]](#)

“There’s a very interesting split of oil people on one hand and geopoliticians on the other,” Thane Gustafson, a Washington-based energy consultant, told journalist Stephen Kinzer. “The geopoliticians are still breathing heavily, but for the oil people it’s more like a sigh.” Julia Nanay, a consultant involved with the companies pumping crude out of the Caspian told Kinzer, “This is not really about oil. It’s about defense politics and world strategy. Whether you’re talking about containing Russian influence or helping Turkey or containing Iran or building up new states in the region, oil is just a political cover.”[\[957\]](#)

## **Nagorno-Karabakh**

Before they could do that, the Clinton administration decided they needed to try to help the new Azeri junta defeat Armenia in the impossibly complicated war that broke out between them when the Soviet Union fell. Under borders drawn by Stalin and the Turks in 1921, an important Armenian enclave they call Artsakh (a.k.a. Nagorno-Karabakh to the

Azeris) was left totally surrounded by the foreign state of Azerbaijan. They fought from 1992 to 1994 in a war that killed approximately 30,000 people[\[958\]](#) and intermittently afterwards, until in September 2023 the Azeris finally “cleansed” the area of Armenians by force.[\[959\]](#) The U.S., of course, supports Azerbaijan.

Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, the ethnic Pashtun Afghan warlord and leader of Hezb-e-Islami—then a U.S. favorite and later deadly enemy during the American war in Afghanistan (2001–2021)[\[960\]](#)—sent 1,000 mujahideen veterans of the 1980s Afghan-Soviet War to fight on Azerbaijan’s side. At least 1,500 more joined them.[\[961\]](#) Clinton’s government sent a secret team of American retired special operations forces mercenaries working with former Iran-Contra scandal figure General Richard Secord and calling themselves “Mega Oil” to match Hekmatyar’s efforts,[\[962\]](#) even though due to domestic lobbying, Congress appropriated more money for the Armenian side, as did the Russians, who also sent arms and mercenaries to help.[\[963\]](#) After the war, many of these fighters turned to terrorism, bombing civilian targets in Baku, and launching four failed coup attempts against Aliyev.[\[964\]](#)

## **Neocons Weigh In**

In 1996, Ariel Cohen, the same man who wrote up the original neoconservative plan for rapid privatization of national oil resources in Iraq War II,[\[965\]](#) wrote an article for the Heritage Foundation called “The New ‘Great Game’: Oil Politics in the Caucasus and Central Asia.” In the article, Cohen explained, “Like the ‘Great Game’ of the early 20th century, in

which the geopolitical interests of the British Empire and Russia clashed over the Caucasus region and Central Asia, today's struggle between Russia and the West may turn on who controls the oil reserves in Eurasia." He claimed that "[p]owerful interests in Moscow are attempting to ensure that the only route for exporting the energy resources of Eurasia will pass through Russia," while insisting the U.S. make every effort to cut them out entirely. "Independent and self-sufficient former Soviet states, bolstered by their oil revenues, would deny Russia the option of establishing a de facto sphere of influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia." He was even ahead of the curve demanding the creation of the BTC pipeline.[\[966\]](#)

## **West to Turkey Instead**

In 1998, Clinton's Energy Secretary Bill Richardson, addressing Caspian oil supplies and pipeline routes, explained, "This is about America's energy security, which depends on diversifying our sources of oil and gas worldwide. It's also about preventing strategic inroads by those who don't share our values." He made it clear that the policy was pure geopolitical power politics. "We're trying to move these newly independent countries toward the West. We would like to see them reliant on Western commercial and political interests rather than going another way," Richardson said. "We've made a substantial political investment in the Caspian, and it's very important to us that both the pipeline map and the politics come out right."[\[967\]](#) Clinton created the Office of the Special Adviser to the President and the Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy to pass out subsidies for the massive Eurasian Transportation Corridor

network of pipelines to ship all that Turkmen and Kazakh oil west across the Caspian Sea and on to Turkey, including the BTC pipeline.[\[968\]](#) As the *Washington Post* explained, the oil majors wanted subsidies and protection, and the pro-Israel factions were most concerned with cutting out the Iranians.[\[969\]](#)

Narrow personal and economic interests trumped anything like what would be good for the American people in the long-term. Bribes and corruption would rule the day.[\[970\]](#) *Post* reporters Dan Morgan and David B. Ottaway wrote as part of their in-depth series on the subject that once the big companies got on board for the project, the faction fight within the administration was won by the hawks. “The State Department encapsulated U.S. ambitions in a report last April, which said the U.S. goal is ‘to tie the region securely to the West’ through multiple pipelines and transportation corridors outside Russia.”[\[971\]](#) In a follow-up, the pair wrote, “This sat badly in Moscow. Russian nationalists had warned of an expanding American presence in Central Asia,” adding, “Now Russian newspapers denounced ‘American imperialism’ and Yeltsin decried U.S. ‘penetration’ in the region.”[\[972\]](#)

That was the whole point of the BTC pipeline. As the former director of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) in Georgia explained, “There was an overarching understanding that Russia having a lock on hydrocarbons to Europe is a problem. Threading the needle between Russia and Iran stuck it to them pretty good.”[\[973\]](#)

## **Taliban Pipeline**

The Clinton administration also backed proposals for new pipelines from Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan, and canceled another planned route between Turkmenistan, Iran and Turkey, a project first floated by Reagan's ex-secretary of state, Alexander Haig.[\[974\]](#) The *Post* explained, "To State Department strategists, the perfect pipeline out of [the] Dauletabad [gas field] lay in a different direction: from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan to Pakistan, connecting the gas resources of Central Asia to the surging economies of South Asia," noting this would "deprive Iran of transit fees for Turkmen gas crossing its territory while capturing the South Asian gas market coveted by Iran."[\[975\]](#) Clinton had tolerated Saudi and Pakistani support for the Taliban in the mid-1990s, hoping to win a contract for a new oil pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and on to Pakistan's Port of Karachi. Therefore, not only did Washington back the Taliban, but even favored a military victory over the rival Northern Alliance and a consolidation of power in Afghanistan, rather than the division of authority that might have resulted from a negotiated peace. For instance, American officials were pleased after the Taliban captured the ancient city of Herat in 1995, and when it seized the Afghan capital the following year, a U.S. diplomat told Rashid it might even be desirable if they went on to conquer the entire country: "The Taliban will probably develop like the Saudis did. There will be Aramco, pipelines, an emir, no parliament and lots of Sharia law. We can live with that." Another senior diplomat similarly acknowledged that the U.S. had "acquiesced in supporting the Taliban because of our links to the Pakistan and Saudi governments who backed

them,” though insisted “we no longer do so and we have told them categorically that we need a settlement.”[\[976\]](#)

Energy expert Sheila Heslin, the anti-Russia hawk on Clinton’s National Security Council, explained how the administration coordinated with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to aid the Taliban’s rise to power. “U.S. policy was to promote the rapid development of Caspian energy,” she told lawmakers. “We did so specifically to promote the independence of these oil-rich countries, to in essence break Russia’s monopoly control over the transportation of oil from that region, and frankly, to promote Western energy security through diversification of supply.”[\[977\]](#) The U.S. oil firm Unocal, a major player in the Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline plan, finally gave up on the effort after Clinton ordered cruise missile strikes on Afghan training camps in response to al Qaeda’s 1998 African embassy bombings, as well as the collapse of oil prices around the same time.[\[978\]](#)

## **GUAM**

The regional grouping of former-Soviet Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUAM), backed by the U.S., was first established in 1997. The acronym used to have two Us, because Uzbekistan was a member until 2005. It is meant to speed European integration and exclude Russian influence from the South Caucasus. The Russians denounced the organization as a new “Axis of Evil” aimed at them in 2005.[\[979\]](#) Anatol Lieven pointed out in 1999, “At barely 2 percent of the world’s proven oil reserves (around a thirtieth of the Gulf’s reserves), it should be blindingly obvious that Caspian energy does not constitute a vital U.S. interest.” He

said that “[i]f the United States possessed vital interests in the Caspian region, and were prepared to secure them with determination, there would then be a case for saying to hell with Russian opinion.” However, he wrote, “in the absence of those conditions, many aspects of existing policy seem like unnecessary and even frivolous provocations.” He cited the GUUAM (now GUAM) group the U.S. had put together. What could they possibly have to offer the United States that is more important than maintaining a positive relationship with Russia?[\[980\]](#)

In 2001, Paul Rogers, professor at Bradford University, warned of the potential of Russian re-militarization based on their “perception that NATO expansion and U.S. commercial interests in the Caspian Basin are part of a strategic encroachment into Russia’s historic sphere of influence.”[\[981\]](#)

## **Azeri Despotism**

In 2003, Azeri dictator Heydar Aliyev—who never won a fair vote[\[982\]](#)—died just weeks before he was set to steal another one. His son Ilham soon took over after an obviously rigged election.[\[983\]](#) Even though opinion polls had him set to lose, the younger Aliyev somehow ended up with over 80 percent of the vote. Police beat protesters, shot them with rubber bullets, gassed them and sicced dogs on them. Two were killed. Journalist Jonathan Steele pointed out that the Bush administration did not say anything about the rigged 2003 election[\[984\]](#) because that was for a loyal American client.[\[985\]](#) Bush had praised the younger Aliyev’s “commitment to a free and fair election,” then went ahead and preemptively announced the winner himself, saying, “I look forward to working with you after these



elections.”[\[986\]](#) Just a few days before the official opening of the BTC pipeline in May 2005, Azeri security forces smashed a pro-democracy protest.[\[987\]](#) But that was just fine with W. Bush and the American foreign policy community. “He’s a sonofabitch, but he’s ours,” as President Roosevelt said about Nicaraguan dictator Anastasio Somoza,[\[988\]](#) so he can do whatever he wants.

Ilham Aliyev has cheated his way to continuing to hold that power ever since. In 2013, the government accidentally announced the president’s reelection victory a day before the vote was held.[\[989\]](#) The OSCE denounced the election.[\[990\]](#) But the BTC pipeline flows West.

## **Chechnya**

### **The First War**

Chechnya, a small Muslim province in the Northern Caucasus Mountains, had violently resisted Russian imperial rule since at least 1785. In 1937, Stalin’s People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD) massacred 14,000 Chechens and Ingush at Gori Yachevodskaya, and during World War II, the Soviets rounded up approximately 500,000 more and deported them to Kazakhstan and Siberia until after Stalin’s death in 1953.[\[991\]](#) So there was plenty of bad blood between the people and the regime in Moscow. After the fall of the Soviet Union, and the loss of such former imperial possessions as Georgia and Azerbaijan, the new Russian Federation decided to draw the line at the Northern Caucasus. The Chechens had other ideas. In the fall of 1990, a meeting of 1,000 prominent Chechens declared their

intent to seek independence from the then-unraveling USSR and elected Dzhokhar Dudayev, a former Soviet air force commander, president. A year later, he declared independence.[\[992\]](#) The new Russian government was too weak at the time to do much about it. The war did not break out until 1994. It began as a falling-out between gangsters. The Chechen mob had extensive business connections with the corrupt Russian army, as well as side deals on oil. It also ran massive protection rackets in Moscow and other major Russian cities. Gen. Lebed said that “Dzhokhar Dudayev decided he had become big and strong and stopped sharing the booty with his Moscow sponsors.”[\[993\]](#) It was a devastating war in which, after a series of humiliating setbacks, the Russians eventually bombed the Chechen capital of Grozny to bits. Just as U.S. marines would do in the Iraqi city of Fallujah five years later,[\[994\]](#) Russian forces warned civilians to flee, declared the city a free-fire zone and determined that anyone left by the time the fighting started must be a terrorist and a legitimate target.[\[995\]](#) At least 30,000 civilians were killed. Many more were put in concentration camps and tortured. One hundred thousand refugees fled to Ingushetia.[\[996\]](#) While the Russian military bombed civilians, the rebels publicly cut the throats of Russian prisoners of war.[\[997\]](#)

The Clinton administration had contributed \$10 billion to the cause, and the president and vice president both defended Yeltsin’s brutality by comparing him to Abraham Lincoln in the U.S. Civil War.[\[998\]](#) E. Wayne Merry later said, “In that, we lost our credibility, I think, with almost all of the democratic forces in Russia.” Washington may have even been involved

in helping the Russians target President Dudayev in a rocket attack in April 1996.[\[999\]](#)

## **Terris**

At the end of the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War and beginning of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Chechen capital city of Grozny became a major destination and hub of travel for mujahideen veterans, especially Arabs. [\[1000\]](#) Osama bin Laden, then in exile in Sudan, sent fighters to join the jihad via an office his men had set up in Azerbaijan.[\[1001\]](#)

This included military commander Samir Salih Abdallah al-Suwaylim, otherwise known as Ibn al-Khattab, a Saudi associate of terrorist godfather Abdul Azzam[\[1002\]](#) and Azzam's successor bin Laden[\[1003\]](#)—who had fought in Afghanistan,[\[1004\]](#) Bosnia,[\[1005\]](#) Tajikistan, Dagestan and both Chechen wars[\[1006\]](#)—and Khattab's right-hand man, Shamil Basayev, who had been committing terrorist attacks inside Russia since 1995. In June of that year, Basayev led a team that took hostages at a hospital in the town of Budyonnovsk, 70 miles inside Russia. At least 140 innocent civilians were eventually killed by the terrorists and the Russian forces sent to stop them. In August, Basayev's men took Grozny, killing 500 soldiers and leaving 3,000 more surrounded in their barracks. These successful attacks forced the Yeltsin government to send Gen. Lebed to negotiate.[\[1007\]](#) Lebed later said that he began talks after finding out that Chechen terrorists were planning to hit Russian nuclear plants.[\[1008\]](#) The next August, Yeltsin signed the Khasavyurt Accords, which gave autonomy to the province and brought the first war to an end.[\[1009\]](#)

But it was not truly over. The new government in Grozny could not control all the rebel factions, with the bin Ladenites rejecting new president Aslan Maskhadov's rule as too moderate, and committing the most violent attacks on Russian forces in neighboring provinces and along the border. [\[1010\]](#) Jordanian Soviet-Afghan War veteran Sheikh Ali Fathi al-Shishani created a new group of Chechen fighters in 1993, just in time to recruit massive numbers of other terrorists to fight in the first war, including Khattab, who quickly assumed command of most of the unit. Khattab then allied himself with the native commander Basayev.[\[1011\]](#) In the time between the wars, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Jordan and Egypt all sent at least hundreds of their bin Ladenites to fight in Chechnya.[\[1012\]](#) They were led by Khattab and his men, who had already been there for years. President Maskhadov was so dependent on the bin Ladenites that after the first war, he was forced to include Sharia law in the new government's constitution. He could not control the jihadists, who later started the second war without his approval.[\[1013\]](#)

## **Berezovsky**

The powerful Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky, who had been instrumental to Vladimir Putin's rise to power, helped to negotiate the end of the First Chechen War in 1996.[\[1014\]](#) After becoming deputy secretary of the Security Council, he took charge of rebuilding the Chechen economy. Gen. Lebed accused him of simply needing to cover up his previous business ties to assorted Chechen terrorists and gangsters. Paul Klebnikov marveled at Berezovsky's confidence and ease of travel around the

renegade state. Berezovsky made himself famous by successfully negotiating the release of various hostages seized by Chechen terrorists. But Klebnikov noted, “Over two and [a] half years, Berezovsky maintained close relations with the warlords who either carried out kidnappings or were closely linked to the criminals who did.” He associated not with moderates like Maskhadov, but with bin Ladenite terrorist leaders like “Shamil Basayev and Salman Raduyev or Islamic fundamentalists like Movladi Udugov,” who had been made deputy prime minister in the Maskhadov government. According to Klebnikov, “Maskhadov tolerated this man’s presence for the sake of national unity but privately scorned him as a proponent of jihad (Islamic holy war)—Udugov’s brother was one of the leaders of the Wahhabi sect the most fanatical Islamic fundamentalist group in Chechnya.”[\[1015\]](#) Moscow police considered Berezovsky to be the kidnappers’ banker. Authorities allowed Klebnikov to listen to audio of Berezovsky and Udugov haggling about payoffs.[\[1016\]](#) Maskhadov himself also declared that Berezovsky was playing a double game and deliberately financing the kidnappers, as he put it, “to discredit the whole Chechen people.” More likely he was just enjoying the publicity of posing as a hero solving problems, and taking a kickback on the side. He was later accused by Putin of backing Basayev in the second war after their falling-out and his exile to London. In fact, he admitted to giving Basayev a million dollars, claiming it was for a cement factory.[\[1017\]](#)

Lebed died in a helicopter crash in Siberia in 2002.[\[1018\]](#) Klebnikov was assassinated by Chechen hitmen in Moscow two years later.[\[1019\]](#)

## **Terrorism in One Country**

Some experts, such as Paul Tumelty of the Jamestown Foundation and Justine A. Rosenthal of the Brookings Institution, point to differences in strategy between bin Laden and Khattab to downplay their connection, which they both admitted was real.[\[1020\]](#) But Abu Musab al-Zarqawi—the Jordanian who had turned down bin Laden’s offer to join al Qaeda, since he wanted to focus his efforts on Jordan, rather than the U.S., as bin Laden preferred—later became the leader of the most violent part of the Sunni-based insurgency in Iraq War II (2003–2011), employing terrorist tactics like suicide bombings and beheadings. He was no less a bin Ladenite terrorist for his more parochial views and belated declaration of loyalty to the Saudi sheik.[\[1021\]](#)

The same argument would apply to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who explicitly denounced the leadership of Ayman al-Zawahiri when he broke from al Qaeda and began to create his so-called Islamic State Caliphate in eastern Syria in 2013 and western Iraq in 2014,[\[1022\]](#) as well as the KLA, Algeria’s Armed Islamic Group,[\[1023\]](#) the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG)[\[1024\]](#) and Ansar al-Sharia[\[1025\]](#) in Libya, Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria,[\[1026\]](#) in addition to Khattab and Basayev in Chechnya before them. In the Chechens’ case, just like the others, bin Laden’s organization was directly involved in financing and transporting mujahideen to get involved in the fight.[\[1027\]](#) The BBC went to interview the jihadists in 2000. They were bin Ladenite terrorists, determined to create an Islamic state. Calling it “the ultimate jihad,” the reporter described the International Islamic Brigade fighters as “Turks, Arabs, Kurds [and] Azeris.” They fought under Ibn al-Khattab, whom they called “Osama bin Laden’s agent in Chechnya.”

Members glorified female suicide bombers.[\[1028\]](#) Whether they focus on the near enemy or far, the terrorists are the same psychopathic killers and statist— an “Islamist Khmer Rouge,” as journalist Patrick Cockburn described ISIS in 2014.[\[1029\]](#)

A 2010 UN report confirmed Basayev had been to Afghanistan to meet with bin Laden and arrange for fighters to come back with him to Chechnya at least twice. In 1999, he sent emissaries to meet with the al Qaeda leader, who agreed to send more money and fighters to support their effort. Over the years, hundreds of Chechens had traveled to Afghanistan to fight and train. The UN said Khattab had used al Qaeda’s money to help recruit fighters from Ingushetia, Ossetia, Georgia and Azerbaijan for the holy wars in Chechnya and Dagestan, and that by 1995, “substantial numbers” of Arab-Afghans were fighting Russian troops in Chechnya. Many Chechens also fought for al Qaeda’s “055 Brigade” alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan.[\[1030\]](#)

Another article at Jamestown explained that the Saudis financed their Chechen fighters through a charity called Mercy International.[\[1031\]](#) The *Washington Post* confirmed the Saudi involvement in 2003, identifying another charity front, al Haramain. Magomed Makhdiyev, a local village imam in neighboring Dagestan, told them about the al Qaeda-backed Arab imams who had infiltrated his village: “They tried to lure people in a friendly way at first, but by 1999, they were saying, ‘Join us or we’ll cut your head off.’”[\[1032\]](#)

## **Dagestan**

The war started up again in 1999, when Chechen forces led by Basayev and Khattab invaded Dagestan, killing Russian border guards, taking over a few villages and declaring an Islamic state. Col. Robert W. Shaefer, who is sympathetic to the Chechens and their resistance against Russian domination, conceded, “A strong case can . . . be made that the radicals caused the second war, partly because they themselves did not honor the Khasavyurt agreement and vowed before the start of the second war to liberate Dagestan.” Citing the bin Ladenites, he wrote that “the inexorable advance of Salafism provided at least some of the motivation for the Russians to consider the reinvasion in the first place, while the attack into Dagestan . . . gave them the clear legal justification to do so.”[\[1033\]](#)

## **The Apartment Bombings**

Basayev and Khattab’s invasion of Dagestan was followed shortly by a controversial series of apartment complex bombings that September which killed more than 300 people and were blamed on Chechen terrorists.[\[1034\]](#) Former Prime Minister Primakov had been ahead in the polls compared to the new prime minister, Vladimir Putin. But the renewed war against Chechen terrorism solidified Putin’s popularity and rise to the presidency.[\[1035\]](#)

Federal Security Bureau (FSB) agents were caught by local police in the middle of what they said was a drill with fake explosives, causing suspicions that they were behind the entire wave of attacks in order to restart the war and boost Vladimir Putin’s fortunes.[\[1036\]](#) The American War Party loves this particular conspiracy theory.[\[1037\]](#) Alexander



Litvinenko, a former FSB agent, had defected to England after claiming he had been sent to assassinate by-then-exiled oligarch Boris Berezovsky, his later patron. Berezovsky then financed the writing of Litvinenko's book and a documentary claiming Putin and the FSB were behind the string of attacks.[\[1038\]](#)

But former KGB agent and fellow defector Oleg Gordievsky cast severe doubt on the story in the *Telegraph*. "Planting a bomb which kills 300 civilians merely to increase your popularity would set a new record for cold-blooded callousness, even by the standards set by Russia's past leaders," he wrote, adding, "It would mean Putin is capable of the kind of Caligulan cruelty which would raise serious questions about his sanity." Calling Putin's responsibility "unlikely," Gordievsky wrote that Putin was "well able to calculate that the risks of exposure would guarantee the operation was not worth its possible benefits." He also doubted Litvinenko's story about being sent to assassinate Berezovsky: "Stalin's KGB was famous for assassinating opponents, with or without the slightest pretext. But by the time I joined the KGB, such 'wet jobs' were very rare."[\[1039\]](#)

Paul Klebnikov also doubted this "strange" story, noting Berezovsky had worked closely with the FSB on Chechen kidnappings in the past and had a decent relationship with them. In his book *Godfather of the Kremlin*, which features more Russian mob hits than one could imagine, Klebnikov dismissed this one as unlikely. "Most knowledgeable observers," he wrote, "concluded that the alleged FSB plot to assassinate Berezovsky was a fabrication." However, it was this fake scandal which served as the pretext

for Yeltsin's so-called "family" to fire Putin's predecessor Nikolai Kovalev and make Putin the head of the FSB—his first big step on his way to the presidency.[\[1040\]](#)

The *Times* also conceded that the accusations against Putin for the bombings were completely unproven, noting that "terrorism has traumatized Russia for two decades. Suicide bombers have killed hundreds of Russians in dozens of attacks."[\[1041\]](#) CBC News counted 654 Russians killed in 18 attacks between 1996 and 2011.[\[1042\]](#) Why would the FSB need to fake a few of those against their own people?

Klebnikov also wrote that though the bombings helped Putin in the polls, he found it "hard to believe" Putin was behind the attacks. "There's nothing in the man's past to indicate that he would commit such a monstrous crime to gain power," Klebnikov wrote. "On the contrary, Putin's past career betrays an unusual dedication to a fixed code of conduct (albeit an authoritarian one); there is nothing to suggest the bottomless cynicism necessary to massacre one's own people to promote one's career." On the contrary, he said, the more likely answer was that the terrorists had done it. "Both Shamil Basayev and other commanders such as Salman Raduyev had carried out terrorist assaults against the Russian civilian population in the past and had boasted of their exploits." Noting their connections to bin Laden, Klebnikov wrote, "These men publicly executed Russian prisoners of war and civilian hostages by cutting off their heads with large hunting knives, and videotaped the procedure. Clearly there were plenty of candidates . . . capable of carrying out the 1999 apartment bombings."[\[1043\]](#)

Professor Robert Bruce Ware, an expert on Dagestan,[\[1044\]](#) found that rather than Chechens or FSB agents, the simplest explanation was that “they were perpetrated by Wahhabis from Dagestan, and perhaps elsewhere in the region, under the leadership of Khattab, as retribution for the federal attacks on Karamakhi, Chabanmakhi, and Kadar,”[\[1045\]](#) three Dagestani towns which had recently been bombed by Russian forces. Ware also showed that the explosives used—said to be proof of FSB involvement—were widely available in Dagestan at the time.[\[1046\]](#) Khattab stopped just short of taking credit for the attacks, declaring his group’s future anti-Russian terrorism should be considered revenge for their attacks on his forces in Dagestan.[\[1047\]](#)

Basayev, the founder and leader of the Islamic International Brigade (IIB), later carried out the massacre at Moscow’s Podshipnikov Zavod (Dubrovka) Theater in October 2002, where terrorists killed 129 hostages.[\[1048\]](#) He attributed the bombings to Dagestanis: “The latest blast in Moscow is not our work, but the work of the Dagestanis. Russia has been openly terrorizing Dagestan. . . . [T]he army and the Interior Ministry units have been pounding three small villages.” Citing revenge for the women and children who had been killed by Russian forces, Basayev said, “This is a natural process and it is yet more evidence of Newton’s third law, that each action generates a reaction.”[\[1049\]](#) Former Chechen foreign minister and insurgent leader Ilyas Akhmadov suspected Basayev himself and confronted him about it.[\[1050\]](#)

No matter. The professional regime changers over at the National Endowment for Democracy and their friend, the Hungarian-American

billionaire investor and political intriguer George Soros, bought the story, though he believed the conspiracy was Berezovsky paying Basayev to do the deed as a way to both help and compromise Putin.[\[1051\]](#) The apartment bombings, which the hawks blamed on Putin and the FSB, were central to their thesis that the KGB had returned to power and must be stopped at all costs. Soros alluded to the apartment bombings, as well as Putin's association with Boris Berezovsky, to declare the failure of Russian democracy before the election of 2000 had ever been run.[\[1052\]](#) For these old Cold Warriors, the new Cold War was already on.[\[1053\]](#)

## **The Second War**

Khattab did have a point about the violence of the Russian army. It was an absolutely brutal war,[\[1054\]](#) which, after relatively rapid success for the Russians, then turned into a prolonged counterinsurgency campaign that lasted many more years. First, local Dagestanis fought off the invaders themselves, driving the Chechens back across the border to deal with the Russians.[\[1055\]](#) The Russian army then came with more than 100,000 men. Rather than roll right into Grozny this time, they slowly worked their way towards it, eliminating all opposition in their path. Combined with more modern communications and planning, and aided by Chechens who had switched sides, the Russians had it much easier the second time around. When they got to Grozny, they again leveled the place, this time with artillery, before moving in. After a month of heavy fighting, the Chechens withdrew to the mountains to restart their guerrilla war.[\[1056\]](#)

That December, after President Clinton had offered some mild criticism of Russian tactics in the renewed war,[\[1057\]](#) Yeltsin pointedly reminded the U.S. that Russia was still a nuclear power: “Yesterday, Clinton took the liberty of putting pressure on Russia. He obviously must have forgotten for a few seconds . . . what Russia is and that Russia possesses a full arsenal of nuclear weapons.”[\[1058\]](#)

Col. Shaefer writes that the first phase of the Chechen resistance was based on attacks against military targets, or at least government employees, and that this was true even after they began to use suicide attacks in June 2000.[\[1059\]](#) But that did not last. Beginning in 2002, Basayev launched a major terrorism campaign against Russian civilians. “For all intents and purposes,” Shaefer wrote, by 2003, “this terrorism campaign would become the insurgents’ main effort . . . as Chechen and foreign terrorists tried to blow Russia apart from the inside, attacking military, government and civilian targets, killing over 1,000 people and injuring thousands more by the end of 2004.” The purpose of this terrorism campaign was to “create fear in the minds of average Russian citizens, to create a schism between the people and the government that would encourage them to protest to stop the war like they had in 1980 (Afghanistan) and the Chechen campaign in 1994.”[\[1060\]](#) It backfired. After the Beslan massacre of September 2004, the Chechens were completely discredited and the Russians gained the upper hand in the war.[\[1061\]](#) Russia took control of Grozny in early 2000, after a brutal fight that killed tens of thousands of people, though a lower-level insurgency continued until at least 2005.

## **High Treason**

Though Clinton publicly supported Russia's Second Chechen War,[\[1062\]](#) his CIA, in alliance with Saudi Arabia, also backed the separatist mujahideen fighters in the North Caucasus Mountains province starting in 1999.[\[1063\]](#) Again, this included bin Ladenite terrorists from the International Islamic Brigades.[\[1064\]](#) According to former FBI counterterrorism agent Ali Soufan, when young would-be jihadis who had missed the Soviet-Afghan War traveled to Bosnia and Chechnya, they did so "through the same infrastructure that supported the Afghan jihad—the recruitment channels, funding, NGOs, and travel facilitators were all still in place."[\[1065\]](#) New al Qaeda recruits were even confused about why bin Laden wanted to attack our country. "Their past experience with America had been positive—the United States had been on the side of Muslims in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya," he wrote.[\[1066\]](#)

In 2008, the private spooks at Stratfor confirmed, "Saudi Arabia, the United States and Turkey—all of whom had a vested interest in keeping Russia heavily preoccupied after the fall of the Soviet Union—helped fuel these wars by providing support to the Chechen rebels." They said that "Saudi Arabia in particular led this effort by implanting the Wahhabist doctrine and providing financing, arms, supplies, guerrilla training and moral support to Chechen militants. The bulk of Saudi support to the Chechens was funneled in through charities and humanitarian aid in the region."[\[1067\]](#)

Yossef Bodansky, then-director of the U.S. Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare,[\[1068\]](#) wrote in June 2000 that the United States had been "encouraging its allies to support the irregular

Islamist forces fighting the Russians, while providing strategic and diplomatic umbrella, and reviving radical militancy in the process.” He added that “the anti-Russian forces which Washington is supporting are radical Islamist and allied with Osama bin Laden and other similarly anti-U.S. forces.” Al Qaeda’s numerous attacks against the United States by that time[\[1069\]](#) notwithstanding, Bodansky wrote, “As if reliving the ‘good ol’ days’ of Afghanistan of the 1980s, Washington is once again seeking to support and empower the most virulent anti-Western Islamist forces.” His specific accusations included U.S. officials meeting in Azerbaijan in mid-December 1999, “in which specific programs for the training and equipping of mujahedin from the Caucasus, Central/South Asia and the Arab world were discussed and agreed upon.” After this meeting, the Clinton administration encouraged Turkey, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, along with private American security contractors, to help train and arm up the insurgency for their escalation in the summer of 2000. And he confirmed that the only point of this treacherous game was to “deprive Russia of a viable pipeline route through spiraling violence and terrorism,” adding, “In the calculations of the Clinton Administration, a U.S.-assisted escalation and expansion of the war in Chechnya should deliver the desired debilitation of Russia.” Slightly more than a year before September 11, Bodansky warned, “the Clinton Administration keeps fanning the flames of the Islamist jihad in the Caucasus through covert assistance, tacit encouragement of allies to actively support the mujahedin.”[\[1070\]](#)

Previously, in 1999, Bodansky had written that the bin Ladenites had struck a deal with Heydar Aliyev to allow the free flow of fighters through

Azerbaijan, and in exchange, they would not attempt to overthrow him and would make forces available for deniable missions in Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenia. The terrorists had set up an entire infrastructure there, disguised as charities and educational organizations, like the World Assembly of Muslim Youth (WAMY), to oversee the “absorption, handling and initial acclimatization and indoctrination of foreign volunteers . . . before being sent forward to terrorism and military training bases in central Chechnya”—those of Ibn al-Khattab. He said that there was at that time a “major expansion” of the pipeline of arms and fighters coming into the country. Just days before, a large group of Arabs, alleged associates of bin Laden, had left Azerbaijan, heading for the mountains and the war.[\[1071\]](#)

In 2005, the U.S. State Department reported that Basayev’s Islamic International Peacekeeping Brigade (IIPB) was the same group that had carried out the horrible Dubrovka Theater attack in 2002. It accused them of involvement in “terrorist and guerilla operations against Russian forces, pro-Russian Chechen forces, and Chechen non-combatants” and added, “The IIPB and its Arab leaders appear to be a primary conduit for Islamic funding of the Chechen guerrillas, in part through links to al-Qa’ida-related financiers on the Arabian Peninsula.”[\[1072\]](#)

## **The Great Game**

The policy was all about the oil in the Greater Caspian Basin. Again, it was not only about gaining control over it for the money, but keeping that wealth out of the hands of the Russians and Iranians. An old Soviet pipeline ran through Chechnya—from Baku, Azerbaijan, through Grozny, to the



Russian city of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea—and the Americans wanted it disrupted at any cost. As journalist Sergei Blagov noted in 1999, “Russia has been keen to use its Baku-Novorossiysk export route for Azerbaijani ‘early’ oil exports. But the pipe crosses over 153 kilometers of Chechen territory, which makes it unreliable as long as the country is lawless.” The Russians had tried to pay off the Chechens, but armed gangs kept stealing the oil. They built another pipeline running through Dagestan instead, “[b]ut inroads by Chechen militants into Dagestan last August showed that this option was unsafe too. It was then that the Second Chechen War commenced.” Blagov added, “Ankara’s quiet support to the Chechen militants has been said to be designed to sustain volatility in the Northern Caucasus—which would make it impossible for the competing CPC project to proceed.”[\[1073\]](#) Neoconservative strategist Ariel Cohen wrote in 1996 that this pipeline had been at the center of the First Chechen War. Criminals had been allowed to steal hundreds of millions of dollars in oil from the pipeline running through Chechnya. The Russians had invaded to prop up opponents of Dudayev’s regime and put a stop to it. Dudayev had then made common cause with the terrorists to resist them. Cohen noted, “This exacerbated the religious aspect of the conflict between the Muslim Chechens and Christian Orthodox Russians.”[\[1074\]](#)

Fighting this pipeline war was also important to Putin’s rise to the presidency. When he became prime minister in the summer of 1999, his first assignment was to build this new segment of pipeline across Dagestan to bypass Chechnya, just as Basayev and Khattab were invading the small republic and bringing the Russia-Chechnya war with them. The new PM

promised to solve the problem immediately. As oil industry analyst John Daly noted, once the new BTC pipeline opened in 2005, the West began transporting “oil that would have otherwise moved northwards to Russia, providing lucrative transit fees. Chechnya proved ground zero for both Western political and business interests.” Even though most Americans knew nothing about this history, he wrote, responsibility for the conflict was partly on us. “The shadow war between Moscow and Washington for the Caspian’s energy riches saw Chechnya squarely caught in the middle, leaving the Chechen homeland virtually destroyed.”[\[1075\]](#)

A former CIA analyst told author Richard Labévière in the 1990s, “The policy of guiding the evolution of Islam and of helping them against our adversaries worked marvelously well in Afghanistan against the Red Army.” He said that “[t]he same doctrines can still be used to destabilize what remains of Russian power, and especially to counter the Chinese influence in Central Asia.”[\[1076\]](#) In 2000, Uigur fighters being trained in Afghanistan were said to have been moved by the Taliban away from Kabul and to northern regions where they were encouraged to join the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[\[1077\]](#) However, Eric Margolis witnessed dissident Chinese Islamist Uigurs being trained under Taliban and Pakistani supervision, and with CIA approval, for potential use against China, as late as summer 2001.[\[1078\]](#) Margolis, the great war reporter and the author’s friend, was right to complain that the involvement of the bin Ladenites was used by the Russians as propaganda to discredit the entire insurgency the same way the George W. Bush administration pretended to believe the entire Sunni-based insurgency in Iraq War II (2003–2011) was simply

“terrorism” by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and his group al Qaeda in Iraq. [\[1079\]](#) But it was still true that such terrorists were heavily involved, and as in Iraq, the insurgency’s association with bin Ladenite terrorists did the local resistance far more harm than good, discrediting their cause and provoking a far worse reaction from their enemies. Noting the large number of Arabs involved in the September 2004 school massacre in Beslan, North Ossetia, perpetrated by Khattab and Basayev’s terrorists, [\[1080\]](#) journalist Scott Peterson wrote that the bin Ladenites had been coming to Chechnya to fight since the first war. “By 1999, when Chechen warlord Shamil Basayev invaded Russian territory in Dagestan—prompting a second war—it became clear that Islamic radicals dominated Chechen rebel groups.” [\[1081\]](#)

Just as in Bosnia, Kosovo and mid-1990s Afghanistan, the Americans knew good and well that in Chechnya they were backing bin Ladenite Arab and Central Asian veterans of the 1980s covert Afghan war. [\[1082\]](#) Assistant Secretary of State Jamie Rubin detailed the danger in December 1999, while then-Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin said that the chief terrorist himself had been to Chechnya “several times.” [\[1083\]](#) A 1998 Defense Intelligence Agency report, reviewing a captured al Qaeda document, describes bin Laden’s creation of al Qaeda from the “nucleus” of Arab-Afghan fighters who had remained loyal after the Soviet-Afghan War. After a curious redaction, and noting Khattab’s friendship with bin Laden and legendary brutality, the report says it was actually the Saudi sheik who sent him and nine others to Chechnya in the first place to train a new insurgent army. The DIA report stated that “[s]everal times in 1997 in

Afghanistan, Ben Laden [sic] met with representatives for Movladi Udugov's party, 'Islamic Way' and representatives of Chechen and Dagestan Wakhabites from Gudernics, Grozny and Karamakhy." There they agreed on financing for the new army and the need to recruit European converts to commit attacks against Western targets. They noted fighters being sent by bin Laden to Chechnya through Turkey and Azerbaijan, and said their strategy was to use "new strikes and kidnapping conducted for the purpose of provoking a unified uprising against Russia and creating an Islamic state of Northern Caucasus." The report went on to connect the two to international terrorist movements and leaders across the Middle East and Europe, including the KLA in Kosovo and Islamist groups in Bosnia.[\[1084\]](#)

This is how Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin rose to power, as leader of Russia's war against the treasonous, terrorist alliance of William Jefferson Clinton and Osama bin Laden. Twenty-two years later, when he was declaring Russia's "special military operation" invasion of eastern Ukraine, Putin railed against America's "empire of lies," and accused them of "actively supporting separatism and gangs of mercenaries in southern Russia" at the turn of the century. "What victims, what losses we had to sustain and what trials we had to go through at that time before we broke the back of international terrorism in the Caucasus! We remember this and will never forget," he said.[\[1085\]](#)

At the ceremony marking the signing of the Conventional Forces Europe treaty, Yeltsin defended Russia's Chechen War, adopting exactly the formula and what could have been the words of the incoming George W. Bush administration: "You have no right to criticize Russia over Chechnya.

We are standing up to a wave of terrorist acts which have swept through Moscow and other cities and villages of our country.” He continued, “1,580 people—peaceful citizens—have suffered. The pain of this tragedy is now being felt by thousands of families in all corners of Russia.” He demanded Western understanding for his position. “There will be no peace talks with bandits and killers! We are for peace and a political resolution to the situation in Chechnya,” Yeltsin said. “And for this, the complete liquidation of bandit formations and the elimination of terrorists is necessary. Russia has the right to count on the understanding and support of Europe and the OSCE.”[\[1086\]](#)

## **Hijackers**

But it is much worse than that. In 1997, the Russians had arrested bin Laden’s partner Ayman al-Zawahiri in Dagestan and held him for six months.[\[1087\]](#) September 11 hijackers Salem al-Hazmi and his brother Nawaf al-Hazmi, as well as Khalid al-Mihdhar, all three veterans of the Bosnia war, also traveled to Chechnya before attacking the Pentagon in a hijacked American Airlines jet full of civilians.[\[1088\]](#) Mohand al-Shehri, Hamza al-Ghamdi and Ahmed al-Ghamdi from United Airlines Flight 175, [\[1089\]](#) which they crashed into the South Tower of the World Trade Center, fought in Chechnya as well. Wail al-Shehri and Waleed al-Shehri, brothers who helped hijack American Airlines Flight 11—with which they hit the North Tower—had also allegedly been to Chechnya before they were diverted to Afghanistan and eventually the September 11 operation in the United States.[\[1090\]](#) That is not all. Saeed al-Ghamdi and Ahmed al

Haznawi from United Airlines' Flight 93 fought the Russians in Chechnya as well.[\[1091\]](#)

After nearly a decade of fighting, and after the catastrophe of September 11, the *Post* said that “[t]he United States now agrees that Khattab had al Qaeda ties, and cited those links when it added three Chechen rebel units to its list of terrorist organizations earlier this year.” U.S. officials also said that “several hundred Chechen fighters were trained at al Qaeda camps in Afghanistan and that bin Laden sent ‘substantial amounts of money’ to equip Chechen rebels in 1999.” They had reportedly raised \$2 million for the Chechen War as recently as May 2002.[\[1092\]](#) The *Post* said the terrorists’ plan was to merge Chechnya and neighboring Dagestan into a new Islamist state.[\[1093\]](#)

## **Zacarias Moussaoui**

But in 2001, when that small cadre of al Qaeda terrorists had infiltrated the United States, plotting the September 11 attack, the FBI’s Minneapolis field office could have stopped it—if they had been allowed to do their job. Bureau lawyer Coleen Rowley was *Time*’s Person of the Year in 2002 for her whistleblowing on FBI supervisors Michael Maltbie and Michael Rolince. The officials had stonewalled her office’s investigation of al Qaeda operative Zacarias Moussaoui, who famously wanted to learn how to fly a jumbo jet, but not how to take off or land.[\[1094\]](#) It later became clear that if their team had been allowed to seek and execute the warrant, they would have found information in his computer which would have led them straight to key planner Ramzi bin al-Shibh in Europe and the core cell of September

11 hijackers in Florida, and almost certainly would have stopped the plot in its tracks.[\[1095\]](#) Bin al-Shibh later told interrogators that he and fellow members of the Hamburg Cell of September 11 hijackers were on their way to join the holy war against Russia in Chechnya when they were advised that it was too difficult to get in and that they should meet bin Laden in Afghanistan instead.[\[1096\]](#) As previously noted, 10 of the 19 September 11 hijackers had fought in or at least traveled to Chechnya before taking their war to the United States.

As Roland Jacquard, who wrote two books about al Qaeda and was given access to classified French intelligence on Moussaoui, told the *Wall Street Journal* in 2002, “Western intelligence services completely neglected the importance of Chechnya. . . . To earn one’s stripes as a jihadi, one had to go to the land of the jihad and wage jihad first-hand. . . . It’s the Chechen cause that turned Moussaoui into who he is today.”[\[1097\]](#)

Rowley explained that her office sought permission to pursue a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant against Moussaoui, on the basis that he was tied to a foreign terrorist group, Ibn al-Khattab’s bin Ladenite fighters in Chechnya, which they knew was true by at least August 22. His status as a jihadist recruiter had been confirmed by French intelligence.[\[1098\]](#) Despite an April 2001 FBI memo which linked al-Khattab to Osama bin Laden’s al Qaeda,[\[1099\]](#) D.C. supervisors were “denying [these links] existed to the Minneapolis field office,” refused to consider the bin Ladenite fighters in Chechnya a foreign terrorist group for FISA purposes and continued to deny their agents permission to seek a search warrant. After nearly 3,000 people were slaughtered on September

11, they simply claimed ignorance, though Rowley believed America's conflict of interest in the Chechen war played a part in their reasoning.

[\[1100\]](#)

Sure, it was treason, but it was not a matter of Clinton's loyalty being bought by the enemy. He and his government were just too clever by half. They thought they could use bin Laden and his terrorists on the 1980s Afghan model in Bosnia, Kosovo, Chechnya or wherever else their enemies' civilian population needed to be terrorized. As far as al Qaeda blowback hitting the United States, well, in the 1990s terrorism was thought to be just "a small price to pay for being a superpower," as policy planners for the Joint Chiefs of Staff at the Pentagon were repeatedly heard to say by a "very senior" special operations commander.[\[1101\]](#) They reaped the whirlwind,[\[1102\]](#) and took thousands of civilians they had sworn to protect with them.[\[1103\]](#)

## **The Color Revolutions**

### **NED**

The color-coded revolutions were essentially U.S. coups d'état dressed up as local "uprisings," primarily against Russian-leaning states in their near abroad. Backed by the CIA, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), National Democratic Institute (NDI), International Republican Institute (IRI) and friendly, supposedly private non-governmental organizations (NGOs) like Serbian Otpor, the Soros Foundation, Open Society



Foundation, International Renaissance Foundation and the Atlantic Council, they have had quite a few successes.[\[1104\]](#)

Allen Weinstein, a co-founder of the NED, told the *Washington Post*'s David Ignatius in 1991, "A lot of what we do today was done covertly twenty-five years ago by the CIA." Ignatius added, "When [Cold War-era] covert activities surfaced (as they inevitably did), the fallout was devastating. The CIA connection, intended to protect people and organizations from public embarrassment, had precisely the opposite effect." However, "The biggest difference is that when such activities are done overtly, the flap potential is close to zero. Openness is its own protection."[\[1105\]](#)

## **Electoral Revolution**

Though the U.S. and allied oil companies British Petroleum and Amoco helped overthrow President Abulfaz Elchibey of Azerbaijan in 1993, that was more of a straight-up coup than any pretended "revolution."[\[1106\]](#) But those started with mixed success in Albania and Bulgaria in 1996,[\[1107\]](#) Montenegro and Romania[\[1108\]](#) in 1997, Armenia in 1998,[\[1109\]](#) Slovakia[\[1110\]](#) and Croatia in 1999 and Serbia in 2000.

## **Slovakia**

The NED's Rodger Potocki explained that "NDI . . . and IRI, in the early 90s, working in Bulgaria and Romania, came up with two key ideas on how you build momentum for democratic change: citizen advocacy and

monitoring groups.”[\[1111\]](#) In 1997, after the success of their intervention in the Bulgarian elections, the NED targeted Slovak President Vladimír Mečiar. The NED and associated NGOs spent more than \$850,000 in direct financial support to Mečiar’s opponent, Pavol Demeš, and his OK’98 campaign. Contributors to Demeš’s “electoral revolution” included the United States Information Service, the IRI and NDI, Soros’s Open Society Foundation, the German Marshall Fund, as well as the governments of Britain and the Netherlands.

This money paid for a tour of 13 rock concerts, two films and a television ad buy, encouraging the young to vote. It was a massive success. The NGOs also did extensive exit polling so they could claim their results before the votes could be counted. Though the incumbent’s party received the most votes, the minority parties were able to form a coalition and oust him for a Western-compliant MP named Mikuláš Dzurinda. The NED and associated groups only claimed to be supporting the process, but that was an obvious lie. Their propaganda was entirely designed to push people to vote for the right guy—or at least against the wrong one.[\[1112\]](#)

## **Croatia**

In Croatia, Clinton turned on his ally Franjo Tudjman. The NED and its allies created a new group called Citizens Organized to Monitor Elections (known by its Croatian acronym GONG). Again they bought a massive advertising campaign in support of pro-Western parties. The Slovak politician and NGO leader Demeš traveled to Croatia to help show GONG how it was done. Tudjman died just before the election and the pro-Western

parties won. Demeš later became a leader at the German Marshall Fund. At least he was honest about what they were doing, saying that “[e]xternal funding for these civic campaigns is critical. Without external support, they wouldn’t happen.”[\[1113\]](#)

## **The Bulldozer Revolution**

The Clinton administration finally got rid of Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in 2000. Perhaps the most notable thing about this coup, disguised as a democratic election, was the degree to which the participants boasted about it. As the National Democratic Institute later explained, in 1998 they brought 11 Serbian activists to Poland to be trained explicitly for the purpose of using the media to help accomplish regime change against Milošević.[\[1114\]](#) The NDI later said, “The opposition relied on information gathered in a series of 11 public opinion polls conducted for NDI by Doug Schoen of the U.S. polling firm of Penn, Schoen and Berland.” They added, “In the three years leading up to the September elections, NDI worked with Serbia’s democratic parties to help them develop the political skills needed to compete more effectively, training party leaders and local activists who, for the first time, used grassroots techniques . . . to better communicate with the electorate.” They backed a group called the Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID), which deployed more than 5,000 election monitors across the country.[\[1115\]](#)

The operation was run from the Office of Yugoslav Affairs, America’s de facto Yugoslav embassy-in-exile. Journalist Mark MacKinnon wrote,

“From the moment that office was opened in August 2000, the diplomats’ station there had one task—to overthrow Milošević.”[\[1116\]](#)

The regime changers got their start backing a protest movement in the winter of 1996–1997 that had come together to oppose the annulment of more than a dozen local elections, forming a group called Zajedno (Together).[\[1117\]](#) Then-American Ambassador Richard Miles allowed the embassy to be a base for the opposition. Jadranka Jelinčić, the former program manager for the Soros Foundation and executive director of Soros’s Fund for an Open Society-Serbia, said the two groups spent \$108 million on Serbian NGOs and media, including the important radio station B92. This total was not including whatever funds also came from the foundation’s New York and Budapest offices, the latter of which had spent at least \$30 million.[\[1118\]](#) While claiming the money was not targeted against Milošević, Jelinčić acknowledged that she and her colleagues all agreed he would “have to go.”[\[1119\]](#)

Otpor—Serbian for “resistance” and famous for their ubiquitous clenched fist symbol—was an anti-Milošević youth group founded by Srđa Popović. He also founded its offshoot, the Center for Applied Nonviolent Action and Strategies (CANVAS). They specialized in provoking the regime into cracking down on them and radicalizing more people to their cause.[\[1120\]](#) The Open Society Institute rented office space for them and bought them all the spray paint they needed to throw up their fist logo all over town. Anti-Milošević activist Marko Marković of Otpor explained, “Soros came to this country several times and spent a lot of money, really

huge money. . . . There was nobody on the media scene in Serbia back then who was against Milošević and didn't have contacts with Soros.”[\[1121\]](#)

The NED said they had spent approximately \$40 million to support 18 anti-Milošević groups in the lead-up to the 2000 election. Author Gerald Sussman calculated that this would be the equivalent to a foreign government spending more than \$1 billion to influence an American election in 2010 dollars,[\[1122\]](#) as much as American major party candidates for president spend on their campaigns.[\[1123\]](#) Though they are forbidden to outright back candidates for foreign office, the NED “skirts these rules by funding what it refers to as ‘civil society’: non-governmental organizations and media outlets that are non-partisan on paper but whose activities work to the benefit of a favored candidate or party,” as MacKinnon put it.[\[1124\]](#)

In this case, the NED, NDI and Open Society-Serbia also supported parallel vote tabulation [PVT] so they could dispute the government-announced vote totals.[\[1125\]](#)

The Germans also came up with a brilliant plan to pour cash, around 45 million marks, into nearly 40 cities where the opposition had the most support, for campaigns such as “Energy for peace,” “Education for peace,” and “Asphalt for peace.” Along with “large-scale” support for so-called “independent” media, *Der Spiegel* explained that this “was just a trick to conceal the fact that Germany—like other states—was directly supporting the opposition in Yugoslavia.”[\[1126\]](#)

The 78-day bombing campaign on behalf of the Kosovar Albanians in the spring of 1999 did much to set back the anti-Milošević movement in the country due to the “rally ’round the flag” effect. Otpor activist Marković

says that some people dropped out of the group and began to support Milošević in defiance of their American benefactors once the war began.

[\[1127\]](#) But a few months later, they were back in business.

The regime changers took credit in the *Post*, calling it a mostly “overt operation,” run by USAID, the NED, NDI and IRI, with just a little help from the CIA. Reporter Michael Dobbs wrote that even though the administration’s \$41 million “democracy building” campaign was well known, “interviews with dozens of key players, both here and in the United States, suggest it was much more extensive and sophisticated than previously reported.” Aside from hosting the “strategy session” where the opposition was consolidated and campaigns were planned, “U.S.-funded consultants played a crucial role behind the scenes in virtually every facet of the anti-Milošević drive, running tracking polls, training thousands of opposition activists and helping to organize a vitally important parallel vote count.”

Two dozen Otpor leaders were brought to the Hilton hotel in Budapest by the IRI and given training in nonviolent resistance by retired U.S. Army Col. Robert Helvey, based on the theories of author Gene Sharp.

“Removing the authority of the ruler is the most important element in nonviolent struggle,” Otpor leader Popović told his group.

The Americans supplied 5,000 cans of spray paint, and 2.5 million stickers that said “He’s finished”—the “catchphrase” of the revolution. “Milošević’s overthrow,” the *Post* said, “may also go down in history as the first poll-driven, focus group-tested revolution.”[\[1128\]](#) The NED also

backed a massive TV and radio campaign, including supporting stations in Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.[\[1129\]](#)

Based on Sharp and Col. Helvey's instruction, they came up with their five-point plan for winning the election no matter what: uniting the opposition, promoting opposition media, bankrolling NGOs to spread messages of discontent with the president, paying for election observers and exit pollsters in preparation to dispute the results and getting nonviolent, young demonstrators out in the streets. That was exactly what they did.  
[\[1130\]](#)

William D. Montgomery, the former American ambassador to Croatia who worked on the operation, told the *New York Times*, "Milošević was personal for Madeleine Albright, a very high priority. She wanted him gone, and Otpor was ready to stand up to the regime with a vigor and in a way that others were not." Little did the American people know, this was regime change. "Seldom has so much fire, energy, enthusiasm, money—everything—gone into anything as into Serbia in the months before Milošević went," he told them.[\[1131\]](#)

Albright personally demanded that Zoran Đinđić and Vuk Drašković, two leading opposition figures, follow or get out of the way of the State Department's chosen candidate, Vojislav Kostunica.[\[1132\]](#) The various opposition parties united into a new group calling itself the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) and around Kostunica. Đinđić joined up; Drašković stayed out. The party then used tens of millions of dollars pumped in by Western NGOs to run sophisticated polling and "get out the

vote” programs, and ran simultaneous efforts through Otpor, G17, DOS and the Kostunica campaign itself.

The NED, NDI and IRI gave Otpor at least \$2.5 million for their various public relations projects.[\[1133\]](#) “The [German] Chancellor and Foreign Minister have been working discreetly for months towards the change of power in Belgrade—with money and ideological support for the opposition to Milošević,” *Der Spiegel* reported. “Massive political and material support from Berlin—as from other Western capitals—has helped opposition groups and parties develop the strength to force Milošević to give up and take over the government themselves.”[\[1134\]](#)

Within hours of the vote, the NED and Soros-funded Center for Free Elections and Democracy (CeSID, its Serbian acronym), announced that their candidate had won 57 to 33 percent, according to their exit polls. The government then announced, quite improbably, that no, Kostunica was ahead, but falling short of a majority, would have to face a run-off.[\[1135\]](#) Instead, Kostunica and other opposition leaders arranged a 10-day general strike and massive protest in downtown Belgrade, culminating in the sacking and burning of the parliament building[\[1136\]](#) in what would surely be called a violent insurrection by American Democrats if they had not been behind it.[\[1137\]](#) Though Milošević attempted to dispute the results and stay in office for a little over a week, after heavy pressure from the Germans, Yeltsin withdrew support,[\[1138\]](#) and he conceded defeat on October 6.

The regime changers were just getting started. Otpor’s founder Srđa Popović, the self-described “ideological commissar” of Otpor,[\[1139\]](#)



boasted that he was in contact with revolutionary groups around the world—all of them from countries who were adversaries of the United States.

[\[1140\]](#) A Freedom House spin-off called the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict even made a documentary about their effort called *Bringing Down a Dictator*, narrated by Hollywood film star Martin Sheen, [\[1141\]](#) which they played continuously on an opposition TV channel for protesters.[\[1142\]](#)

Popović was close with the previously mentioned private security firm Stratfor. Years later, a trove of Stratfor emails were hacked by a man named Jeremy Hammond[\[1143\]](#) and furnished to WikiLeaks.[\[1144\]](#) In the emails, Stratfor’s Marko Papić said that Popović was his “great friend” who “travels the world fomenting revolution.” Referring to Otpor, he added: “They . . . basically go around the world trying to topple dictators and autocratic governments (ones that U.S. does not like).” In a follow-up email, he said, “They just go and set up shop in a country and try to bring the government down. When used properly, more powerful than an aircraft carrier battle group.”[\[1145\]](#)

Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton’s nemesis Slobodan Milošević died in jail in 2006, during his extended trial for war crimes in the ad hoc International Tribunal for Yugoslavia. He was essentially exonerated 10 years later. In their ruling in the Radovan Karadžić case, the court unanimously concluded that while Milošević had agreed with the Bosnian Serb’s objective of remaining part of Yugoslavia, he was “more cautious” from the beginning and not part of a “joint criminal enterprise” against the Croats and Muslims in the Bosnian war. They said that due to “the diverging interests that

emerged between the Bosnian Serb and Serbian leaderships” during the war, and “Milošević’s repeated criticism and disapproval of the policies and decisions made by the Accused and the Bosnian Serb leadership, the Chamber is not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence presented in this case to find that Slobodan Milošević agreed with the common plan.” They added, “The relationship between Milošević and the Accused had deteriorated beginning in 1992; by 1994, they no longer agreed on a course of action to be taken.” They also found that “beginning as early as March 1992 . . . Milošević and other Serbian leaders openly criticized Bosnian Serb leaders of [sic] committing ‘crimes against humanity’ and ‘ethnic cleansing’ in the war for their own purposes.”

The court cited numerous other examples of divisions between Milošević and the Republika Srpska leaders, on excluding minorities, protecting them, intransigence over peace negotiations, excessive territorial demands, as well as the Yugoslav leader’s reduction of support for their army over disagreements with how far they were taking the fight against Izetbegović’s forces.<sup>[1146]</sup> Karadžić and Mladić were sentenced to life in prison in The Hague.<sup>[1147]</sup>

## **Stuck in the Mud**

After September 11, Vojislav Kostunica, the man Bill Clinton had installed to replace Milošević, blamed his benefactor, telling a Serbian radio station, “These are the true deep roots and the true reasons that triggered the birth of terrorism and its development.” He explained, “One thing that is needed is a redefinition of America’s role in a new world in which it is the only

superpower; of its role as a world policeman who can function quite easily when he needs to bomb a country, such as Yugoslavia, for 78 days.”

However, “When this country is also faced with terrorism in its most fanatical form, as happened on September 11, then things look rather different.” Kostunica said he hoped the “terrorist evil and crimes committed in New York and Washington” would prompt the U.S. to view “terrorism in the Balkans” in a new context, now that it had happened to them.

“Terrorism has not been taken seriously unless it happened on one’s own territory or rather, the territory of the world’s only superpower—the U.S.A.,” he added. “These dual criteria must be dropped. Terrorism would become much more easy to spot than in the past, and the fight against it more efficient, if these dual criteria were abolished.”[\[1148\]](#)

President Kostunica was quickly marginalized by his prime minister, Zoran Djindjic,[\[1149\]](#) who arrested Milošević[\[1150\]](#) and made a deal with separatists in Montenegro to finally abolish Yugoslavia in 2002.[\[1151\]](#) Kostunica ran for president of Serbia the same year but lost.[\[1152\]](#) Djindjic was assassinated by a sniper in March 2003.[\[1153\]](#) The pro-Western Boris Tadić was elected president in 2004 and lasted until 2012.[\[1154\]](#) The current leader, Aleksandar Vučić from the Progressive party, was supported by the United States, but has angered them by refusing to pursue NATO membership or to join the sanctions regime against Russia.[\[1155\]](#)

Marko Marković from Otpor finally understood his role in the world years later, telling Mark MacKinnon that the Western powers were simply playing a game of *Risk*: “I was somebody’s little red chip. I am deeply

convinced of that.” His partner Sinisa Sikman regrettably concurred.

“Maybe the CIA did use us. Maybe they did.”[\[1156\]](#)

The *Times* agreed that “the CIA supported a State Department push in 2000 to help opposition leaders defeat President Slobodan Milošević at the ballot box.”[\[1157\]](#) So, apparently, he was right. It was a covert and an overt operation simultaneously.

## Imperial Hubris

### The Grand Chessboard

In 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski published his famous book *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*. He wrote of the major “geopolitical pivots” of Eurasia, including Ukraine, Azerbaijan, South Korea, Turkey and Iran, and recommended various ways to perpetuate American dominance on the continent, especially at Russia’s expense. He identified Ukraine as key to limiting their regional power: “Ukraine, a new and important space on the Eurasian chessboard, is a geopolitical pivot because its very existence as an independent country helps to transform Russia. Without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be a Eurasian empire.” He warned, “[I]f Moscow regains control over Ukraine, with its 52 million people and major resources as well as access to the Black Sea, Russia automatically again regains the wherewithal to become a powerful imperial state, spanning Europe and Asia.”[\[1158\]](#)

According to Brzezinski, who drew from the ideas of British imperial thinker Halford Mackinder, the global naval power of the U.S. and UK must

be complemented by domination of Eastern Europe, the “heartland” of the “world island”; otherwise, it would naturally be dominated by the Russians. [\[1159\]](#) In *The Grand Chessboard*, Brzezinski cited the Mackinder mantra as the basis of all modern geopolitical thinking, though he begrudgingly admitted the man’s apparent influence on Nazi Führer Adolf Hitler as well:

Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland;  
Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island;  
Who rules the World Island commands the World.[\[1160\]](#)

Eurasia is “the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played,” Brzezinski wrote. “It is imperative that no Eurasian challenger emerges, capable of dominating Eurasia and thus also of challenging America.”[\[1161\]](#)

With the Soviet Union out of the way, America was ready to embrace world empire on a level never considered before. If the U.S. could keep Russia moving toward the West, where it is already dominant, and prevent any other single player from dominating the Global South and East Asia from uniting against us and kicking our navy out of the region, “America can then be said to prevail.”[\[1162\]](#)

Brzezinski identified the greatest dangers to American hegemony, including a renewed alliance between Russia and China: “If the middle space rebuffs the West, becomes an assertive single entity and . . . forms an alliance with the major Eastern actor, then America’s primacy in Eurasia shrinks dramatically.” Preventing such an outcome, then, was the highest priority. “To put it in a terminology that harkens back to a more brutal age

of ancient empires,” he wrote, “the three grand imperatives of imperial geostrategy are to prevent collusion and maintain security dependence among the vassals, to keep tributaries pliant and protected, and to keep the barbarians from coming together.”[\[1163\]](#)

The barbarians had just ratified the START II treaty, slashing nuclear weapons arsenals by 66 percent, and were asking to join NATO. But instead of drawing them closer, the Clinton administration was treating the Russians with such contempt as to almost guarantee they would attempt to turn East. Perhaps the surprise is how long it took them to quit trying.

## **There’s Always NATO**

By so ruthlessly exploiting their “unipolar moment,” the U.S. government was squandering it. President Clinton’s brutal blockade and no-fly zone bombings against Iraq were two important issues which had soured relations with Yeltsin’s Russia. “Russia’s fury with American policies in Iraq were most acute when Washington’s propensity for unilateralism led it to defy liberal principles such as commitment to a rules-based system and international law,” wrote Samuel Helfont, assistant professor of strategy and policy in the U.S. Naval War College program at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California.[\[1164\]](#)

Oh well. What were they going to do about it? Secretary of State Madeleine Albright told the Senate Armed Services Committee in April 1997, “On the off-chance that in fact Russia doesn’t work out the way that we are hoping it will, NATO is there.”[\[1165\]](#)

William Perry said much the same thing. If we pick this fight by arming up and adding members to our alliance, then it is a good thing we have our newly expanded alliance. “If Russia hews to a course of internal reform, respect for its neighbors’ independence, and cooperation with the West, NATO will continue to evolve in the direction of maximum inclusiveness.” This had already been shown to be false. Russia would never be more welcome to participate than what few concessions they got out of the 1997 Founding Act. And it was the West, led by the U.S., which was refusing to cooperate with them. “If however, reform in Russia falters,” Perry concluded, “NATO will be there to provide for the allies’ collective defense.”

The Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe, signed by Bush Sr. and Gorbachev in 1990, was breached by the construction of permanent U.S. military bases in Bulgaria and Romania, beginning in 1999. The Clinton administration said they were not in violation because the bases were not to be permanent, but they were, as agreed from the beginning.

[\[1166\]](#) Russia and the U.S. both quit the treaty in 2023.[\[1167\]](#)

## **50th Anniversary**

Within the space of a few weeks in the spring of 1999, the U.S. and NATO brought Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic into the NATO alliance, [\[1168\]](#) announced their “New Strategic Concept” declaring their intent to expand “non-Article 5 crisis response operations”[\[1169\]](#) and launched the aggressive war against Serbia to break off Kosovo.

At NATO's 50th anniversary meeting in the midst of the war in April 1999, the Clinton administration inaugurated their new Open-Door Policy, inviting the Baltics, Albania, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Macedonia to begin their track to full-fledged membership.[\[1170\]](#) Always wary about nationalist Russian reaction, the administration also debuted the new Membership Action Plan (MAP) system for further NATO expansion, beginning with the Baltic states. This was simply for public relations: announcement of MAPs was “less insulting” to Russia. “In practical terms, the outcome would be the same, but it sounded better,” as historian Mary Elise Sarotte wrote.[\[1171\]](#) Importantly, she also noted that Ukraine was not included in the list of nine new entry-level members, “not least because of tensions over Sevastopol”—the important city and Russian naval base on the Crimean Peninsula—as well as the amount of corruption in Kiev. The nation had been “taken off the conveyor belt of future members.”[\[1172\]](#)

## **Clinton's Broken Relationship**

In 2000, after Putin took power, he restored the official Russia-NATO relationship that had been suspended over the Kosovo War the previous year. He then asked President Clinton if Russia could join the alliance as well.[\[1173\]](#) Clinton ignored the overture, telling Talbott it was “blue-sky stuff.”[\[1174\]](#) Brzezinski had previously argued against Russia's inclusion since the U.S. would have to share decision-making authority to an intolerable degree, insisting it was the Russians' “delusion” regarding their current status that made them believe they should have any influence in Eastern or Central Europe at all.[\[1175\]](#) But he also recognized that “[t]he



costs of the exclusion of Russia could be high—creating a self-fulfilling prophesy in the Russian mindset—but the results of dilution of either the EU or NATO could also be quite destabilizing.”[\[1176\]](#)

At the end of the century, former Russian Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov said that all of Washington’s recent intervention in the Russian economy and expansionist policies in Eastern Europe had already cost the Russian people’s goodwill and risked setting our nations on a collision course: “It’s clear that this kind of honeymoon period between United States and Russia is long gone because, after all these efforts of United States government, many more Russians now dislike America than ever before, and that’s sad.”[\[1177\]](#)

## **Right from the Beginning**

### **Making Vladimir Putin**

Just as former Republican and Reform Party presidential candidate, author and commentator Pat Buchanan and so many others predicted, a nationalist strongman came to power in reaction to American overreach after the fall of the USSR. But the wrinkle was, this strongman’s rise was not just a reaction to, but also an example of, that intervention.

As mentioned, at the urging of oligarch Boris Berezovsky, President Yeltsin appointed Vladimir Putin, a former deputy mayor of St. Petersburg and made member of the Yeltsin “family,”[\[1178\]](#) to head the FSB and run the Second Chechen War against Western- and Gulf-backed forces there. After Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov’s investigations into government

corruption got too hot, Berezovsky pushed to have him removed from power.[\[1179\]](#) He had the same problem with Primakov's successor Sergei Stepashin. When pressed, the man refused to shut down ongoing criminal investigations of Berezovsky and his associates, so Yeltsin fired and replaced him as prime minister with Vladimir Putin in August 1999.[\[1180\]](#)

Putin then made himself invaluable to the "family" by releasing compromising materials on Prosecutor General Yuri Skuratov and launching repeated investigations against him just as he was bringing charges against Berezovsky and other close friends of the Kremlin.[\[1181\]](#) According to Paul Klebnikov, "The family decided that Putin was the man to guarantee that there would be no retribution after the change in power."[\[1182\]](#) Strobe Talbott called Putin "the new product I knew [Berezovsky] was selling."[\[1183\]](#)

Yeltsin then resigned and appointed Putin to be president on New Year's Eve 1999,[\[1184\]](#) a rise to power that was widely celebrated by American politicians and pundits.

Putin had originally been brought to Moscow by these gangsters and made his major break toward power when he helped his mentor Anatoly Sobchak, the mayor of St. Petersburg and a favorite of the Clinton administration,[\[1185\]](#) escape the country to the West to avoid prosecution for corruption. A former colonel in the KGB, Putin had sided with the reformers during the failed coup attempt of August 1991. America's man Boris Yeltsin took an instant liking to him, and his promotion up the ranks was soon underway. Yeltsin's daughter would later reportedly tell Talbott, "It was really hard, getting Putin into the job—one of the hardest things we

ever pulled off.”[\[1186\]](#) Journalist Matt Taibbi later wrote, “Putin would go on to help the whole Yeltsin clan slither out of Russia with their stolen millions.”[\[1187\]](#)

Oligarch Berezovsky boasted, “After the 1999 election, only two oligarchs were left center stage, Gusinsky who supported [Yevgeny] Primakov and [Yury] Lujkov, and yours truly, who supported Putin [for PM].” They had groomed him to be president all along by making him head of the FSB, then prime minister. Berezovsky spent millions on a massive propaganda campaign to make Putin famous.[\[1188\]](#) According to the *London Times*, “On the evening that Yeltsin resigned and Putin was appointed acting president, Berezovsky celebrated by attending the Bolshoi ballet.” He had told a *Times* reporter there that “Russia now has the best president in the world.”[\[1189\]](#)

According to in-depth investigations by the *Moscow Times* and *Christian Science Monitor*, even with the three-month head start and an ongoing war, Putin’s faction resorted to stuffing ballot boxes across Russia to steal the election of 2000.[\[1190\]](#) The State Department took Putin’s side, telling Congress there were “very few procedural improprieties.”[\[1191\]](#)

President Clinton, Prime Minister Blair and all the powerful players praised Putin.[\[1192\]](#) He was part of Yeltsin’s “family” after all. But soon it became clear his priority was to assert the power of the central state over the seven corrupt kings of Russian business. Many of the oligarchs fell in line. Berezovsky’s old partner Roman Abramovich is close with Putin to this day.[\[1193\]](#) But many others fled to Tel Aviv, London and New York,

often spending their misbegotten fortunes agitating against their former country.[\[1194\]](#)

In 2000, Boris Fyodorov explained that though Putin might consolidate power at the expense of organized crime, the man was no angel. Everyone expected him to purge the family that made him, Fyodorov wrote, “[b]ut it doesn’t mean that anybody today in Russia thinks that Putin is great reformer, that Putin is great democrat, that Putin is ideologically motivated idealist or anything like that, because clearly he’s not.”[\[1195\]](#)

But Mikhail Gorbachev and Boris Yeltsin are now widely hated and reviled in Russia as villains and traitors for selling out the country to America.[\[1196\]](#) By then, virtually the entire national consensus was that democracy was a failure. The word itself became a curse.[\[1197\]](#) The men who led Russia’s transition from Communism—with much assistance from their American friends—had blown it. If a strongman could give them their dignity back, they would let him.

## **Laying Down the Law**

Putin said the government “would not investigate the controversial circumstances in which the oligarchs made their money as long as they stayed out of politics,” as the London *Times* put it.[\[1198\]](#) Gusinsky went to jail until he signed over his television network to the state, then fled to Spain and later Israel.[\[1199\]](#) Putin stripped his previous patron Berezovsky of everything[\[1200\]](#) and charged him with money laundering and theft.[\[1201\]](#) The billionaire fled to England, which granted him asylum to avoid

extradition to Russia in 2003.[\[1202\]](#) He died of a reported suicide 10 years later.[\[1203\]](#)

Referring to the purge of Gusinsky and his Media-Most empire, the revival of the Soviet national anthem, marginalization of Moscow's mayor and beatings of dissenting journalists, Taibbi called the purge "Putin's Night of the Long Knives," a reference to Adolf Hitler's betrayal of Ernst Röhm's brownshirt SA Stormtroopers or *Sturmabteilung* in favor of the "protective echelon," or *Schutzstaffel* (SS), under Heinrich Himmler in 1934.[\[1204\]](#)

A month into Putin's new reign, Congressman Ron Paul gave a speech on the House floor noting that one of the first things to happen under the new regime was the consolidation of the nuclear weapons authority in the Russian presidency. "The first reason given for this change in policy," Paul noted, "was that the expansion of NATO had caused the Russians to see a threat drawing closer to them which had not been previously perceived." He added, "The second reason—the war in Yugoslavia had made it apparent that there is now a NATO precedent for launching an attack into a country that had not itself attacked any NATO member."[\[1205\]](#)

Russian patriotism is a powerful force, often compared to Americans' own sense of their country's special destiny. They did not react well to being robbed blind, starved and threatened, especially by their longtime foreign rival. Instead of heeding the lessons of Versailles and treating our defeated foes with respect, President Clinton kicked the Russians while they were down, sowing extreme deprivation and resentment that lasts to this day and setting the stage for the rise of Vladimir Putin.

# George W. Bush

“All of us are committed to the advance of freedom in Belarus. People in that country live under Europe’s last dictatorship, and they deserve better.”

—George W. Bush

“How the United States both manipulates and accommodates the principal geostrategic players on the Eurasian chessboard . . . will be critical to the longevity and stability of America’s global primacy.”

—Zbigniew Brzezinski

“Russia is particularly worried that the strong divisions in Ukraine over NATO membership, with much of the ethnic-Russian community against membership, could lead to a major split, involving violence or at worst, civil war. In that eventuality, Russia would have to decide whether to intervene; a decision Russia does not want to have to face.”

—William Burns

“Though it is clear that present-day Russia poses no threat to them, NATO is methodically and persistently building up its military machine into the east of Europe and surrounding Russia from the south. This involves open material and ideological support for the ‘color revolutions’ and the paradoxical forcing of North Atlantic interests on Central Asia. All this leaves no doubt that they are preparing to completely encircle Russia and deprive it of its sovereignty.”

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“Her . . . flag is the flag not only of America but of humanity.”

—Woodrow Wilson

# Sucking Up

## The Cold Shoulder

Following up on his previous request to Bill Clinton, Vladimir Putin asked President George W. Bush (2001–2009) if Russia could join NATO the summer after the new president took office. Putin said, “The simplest [solution] is to dissolve NATO, but this is not on the agenda. The second possible option is to include Russia in NATO. This also creates a single defense and security space.” The administration did not directly respond to this statement, but noted that, in fact, Secretary of State Colin Powell had explicitly shot that idea down a month before.[\[1\]](#)

Russia was never going to get into NATO, because, as Brzezinski said, the Russians would surely demand too much of a share of the decision-making authority. The Americans wondered why the sole remaining superpower ought to concede so much to those they had beaten. But it is worth noting not just the predictions of disaster by the experts in the beginning, but Putin’s attempt to nullify the threat of what was still an anti-Russian military alliance, which claimed not to be one, by calling their bluff and asking to join.[\[2\]](#) At a joint press conference in June 2001, in Bush’s presence, noting the latter’s statements that he wanted our countries to be “partners” or even “allies,” Putin said, “We ask ourselves, is this a military organization? Yes, it’s a military organization. It doesn’t want us in it. No, they don’t want us. It’s moving toward our border. Yes, it’s moving toward



our border. Why?” That July, Putin reiterated, “When NATO enlarges, division doesn’t disappear; it simply moves toward our borders.”[3]

In Putin’s 2000 book *First Person*, an interviewer asks, “Will we once again search for Russia’s special path?” He replies, “Russia is a very diverse country, but we are part of Western European culture. No matter where our people live, in the Far East or in the South, we are Europeans.” His interviewer adds, “All that remains is for Europe to think that too,” to which the president responded, “We will fight to keep our geographical and spiritual position. And if they push us away, then we’ll be forced to find allies and reinforce ourselves. What else can we do?”[4] He even told Madeleine Albright, “Sure, I like Chinese food. It’s fun to use chopsticks. But this is just trivial stuff. It’s not our mentality, which is European. Russia has to be firmly part of the West.”[5]

In a March 2000 interview with David Frost, when asked about Russia joining NATO, Putin answered, “Why not? Russia is part of European culture . . . and seeing NATO as an enemy is destructive for Russia.”[6] Russian diplomats even attended preliminary membership talks with NATO officials until the Americans put a stop to it.[7] He reiterated this view of Russia’s place as late as 2012, writing that “Russia is an integral, organic part of Greater Europe, a broad European civilization. Our citizens feel like Europeans.”[8]

In a speech to the German Bundestag in 2001, Putin said he believed Europe could again regain its global importance “if it succeeds in bringing together its own potential and that of Russia, including its human, territorial and natural resources and its economic, cultural and defense potential.”[9]

There is real reason to believe Putin meant what he said. He acted like it. Though he had warned against NATO expansion to the Baltics in January 2001, saying it would be a “serious matter,”[\[10\]](#) Putin was the first foreign leader to call George W. Bush on September 11, 2001, to offer his condolences.[\[11\]](#) He promised not to respond in kind after America’s move to DefCon 3, as they normally would,[\[12\]](#) and stood down a major military exercise that had been planned for the next day as a show of “moral support” for the United States.[\[13\]](#) In a public statement, he said, “We understand the feelings of the American people better than anyone. I want to tell the American people in Russia’s name, ‘We are with you. We fully and wholeheartedly share and feel your pain. We support you.’”[\[14\]](#)

He also offered Russia’s full cooperation in America’s new war,[\[15\]](#) including the use of Russia’s “northern route” into Afghanistan, as well as the use of former Soviet bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.[\[16\]](#) Putin is said to have spent considerable political capital facing down critics on his right in Russian politics and the military to do so.[\[17\]](#) But he seemed to think it would be worth a shot to turn a crisis into an opportunity to strengthen Russia’s relationship with the United States. After all, it was America that was switching sides in the by-then already 20-year civil war in Afghanistan. Some Russian analysts had actually expected their Federation would go to war with the Taliban in 2001 before the U.S. attacked them instead.[\[18\]](#)

In fact, not a month after the September 11 attacks, Putin officially softened his stance on NATO expansion on the condition that, like in Bush Sr. and Bill Clinton’s broken promises, it would become a “political,” rather

than military organization—one that Russia could even join. He made these overtures under severe criticism back home.[\[19\]](#)

After a meeting in Slovenia, Bush famously said about Putin, “I looked the man in the eye. I was able to get a sense of his soul,” reflecting Putin’s attempted charm offensive.[\[20\]](#) Senator Biden said in early 2002 that “[n]o Russian leader since Peter the Great has cast his lot as much with the West as Putin has.” Then-State Department official Richard Haass agreed. “The hallmark of the 20th century was the great power rivalry,” he said. “At the beginning of the 21st century, we’ve ensured that it’s now over.”[\[21\]](#)

Shortly after September 11, Putin raised the issue of Russia joining the alliance with NATO Secretary-General George Robertson, who put him off with a line about checking bureaucratic boxes. The RAND Corporation’s Samuel Charap and Harvard’s Timothy Colton wrote, “Putin undoubtedly heard: ‘get in line behind Estonia and Bulgaria.’”[\[22\]](#) Experts suggested that rather than embracing the policy, Putin was more likely “simply getting reluctant constituencies ready for what could be inevitable new NATO expansion,” as well as an attempt to create closer ties with the U.S. in the name of fighting terrorism.[\[23\]](#) Marc Grossman, undersecretary of state for political affairs, said that one important reason to hold a new NATO-Russia summit would be to “help President Putin neutralize opposition to enlargement,” due to the Russian president’s “public opinion problems” on the issue.[\[24\]](#)

But the W. Bush administration never had any intention to compromise and forge a true working relationship with Russia. Even America’s Middle East wars of the last 30 years can be seen as an extension of the last Cold

War. Strategists believed it was important to control certain choke points in the Persian Gulf to lord oil supplies over our potential enemies, like energy importer China and our Pacific allies alike, and to wield control over the oil price against energy exporters like Iran and Russia.[\[25\]](#)

William Burns wrote in his memoir that Putin hoped to trade Russia's cooperation in the Afghan war with American restraint on further NATO expansion beyond the Baltics, a free hand in Chechnya and a promise not to interfere in Russian domestic politics. Three for one, perhaps, but reasonable enough. "As Putin quickly learned, however," Burns wrote, "this kind of transaction was never in the cards. He fundamentally misread American interests and politics. From Washington's view, there was no desire—and no reason—to trade anything for Russian partnership against al-Qaeda." He says Putin was wrong to see anything nefarious in this attitude. The Americans were just "generally disinclined to concede or pay much attention to a power in strategic decline."[\[26\]](#)

## **Missile Defense**

### **Killing Two Nuke Treaties**

Then, despite all of Putin's efforts to befriend the U.S., and Bush declaring the Russian "a new style of leader" and "a reformer,"[\[27\]](#) Bush turned right around and announced America's withdrawal from Richard Nixon's Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972,[\[28\]](#) which prohibited large-scale missile defense systems for the purpose of "curbing the race in strategic offensive arms."[\[29\]](#) Russia, which had already procrastinated on ratifying

the START II treaty in protest over NATO expansion,[\[30\]](#) but did so in 2000,[\[31\]](#) quit it entirely in response the next day.[\[32\]](#) The treaty, Bush's father and Boris Yeltsin's great achievement of January 1993, would have banned multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles (MIRV) on all ICBMs.[\[33\]](#) The son killed them both.

Bush's first choice for defense secretary had been former Senator Dan Coats of Indiana. However, Coats had blown his job interview by stating he thought missile defense was not that important. So the job went to Vice President Cheney's old friend and mentor Donald Rumsfeld instead.[\[34\]](#) John Bolton, the neoconservative fellow-traveler,[\[35\]](#) then deputy secretary of state for arms control and international security affairs, took the lead in building the case to withdraw from the treaty.[\[36\]](#) The administration also refused to sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiated by Bush's predecessor, which Russia did sign and ratify,[\[37\]](#) though at least he did sign the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty, or SORT, in 2002, which limited the number of deployed warheads to 1,700–2,200 for each side.[\[38\]](#)

## **Poland, Romania, Czechia**

Bush soon added plans to put defensive missiles in Romania and Poland and radars in the Czech Republic. Attempting to avoid the obvious, the president claimed these were to protect Poland from ballistic missile attacks from Iran.[\[39\]](#) For their part, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov mocked these assurances as “laughable.”[\[40\]](#) Their Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Kislyak complained about it bitterly in private as well, “arguing that the locations in Poland and the Czech Republic were better

suited for intercepting Russian ICBMs than against ‘hypothetical’ Iranian ballistic missiles.” The Russians said if this was really about protecting Europe from Iran, “the proposed MD sites should be located in Turkey, France and Italy.”[\[41\]](#)

Rather than keep the peace, anti-ballistic missiles potentially tip the balance of Mutually Assured Destruction toward potential first-strike capability. This is naturally considered a major threat by Russia.[\[42\]](#) On the other hand, the Bush administration’s argument that these systems could not possibly be meant to shoot down Russian missiles due to the limited number installed seemed to be a sound one.[\[43\]](#) His pretense that they were meant to protect Poland, of all places, from an Iranian attack[\[44\]](#) with nuclear weapons and long-range missiles they do not possess,[\[45\]](#) however, was preposterous.[\[46\]](#)

Maybe it all comes down to connected contractors soaking the taxpayer.[\[47\]](#) But it is understandable that some Russians—evidently including President Putin, who continues to bring this up—seem to be convinced that ballistic missile defense (BMD or MD, as they call it) is just a cover story for the installation of Mark 41 Vertical Launch System (MK-41) missile launchers, which are capable of firing defensive SM-3 missile interceptors, but also Tomahawk cruise missiles, which can potentially be armed with hydrogen bombs.[\[48\]](#)

In January 2007, Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin said that “the creation of a U.S. European anti-missile base can only be regarded as a substantial reconfiguration of the American military

presence in Europe . . . a mistaken step with negative consequences for international security.”[\[49\]](#)

Ambassador Burns later wrote in his memoir that he thought Putin had accepted but resented U.S. withdrawal from the ABM Treaty. Putin, however, was far more upset about the new missile defense systems in Poland and the Czech Republic (a.k.a. Czechia). Since Putin “not unreasonably” thought an anti-Iranian defense would make much more sense if it were placed in the Mediterranean or Italy, “[n]o amount of argument about the technological limitations of systems based in the Czech Republic and Poland against theoretical Russian targets, however soundly based, swayed Putin and his innately suspicious military.”[\[50\]](#)

In a press conference after the G8 summit in June 2007, Putin publicly proposed that Russia join the project with the United States. Putin correctly stated that Iran’s best missiles still had a range far short of even Southern Europe, and that Tehran had no current program to make longer-range ones and no motive to attack Europe in the first place. He did not bother to mention the fact that Iran had only an internationally safeguarded civilian nuclear program and no nuclear weapons to tip a missile with anyway.[\[51\]](#) Putin explained the Russian fear that when defensive missiles are deployed—such as those the U.S. was placing in Poland and Romania—they could give one side the false confidence to attempt a first-strike, relying on the defensive missiles to protect them from retaliation and upsetting the balance of power. He warned further that “yes, it seems we will have to target our missiles at these facilities. Such a step should not be seen as a surprise. It

would be better not to provoke Russia into taking such action in the first place.”

Putin said he had offered an alternative to President Bush in a conversation the day before in the form of the Gabala radar station in Azerbaijan, which was already under lease by Russia. Interceptors could be deployed closer to Iran, at sea, in Turkey or Iraq, where the U.S. still had a large detachment of troops. “What was the war for, after all? At least some advantage could be gained from it all,” he said. “Even if Iran were to begin developing such missiles, we would have timely warning, and even if we did not get any warning, we would soon find out when the first tests were carried out,” he continued. Since it takes four or five years from the time of first tests to military deployment, this would leave “enough time to deploy any missile defense system anywhere in the world. So why destabilize the situation in Europe today? It seems to me that our proposals are entirely logical, justified and are made in a spirit of partnership.”[\[52\]](#) Even Mikhail Gorbachev added that “[e]recting elements of missile defense is taking the arms race to the next level. It is a very dangerous step.”[\[53\]](#)

In January 2008, Republican Senator Chuck Hagel met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and among other things, discussed missile defense. Ambassador Burns summarized the meeting in a classified State Department cable. Lavrov revealed a proposal by Secretary of Defense Robert Gates in October 2007 “to keep the Czech radar inactive and leave the Polish silos without interceptors until the U.S. and Russia agreed that an Iranian missile capacity had materialized, while having a permanent U.S. and Russian presence located at both sites.” When they finally got the



proposal in writing, the part about the Russian presence at the sites had been cut and assessment of the Iranian threat was now to be left to the U.S. alone to decide.

For some reason, the Russians just could not get over the way that the Bush administration's claims did not make any sense. If the project was driven out of a generic sense that it would enhance security, then why not discuss it with all of NATO and Russia? If it was about Iran, why not take the Russians up on their offer to use the base in Azerbaijan? "When Czech and Polish officials justified the radar and missile interceptors as providing a defense against Russia, the logic of the U.S. deployment was further called into question," Burns wrote.[\[54\]](#)

When German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Russia in March 2008, officials reported back to the State Department that Putin had again offered to set up a joint system. If not, he said, he would require a permanent inspection presence, and would have to react by targeting the sites in return.[\[55\]](#) But W. Bush went ahead anyway. So, too, eventually did the Russians. In May and June 2007, they began testing new generation cruise missiles and RS-24 ICBMs,[\[56\]](#) and in November 2008, deployed Iskander medium-range ballistic missiles into the small Russian seaport region of Kaliningrad. This small strip of land, which also borders Poland, serves as home base to Russia's Baltic Fleet and is separated from the Russian mainland by their ally Belarus and NATO member Lithuania—which provides a railway across the Suwałki corridor between the two, a possible flashpoint itself. "From what we have seen in recent years, the creation of a missile defense system, the encirclement of Russia with

military bases, the relentless expansion of NATO, we have gotten the strong impression that they are testing our strength,” new Russian President Dimitry Medvedev said in late 2008.[\[57\]](#)

In September 2007, Burns, then-U.S. ambassador to Russia, wrote in a classified State Department document about the Russian leadership’s angry reaction to their treatment by the Bush administration, including leaving the ABM Treaty, the failure of negotiations over the Adapted Conventional Forces Europe Treaty, keeping them from securing a cooperation agreement with the EU, further NATO expansion and delay in their joining the World Trade Organization (WTO). He added that after speaking with numerous Russian analysts, most had said that “unlike the Kosovo situation, the entry of Ukraine and Georgia in NATO represents an ‘unthinkable’ predicament for Russia.” Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov had recently stated that “Russia has been and will remain against all unilateral or coalition approaches to international affairs that undermine the principle of equal security, which includes not only MD [missile defense], but the expansion of NATO.” Burns continued, “Russia still hopes to cause enough trouble in Georgia and is counting on continued political disarray in Ukraine to minimize the prospects for further NATO expansion eastward.”[\[58\]](#)

One need not have any sympathy for the men who run the Russian state, but a little bit of empathy might have gone a long way.

## **Far From Home**

### **White Stork**

In the name of “global democratic revolution,” W. Bush’s government also launched their own series of color-coded coups in Russia’s near abroad. They botched the export of the successful Serbian template to Belarus in 2001, but were successful with the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004 and the Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan in 2005. They also failed with the attempted Cedar Revolution in Lebanon,[\[59\]](#) the second-try Denim Revolution in Belarus in 2005–2006[\[60\]](#) (as well as the disastrous Green Revolution in Iran[\[61\]](#) and unsuccessful Umbrella Revolution in Hong Kong[\[62\]](#) during Obama’s presidency in 2009 and 2014).

Bush had obviously been deceiving conservatives when he claimed in his debates with Vice President Gore in 2000 that he intended to inaugurate a “humble foreign policy,” because “if we’re an arrogant nation, they’ll resent us.”[\[63\]](#) The Texas governor, son of committed internationalist George H.W. Bush, had even given away his game in the same statement: if we are humble, “they’ll welcome us,” he had said. The man’s role as a foreign interventionist had been set long before September 11, 2001.[\[64\]](#)

W. Bush spent much of his first year in power trying to figure out how to overthrow the government of Belarus, consequences for America’s future relationship with Russia be damned. Elected in 1994 in the aftermath of disastrous shock therapy policies which had deindustrialized the country and wiped out the average citizen’s standard of living, President Alexander Lukashenko sought strong ties with Russia, brought back the old Soviet-era flag, minus the hammer and sickle, and cracked down on dissent, even expelling the Belarusian Soros Foundation from the country.[\[65\]](#)

The NDI and IRI had been funding opposition groups in Belarus for some time. In just the two years leading up to the 2001 elections, they spent approximately \$50 million supporting dissident groups. As Mark MacKinnon noted, “[I]n a country where the average wage was just \$77 a month, it empowered the opposition to challenge the status quo.” He continued, “That \$50 million was just the overt spending. American money funded about three hundred non-governmental organizations, some with such clear links to the opposition that many observers considered them to be one and the same.”[\[66\]](#)

In 2001, Freedom House funded a mission by Serbian Otpor to Minsk to train their dissidents. They created their own version, a group called Zubr (Bison).[\[67\]](#) “Like Otpor,” MacKinnon wrote, “Zubr was an American invention from day one.”[\[68\]](#) They were simply foreign agents. “They transfer the money into European banks in Poland, and we bring it from there,” one member told the *Wall Street Journal*. “As in Yugoslavia, the U.S. encouraged the political opposition to put forward a single, compromise presidential candidate,” they reported, adding, “Belarus’s small independent media and its independent nongovernmental organizations depend on U.S. government-funded organizations for legal defense, technical support, and occasional cash infusions.”[\[69\]](#) Otpor operative Milos Milenkovic said he made approximately 20 trips to Belarus before the election to train members of Zubr.[\[70\]](#) The IRI paid to have Zubr activists travel to Lithuania and Poland for further training. Again, they put up anti-regime graffiti and mocked the government in street theater scenes.[\[71\]](#)

The American ambassador, Michael Kozak, was a regime change specialist with experience in Nicaragua, Panama, Haiti and Cuba.[\[72\]](#) He was publicly adamant about seeking regime change in Belarus. The opposition had been deeply fractured, but the U.S. had the money to bring them all into line. In a meeting at the U.S. Embassy, they chose a former trade union leader named Vladimir Goncharik to be the unity opposition leader. Engaging in a “battle of wits” with the current administration, he offered normalized relations and aid money “in return for his establishing laws and procedures to ensure a fair election,” according to the *Guardian*.[\[73\]](#)

But President Lukashenko was not having it. Two days before the election, the major state newspaper *Sovetskaya Belarus* ran an investigative piece exposing the coup plot, which they said had been codenamed Operation White Stork. As MacKinnon put it, the article was “bang on”—he is Canadian—including about the dissidents’ plan to call out massive street protests to dispute the election results and provoke crackdowns to legitimize Western denunciations of the president.[\[74\]](#)

The election was held on September 9, 2001. Lukashenko claimed a victory of 76–13 percent. Zubr came out to complain, but no one joined them. The cops did not even bother busting up the protest. Lukashenko announced that the attempted “revolution” against him had failed, “[o]r at least [has] been postponed.”[\[75\]](#)

## **Transnistria**

Transnistria, a.k.a. Transdniestria, or the Pridnestrovian Moldovan Republic (PMR), a small strip of land on Ukraine's western border with Moldova along the Dniester River, is known for one of the world's dangerous "frozen" conflicts left over from the breakup of the USSR in the early 1990s. Populated by approximately one-third ethnic Russians,[\[76\]](#) the territory broke away from Moldova in a short war in 1992 and, though unrecognized by the Russian Federation, has remained under the protection of its troops ever since. Moldova has no real historical claim to the land, which was only granted to it by the decree of Joseph Stalin after World War II.[\[77\]](#)

In 2003, the president of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, announced a compromise plan, written by the Russians, to absorb the breakaway province—and another, smaller breakaway region of Turkic speakers called Gagauzia—under Moldovan rule, but with a note of strong federalism and the presence of Russian peacekeeping troops. The EU's high representative for common foreign and security policy, Javier Solana, worked hard to kill the plan and convinced Voronin to rescind it just as Putin was preparing to fly to Moldova to witness the signing ceremony.[\[78\]](#) William Hill, then the chief of the OSCE's mission to Moldova, said, "What was for most Western capitals a fairly minor incident for the Russians was a personal affront to their president and a denial of Russia's right to play an independent political and diplomatic role in a part of the world that had once been theirs exclusively."[\[79\]](#)

## **The Rose Revolution**

## Too Close to Russia

Bush had sent troops to Georgia in 2001, shortly after the September 11 attacks, in the name of fighting terrorism, but more likely to guarantee the route of the new BTC pipeline meant to bypass Russia and Iran through Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.[\[80\]](#)

The U.S. had been involved in Georgia since 1992, when the Georgian president, former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, came to power with promises to restore order and attract Western aid. Due to his personal relationship with Secretary of State James Baker, diplomatic ties were quickly established and the aid money flowed, hundreds of millions of dollars' worth: Georgia was receiving more per capita from American taxpayers than any other country besides Israel.[\[81\]](#)

But Shevardnadze was too close to Russia. Later that year, he made a deal with them to solve the crisis in the secessionist minstate of Abkhazia on the Black Sea, a deal which required Georgia to join Russia's Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

He had asked for Yeltsin's help to suppress a violent insurrection by supporters of his predecessor Zviad Gamsakhurdia in October 1993. As an investigative commission appointed by the EU later noted, after Russian troops intervened to help, "[T]his led to a pro-Russian re-orientation of Georgia's foreign policy. In October 1993 Eduard Shevardnadze signed Georgia's accession to the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS)." They added that "in the following year Tbilisi joined the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty (CST), too."[\[82\]](#) In 2001, Shevardnadze had expressed disinterest in joining the NATO alliance. The

next year, after a meeting of the CIS in Moldova, Shevardnadze started sending troops to the Pankisi Gorge in northern Georgia to clear out Chechen and allied terrorists. Shortly afterwards, he made a new deal with Russia's Gazprom to take over Georgia's internal pipeline network and signed a 25-year deal to make Russia Georgia's sole supplier of natural gas. [83] Journalist and Russia expert Jonathan Steele reported that "ambassador Richard Miles complained that Washington must be informed of such deals in advance. Then Bush's energy adviser Steven Mann flew to Tbilisi to warn Shevardnadze not to go ahead with it." The young reformer Mikhail Saakashvili—an American-educated former city council chair of Tbilisi and Shevardnadze's former minister of justice—and his allies "denounced the Gazprom negotiations." [84] Third, Shevardnadze sold Georgia's electricity grid at an artificially low price to the Russian firm RAO-UES, then headed by Bill Clinton and Al Gore's old friend Anatoly Chubais, right after its chief financial officer was brutally murdered. The Americans decided this was a threat to the BTC pipeline. Shevardnadze told them not to worry about it, even as he named a former ambassador to Russia to lead his party in the upcoming elections. [85]

## **Yer Out!**

Regime change was on. Amb. Richard Miles, who had run the operation against Milošević in Serbia in 2000, [86] and was ambassador to Azerbaijan during the 1993 coup, [87] was brought in to lead the effort. Miles publicly announced his mission before he even left America, telling the U.S. Senate that he intended to make sure Georgia stayed with the West, not Russia. As



soon as he arrived in Tbilisi, Miles made it clear his priority was to influence the upcoming election in an interview with Rustavi 2 television channel, which was backed by Soros's Open Society Institute,[88] and met with opposition leaders.[89]

The coup was assisted by a group called "The Liberty Institute," which was also funded by USAID and George Soros. The *Wall Street Journal* called it the "organizing juggernaut behind the move to push Mr. Shevardnadze out of office." [90] Its leader, Giga Bokeria, and at least 1,000 others were trained by Otpor from Serbia and Slovakia's OK'98 group with funding from Freedom House and Soros's Open Society Institute [91] at a former Communist Young Pioneers camp on the outskirts of Tbilisi. They also established their local clone youth group called Kmara ("Enough!"), which later helped create pressure from below for the street putsch. The group was run out of the Liberty Institute's offices. [92] Mark Mullen, the director of the Tbilisi office of the National Democratic Institute, helped train the kids himself with the approval of Amb. Miles. Mullen also hired the Global Strategy Group to run the exit polls used in the regime change. On top of the tens of millions spent by the private NGOs, the U.S. government, through the NDI, IRI, NED and USAID, spent at least \$2.4 million on swaying the election. [93]

The NDI introduced former Justice Minister Mikhail Saakashvili, Washington's favored candidate, "to the methods insurgents in Serbia used to depose dictator Slobodan Milošević," the *Journal* reported. [94] In February 2002, the NDI brought Saakashvili and other opposition figures to meet with George Soros, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul Wolfowitz and

the other regime changers in Washington. Upon his return to Georgia, Saakashvili declared that he had the support of the United States to “assist” building civil society, holding elections and managing military affairs.[\[95\]](#) Former Secretary of State James Baker went to Georgia in July 2003, first meeting with the opposition and then with Shevardnadze to let him know the U.S. was on the other side. Sen. John McCain, the leader of the IRI, went to meet with the opposition as well.[\[96\]](#)

The *New York Times* reported that the administration was happy to boast about their aid to Saakashvili, then “the dominant candidate in presidential elections.”[\[97\]](#)

## **The Coup**

The early results of the parliamentary elections in November 2003 were entirely believable. Shevardnadze’s party won the most seats, but not a majority. The opposition coalition would be in charge.[\[98\]](#) The president conceded this and announced that he did not expect any confrontation with the new parliament.[\[99\]](#) But the U.S. had invested too much in the plot to back down by that point. So they got him with the exit poll scam.

The foreign-backed Rustavi 2 television station declared that the real poll numbers should have given the opposition parties higher percentages of the vote and that the election had been stolen by the ruling regime. “They were a tribune,” Liberty Institute director Bokeria said. “People knew where to get real information. They were informed about the details of the election, when to go into the streets, where and how.”[\[100\]](#) The signal activated, the professional protest groups, led by Kmara, hit the streets.

[\[101\]](#) American and EU observers joined in, denouncing the vote as rigged. Even though the State Department’s official report had noted the good and bad of the election, Ambassador Miles outright denounced it as a fraud and demanded satisfaction.[\[102\]](#)

On November 4, Saakashvili led a protest where he demanded that Shevardnadze concede that the opposition had won—which he had already done—and threatened to force him from office. “If [Shevardnadze] wants a revolution, he will get it!” Saakashvili declared.[\[103\]](#) On the 7th, he led another march denouncing the “scumbags and rogues” in the Shevardnadze government.[\[104\]](#)

Rustavi 2 television constantly called for Shevardnadze to resign over the supposed election irregularities, devoted extensive coverage to the 24-hour-per-day protests Soros had financed and repeatedly played their documentary about Otpor’s success against Milošević, *Bringing Down a Dictator*, for the youth groups to mimic.

When the government announced the final vote totals on November 20, they claimed another party, the Revival movement, had a slight lead over Saakashvili’s National Movement party, giving them the chance to form a government with Shevardnadze’s For a New Georgia.[\[105\]](#) On November 22, Shevardnadze convened the parliament with the intent of forming a new government with Revival. Instead, MacKinnon wrote, “with Kmara and Saakashvili in the forefront,” the foreign-paid crowd stormed the parliament and occupied the president’s offices.[\[106\]](#) “Armed guards whisked Shevardnadze away from the Parliament building after demonstrators broke into the chamber while he was speaking . . . and still

clutching his unfinished speech in a shaking left hand,” the *Washington Post* reported. The speaker of the parliament, Nino Burdzhaneladze, declared herself interim leader.[\[107\]](#) Shevardnadze insisted the Georgian constitution had to be followed.[\[108\]](#) But no law could stop the most powerful nation in the world posing as the will of a local mob. Democracy would prevail. After three weeks of street protests financed by Soros’s NGOs and American taxpayers, Shevardnadze was forced to resign and was replaced with Saakashvili.

Toronto *Globe and Mail* reporter Mark MacKinnon ran an explosive story on George Soros’s role in the coup. He detailed the Open Society Institute’s and Liberty Institute’s support for Serbian Otpor leaders’ travel, training of Georgian Kmara in how to run their street protests, financial support for Kmara itself, as well as the television station Rustavi 2 and Saakashvili’s National Movement party.[\[109\]](#) Richard W. Carlson, a former director of Voice of America, learned from a former member of parliament that “from August through October, Soros spent \$42 million ramping-up for the overthrow of Shevardnadze.” Soros even paid to have the roses shipped in along with the buses full of demonstrators.[\[110\]](#)

## **George Soros**

Journalist Joshua Eaton, who has done good work,[\[111\]](#) apparently attempting to help forge a new consensus on the question, recently wrote a “reminder”: use of the term “‘Soros-backed’ is anti-Semitic.”[\[112\]](#) That is absurd nonsense and no one should be intimidated by it. George Soros is a billionaire investor and currency speculator who has been deeply involved

in global politics for generations. He is a self-described “stateless statesman”; a center-left, liberal anti-Communist and later anti-Russian activist; he was and remains deeply involved in Eastern Europe, including Ukraine.[\[113\]](#) Whether he was bankrolling the Polish Solidarity movement and Czechoslovakian Charter 77, which led the revolution against Soviet power in Eastern Europe in the 1980s,[\[114\]](#) pot legalization in California in the 1990s,[\[115\]](#) overtly funding aggressive regime change efforts in former-Soviet, Russia-friendly states in the 2000s, or for some reason backing American prosecutors who go soft on violent felons in the 2010s,[\[116\]](#) Soros is as responsible for his actions as any man, only with much more wealth and influence. “He had power on the international scene that no other private individual could claim to have,” as MacKinnon put it.[\[117\]](#)

Soros boasted in his book, ironically titled *The Bubble of American Supremacy*: “My foundations contributed to democratic regime change in Slovakia in 1998, Croatia in 1999, and Yugoslavia in 2000, mobilizing civil society to get rid of Vladimír Mečiar, Franjo Tudjman, and Slobodan Milošević, respectively.”[\[118\]](#)

Back in the Clinton years, Strobe Talbott told *The New Yorker*, “I would say that Soros’s policy is not identical to the foreign policy of the U.S. government, but it’s compatible with it.” He continued, “It’s like working with a friendly, allied, independent entity, if not a government. We try to synchronize our approach to the former communist countries with Germany, France, Great Britain—and with George Soros” [emphasis in original]. Morton Abramowitz, the former United States ambassador to Turkey, who was formerly the president of the Carnegie Endowment for

International Peace in the mid-1990s, and who had been a part of Soros-backed groups in the past, added, “As I frequently say about George, he’s the only man in the U.S. who has his own foreign policy—and can implement it.”[\[119\]](#)

Of course, Soros and his organizations mostly take credit for their involvement in these projects. He is only trying to help create “open societies” and liberal democracies, after all.[\[120\]](#)

And since Soros largely acts in a supporting role for the U.S. State Department overseas, the only accountability he will ever see is criticism in the press. Instead of being anti-Semitic, critics should be presumed to have never considered Soros’s religion in their lives as they remark upon his actions and those of the people, groups and movements he funds—which do not happen to include religiously motivated Israeli colonization of the West Bank, for example.[\[121\]](#) In fact, it is probably true that much of the modern day “hate Soros” movement is an astroturfed phenomenon made to punish him for not being a Zionist, or at least not prioritizing Israel’s alleged interests.[\[122\]](#) Too bad, though. These things about him are true.[\[123\]](#)

Humorously, the Western allies parachuted in Salome Zourabichvili, a French woman of Georgian descent, and until then the French ambassador to Georgia. She switched citizenship and was made Saakashvili’s foreign minister.[\[124\]](#) She would end up being elected president with American support in 2018.[\[125\]](#) A decade before, Zourabichvili told the French journal *Hérodote*, “These institutions were the cradle of democratization, notably the Soros Foundation. . . . The NGOs which gravitate around the Soros Foundation undeniably carried the revolution. However, one cannot

end one's analysis with the revolution and one clearly sees that, afterwards, the Soros Foundation and the NGOs were integrated into power.”[\[126\]](#)

Soros's business partner Kaka Bendukidze became the new economy minister.[\[127\]](#) Alexander Lomaia, the director of Open Society Georgia, was made education minister, while Giga Bokeria, co-founder of the Liberty Institute, became leader of the National Movement party in the parliament. In the name of fighting against corruption, they stayed on Soros's payroll. Saakashvili too.[\[128\]](#)

“I'm delighted by what happened in Georgia, and I take great pride in having contributed to it,” Soros told the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.[\[129\]](#)

## **A Textbook Case**

On November 22, Secretary of State Colin Powell called and told Shevardnadze to give it up. The next day he did, as the *Journal* noted in an article titled “Putin Is Not Amused by the Coup in Georgia.”[\[130\]](#) “This is a textbook case of how to do things right,” an unnamed ambassador told the *Times*.[\[131\]](#) Journalist Wendell Steavenson later wrote in *The New Yorker* that after the coup, Saakashvili hired advisers like American Daniel Kunin, son of former Vermont Governor Madeleine Kunin, with the financial support of Condoleezza Rice's State Department and Soros Foundation. In addition to actually making foreigners such as Zourabichvili and others into government ministers, this “contributed to the Russian sense that Georgia was a Western—and for ‘Western’ the Russian élite tends to read ‘American’—proxy,” Steavenson wrote.[\[132\]](#)

## Rose Wilted

In May 2005, W. Bush gave a speech in Tbilisi hailing the Rose Revolution. “[B]ecause you acted, Georgia is today both sovereign and free, and a beacon of liberty for this region and the world,” he declared. “The path of freedom you have chosen is not easy, but you will not travel it alone. Americans respect your courageous choice for liberty. And as you build a free and democratic Georgia, the American people will stand with you.” Bush gave them credit for inspiring his “global democratic revolution,” saying that “before there was a Purple Revolution in Iraq, or an Orange Revolution in Ukraine, or a Cedar Revolution in Lebanon, there was the Rose Revolution in Georgia.” He continued, “Your courage is inspiring democratic reformers and sending a message that echoes across the world: Freedom will be the future of every nation and every people on Earth.”[\[133\]](#)

But the new regime, while at first tackling corruption, ended up becoming a tyranny, no better than it had been under Shevardnadze.[\[134\]](#) Saakashvili won the 2004 elections with a Saddam Hussein-like 97 percent of the vote,[\[135\]](#) which is grounds for the highest ridicule from the U.S. foreign policy establishment when they are writing about governments that are not American client states.[\[136\]](#) Fitting the tyrant’s mold perfectly, Saakashvili locked up his opponents from the Justice and Conservative parties.[\[137\]](#) Sozar Subari, Georgia’s “public defender,” said that after Saakashvili seized power, the courts had become even more crooked than before. “The law has been adjusted for the comfort of the ruling party as if it were the reign of Louis XIV,” he added.[\[138\]](#)



It was a brutal police state.[\[139\]](#) In 2007, when protesters massed in central Tbilisi,[\[140\]](#) Saakashvili cracked down hard, declaring a state of emergency and sending riot cops with tear gas and truncheons to smash them.[\[141\]](#) Saakashvili and his party, United National Movement (UNM), were finally run out of office in 2012, as reported by *Foreign Policy* magazine, after their “reformist credentials were undermined by a prison scandal that broke days before the elections. Prison guards were caught on tape sodomizing prisoners with broom handles.” Further, they reported, “knowledge of these practices allegedly went all the way to the top. For all of Georgia’s pro-West rhetoric, the scandal showed just how incomplete the UNM’s commitment to the rule of law had been.”[\[142\]](#)

But before he was run out of office for his organized mass-male rape campaign, in 2008, Saakashvili went to war.

## NATO Round 2

### Whole and Free

In June 2001, President Bush had invoked his father’s phrase “Europe whole and free” to mean that “[a]ll of Europe’s new democracies, from the Baltic to the Black Sea and all that lie between, should have the same chance for security and freedom and the same chance to join the institutions of Europe as the old democracies have.”[\[143\]](#) This implied that Europe could not be whole and free until they had all joined—all but Russia, of course—and that if they did not want to join, that could be considered a threat to its new “wholeness” and freedom.[\[144\]](#)

In early 2004, he continued further NATO expansion into Eastern Europe in violation of his father's promise, bringing seven more countries into the alliance: the former Warsaw Pact nations of Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia, as well as the former Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, and the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania[\[145\]](#)—the latter three actual former Soviet “republics,” the former two of which share a border with Russia.

By this time, the controversy seemed to have worn off in the United States. The foreign policy establishment's focus was on Iraq War II, and many of the critics from just five and six years before had by then faded from the scene. Putin seemed to begrudgingly accept it, so the Bush administration just went ahead.[\[146\]](#) But they were not really listening.

The *New York Times* wrote, “To Russia, at least, the meaning is clear: the alliance still views it as a potential enemy rather than a partner.” While they could not stop the expansion, the lower house of Russia's parliament protested by passing a resolution denouncing the stationing of F-16s in the Baltics. “Russian politicians and commanders have vowed to increase their forces in Kaliningrad and northwestern Russian [sic] in response.”[\[147\]](#)

“The presence of American soldiers on our border has created a kind of paranoia in Russia,” Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told the AFP in April.[\[148\]](#) That August, Defense Minister Sergei Ivanov complained that F-16s stationed in Latvia were “a three-minute flight away from St. Petersburg.” He then added to Bush's Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, “We cannot understand how these four planes can intercept al Qaeda, the Taliban or anything else. The only thing they can intercept is a mythical Soviet

threat.”[\[149\]](#) Putin complained, “This purely mechanical expansion does not let us face the current threats, and cannot allow us to prevent such things as the terrorist attacks in Madrid or restore stability in Afghanistan.”[\[150\]](#)

## **The Elbe**

But as Pat Buchanan, ardent cold warrior in the bad old days, likes to point out, the U.S. used to draw the line halfway across Germany.[\[151\]](#) The threat was that if the Soviets invaded West Germany, threatening France, Belgium, Denmark and the other Western democracies, the United States would go to war to stop them. Even though the CIA had at least rhetorically supported each uprising, in Hungary in 1956,[\[152\]](#) Czechoslovakia in 1968[\[153\]](#) and Poland in 1981,[\[154\]](#) once the USSR intervened, as in the former two cases, or their puppet government cracked down, as in the latter, America stayed out.[\[155\]](#) “The heart of America goes out to them,” as Eisenhower said, but they do not have our sword, as he and Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Ronald Reagan had decided.

President Clinton had put Poland, Czechia and Hungary under NATO protection in 1999. Now his successor was continuing to move that dividing line from the middle of Germany, 1,200 miles east to Russia’s very western border with the Baltic states. There is no real reason to fear it, but if Russia did decide to reconquer Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, our politicians have signed us up to fight a war to defend them from a power that could in fact destroy our entire civilization permanently in a single afternoon if it came down to it.[\[156\]](#)

## **Action Plan**

In 2002, NATO published their first NATO-Ukraine Action Plan, which was different from the more controversial Membership Action Plan which President Bush attempted to push through at the Bucharest Summit in April 2008.[\[157\]](#) Still, this was another step toward further integration between the alliance and Ukraine, setting objectives for the reorganization of Ukraine's armed forces and communications systems for easier integration with allied military forces.[\[158\]](#)

## **The Orange Revolution**

### **Reconstruction Blueprints**

In 2003, National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice brought in a scholar named Stephen Krasner to work with former Ambassador to Ukraine Carlos Pascual to implement a system of intervention in what they deemed to be “weak states” on the pretext that any government judged to be so is a threat to international order and must be assisted by Western governments.[\[159\]](#) They drew up “reconstruction blueprints,” including putting American taxpayers on the hook for financial assistance for up to 25 different governments willing to “share sovereignty”[\[160\]](#) with the U.S. and its allies in order to “change the very social fabric of [their] nation.”[\[161\]](#) They went right to work in Ukraine.[\[162\]](#)

### **Corrupt Puppets**

In the 2004 Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the U.S. helped to prevent the disputed election winner Viktor Yanukovych—a member of then-President Leonid Kuchma’s Russian-leaning Party of Regions—from taking power. This was done in favor of the Western-backed former central bank head Viktor Yushchenko and his allies, such as Yulia Tymoshenko, the so-called “gas princess” who had served as president of United Energy Systems of Ukraine (UESU).

The Bush administration’s favorites were both notoriously corrupt. UESU made their billions out of a crooked deal with the government,[\[163\]](#) massive embezzlement[\[164\]](#) and siphoning off Russian gas to sell on the black market,[\[165\]](#) and the IMF had accused Yushchenko of lying about the size of Ukraine’s reserves to get an extra \$200 million out of them.[\[166\]](#) Yushchenko had been Kuchma’s formerly hand-picked prime minister, but he had been fired, allegedly under pressure from Moscow, due to his resistance to attempted Russian corporate takeovers of Ukrainian companies.[\[167\]](#) Tymoshenko and former Ukrainian Prime Minister Pavel Lazarenko had been accused of arranging the murders of Donetsk businessmen Yevhen Shcherban and Alexander Momot in 1996. Lazarenko was later prosecuted by the United States for stealing the \$200 million. The Department of Justice listed Tymoshenko as an “unindicted co-conspirator” in the scheme.[\[168\]](#)

American politicians and TV anchors say things about democracy. But even one of the aides of the new president installed in the “revolution” admitted, “The key people in the Yushchenko team are from the same oligarchic mold as our opponents.” British parliamentarian Michael

Meacher noted the obvious: “Economic interests, not political principle, pitted them against the Yanukovych camp.”[\[169\]](#) Yanukovych’s predecessor Kuchma had ceased cooperation with the Partnership for Peace and said he had no interest in joining the EU unless Russia could join as well. Worse, from the West’s point of view, he signed a deal giving Gazprom a majority stake in Ukraine’s pipeline network and reversed the flow of the Odesa-Brody oil pipeline that had been delivering U.S.- and British-pumped Caspian oil to Europe, having it instead terminate at Odesa, making Russian oil available for export. When the prime minister, Anatoliy Kinakh, resigned in protest, Kuchma replaced him with Donetsk governor Viktor Yanukovych to get the deal done.[\[170\]](#) Now Kuchma had designated Yanukovych to replace him as president too.

In another unforgivable sin, Kuchma had signed Ukraine up for Putin’s new Common Economic Space (CES), a closer economic and political union with Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan than the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).[\[171\]](#)

It did not matter to the American champions of democracy that the people of Ukraine supported these policies by significant majorities and that polls showed that were Putin allowed to run for president of Ukraine himself, he would win in a landslide. The United States would intervene to ensure their hand-picked president, former central banker Yushchenko, would win. They would not only prevent this increased Russian influence, but reverse it, and bring Ukraine towards the West.[\[172\]](#)

## **The NGO Scam**

The U.S. government pulled the same scam that had worked so well in Georgia the year before. In the second round of voting during Ukraine's 2004 presidential election, foreign-backed NGOs quickly reported all of their exit polls before the actual votes could be counted. They claimed Yushchenko should win by 54 to 43 percent.[\[173\]](#) The narrative was set: the winner had stolen it, and the losers would refuse to accept their defeat in a rigged election. The U.S., led by Secretary of State Colin Powell and then-Senator Joe Biden, along with the European Union, quickly sided with Yushchenko and denounced the results.[\[174\]](#) Yanukovich may have been attempting to steal the election.[\[175\]](#) If so, he simply lost a contest between thieves.

George Soros had been heavily involved in supporting various groups and institutions in Ukraine since the Soviet Union collapsed, including the successful candidacy of "his man" Leonid Kuchma back in 1994. He then worked with Russian shock therapist Anders Åslund of the Carnegie Endowment to help push through a \$4 billion IMF loan for Ukraine, based on what they said were Kuchma's clear pro-market reform credentials. "If this isn't meddling in the affairs of a foreign nation, I don't know what is!" Soros boasted in 1995. "I look at Ukraine with the same frame of mind as I look at [Real Estate Investment Trusts]. . . . By my intervention, I make it happen!"[\[176\]](#)

Things change. The Soros-backed Serbian group Otpor had been training the anti-Kuchma opposition since 2001.[\[177\]](#) Aleksandar Maric from the group explained to the U.S. government's Radio Liberty: "We trained them in how to set up an organization, how to open local chapters,

how to create a ‘brand,’ how to create a logo, symbols, and key messages.” He continued, “We trained them in how to identify the key weaknesses in society and what people’s most pressing problems were—what might be a motivating factor for people, and above all young people, to go to the ballot box and in this way shape their own destiny.” If it was not a zillion-dollar foreign conspiracy, this part at least might sound like what a legitimate democratic movement should be doing. “Indeed, Otpor’s tactics have been replicated not only in Kyiv, but were also visible in Minsk and Tbilisi. They include nonviolent mass protests with humor and irony, a distinct logo and clear demands,” as Radio Liberty put it.[\[178\]](#)

The Associated Press laid out much of the program in what amounted to a Bush administration press release boasting of their success. They had spent more than \$65 million through the NED, NDI, IRI, Eurasia Foundation, Carnegie Foundation, Renaissance Foundation, local media and other groups in the preceding two years, building Ukrainian political organizations and “underwriting” the exit polls indicating their man had won. “Other countries involved included Great Britain, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Norway, Sweden and Denmark,” the outlet added.[\[179\]](#)

The Bush administration even brought Yushchenko to Washington to introduce him to Vice President Dick Cheney, Deputy Secretary of State Dick Armitage and congressional Republican leaders before the election. In another example of the U.S. siding with the revolution, despite their nonpartisan, “democracy building” pretense, the AP noted that the website of the U.S.-funded Center for Political and Legal Reforms had a link to



Yushchenko's site under the heading "partners." USAID had brought a Center for Political and Legal Reforms official to Washington in 2003 for training on political advocacy and had also funded the Center for Ukrainian Reform Education, "which produces radio and television programs aiming to educate Ukrainian citizens about reforming their nation's government and economy," the AP reported.[\[180\]](#) Yushchenko also met with Zbigniew Brzezinski on the same trip.[\[181\]](#)

In the lead-up to the Orange Revolution, Freedom House gave the newly formed dissident group Pora at least \$500,000, and the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation donated \$1 million to a group called Znayu to run an advertising campaign against Yanukovych in 17 cities across Ukraine.[\[182\]](#) Western-leaning billionaire oligarch Petro Poroshenko's television station, 5th Channel, was enlisted to play a similar role to B92 and Rustavi 2, boosting the revolution on the airwaves. The channel would earn the nickname "Orange TV" due to its blatant support for the revolution.[\[183\]](#)

Delegations included Soros himself,[\[184\]](#) Senators John McCain and Richard Lugar, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, former President H.W. Bush, former Secretaries of State Albright and Kissinger, former National Security Advisor Brzezinski and retired Army Gen. Wesley Clark, who traveled to Ukraine shortly before the election to make it clear what outcome the U.S. government preferred.[\[185\]](#) Albright and McCain were at that time chairs of the NDI and IRI respectively.[\[186\]](#)

When Mark MacKinnon traveled to Kiev in early 2004, Tymoshenko and her colleagues were already making preparations. They had publicly asked for Western assistance. The Soros machine quickly responded and

worked to prepare the virtual battlefield. Just days after the Rose Revolution, David Dettman, director of the NDI in Kiev, traveled to Tbilisi to meet with his counterparts and begin preparations for the overthrow of Ukraine. Their first order of business was to bring in Otpor and Kmara to help train the youth groups who would be central to the plot.[\[187\]](#)

Not to be outdone, Boris Berezovsky, Vladimir Putin's spurned former patron, donated approximately \$21 million to the cause from his hideout in London. This became a prominent news story when Berezovsky's sock puppets tried to play down his influence and he threatened to sue them for the credit he was due, demanding an apology and an admission they were working for him. Otherwise, how would Putin know that it was his old enemy who had gotten over on him?[\[188\]](#)

A USAID report written by their contractors boasted that "the Strengthening Electoral Administration in Ukraine Project (SEAUP), administered by Development Associates, played a decidedly important role in facilitating Ukraine's turn to democracy in 2004." But, they said, they could not have done it without the generous support of USAID, which had them "working directly with NDI, IRI, Freedom House, InterNews, and ABA/CEELI [American Bar Association/Central European and Eurasian Law Initiative]." Not to deny the locals "agency" or anything, but "[w]hile the Ukrainian people are clearly the ultimate owners of the Orange Revolution, the U.S. Government and its implementing partners can take pride in their role in supporting the country's turn to democratic rule."

The Supreme Court judges who ordered a third round of voting and somehow ruled it constitutional just happened to have been trainers with

SEAUP, a fact the USAID contractors found “extremely fortuitous.” Their role was “more subtle, indirect, discreet, its success due to the close ties it enjoyed with the U.S. Embassy in Kyiv and USAID,” they continued, “as well as with Ukrainian MPs, multiple party representatives, the OSCE, international and domestic election monitors and other Western government officials.”[\[189\]](#)

## **CIA and MI6, Too**

The Australian magazine *The Age* later ran an extensive piece explaining that the U.S. and Britain had gone beyond the overt NGO-based intervention and had also launched a major covert operation to intervene in the Orange Revolution. A group made up of the American CIA, British MI6, and even part of the Ukrainian SBU and military intelligence ran a massive operation “using spies, intercept technology and old-fashioned dirty tricks,” but only to prevent outgoing president Kuchma from stealing the election from Yushchenko, they claimed. “An intelligence net involving Mr Yushchenko’s youthful and energetic chief of staff, Oleh Rybachuk, an important faction of the SBU (Security Service of Ukraine, their civilian intelligence agency), Ukrainian military intelligence and British and U.S. ambassadors was established,” the magazine said. “When Mr Rybachuk received SBU warnings of attempts to disrupt the elections or threats to Mr Yushchenko, he reported these to both ambassadors.”[\[190\]](#)

The *New York Times*, though they omitted the role of the CIA and MI6, also alleged that the SBU had switched sides and supported the Orange Revolution, saying that in addition to providing intelligence to leaders of

the protest movement, they also “provided security to opposition figures and demonstrations, sent choreographed public signals about their unwillingness to follow the administration’s path and engaged in a psychological tug-of-war with state officials to soften responses against the protests.”[\[191\]](#) The SBU gave Rybachuk, whom the *Kyiv Post* called their “chief conduit” for intelligence against Yanukovych, unverified audio purporting to reveal Kuchma’s people planning to steal the election.[\[192\]](#)

When Kuchma arranged to have miners from the eastern city of Donetsk bused to Kiev to counter-protest—or as the Western intelligence agencies claimed, to start a fight with the goal of justifying a state of emergency—the nationalists had the brilliant idea of getting them stinking drunk. At their designated meeting place, someone had left them crates of vodka. Alex Kiselev, an adviser to Yanukovych, admitted to *The Age*, “No, the vodka was not a coincidence. We realized what was going on too late. It wasn’t illegal but it was damned clever.” He lamented, “It was a trick and we were dumb enough to fall for it, we shot ourselves in the foot with that one. It was all very scripted. There were hundreds of Western agents in Ukraine.”

*The Age* piece went on to explain how the entire Orange encampment had been set up by Western intelligence agencies: “Tents, stoves, food, medical supplies, polystyrene boards for sleeping on in the bitter cold arrived as if by magic,” they wrote. “In fact, much had been planned.” It was also “Western intelligence officers [who] had recommended constant music and rock concerts to distract the huge crowd, which virtually owned the heart of Kiev.” The reporter said that “conversations with PORA leaders

reveal that some of them attended a seminar in the Crimea funded by the American Freedom House Foundation—whose chairman is former CIA chief James Woolsey, and USAID, where these techniques were taught.”[\[193\]](#)

## **The Poison Hoax**

Even better than in Georgia, the losing candidate came up with the hoax that he had been poisoned by the Ukrainian SBU—who had slipped dioxin in his soup, causing not his death, but just some nasty boils on his face. [\[194\]](#) In fact, he publicly blamed Colonel General Ihor Smeshko, [\[195\]](#) who it turns out was very much opposed to Yanukovych and had helped Yushchenko all through the elections. [\[196\]](#) These claims were made by Tymoshenko and Yushchenko’s chief of staff, Rybachuk, [\[197\]](#) but debunked by one Dr. Lothar Wicke of the Rudolfinerhaus clinic in Austria, where Yushchenko was brought for treatment. [\[198\]](#) When they tried to biopsy his facial tumors, Yushchenko refused to allow it, though the chemical should have been detectable much later if it had been there. [\[199\]](#)

The German magazine *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) reported, “Wicke gave a press conference in which he pointed out that people not employed in the Rudolfinerhaus—meaning [Nikolai] Korpan —‘made medically falsified diagnoses about the state of health by Mr. Yushchenko.’” They picked the wrong doctor to try to pressure into changing his story. After his repeated debunking, “Yushchenko’s people made clear to Wicke that he should not say anything more concerning the affair, since otherwise [as Wicke puts it] ‘one would resort to other means

against me and the hospital.’ Dr. Wicke is also supposed to have received death threats at the time.”[\[200\]](#) Wicke later told the *Telegraph*, “I was directly involved, and I can tell you that the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Vienna did not find any traces of poisonous agents in his blood. If there is no poison, there cannot be poisoning, and there was no trace of it whatsoever.” It was a lie against one of their own allies by a false authority, complete with threats against the real one.[\[201\]](#)

## **Do-Over**

After the first round of voting, neither man won a majority. Though all the exit pollsters and parallel vote tabulators had come up with results favoring Yushchenko, the Committee of Ukrainian Voters, which had been granted almost half a million dollars by the NED and International Renaissance Foundation, had skewed the numbers so badly that their leadership decided against making their impossible claims in public.[\[202\]](#)

Tymoshenko and Pora were ready to launch the street protest movement, but Yushchenko announced that he would continue to campaign and try again in the second round of voting, scheduled for November 21.

Kuchma’s people did attempt to rig the vote by busing people from Ukraine’s far-eastern Donbas region to various polling places to vote multiple times and resorted to stuffing ballot boxes to credulity-straining degrees as well, though there was massive support for Yanukovych throughout the country’s south and east.[\[203\]](#) It hardly mattered. Anything but a landslide for the Western-backed candidate would have the same outcome. Before any official results were even announced, the NED and

USAID-backed exit pollsters had proclaimed their own results—a 58 to 39 percent victory for Yushchenko—and started busing in hundreds of thousands of protesters to take over the capital city’s streets.[\[204\]](#) Operatives from Serbian Otpor, Georgian Kmara and Belarusian Zubr worked the crowds as an expensive laser and fireworks show kept the people entertained. More than 1,500 tents were set up to help establish the permanence of the protest.[\[205\]](#)

On November 23, Yushchenko declared himself the president of Ukraine, while Tymoshenko, in a conscious decision to emulate her predecessors in Serbia and Georgia, led the protesters to lay siege to the Presidential Administration building where Kuchma and his men had gathered. Though she had attempted to intimidate the regime with the size of the protest movement behind her, authorities simply told her the protest was unlawful and that they would not resign their offices.[\[206\]](#)

Secretary Powell announced that the U.S. would not accept Ukraine’s election results.[\[207\]](#) In a “symbolic vote,” parliament sided with Yushchenko, calling for a new election.[\[208\]](#)

The Supreme Court, whose members had been “trained” in election law by the American Bar Association and the International Republican Institute on a \$400,000 grant from USAID, blocked Yanukovych from taking power until they could hear Yushchenko’s case. They ended up ruling that a completely ad hoc, unconstitutional third round of voting would be held on December 26.[\[209\]](#) Tymoshenko, flanked by Poroshenko, declared victory from a stage which had been set up on the *Maidan Nezalezhnosti* (Independence Square) in Kiev for the perpetual rock concert

and protest movement.[\[210\]](#) Thousands of foreign observers flooded the country for the explicit purpose of showing a Yushchenko victory, which he evidently did win in the unconstitutional third round.[\[211\]](#)

## **Guardian On It**

While the alleged crisis was ongoing, *Guardian* European editor Ian Traynor wrote a piece on the unfolding coup, “U.S. Campaign Behind the Turmoil in Kiev.” After explaining the role of the various U.S.-backed NGOs and front groups who ran the fake revolutions in Serbia, Georgia and Belarus, Traynor wrote that again the strategy would be to force the opposition to unite behind the chosen candidate, sending “more than 1,000 trained” parallel vote tabulators (PVTs), exit pollsters and election monitors to hover at polling stations, ready to dispute the vote.

Then, of course, “[t]he final stage in the U.S. template concerns how to react when the incumbent refuses to concede.” He continued, “In Belgrade, Tbilisi, and now Kiev, where the authorities initially tried to cling to power, the advice was to stay cool but determined and to organize mass displays of civil disobedience.”[\[212\]](#)

Traynor’s colleague Jonathan Steele added that “the demonstrators do not reflect nationwide sentiments. In Ukraine, Yushchenko got the western nod, and floods of money poured in to groups which support him.” Exit polls, he said, can be unreliable, but “provide a powerful mobilizing effect, making it easier to persuade people to mount civil disobedience or seize public buildings on the grounds the election must have been stolen if the official results diverge.” Steele further explained, “Intervening in foreign



elections, under the guise of an impartial interest in helping civil society, has become the run-up to the postmodern coup d'état, the CIA-sponsored third world uprising of cold war days adapted to post-Soviet conditions.”[\[213\]](#)

Just as in Georgia, Soros's men immediately took positions in the new government, including foreign minister, defense minister and prominent advisers to both Yushchenko and Tymoshenko.[\[214\]](#) One of the first acts of the new government was to order the reversal of the Odesa-Brody oil pipeline. Before long, the new government began openly talking about joining the EU and NATO, while U.S. warships docked at ports on the Crimean Peninsula.[\[215\]](#)

## **Dr. No**

Congressman Ron Paul wrote that USAID had given millions to the Poland-America-Ukraine Cooperation Initiative (PAUCI), which was run by Soros's Freedom House. They then disbursed those funds to groups who supported Yushchenko over Yanukovych. Paul cited the PAUCI-funded Ukrainian International Center for Policy Studies. “On its Web site, we discover that this NGO was founded by George Soros' Open Society Institute. And further on we can see that Viktor Yushchenko himself sits on the advisory board!” And that was not the only one: “The Western Ukraine Regional Training Center, as another example, features a prominent USAID logo on one side of its Web site's front page and an orange ribbon of the candidate Yushchenko's party and movement on the other.” He continued, “By their proximity, the message to Ukrainian readers is clear: the U.S.

government supports Yushchenko.” It was the same with the Center for Political and Legal Reforms. “It is clear that a significant amount of U.S. taxpayer dollars went to support one candidate in Ukraine,” Paul said.[\[216\]](#)

## **Michael McFaul**

A month later, Michael McFaul, a Hoover Institution fellow and future ambassador to Russia under President Barack Obama, admitted the truth while denying it. “Did Americans meddle in the internal affairs of Ukraine? Yes.” He said that “the American agents of influence would prefer different language to describe their activities—democratic assistance, democracy promotion, civil society support, etc.—but their work, however labeled, seeks to influence political change in Ukraine.” He said that USAID, the NED, Freedom House, IRI, NDI, the Solidarity Center, Eurasia Foundation, Internews, International Renaissance Foundation and others provided what he dishonestly claimed were “small grants” to the pro-Yushchenko side. The EU and several European countries did as well. Then McFaul claimed that all they were trying to do was make sure the election was “fair.” They did this by training all the election monitors, exit pollsters, pro-Western media and the Znayu and Pora student movements. They also kept Ukrainian “democrats” in contact with their “counterparts in Slovakia, Croatia, Romania and Serbia.”

While McFaul denied siding with Yushchenko or anyone else, this is as disingenuous as can be since it was Yanukovych who won, and they had to pull their Orange Revolution stunt to cancel the results of his election. Then came the ultimate rationalization: “Does this kind of intervention violate

international norms? Not anymore. There was a time when championing state sovereignty was a progressive idea, since the advance of statehood helped destroy empires.” When they talk about the liberal, rules-based order, what they mean is that the UN Security Council is nothing compared to the U.S. National Security Council. Those who still care about national sovereignty are just siding with old dictators. Now, “those who champion the sovereignty of the people”—including the leaders of the most powerful foreign governments on the planet—“are the new progressives. In Ukraine, external actors who helped the people be heard were not violating the sovereignty of the Ukrainian people; they were defending it.”[\[217\]](#) McFaul was simply obfuscating. At the very best, the U.S. was siding with half the Ukrainian people against the other half so that the politician that the U.S. government favored would win the power.

In 2005, McFaul wrote a journal article extrapolating from the regime changes in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine, and explained how to accomplish a color revolution. The target needs to be an unpopular “semi-autocratic” regime because they have to pretend adversary states with regular elections are still dictatorships. The opposition must be united and organized. Groups need to be ready to claim election results are fraudulent, turn out large crowds and exploit divisions within the regime. Presto: democracy.

This time, McFaul completely omitted the role of foreign interests in any of these events. He credited Serbian, Georgian and Ukrainian NGOs for their supposedly “independent” exit polling and “parallel vote tabulation,” but the reader was left to believe this was all grassroots, local, patriotic,

democratic activity. The same argument is made about opposition radio stations, especially in Serbia.[\[218\]](#)

That is the template. Wherever an incumbent leader or his designated successor they do not like is running for office, the U.S., the most powerful government in the world, will stand firmly against the democratic process, supporting any number of “extraconstitutional measures,” as McFaul put it, to prevent their victory. They do this all while wrapping themselves in flags and declaring they are the ones truly committed to democracy.

Speaking of the sovereignty of the people, when protesters in Ukraine’s eastern Donbas region called for a referendum on autonomy after their candidate’s electoral victory was canceled, Ukraine’s new president threatened them: “Those who are calling for separatism are committing crimes and will definitely receive severe punishment.” They backed down.[\[219\]](#)

McFaul followed up with another piece in 2007, wherein he explained that a mass protest movement was required for the Orange Revolution to succeed, and that it really was the U.S. and its allies that got it done after all. “To understand why there were hundreds of thousands and sometimes a million people mobilized for two weeks after the vote requires a closer examination of the resources that made the Ukrainian democratic opposition powerful and effective.”[\[220\]](#)

He went on to note the effect of declaring exit polling as superior to actual counted ballots, as well as NGO-funded, so-called “independent” media, also citing the “wealthy Yushchenko ally, Petro Poroshenko,” who bought a TV station and turned it into the pro-Yushchenko Channel 5.

Poroshenko would later become president after the next regime change in 2014.[\[221\]](#) However, the masses of protesters in the streets are what really made the difference. “The protest was not spontaneous. . . . The quick appearance of truck-loads of tents, mats, and food supplies, which had been secured weeks before, clearly demonstrated the opposition’s preplanning,” McFaul said. It was Pora, with American taxpayer money, that built the permanent tent city on the Maidan and provided the supplies that made the whole thing work. He boasted that the NDI and IRI “also helped ensure that Kuchma’s party did not win an overwhelming majority of seats in the parliament.” They “worked with several parties that won representation in the Rada, and in turn helped maintain this institution’s independence from the president.” McFaul also bragged that Western denunciations of Kuchma “helped magnify his image as an illegitimate and criminal leader,” and added, “Media reporting, think tank publications, Our Ukraine [Yushchenko’s party] press releases, and parliamentary hearings . . . played some role in decreasing popular support for the Kuchma regime.” He was happy to admit that “[m]any of these critical sources received Western technical assistance or financial support, including Ukrainska Pravda, the Razumkov Centre, and the Rada.” The U.S.-backed youth groups Znayu, Pora and Freedom of Choice coalition “all contributed to more critical coverage of the Kuchma regime and a decline in its popularity.” Without irony, he noted that Western “experts” were then also able to “inform” U.S. and European officials, “who in turn influenced their own governments’ perception of Kuchma.” McFaul also said that it is even better than we think because both the Western governments and groups, as well as the

locals, have an interest in playing down the foreign role in what are supposed to look like grassroots movements. The reality was that the U.S. essentially created the pro-Yushchenko Our Ukraine coalition. “Well before” its formation, McFaul said, “IRI and NDI worked closely with many of the individuals who later assumed senior positions in the Our Ukraine organization and campaign.” They continued to support it. IRI focused on consolidating regional party leaders across the country, while the NDI worked with the top-level organizers in Kiev.[\[222\]](#)

After describing the NDI and IRI’s part in bringing Yushchenko to the U.S. for a tour around Washington, where he met important officials, and how they helped “assure the Bush administration that the Ukrainian opposition was viable and worth supporting,” McFaul added another admission about the Western groups behind Yushchenko’s alleged victory. The NDI, IRI and Soros groups had also boosted turnout in pro-Yushchenko districts with “get out the vote” projects. He continued, “Even with the PVTs [parallel vote tabulators] the Committee of Ukrainian Voters (CVU) still played a leading role in exposing fraud (and creating the perception of fraud) during the second round of the presidential vote. . . . The PVT technology used by CVU was imported from the United States.”[\[223\]](#)

It goes on and on like that, detailing the role of USAID, the NED, IRI, NDI and dozens or even hundreds of George Soros-backed NGOs of all sizes across Ukraine before, during and after the election in conducting the exit polls, making the accusations of fraud and spreading them throughout the “independent” media, which was independent from the ruling party in Kiev, if nothing else. Serbian Otpor and Georgian Kmara came to help train

the Ukrainians “through the facilitating efforts of Freedom House and the German Marshall Fund.” McFaul added that “Pavol Demes, a leader of the OK 98 movement in Slovakia, traveled to Ukraine several times in the months leading up to the Orange Revolution to train and provide support for Yellow Pora.” He continued, “Given the extremely precarious distribution of power . . . these *imported* inputs from the West were consequential in tipping the balance in favor of the democratic challengers” [emphasis in original].

According to McFaul, the Bush administration also played a crucial behind-the-scenes role in the EU and UN mediation efforts during the crisis, encouraging Yushchenko to agree to reduced powers for the presidency and increased powers of the prime minister if Kuchma and Yanukovych would agree to a third round of voting. “Ironically,” McFaul noted, “after the 2006 parliamentary elections, Yanukovych became prime minister again, this time with more enhanced powers as a result of the Orange Revolution.”[\[224\]](#)

Just for a moment, imagine any other nation intervening in America’s elections this way.

## **A Force More Powerful**

At the height of the Bush administration’s imperial hubris, an American consulting firm called the International Center on Nonviolent Conflict (ICNC), Freedom House and Otpor even made a video game about the color-coded revolutions called *A Force More Powerful*, where players go

through supposedly realistic scenarios of building up nonviolent resistance groups to destabilize their local governments.[\[225\]](#)

## **Oh, I See How It Is**

President Putin was greatly angered by the Orange Revolution. “They lied to me, I’ll never trust them again,” he reportedly said. Economist and author David Goldman wrote that “[t]he Russians still can’t fathom why the West threw over a potential strategic alliance for Ukraine. They underestimate the stupidity of the West.”[\[226\]](#)

Jonathan Steele then warned, “This one-sided intervention is playing with fire. Not only is the country geographically and culturally divided—a recipe for partition or even civil war—it is also an important neighbor to Russia.” He said that “Putin has been clumsy, but to accuse Russia of imperialism because it shows close interest in adjoining states and the Russian-speaking minorities who live there is a wild exaggeration.” A Russia expert who lived there for years and wrote an incredible book about the fall of the Soviet Union, Steele made it plain. “Ukraine has been turned into a geostrategic matter not by Moscow but by Washington, which refuses to abandon its cold war policy of encircling Russia and seeking to pull every former Soviet republic into its orbit.” He acknowledged that “[t]he vast bulk of the demonstrators in Kiev are undoubtedly genuine. Their enthusiasm and determination are palpable.” However, he said, “they do not reflect nationwide sentiment, and the support for Yanukovych in eastern Ukraine is also genuine.” Steele also challenged the black-and-white moral narrative spun by Western governments. “Nor are we watching a struggle



between freedom and authoritarianism, as is romantically alleged.” He noted that Western hero “Yushchenko served as prime minister under Kuchma, and some of his backers are also linked to the brutal industrial clans who manipulated Ukraine’s post-Soviet privatization.” And on the other side, “Putin is not inherently against a democratic Ukraine, however authoritarian he is in his own country. What concerns him is instability, the threat of anti-Russian regimes on his borders and American mischief.”[\[227\]](#)

Bush apparently admitted to Putin that the U.S. spent at least \$14 million supporting the protest movement there. As the *Journal* put it, “The Kremlin saw the Orange Revolution as U.S.-sponsored destabilization aimed at pulling Ukraine out of Moscow’s orbit—and as a prelude to a similar campaign in Russia itself.”[\[228\]](#) George Friedman also wrote, “To Putin, the actions in Ukraine indicated that the United States in particular was committed to extending the collapse of the Soviet Union to a collapse of the Russian Federation.”[\[229\]](#)

That was correct. Neoconservative commentator Charles Krauthammer explained in the *Post*, “This is about Russia first, democracy only second.” Forthright in his arrogance, he added, “This Ukrainian episode is a brief, almost nostalgic throwback to the Cold War. Russia is trying to hang on to the last remnants of its empire. The West wants to finish the job begun with the fall of the Berlin Wall and continue Europe’s march to the east.”[\[230\]](#)

For her part, Yulia Tymoshenko, riding high on her victory, threatened, “As soon as our Orange Revolution has been completed, we’ll transfer it to Russia.” The *Guardian* paraphrased her, adding that “one could see cars with orange ribbons in Moscow even now.”[\[231\]](#)

## Solzhenitsyn on Ukraine

In 1990, as the USSR was falling apart, the great Soviet dissident Alexander Solzhenitsyn, author of the *Gulag Archipelago*,[\[232\]](#) attempted to beseech Ukraine to stay in a union with Russia. Whether or not that would have been the right thing, his statement goes to show how truly complicated and intertwined these historical loyalties can be. The coming problems were obvious from the beginning, since the newly independent nation would include “those regions which have never been part of the traditional Ukraine: the ‘wild steppe’ of the nomads—the later ‘New Russia’—as well as the Crimea, the Donbas area, and the lands stretching east almost to the Caspian Sea.”

Still, he said that “the two populations are thoroughly intermingled; there are entire regions where Russians predominate; many individuals would be hard put to choose between the two nationalities; many others are of mixed origin, and there are plenty of mixed marriages.” In vain, Solzhenitsyn exclaimed, “Brothers! We have no need of this cruel partition. The very idea comes from the darkening of minds brought on by the communist years. Together,” he said, “we have borne the suffering of the Soviet period, together we have tumbled into this pit, and together, too, we shall find our way out.”[\[233\]](#) Solzhenitsyn elaborated his views in a 1994 interview with Paul Klebnikov. He asked us to imagine states in the American Southwest breaking away to join Mexico, then vowing to oppress Anglos who refused to learn Spanish and swear loyalty to Mexico City, even if their families had lived there for two centuries. “What would be the reaction of the United States?” he asked. “I have no doubt that it would be

immediate military intervention.” This, Solzhenitsyn said, was the exact situation Russia was in, having left 25 million “undesirable aliens” behind in what are now foreign countries, even in places where their history went back centuries. “And in this situation ‘imperialist Russia,’” he said, “has not made a single forceful move to rectify this monstrous mess. Without a murmur she has given away 25 million of her compatriots—the largest diaspora in the world!”

Being half-Ukrainian himself, Solzhenitsyn said he wished the best for Ukraine, “but only within her real ethnic boundaries, without grabbing Russian provinces.” And he warned that the Ukrainian right was “acting out and trumpeting a cult of force, persistently inflating Russia into the image of an ‘enemy.’ Militant slogans are proclaimed. And the Ukrainian army is being indoctrinated with the propaganda that war with Russia is inevitable.”[\[234\]](#)

## **Secession Is an Option**

Tensions between the new regime and the east became apparent immediately. Leonid Kravchuk, the first president of post-Soviet, independent Ukraine, once said, “We are a country of different interests. Ukraine has three small Ukraines: South-East, West and Center. Different historical roots, different mentalities, different historical memory.”[\[235\]](#)

Nicolai N. Petro, a former U.S. State Department official and professor of politics at the University of Rhode Island, explains this historical idea of “three Ukraines,” with the South-East as the economic and industrial center, the West as the cultural center, and the Center as the geographical and

political center.<sup>[236]</sup> Petro himself views Ukraine as “two nations in one state,” Galician (anti-Russia) in the west and Maloross (pro-Russia) in the east. “The competition between these two mutually exclusive versions of Ukrainian identity,” he wrote, “plays a central role in Ukrainian history. During much of the twentieth century, these two identities struggled to coexist and find common ground.”<sup>[237]</sup> That was sure putting it mildly.<sup>[238]</sup>

The history of the region was a complicated mess. Russian civilization had in fact been born in what is now Ukraine. Its history is usually traced back to when Prince Vladimir of Kiev was baptized into Eastern Orthodoxy in 988. From the Russian point of view, the center of Eastern Slavic power naturally moved to Moscow. From the Ukrainian view, the Muscovites simply usurped their rightful legacy as the true heirs of the ancient Rus.<sup>[239]</sup> The political map of the region changed many times over the centuries, with various warlords and clans ruling parts of what is now Ukraine, including the Turks, Poles, Lithuanians, Hungarians and Austrians. Under the later Tsars, ethnic Russians dominated, especially in the eastern industrial cities. Then the Communists had enforced their own tyranny over the land, including Stalin’s deliberately inflicted famine, known as the Holodomor, in Ukraine and Uzbekistan in the early 1930s.<sup>[240]</sup> By the time the Soviet Union disintegrated in the late 1980s, more than 20 percent of the population was ethnic Russians, especially concentrated in the eastern and southern regions of Kharkiv, the Donbas (Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts or provinces), Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts on the Azov Coast, as well as the Crimean Peninsula and Odesa.

[\[241\]](#) In these regions, they were mostly between 20 and 40 percent of the population, 60 percent in Crimea. But a far greater proportion of the people, up to 80 percent, primarily spoke Russian, and the vast majority of print publications were in Russian—at least until the new government’s post-2004 Ukrainianization policy.[\[242\]](#)

The Communists in Moscow had redrawn Ukraine’s borders to suit their interests, first as part of the cost of making peace with the Central Powers in the First World War,[\[243\]](#) then to regain as much of the territory as they could afterward,[\[244\]](#) more after the Hitler-Stalin pact and division of Poland[\[245\]](#) and finally with their victory over Germany in World War II and the deal with Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt at Yalta.[\[246\]](#)

Part of the reason the Communists drew the border to include the Donbas and Crimea was to have ethnic Russians dominate the eastern industrial base, and to dilute the influence of ethnic Ukrainians in the east.[\[247\]](#) The nation’s eastern border since independence in 1991 was drawn by the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Soviet Union, Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, in 1919.

The reaction in the east to the election interference of 2004 was a protest movement of their own. Tens of thousands turned out in late November in Donetsk to protest and threaten autonomy or secession. The Donetsk soviet moved to hold a referendum on autonomy, though they eventually withdrew it.[\[248\]](#)

Murray N. Rothbard described exactly this problem with the Western doctrine of collective security. All borders are considered sacrosanct, even if they are all wrong.[\[249\]](#) It truly is the curse of the Old World that

virtually all borders have been drawn in blood, and often by far-flung foreign empires who deliberately divided or artificially grouped different ethnicities in the interests of ruling them. Ukraine's borders have been drawn and redrawn over the centuries as its territory was virtually always dominated by foreign empires. Perhaps they simply need adjusting.

Predicting dissention and further reaction during the 2004 Orange Revolution, Rothbard protégé Justin Raimondo wrote that Kiev should just let the east go. "Why are boundaries carved by Russian Communists set in stone?" he wondered.[\[250\]](#) For some countries, democratic, pluralistic, multi-ethnic, multi-religious statehood works. For others, separation may be preferable. It worked for Czechoslovakia, which is now the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The U.S. was more than happy to support the secession of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia[\[251\]](#) and Montenegro[\[252\]](#) from the former Yugoslavia.

But Secretary of State Powell, whose department had done so much to foment the crisis, said he was concerned that Ukraine might split. "I reaffirmed to President Kuchma the United States' position and the position of others that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is important." He then joked, "We once again reaffirmed that we hope that Ukrainians will find a legal way forward as well as a political process based on the constitutional law."[\[253\]](#)

That was the first time America helped overthrow Ukraine's government.

## **Orange Peeled**

Of course, it is true that some governments the U.S. has helped to overthrow are corrupt, but that is just a convenient excuse. It is not the case that the U.S. is replacing corrupt governments with clean ones. The Yushchenko-Tymoshenko alliance, which had been forged in a secret deal authored by the American NDI,[\[254\]](#) and which took power in Ukraine in the 2004 Orange Revolution, was so corrupt and dysfunctional that the two were at each other's throats within a year.[\[255\]](#)

Anders Åslund is a Swedish anti-Russia hawk, and at that time director of the Russian and Eurasian Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. He had been part of the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) group who helped to wreck the Russian economy in the Bill Clinton years[\[256\]](#) and aided George Soros as he rigged the 1994 election for Leonid Kuchma.[\[257\]](#) Åslund would later hysterically demand that President Biden bomb Russia after an errant Ukrainian missile killed two Polish farmers,[\[258\]](#) and the Associated Press reported a false claim by a single American intelligence source asserting Russia had deliberately fired it[\[259\]](#)—so the reader understands whose side he is on. Just a year after the supposed revolution, Åslund complained that the new government, led by Prime Minister Tymoshenko, was as socialist as the last, expanding government monopolies, raising government employee wages, imposing price controls, causing shortages and taxing everyone to death.[\[260\]](#) Yushchenko fired her and National Security Council Secretary Petro Poroshenko in 2005.[\[261\]](#)

The country then gave the plurality in the Rada to Yanukovych—the great villain of the Orange Revolution—leaving Yushchenko no choice but

to name him prime minister in 2006.[\[262\]](#) Yanukovych won the Presidency in 2010,[\[263\]](#) in an election that was ruled free and fair by all the international observers.[\[264\]](#) Yushchenko got 5.5 percent of the vote in the first round.[\[265\]](#) In both cases Yanukovych was assisted by American political consultant Paul Manafort, a notorious adviser to dictatorships across South America, Africa and East Asia,[\[266\]](#) as well as Sen. McCain at the IRI. Former McCain adviser and Manafort partner Rick Davis supported Yanukovych as well, even though the senator was firmly behind Yushchenko.[\[267\]](#)

Joe Biden, a leading voice of support for the Orange Revolution in the U.S. Senate,[\[268\]](#) later summed up its results in a speech to the Rada: “Ukraine’s leaders proved incapable of delivering on the promise of democratic revolution. We saw reforms put in place only to be rolled back. We saw oligarchs uninterested in change ousted from power only to return.” Despite all of America’s best efforts, “the bright flame of hope for a new Ukraine snuffed out by the pervasive poison of cronyism, corruption, and kleptocracy.”[\[269\]](#)

When Yanukovych’s government prosecuted Tymoshenko over her signing a gas deal with Russia in 2011, her old partner Yushchenko testified against her, accusing her of being a “pliant, pro-Russian leader.” Either one hero of the Orange Revolution was a traitorous sellout to the Russians, or another was corrupt enough to falsely accuse her of being one on the stand at her criminal trial.[\[270\]](#)

In the midst of the Orange Revolution, and the Russian reaction to it, the administration announced a broad review of Russia policy, saying they



were abandoning their “strategic partnership” in favor of a “more confrontational approach.” They cited NSC Director for Europe and Eurasia Daniel Fried and Vice President Cheney’s foreign policy adviser, Robert Kagan’s wife, Victoria Nuland, as saying that Secretary Rice’s old realpolitik approach to Russia was outdated and the U.S. now needed to confront them about Democracy. Stanford’s McFaul said it was Putin’s reaction to the perfectly legitimate goings-on in Ukraine that necessitated America’s new harsher doctrine.[\[271\]](#)

## **The Tulip Revolution**

### **To Be America’s Friend Is Fatal**

Daniel McAdams, foreign policy adviser to then-Rep. Ron Paul, complained to Voice of America in 2004 that the NED did not just blindly support the democratic process in these countries, but supposed American “interests” as well, and that they often chose very poorly. “As a matter of fact in Slovakia,” he told them, “the candidate that they were fighting against—Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar—had been persecuted by the Communist regime, and the people who they supported were for the most part former Communist officials in Czechoslovakia.”[\[272\]](#)

In Kyrgyzstan, the previous leader Askar Akayev had been America’s friend.[\[273\]](#) But in the “Daffodil” or “Tulip” Revolution of March 2005, the U.S. government overthrew Akayev in favor of Kurmanbek Bakiyev, who had been prime minister, but had been forced to resign[\[274\]](#) after police under his command killed five demonstrators at a protest in 2002.[\[275\]](#)

Under Akayev, the Americans maintained the Ganci Air Base at the Manas airport, which was crucial to the war in Afghanistan.[\[276\]](#) The Bush administration had made a fuel deal with companies owned by the president's family members. This was supposed to solidify his support for the Americans' position there. Instead, the obvious corruption helped to discredit him and weaken his rule.[\[277\]](#)

Then, just after returning from a trip to Moscow, Akayev made the mistake of allowing the Russians to return to and expand another air base near the village of Kant, just 30 miles from Ganci. Akayev also announced that he had decided to deny the U.S. the right to base Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) planes at Ganci. The Americans claimed to need them for the Afghan war, but the Russians were concerned they would be used for surveillance inside their country instead.[\[278\]](#) Lockheed's Bruce Jackson was upset. He complained to Congress that Russian pressure on Kyrgyzstan to deny America the right to base AWACS planes on their territory was a major signifier of their failure to become a modern democracy.[\[279\]](#)

## **Soros's Islamists**

The regime had also gone after the radical Islamist faction Hizb ut-Tahrir (HuT), which was being supported by Soros's Freedom House. According to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting, "In another sign of Kyrgyzstan's apparent shift away from the West, the country's security forces have accused foreign civil rights advocates of helping the radical Islamic group Hizb-ut-Tahrir." What an odd thing to say, but true. "At a

government meeting on 28 June, National Security Service, NSS, spokesman Tokon Mamitov said the banned group was exploiting the undue attention it was paid by groups like the United States-based Freedom House,” which had “angered the Kyrgyz authorities when it invited Hizb-ut-Tahrir members to a March 1 meeting that was also attended by Kyrgyz police and prosecutors, and by representatives of the U.S. embassy and the OSCE.”[\[280\]](#)

In 2006, Daniel Fried, then-assistant secretary of state for European affairs, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that Hizb ut-Tahrir “claimed to be non-violent and moderate, while appealing to the idealism of socially alienated and/or spiritually hungry Muslims in Europe,” but that “it transmits a hateful, anti-Semitic and anti-American call for the overthrow, albeit non-violent, of existing governments and the reestablishment of a single Islamist theocracy (or Caliphate).” He added that “Hizb ut-Tahrir’s websites have deemed justified the killing of Americans or Jews, and even the flying of airplanes into office buildings.” The Germans and British had banned the group. The State Department’s Fried continued, “We lack evidence of Hizb ut-Tahrir having organized terrorist actions, but we know it skillfully uses Western freedoms to provide the ideological foundation for Islamist terrorists.”[\[281\]](#)

On June 6, 2003, Russian police arrested 55 men they said were members of Hizb ut-Tahrir and accused them of possessing explosives.  
[\[282\]](#)

Perhaps the danger of this group was embellished, and they were as peaceful as the U.S. State Department now claims.[\[283\]](#) However, just

think how Western intervention in favor of such dissident factions in countries on the other side of the world must look to them and, more importantly, to the Russians. Then when their governments react against these groups—even ones also banned by our closest allies—that becomes the excuse for intervention against them.

## **Same Ol' Thing**

The U.S. sponsored another color-coded “revolution,” this time a violent one against their old client Akayev.[\[284\]](#) In early 2005, the usual suspects started getting prepared. The NED financed a group called Civil Society Against Corruption and sponsored a new youth group called Kel-Kel. The election was held on February 27. The OSCE had complained about irregularities in their electoral process,[\[285\]](#) which was all the excuse the U.S. government needed to interfere. Violent mobs seized control in the southern cities of Jalal-Abad and Osh. Like Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan is deeply divided by region and ethnicity. The south of the country was dominated by ethnic Uzbeks who resented the ethnic Kyrgyz control of the national government and its powers over the economy. They were taking the opportunity to riot against central authority. Democracy, like in previous color-coded revolutions, had very little to do with it beyond a rallying cry of pretended legitimacy for the protesters.

The *Wall Street Journal* explained it all before the coup. An American named Mike Stone was paid by USAID through Soros’s Freedom House and Open Democracy Institute to run a State Department-owned printing press on U.S. Embassy-provided generators to endlessly print anti-regime

propaganda, including all the typical Otpor-style advice on civil disobedience. They directly tied the Kyrgyz protest movement to previous color-coded revolutions in Georgia and Ukraine, saying, “Now, opposition figures hope to go three-for-three—this time using yellow as their color—in a bid to push Mr. Akayev from power.” He had allowed the Trojan Horse inside the city walls, having welcomed as many as 8,000 foreign-backed NGOs to influence society. “Akayev once joked that if the Netherlands is a land of tulips, then Kyrgyzstan is a land of NGOs,” the *Journal* said. The U.S. had spent almost \$750 million there between 1992 and 1995, including \$31 million after the Freedom Support Act of 2004.[\[286\]](#) The NDI paid an Akayev opponent named Edil Baisalov \$110,000 per year to run a group called “the Coalition for Democracy and Civil Rights,” who in turn supported the dissident group Kel-Kel and printed their manifesto.

The exit pollsters, election monitors and radio reporters were ready.[\[287\]](#) On February 27 they held elections, and the Western-backed side immediately cried fraud. Two cities in the predominantly ethnic-Uzbek south, Osh and Batken, were taken over first, and then the protests spread to the capital of Bishkek.[\[288\]](#)

On March 25, protesters seized control of the Presidential Administration offices, forcing Akayev to flee to Russia. Police simply stood aside and allowed them in.[\[289\]](#) Five days later, the *New York Times* helped the W. Bush administration publicize their great success. They had spent at least \$12 million on “pro-democracy” programs, not including money funneled through Freedom House or Radio Liberty, which was spent supporting groups, backing radio and television stations and “civil society

centers” where propaganda was distributed. The NDI’s Baisalov told the *Times*, “It would have been absolutely impossible for this to have happened without that help.” American Jeffrey Lilley from the IRI boasted that his group had helped to get the regime change done. Alexander Kim, editor of a U.S. government-subsidized opposition newspaper, said that “[t]he role of the NGOs and independent media were crucial factors in the revolution.”[\[290\]](#) Who needs secret CIA plots when you can just put NED ones on the front page of the *Journal* and the *Times*? What could Putin’s Russia do about it anyway? “What happened today concerns the Kyrgyz people and their decisions, yet the United States is proud to have assisted the process,” declared Ambassador Stephen Young.[\[291\]](#) “It’s the fourth wave of democratization,” said the *Washington Post*’s Daniel Drezner.[\[292\]](#)

The normally reasonable Samuel Charap of the RAND Corporation dismissed claims of American influence in the alleged revolution by saying the new regime did not end up behaving substantially different toward the United States or Russia. But that fact does not reflect on their effort at all, only its result, which may have been less than what the regime changers had hoped for. And, to be fair, he emphasized that what mattered most was Russian perceptions of the events—and those were decidedly negative. The “revolution” only proved to them how unrelenting the American regime change agenda in Russia’s near abroad really was.[\[293\]](#)

## **Russian Reaction**

Perhaps here we should take the naïve version of this story at face value for argument’s sake. Let us stipulate that all the U.S. government’s direct

support for “civil society” institutions, NGOs, independent political parties and election infrastructure in this vast number of countries across Eastern Europe and Central Asia—due solely to a pure and virginal commitment to the highest ideals of natural rights, equality and independence for the benighted people of the world—has only coincidentally empowered pro-American forces time after time, if not from winning elections, then from disputing them, because people just really like the U.S. and truly hate and fear Russia. The fact that these “democratic” revolutions always target Russia’s friends over disputed elections while the U.S. supports outright monarchies and military dictatorships across the Middle East and Central Asia can also be dismissed as only a correlation that does not indicate true U.S. intentions in any way. . . Well, still. The policy is clearly causing the Russians to panic, understandably, and is risking major war in the name of democracy in places that never had it and probably never will, like Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.

Unsurprisingly, after the coup, Putin started cracking down on foreign-funded NGOs in Russia, telling the press, “I object categorically to foreign funding of political activity in the Russian Federation. . . . Not a single self-respecting country allows that and neither will we.”[\[294\]](#) In January 2006, he signed a new law requiring detailed reports of their finances and relationships. Putin adviser Vladislav Surkov explained that “NGOs won’t be able to act in Russia as they did in the color revolutions in Ukraine and Georgia. Period. In the ’90s we were too weak and distracted to act. Now Russia will defend its sovereignty.” When Putin warned Amb. Burns about interference in Russia’s elections in 2007, the diplomat gave him the

standard line about U.S. supporting democracy, but never any particular party or candidate. Putin simply responded, “Don’t think we won’t react to outside interference.” He cited all the money being poured in and American diplomats and spies running around the country meeting with opposition figures.[\[295\]](#)

In reaction to the overthrow of Akayev in Kyrgyzstan, the Kazak and Uzbek regimes also preemptively cracked down on foreign-backed NGOs, with the Uzbeks shutting down the Open Society Institute permanently. As Mark MacKinnon noted, Soros’s groups were willing to encourage dissent even in U.S.-backed nations like Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan, where the NED and USAID would not.[\[296\]](#) Even after Uzbek dictator Islam Karimov’s forces machine-gunned hundreds of protesters in May 2005, the Bush administration waited days to condemn the slaughter. They would not lift a finger to help dissidents in any of the three nations because they liked the dictatorships there just fine.[\[297\]](#) As MacKinnon also noted, it was clearly U.S. support for the groups on the ground that had made the difference in every nation where the color-coded revolutions had succeeded. Soros money, opposition media and energetic youth groups could not make the difference without the NED and their associates to handle the heavy lifting.[\[298\]](#)

William Perry faulted the U.S. for stationing provocative missile defense systems in Eastern Europe[\[299\]](#) and for supporting the color-coded revolutions in Russia’s near abroad,[\[300\]](#) saying they had poisoned relations with Putin’s Russia. In fact, he said Putin was sure the U.S. was plotting to overthrow him too, something which Perry did not seem to think



was too farfetched himself. “After he came to office, Putin came to believe that the United States had an active and robust program to overthrow his regime,” he told the *Guardian*. “I don’t know the facts behind Putin’s belief that we actually had a program to foment revolution in Russia, but what counts is he believed it.”[\[301\]](#)

## **Tulip Bust**

Bakiyev was as corrupt as his predecessor.[\[302\]](#) He lost much of his credibility after a U.S. soldier stationed in the country shot and killed a fuel delivery man at a checkpoint in 2006. The soldier claimed self-defense based on sketchy claims that the man had brandished a knife at him,[\[303\]](#) an incident the later Obama administration decided to compound by making a “condolence payment” of merely \$2,000. Though they later gave the victim’s wife more money, it was too late. The scandal of the lower amount had already made its impression on the population.[\[304\]](#)

Bakiyev dealt with the pressure by turning on his American patrons. He shut down the local rebroadcasts of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and threatened to expel the U.S. military from the Manas Air Base in 2006[\[305\]](#) and again in 2009.[\[306\]](#)

After installing his own family kleptocracy and obviously rigging the election of 2009,[\[307\]](#) Bakiyev was then overthrown himself in what looked much more like a real popular revolution in 2010,[\[308\]](#) which he attempted to suppress violently, massacring protesters before giving up and fleeing the capital.[\[309\]](#)

Anti-Russia hawk Steve LeVine complained that when Obama refused Bakiyev's request for military assistance, it represented "pulling the plug on America's empire in Central Asia." At least he was being honest, instead of pretending the U.S. was on the side of Kyrgyz independence. LeVine wrote, "On paper, the Obama administration continues to reject the idea of a Russian sphere of influence in Central Asia, but the events in Kyrgyzstan appear to mark a softening of this red line in practice." He was "leaving a largely powerless government to its own devices"—as opposed to, say, helping the coup regime crack down on dissent to stay in power.[\[310\]](#)

An expert from the Brookings Institution was even so honest, or critical, to write in April 2010, when Bakiyev was overthrown, that the new regime was much more cautious about working with the Americans since they had been willing to countenance Bakiyev's corruption and oppression while Russia had supported more democratic forces.[\[311\]](#)

The new government vowed to force the United States out of the Manas Air Base in 2011,[\[312\]](#) in part because of the scandals, and in part because of pressure from the Russians.[\[313\]](#) Though the Obama administration delayed as long as possible, they finally left in 2014.[\[314\]](#)

It was the same in Kyrgyzstan as it was in Serbia, Georgia and Ukraine: all the color-coded revolutions eventually fade to black.[\[315\]](#)

Why would foreign-backed coups ever produce stable governments, when whoever the outsiders pick are virtually necessarily not those who would have the most support to inherit power over the state? Even if they did not have a conflict of interest, the knowledge problem precludes it. They are virtually guaranteed not to have enough information to decide who

they can put in power and who will protect their interests while holding on to what could be seen by many locals as foreign rule.[\[316\]](#)

## **The Denim Revolution**

### **October 2004**

Bush tried again to overthrow Belarus's Alexander Lukashenko in the "Denim Revolution" of 2005–2006. First, in October 2004, a referendum was held on amendments to the constitution which would allow the president to seek a third term. While Western-backed exit polls showed broad support for the measures, the dissenters' blatant attempts to spin them otherwise only backfired, discrediting the pollsters.[\[317\]](#)

### **Foreign Agents Confirmed**

In February 2005, President Bush awarded "Champion of Freedom" medals to members of Slovakian OK'98, Serbian Otpor, Georgian Pora, Belarusian Zubr, as well as activists with the Liberty Institute and the Young Lawyers Association in Georgia. Bush's association with Zubr was so toxic that the award recipient, Vlad Kobets, was discredited and was forced to resign and flee to Ukraine.[\[318\]](#)

### **Tens of Millions**

That spring, Secretary Rice traveled to Lithuania to meet with Belarusian opposition figures. While there, she declared Belarus an "outpost of

tyranny” and announced that it was “time for a change” of regime there. [\[319\]](#) The U.S. and its allies spent at least \$25 million on the attempt to overthrow Lukashenko, with all involved making direct references to Serbia and Ukraine as models for how it should be done. [\[320\]](#) But the nation was nowhere nearly as divided as had been the case in Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine or Kyrgyzstan. Nor would Lukashenko tolerate NED- and Soros-backed NGOs inside the country, forcing dozens of them out and leaving the regime changers to wage the attempted overthrow from Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Slovakia. [\[321\]](#)

Their new youth group, Khopits (“Enough”), was well-funded by the IRI, NED, the UK’s Westminster Foundation and German Foreign Ministry, but had little success, with public opinion solidly behind the government. [\[322\]](#) With help from the German Marshall Fund office in Slovakia, they came up with the gimmick of using blue jeans as the symbol of their new color-coded revolution. The EU poured in \$2.4 million to bankroll opposition media, and the NED another \$2.2 million for other election-related grants. They chose a little-known professor named Alexander Milinkevich to be their unification candidate since the other opposition leaders were already identified by the public as being foreign agents. [\[323\]](#) A poll in January showed only 17 percent saying they planned to vote for the challenger. [\[324\]](#)

While the media claimed more than 10,000 protesters turned out to set up their tent city, [\[325\]](#) this was false. McAdams reported the truth of the matter, having witnessed it firsthand. “I was there standing in October Square on Wednesday afternoon watching the 150 or so protesters while the

BBC reported ‘thousands.’” That same day, he said, the German paper *Frankfurter Allgemeine* reported that “they flew flags of denim” when McAdams saw not one denim flag on the square. And while the Western media reported an oppressive government presence, he said “there was hardly a police officer to be seen.” He also pointed out that the OSCE observers who complained about the vote process were almost all Western diplomats and intelligence officials with a massive conflict of interest in complaining about the election, and that the IRI failed to produce their promised exit polls, indicating that they likely showed a solid victory for the incumbent.[\[326\]](#) He also observed the vote-counting and found the process to be perfectly transparent and inclusive of all parties.[\[327\]](#)

Jonathan Steele explained the situation: “Would you expect a European leader who has presided over a continual increase in real wages for several years, culminating in a 24 percent rise over the past 12 months, to be voted out of office?” He asked, “What if he has also cut VAT [value added tax], brought down inflation, halved the number of people in poverty in the past seven years, and avoided social tensions by maintaining the fairest distribution of incomes of any country in the region?” That was the situation in Belarus. Just because the administration was angry at them for being independent, that did not mean the people of the country agreed with whatever George W. Bush wanted.

Steele noted, however, the amount of Western media coverage already set on the narrative that the upcoming election was sure to be unfair. “We saw similar conformism little more than a year ago in Ukraine, when one side was glorified to the skies, as if only a tiny minority of benighted

Soviet-era automatons did not support the pro-western candidate, Viktor Yushchenko.” In fact, Yanukovych had gotten 44 percent of the vote, and, Steele correctly predicted, “may even emerge with the highest number of votes in Ukraine’s parliamentary elections.” But the public narrative was being driven by the administration’s policy. “[T]here is a huge campaign by foreign governments to intervene in the Belarussian poll, even more controversially than in Ukraine in 2004. While Russia is hardly engaged in this election, Europe and the U.S. are pumping in money.” He said that “[s]ome of this foreign money will be used to fund street protests promised by opposition activists if Lukashenko is declared the winner. They have already dubbed it the ‘denim revolution,’ giving supporters little bits of the cloth as symbols to copy the successful demonstrations in Ukraine and Georgia.”[\[328\]](#)

Steele cited a *New York Times* report called “Bringing Down Europe’s Last Ex-Soviet Dictator,” saying the NED and friends were pouring in millions of dollars on the attempted regime change. The *Times* introduced Milinkevich and explained that state monopoly media had made the people crazy, their heads full of dumb conspiracy theories: “In the consciousness of a people saturated with state propaganda and ideology, he appears as the shadowy leader of a revolutionary cadre financed by big powers abroad and committed to the overthrow of the government,” the truth of which was exactly the point of the article itself. They continued, “President Bush [and] leaders across Europe, have thrown their support—and money—behind Milinkevich and an array of democratically minded activists determined to wake up a populace considered too passive, or too afraid, to challenge the

state.” They quoted Lukashenko’s warning to would-be revolutionaries: “Any attempt to destabilize the situation will be met with drastic action. We will wring the necks of those who are actually doing it and those who are instigating these acts.” He added that “[e]mbassies of certain states should be aware of this. They should know that we know what they are up to. They will be thrown out of here within 24 hours.”[\[329\]](#)

Democracy is when there is a “popular uprising” by “George W. Bush and leaders across Europe” against governments with overwhelming domestic support to cancel election results that do not go their way. Or at least in this case to stage some sort of mass protest to show their discontent when they were sure to lose badly. Lukashenko “acts as if the world were plotting to overthrow him,” the *Times* wrote in their piece about how the West was trying to overthrow him. “In a sense, Lukashenko is right. The policies of the European Union and the United States—supporting free news media, sponsoring civic organizations and providing assistance to the country’s democratic opposition—all seek to undermine his hold on power.” The article started to read as if it had been written by Lukashenko’s press office. Whose side were they on anyway? “With the election approaching, foreign aid has jumped in ways reminiscent of the cold war. In January, the European Union awarded a two-year, \$2.4 million contract to a German organization, Media Consulta, to coordinate the broadcasting of news into Belarus.” They also said the Bush administration spent \$11.8 million on “democracy promotion” in 2005 and planned to spend another \$12 million in 2006. The NED was prepared to spend another \$2.2 million “on 49 grants related to the Belarus election.” The Americans sponsored an

election-monitoring group called Partnership. What the *Times* called “the Belarusian freedom industry” met in Vilnius, Lithuania, to divide up millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, with one big winner being the youth group Khopits, which they said “does not, officially, exist. . . . According to its members and sponsors, [it] is a network of cells with dozens of activists in 60 cities and villages.” The *Times* said that “Khopits’s information war is well under way.” The NED, Westminster Foundation for Democracy (the NED’s British equivalent) and the Foreign Ministry of Germany were bankrolling it all.

They went on to describe the role of Bush 2004 campaign manager Terry Nelson and the IRI, NDI, NED and others in coordinating the Belarusians’ dissent with Khopits and Zubr, including their planned protests after the election. Milinkevich told the *Times* they were trying to provoke Lukashenko into declaring martial law in a desperate attempt to undermine his legitimacy. Perhaps they did not consider what it meant for theirs. [\[330\]](#)

Steele concluded, “The revolt against Lukashenko within Belarus is genuine, idealistic and, in some cases, courageous. . . . But they are not the majority.” He elaborated, “A poll in January by Gallup/Baltic Surveys, and reported in the emigre *Belarusian Review*, found only 17 percent in favor of Milinkevich and nearly 55 percent supporting Lukashenko.” If the U.S. government really supported democracy, they would have respected that. [\[331\]](#)



## Freedom Betrayed

As Thomas Carothers from the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace pointed out, the W. Bush administration's blatant support for the overthrow of the governments of Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, combined with their total contempt for the rule of law and individual rights, was a public relations disaster for freedom and self-government in the world. "Democracy promotion" had come to be seen as just an excuse for the American empire to launch regime change operations in other people's nations.[\[332\]](#) Not only did the U.S. back royal monarchies[\[333\]](#) and assorted military dictatorships[\[334\]](#) while overthrowing elected governments and starting illegal wars,[\[335\]](#) but the CIA tortured at least seven men to death,[\[336\]](#) the military at least 108,[\[337\]](#) in addition to thousands more tortured by their Iraqi and Afghan clients during the terror wars.[\[338\]](#) And they were guilty of millions of felony violations of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, illegally spying on Americans.[\[339\]](#) Not that foreign states care about that, but it goes to show that the U.S. government does not mean what they say about the rule of law any more than the others do, and so all criticisms along those lines may be ignored as irrelevant. Carothers seemed honestly surprised at the transparency of the administration's hypocrisy in the cases of Egypt, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. After rigged elections in all three countries, "U.S. officials have said little in public about the events. It seems that all three of these strongmen will pay no significant price for their antidemocratic defiance."

Within a year and a half of Carothers's essay, due to the Federal Reserve's big budget-friendly, low-interest rate policy, they created a bubble that collapsed the world economy.[\[340\]](#) Bush claimed freedom, justice and the American way as their purpose for it all.[\[341\]](#) So in reaction, more came to consider the concepts themselves to be bankrupt, and worse, plausible denial for American covert operations against them. In response, Carothers lamented, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Belarus and many other countries passed laws restricting foreign NGOs from interfering in their politics.[\[342\]](#) MacKinnon, who was probably the foremost chronicler of the color-coded revolutions, actually thought they were on balance good for the target countries, but noted that they meant fair elections would now be further away than ever for other nations in the region, making them a wash at best.[\[343\]](#)

## **Crying For Yukos**

### **Texas Tea**

Due in large measure to W. Bush's self-described "unjustified and brutal invasion of Iraq"[\[344\]](#) in 2003, oil prices skyrocketed, saving the Russian economy and the presidency of Vladimir Putin. By 2005, the government had paid off all of their foreign debt and cut taxes,[\[345\]](#) while their annual growth rate was averaging 7 percent. Unemployment fell to record lows, and the president's approval rating was sky-high.[\[346\]](#) Putin, a former member of Yeltsin's corrupt crime "family," had instituted a new domestic economic order. The oligarchs could have their wealth, but they better stay

out of politics from now on, or find out the hard way who is really the boss.  
[\[347\]](#)

In October 2003, Putin arrested Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Russia's wealthiest man and CEO of the oil company Yukos, who had been waging a public campaign against the president. Khodorkovsky had announced his retirement, hinting at challenging Putin in politics. "I am all three generations of the Rockefellers," he told journalist Ben Aris, "The first were robber-barons. The second consolidated the empire. And the third were royalty."[\[348\]](#) Putin then arrested him, took away his oil company and put him in prison.[\[349\]](#)

Khodorkovsky was as corrupt an oligarch as any of them. He gained control of Yukos through a rigged loans-for-shares auction where he loaned the government \$159 million on a company worth billions.[\[350\]](#)

After his Menatep Bank failed in the financial crisis of 1998, Khodorkovsky turned to politics and, with the help of his friend George Soros, founded a new group called Open Russia, which was modeled on the Open Society Institute.[\[351\]](#) The newly reinvented "Open Mike" paid big dividends and promised corporate transparency, which so many American investors wanted to cash and believe.[\[352\]](#) Khodorkovsky proceeded to pour money into the liberal Yabloko Party, right-wing nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's Liberal Democratic Party and the Communist Party. But after he publicly challenged Putin about a rigged oil deal that went against him, his fate was sealed.[\[353\]](#)

The final straw was when Khodorkovsky tried to sell his shares in Yukos to the American firms ExxonMobil or Chevron-Texaco for \$25

billion. Soon he and his partner Platon Lebedev were arrested. The state seized their shares[354] and convicted them of fraud and tax evasion. The oligarch was sentenced to nine years in prison.[355] He was later convicted for more fraud and theft and given seven more years.[356] The Russian public broadly supported the Putin regime's persecution of Khodorkovsky, Berezovsky and Gusinsky. For some reason, MacKinnon attributed this to Russian anti-Semitism rather than the fact that these were quite literally three of the most corrupt individual human beings in the world, and certainly in their poor country, which they had mercilessly exploited through fraud and violence.[357]

Soros and neoconservative Richard Perle, the major ringleader of the plot to lie the United States into war with Iraq in 2003,[358] declared that Russia should be kicked out of the G8 over Khodorkovsky's arrest.[359] John McCain decried the "new authoritarianism in Russia." [360] Bruce Jackson railed to Congress that it was the "watershed event" that showed the deterioration of democracy in Russia.[361]

But as Anne Williamson explained, since the Harvard Boys had completely blown the opportunity to institute real property rights in Russian law, the very basis of social cooperation and peace[362] was ruined. In its place, the people demanded a strong, state-led order to keep the private criminals in line and the inflation rate low. So whose fault was that again? [363]

After the Soros Foundation was raided by armed men said to be working for a businessman they were in a dispute with, the foundation reasoned it must be revenge for their support of Khodorkovsky.[364] The

tycoon was eventually released in 2013 in a deal cut by former German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher.[\[365\]](#) American Russia hawks sure pick strange champions sometimes.

## Litvinenko

### Kook Killed

In November 2006, a former FSB agent and exile named Alexander Litvinenko died of poisoning by the radioactive isotope polonium-210 in London. He had worked for Boris Berezovsky in the UK spreading farfetched claims about the Russian state, such as that Ayman al-Zawahiri was their secret agent and al Qaeda an FSB plot against the West, that the government was behind the 1999 apartment bombings, the 2002 theater siege, and the 2004 Beslan school massacre,[\[366\]](#) and even that Putin was a child molester.[\[367\]](#) The mysterious death was widely proclaimed to be a Russian nuclear attack on a British citizen on British soil—perhaps an act of war[\[368\]](#)—and served as a major turning point on Russia and the West’s path to renewed confrontation.

While the official British investigation seems to make it clear who poisoned the man, they failed to demonstrate the Russian government’s responsibility. It made little sense that they would kill him this way. Litvinenko was no threat. His accusations against Putin and the Russian government were absurd nonsense. “Litvinenko just wasn’t worth it. He didn’t pose a threat,” as an FSB veteran told *The Observer*. Not only that, but the poison used to kill him was a highly refined radioactive metal which

would obviously bring suspicion onto them. And it took three weeks for the poison to kill the guy, enough time for the victim and all his friends to make a huge show out of it and call it a politically motivated assassination. They could have just shot him. Again, as former FSB agent Oleg Gordievsky told the press regarding Litvinenko's initial sensational claims that he had been sent to kill Boris Berezovsky in the first place, that was not how they did business anymore.[\[369\]](#)

## Suspects

For his part, Litvinenko implicated an Italian academic security consultant named Mario Scaramella, since he had insisted on a meeting about a potential assassination plot against them both, where the information he had provided had suspiciously not been worth the trip. He had told the same thing to his co-author Yuri Felshtinsky.[\[370\]](#) But the London *Times* said that "Scaramella has spoken freely about the meeting and is keen to cooperate with any investigation. He believes that Litvinenko had already been poisoned by the time they met."[\[371\]](#) Scaramella was not accused of killing Litvinenko by British authorities. The official investigation by Lord David Owen[\[372\]](#) found that Litvinenko named Scaramella to the press to convince two other suspects that they were in the clear and could return to London.[\[373\]](#)

British prosecutors ended up charging Yegor Gaidar's former bodyguard and an ex-FSB agent, as well as his associate, a retired Russian army officer named Dmitri Kovtun. These two men also met with Litvinenko on November 1 at the Millenium Hotel in Mayfair. Despite their

repeated denials,[\[374\]](#) the timeline and investigators' claims about the radioactive trail left behind at their various hotel rooms, restaurants, a nightclub and in the airplanes they took,[\[375\]](#) would seem to be conclusive as to their responsibility for the deed.[\[376\]](#)

The *New York Times* noted that when the UK filed its charges against Lugovoy, he, like Litvinenko, had previously worked for Boris Berezovsky.[\[377\]](#) The exiled oligarch predictably blamed Vladimir Putin.[\[378\]](#)

## **Ultimate Responsibility**

But the origins of the polonium have not been proven. British investigator Owen cited testimony by nuclear expert “A1” that “very many” research reactors around the world would be capable of producing the polonium simply by “irradiating bismuth 209,” leaving it impossible to attribute responsibility for its manufacture.[\[379\]](#) The furthest the British government ever went with their accusations was to claim that Litvinenko was “probably” killed on orders from Putin.[\[380\]](#) Owen, author of their final investigative report on the matter, wrote that unfortunately the proof would have to remain classified.[\[381\]](#)

Lugovoy eventually won a Duma seat under Zhirinovsky's party—where he now enjoys immunity from prosecution—and an award he received from Putin. So it does not seem that they were very mad at him for making them look bad. (Kovtun kept a low profile after returning to Russia and died of Covid in 2022.[\[382\]](#))

## **Gaidar Too**

After Yegor Gaidar himself was also possibly sickened by poison the day after Litvinenko died, former Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais, by then CEO of the electric company UES, had a theory of his own: the shooting murder of Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya,[\[383\]](#) the poisoning death of Litvinenko and would-be death of Gaidar were a plot against Putin, rather than by him. “Yegor Gaidar was on the verge of death on 24 November,” he said. “The deadly triangle—Politkovskaya, Litvinenko and Gaidar—would have been very desirable for some people who are seeking an unconstitutional and forceful change of power in Russia.”[\[384\]](#)

## Smuggling

There was always the possibility that Litvinenko was smuggling nuclear materials and became sickened by them, and that he and his allies then decided to pin his death on Putin.[\[385\]](#) Scaramella claimed that Litvinenko told him he had run an operation smuggling radioactive material out of Russia to Switzerland in 2000.[\[386\]](#) The German daily *Der Spiegel* reported, “In Hamburg, police consider Kovtun to be a nuclear smuggling suspect.”[\[387\]](#) Scotland Yard and MI5, Britain’s domestic national police and counterintelligence force, quickly focused their investigation on London’s criminal underworld. The *Australian* reported, “It is thought the former Russian spy might have been killed in London after a deal that went wrong with associates involved in the ruthless world of Russian business.” They wrote, “Police will look at investigations that his friends say he



claimed to be involved in at the time of his death, including smuggling rings for nuclear material and prostitutes.”[\[388\]](#)

Owen’s official investigation also found that Litvinenko had implicated Scaramella to all of his associates, Yuri Shvets, Vladimir Bukovsky, Akhmed Zakayev and Boris Berezovsky, but did not mention his meeting with Lugovoy and Kovtun at all. This, Owen wrote, “cannot be explained by his strategy to try to lure the two men back into the jurisdiction, since these were private conversations with trusted friends.”

Owen then attributed this massive omission to “wounded professional pride,” since he must have known it was the two who had done it and was then embarrassed that he did not see the attack coming.[\[389\]](#) But the guy was clearly dying, and Lugovoy and Kovtun were the obvious alleged connection if he wanted to implicate the Russians. Perhaps there was another reason for Litvinenko to attempt to direct attention away from them.

Owen also related that two years before his ultimate poisoning by polonium, Litvinenko and his friend and neighbor, Chechen separatist exile Akhmed Zakayev, both had their Berezovsky-provided houses firebombed by two Chechen men who claimed Berezovsky owed them money in a dispute over the smuggling of nuclear material. Wanted by Russia, English judges refused to hand Zakayev over.[\[390\]](#) After also mentioning a previous alleged poisoning attempt against the oligarch, Owen wrote, “I refer to the two incidents because they do perhaps give a flavour of the life that Mr Litvinenko was living, and the risks that he was running, as a member of Mr Berezovsky’s entourage during this period.”[\[391\]](#)

## Blackmail

There was also the possibility that Litvinenko was killed by any number of criminals or Russian government officials to put an end to his reckless blackmail schemes, what the *Guardian-Observer* said “may prove the most compelling motive yet for murder.” They reported, “Litvinenko claimed to have made contact with senior sources in the heart of the FSB, the successor to the KGB, who would supply him with a stream of confidential dossiers on any target that the 43-year-old exile requested.” According to Litvinenko, he would use the intelligence to blackmail figures from Russia’s criminal underworld. Julia Svetlichnaja, a Russian-born academic who knew him, informed the paper that Litvinenko “told me he was going to blackmail or sell sensitive information about all kinds of powerful people including oligarchs, corrupt officials and sources in the Kremlin.” She continued, “He mentioned a figure of £10,000 they would pay each time to stop him broadcasting these FSB documents. Litvinenko was short of money and was adamant that he could obtain any files he wanted.”[\[392\]](#) While Lugovoy claimed Litvinenko planned to blackmail Berezovsky, who had severely scaled back his monthly allowance, the official investigation could not corroborate that.[\[393\]](#)

The *Guardian* reported that Litvinenko had claimed to have a file on the nationalization of Yukos—compiled by another former KGB agent and Berezovsky associate, Yuri Shvets[\[394\]](#)—that was worth his traveling to Israel to give a copy to Leonid Nevzlin, a Yukos executive then in exile, to avoid criminal charges back in Russia.[\[395\]](#) However, the official investigation found that the Russian government’s first knowledge of this

came too late to have motivated a series of events which were already being planned.[\[396\]](#)

## **Informant**

The official investigation did, however, develop the story of Litvinenko's involvement with the Russian mafia in Spain. According to the official investigation, based on multiple sources, he was working with Spanish police against them. Berezovsky told investigators that Litvinenko had helped them arrest a mobster named Shakuro and was giving them information about Berezovsky's old protégé Roman Abramovich.[\[397\]](#)

According to an article in Spain's *El País*[\[398\]](#) and a State Department cable posted to WikiLeaks.org,[\[399\]](#) Litvinenko was working with Lugovoy and national police in Spain on what they called operations "Avispa" and "Troika" against the "Tambov-Malyshev crime family," and "tipped off Spanish security officials on the location, roles and activities of several 'Russian' mafia figures with ties to Spain." The cable went on to say that Litvinenko "allegedly provided information on Izguilov, Zakhar Kalashov and Taniel Oniani to GOS [Government of Spain] officials during a May 2006 meeting." In 2018, a Spanish court acquitted the mobsters on all charges.[\[400\]](#) Perhaps silencing the informant did the trick.

Berezovsky died in an apparent, but obviously suspicious, suicide by hanging in 2013.[\[401\]](#)

In the end, whether Litvinenko was involved in something criminal or killed by criminals for exposing them, claims that the hit was ordered by the Kremlin seem to be based only on inference, as in the official UK

government report by Lord Owen. But that never stopped the Western War Party from making the man's death a cause to celebrate and use as a cudgel against Russia.[\[402\]](#)

## **Pretensions Canceled**

### **National Security Strategy for 2006**

Outlining Russia policy in the Bush administration's new National Security Strategy for 2006, they wrote, "Recent trends regrettably point toward a diminishing commitment to democratic freedoms and institutions. We will work to try to persuade the Russian Government to move forward, not backward, along freedom's path." They added, "[E]fforts to prevent democratic development at home and abroad will hamper the development of Russia's relations with the United States, Europe, and its neighbors."[\[403\]](#) That might not sound too bad, but in the era of W. Bush's wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and multiple color-coded coups, all in the name of spreading democracy, it may have come across like Bush was threatening regime change.

Secretary Rice announced new permanent troop deployments of up to 5,000 men each in Romania and Bulgaria,[\[404\]](#) in violation of President Clinton's solemn promises in the 1997 Founding Act.[\[405\]](#)

### **Cheney in Vilnius**

Russia had been selling natural gas to the former Soviet republics at a discount, but after the Orange Revolution decided that Ukraine would have to pay global market rates like the rest of Europe.[\[406\]](#) In May 2006, Vice President Cheney gave a speech in Vilnius, Lithuania, where he condemned Russia for ending subsidies to Ukraine the previous year: “No legitimate interest is served when oil and gas become tools of intimidation or blackmail, either by supply manipulation or attempts to monopolize transportation. . . . No one can justify actions that undermine the territorial integrity of a neighbor.”[\[407\]](#)

That part was a reference to Georgia, certainly not Serbia’s Kosovo, Sudan’s south nor Syria’s Golan Heights. The territorial integrity of those places was undermined by the United States and its clients, so they do not count. But what an absurd thing to argue anyway, against an end to subsidies for a foreign nation? Why even bring it up, asked Justin Raimondo. “It was a provocation, pure and simple.” So was the fact that Cheney secretly met with Russian dissident MP Vladimir Ryzhkov while he was in town.[\[408\]](#)

It appears Russia was not even singling out Ukraine for any particular extortion at the time. Instead, they had decided on a new policy that only the most cooperative nations would get a break on the price of gas. In 2006, only Belarus avoided the global going rate.[\[409\]](#)

In Moscow, Cheney’s speech was taken as a sure sign the U.S. would attempt to back the opposition in the 2007 Duma and 2008 presidential elections. Even the pro-Western *Kommersant* accused Cheney of announcing the beginning of the second Cold War. Putin mocked the vice

president's pretense to democracy as he stopped in Vilnius to give his provocative speech on the way to visit bloody dictator Nursultan Nazarbayev in Kazakhstan: "Where is all that pathos of the need to fight for human rights and democracy when it concerns the need to realize their own interests? Then it seems everything is possible. There are no limits at all."[\[410\]](#)

It was not true, as Cheney claimed, that Russia's tough stance in negotiations with Ukraine on gas transit prices was a simple case of imperialism. As shown in multiple international arbitration cases, their accusations against Ukrainian companies for stealing gas and refusing to pay their debts were valid.[\[411\]](#) The pipeline controversy came to a head in 2009 in a dispute over Ukrainian Naftogaz's debts to Russian Gazprom and Russian accusations that Ukrainians were diverting and stealing gas meant for European markets. The Russians eventually cut off all gas exports through Ukraine for a short time until they reached a temporary monitoring deal, followed by a new price agreement with Tymoshenko, who was again prime minister at the time. This is the agreement over which she was eventually charged with treason, though it looks more like a simple battle between oligarchs: those who controlled Naftogaz, close to Tymoshenko, and others from RosUkrEnergo, close to Yanukovych and the Party of Regions.[\[412\]](#)

## **Russian Pora**

In December 2004, Andrei Sidelnikov, a former spokesman for Boris Berezovsky, had founded Russian Pora for the explicit purpose of

attempting to create an Orange Revolution-type overthrow of the Putin regime. They immediately made contact with Serbian Otpor, Ukrainian Kmara and Georgian Pora. However, the dissenters had no credible candidate. Grigory Yavlinsky of Yabloko and former Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov were already proven losers. Chess prodigy Garry Kasparov also showed to have little public appeal after a national speaking tour. Former Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov had the backing of exiled oligarchs Berezovsky in London and Leonid Nevzlin in Tel Aviv—whose reputations as thieves and gangsters cost the man more than their money could make up for. Kasyanov himself still carried his own negative reputation for corruption during the Yeltsin years. Polls showed that people would have preferred the Communists to the Western-tied oligarchs’ puppets.[\[413\]](#)

## **Russia’s War on Terrorism**

### **The Pankisi Gorge**

In 2002, George W. Bush sent an anti-terrorist mission to former-Soviet Georgia to train the Georgian army to fight against Arab al Qaeda members hiding in the lawless Pankisi Gorge in the Southern Caucasus Mountains, [\[414\]](#) called the Georgia Train and Equip Program (GTEP). Alexander Vershbow, a former American ambassador to Russia, said that considering the involvement of al Qaeda there, “we’re working with the Russians to cut off these external sources of support, and that includes intelligence-sharing, and working with Georgia to tighten up controls.”[\[415\]](#) In early 2003, the

State Department finally designated three major Chechen groups as terrorist organizations, the Riyadus-Salikhin Reconnaissance and Sabotage Battalion of Chechen Martyrs, the Special Purpose Islamic Regiment and the Islamic International Brigade.[\[416\]](#)

## **Basayev's War Against Russia**

In 2002, the Russians assassinated Saudi terrorist leader Ibn al-Khattab with a poisoned letter. Just one drop did the trick, apparently. But Shamil Basayev (a.k.a. Abdullah Shamil Abu Idris) survived to carry on the war. Though he had started out as more of a Chechen nationalist, under the influence of Khattab and the other mujahideen, Basayev's politics had been converted to the bin Ladenite doctrine of international jihadist revolution.[\[417\]](#)

Journalist C.J. Chivers wrote that "Mr. Basayev belongs to the older generation but he trained in Afghanistan and from the earliest days of the Chechen rebellion has inclined to more radical tactics." He took credit for the Dubrovka theater attack in Moscow[\[418\]](#) where Chechen terrorists took almost 800 hostages, ringing the place with so-called "black widow" female suicide bombers. It ended in a botched rescue where 129 hostages were killed, along with the terrorists, by the knockout gas Russian forces pumped into the theater.[\[419\]](#) Chechen President Aslan Maskhadov had officially allied with Basayev two months before.[\[420\]](#) Basayev was also behind an attack in the North Caucasus nation of Ingushetia, killing 47 policemen and many other civilians in June 2004.[\[421\]](#) This was followed by the mid-air destruction of two passenger planes by two Chechen female suicide



bombers which killed 90 people[\[422\]](#) and a suicide bombing at a Russian subway station in August that killed 10 more.[\[423\]](#)

## **Beslan**

Then on September 1, 2004, they launched the horrific school massacre in Beslan, North Ossetia, in which 329 people, 186 of them children, were slaughtered.[\[424\]](#) Basayev was happy to take credit for his “jihad” against Russia, including these terrorist attacks against civilian targets, as well as his association with bin Laden from his time spent at his Afghan training camps.[\[425\]](#) His men were later also behind the 2010 Moscow Metro bombings.[\[426\]](#)

Amb. Burns wrote in his memoir that when President Bush—who had declared war against Islamist terrorists from Somalia to the Philippines[\[427\]](#)—found deep nuance when it came to the bin Ladenites among the Chechens, the Russian president was furious. “Putin saw Bush’s response, which included warnings against overreaction and a dalliance with ‘moderate’ Chechen elements to try to defuse tensions, as nothing short of a betrayal.” Burns reiterated that the Russians were certain the U.S. was gunning for them next.[\[428\]](#)

An article from the London Sunday *Times* on the third anniversary of the al Qaeda attack on the United States, just days after the slaughter at Beslan, represented the typical sentiments of the American and British governments. As far as they were concerned, the Chechen suicide bombers had no link to al Qaeda or international terrorism at all. They refused to believe Arabs were involved or to seriously entertain deporting wanted

Chechen exiles like Akhmed Zakayev or Ilyas Akhmadov, who were given asylum and overtly supported by the NED, Madeleine Albright, Zbigniew Brzezinski and John McCain.[\[429\]](#) And they demanded that Putin negotiate rather than crack down.[\[430\]](#)

This was the same government that falsely claimed secular Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist Iraq was joined at the hip to al Qaeda,[\[431\]](#) when they had no working relationship whatsoever,[\[432\]](#) therefore supposedly justifying the outright invasion of that country in the name of the terror war.[\[433\]](#) But literal associates of bin Laden running a suicide bombing campaign against the Russians?[\[434\]](#) Why, they were just moderate rebels. State Department spokesman Richard Boucher still insisted, unlike the United States in its wars, that "the broader conflict in Chechnya cannot be resolved militarily, and requires a political solution."[\[435\]](#)

Just three days after Beslan, Putin addressed the Valdai Discussion Club. Dr. Mark Bassin wrote about the event that "Putin came into the meeting visually shaken by the events that were occurring. What was clear from his answers was that he took a very American approach to Chechnya—it was a case of 'these people want to hurt us and they have to be stopped.'" He compared the Chechens to al Qaeda, saying that "he did not counsel the Americans to meet Bin Laden for talks."[\[436\]](#) Stratfor wrote in their client newsletter, "Visibly angered, Putin told his compatriots that Moscow knew major foreign powers wanting Russia to collapse were backing the terrorists." They continued, "Though he did not name any countries, nobody in Russia except a few pro-U.S. liberals doubted that

Putin meant Washington and its allies.” Their sources confirmed he certainly meant “the United States and United Kingdom.”[\[437\]](#)

The next day, he challenged Washington’s hypocrisy: “Why don’t you meet with Osama bin Laden, invite him to Brussels or to the White House and engage in talks? Ask him what he wants, and give it to him so he’ll leave you in peace.”[\[438\]](#)

The *Washington Post*’s David Ignatius wrote that it was this moment that permanently destroyed Bush and Putin’s personal friendship and trust, and solidified Russia’s break with the West. He cited Secretary of State Rice and the NSC’s Thomas Graham to support that view, and a “careful review” by the Belfer Center at Harvard’s Kennedy School[\[439\]](#) saying Putin was at least “partially correct” about U.S. support for Chechen separatists, noting the asylum and financial backing granted to Foreign Minister-in-exile Ilyas Akhmadov, whom Russia accused of planning the 1999 Chechen terrorists’ invasion of Dagestan. That support came over the objections of the Department of Homeland Security, who called him a “terrorist” and attempted to deport him,[\[440\]](#) though the academics denied finding evidence of direct support for fighters on the ground.[\[441\]](#) As Zbigniew Brzezinski’s nephew Matthew pointed out in the *Post*, this group of old Cold Warriors was using Akhmadov “as a point on the sharp end of a wedge forming between Washington and Moscow that could widen in the near future.”[\[442\]](#)

For the sake of argument, imagine that Litvinenko’s nonsense about the Russian FSB being the secret power behind al Qaeda had been true and our

government knew it for a fact too. How would Americans have felt and acted in response to such treachery?

In 2015, Putin claimed that just after September 11, Bush had promised to end America's double game in Chechnya. After the Russians had intercepted American spies in Azerbaijan in contact with Chechen fighters, he brought it up with President Bush. He said Bush told him, "I'll kick them in the backside." According to Putin, "Ten days later, the senior staff in the FSB got a letter from their colleagues in Washington saying we've maintained relations with all of the Russian opposition in the past and we'll continue to do so. . . . They were actually helping them, even with transportation."

Spouting American non-interventionist talking points, the Russian leader warned, "One should never use terrorists to solve short-term political or even geopolitical objectives. If they're helped in one place, they raise their heads elsewhere and attack the people who supported them the day before."[\[443\]](#)

## **Chitigov**

Stratfor also said the Russians' discovery of an American green card holder named Rizvan Chitigov, who was minister of defense and military intelligence in the Chechen insurgent hierarchy, killed in 2005,[\[444\]](#) "led the Kremlin to believe that Washington directly influences and helps the insurgency—even its Islamist wing—while using spies on the ground in Chechnya." This was due to Chitigov's time allegedly spent in the U.S. Marine Corps and participation in terrorist attacks inside Russia, such as a

bombing next to Red Square in 1999.[\[445\]](#) The Russians said Chitigov was involved in terrorist attacks in Russia and Chechnya and the 1999 kidnapping and execution of four OSCE officials.[\[446\]](#) Chitigov's CIA ties may well have been overstated by the Russians,[\[447\]](#) though the Stratfor authors were likely right that they believed it.

In 2009, the Moscow-supported Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov accused the U.S. and Britain of continuing to back local mujahideen forces. In an interview he said, "We're fighting in the mountains with the American and English intelligence agencies. They are fighting not against Kadyrov, not against traditional Islam, they are fighting against the sovereign Russian state." He referred to Chitigov, saying, "he worked for the CIA. He had U.S. citizenship. . . . When we killed him, I was in charge of the operation and we found a U.S. driving license and all the other documents were also American."[\[448\]](#)

In 2013, after two Chechen terrorists blew up the Boston Marathon,[\[449\]](#) U.S. Army Lt. Col. Robert W. Schaefer, author of *The Insurgency in Chechnya and the North Caucasus*, said that "[p]rior to 2002, there was a lot of support from Western governments for the Chechens and their bid for independence. But around 2002, some of the Chechens started a terrorism campaign—at which point pretty much all international support for their operations dropped off. . . . Once the terrorism started—that changed everything."[\[450\]](#) But that does not seem to be the case. The policy continued through some substantial part of the W. Bush years. Saudi money and al Qaeda preachers and organizers remained central to the Chechens' ongoing efforts against Russia until at least 2005.[\[451\]](#)

## ACPC

In reaction to Beslan, a large group of Democratic and Republican foreign policy hawks issued a joint letter demanding that President Bush cease “embracing” Putin, confront him and side “unambiguously” with opposition forces in Russia. It was signed by neoconservatives like PNAC’s Robert Kagan, Bill Kristol and Randy Scheunemann, along with the American Enterprise Institute’s Joshua Muravchik, former CIA director and Iraq–al Qaeda conspiracy kook James Woolsey and the CFR’s Max Boot; Stanford’s neocon Francis Fukuyama and liberal interventionist Michael McFaul; Senator Joe Biden; Carnegie’s Anders Åslund; Brookings’s Ivo Daalder; NED’s Carl Gershman; Lockheed Martin’s Bruce Jackson; former Ambassador Richard Holbrooke; and even foreign hawks like then-former Polish Deputy Defense Minister Radosław Sikorski.[\[452\]](#)

The neoconservatives Perle, Kristol, Kagan, Muravchik, Woolsey, Norman Podhoretz, Gary Schmitt, Elliott Abrams, Kenneth Adelman, Midge Decter, Eliot Cohen, Stephan J. Solarz, Frank Gaffney, Michael Ledeen, and their benefactor, Lockheed’s Jackson, in alliance with older, more supposedly “realist” hawks like Brzezinski, former Reagan-era Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and Secretary of State Alexander Haig, joined forces to create a pressure group called American Committee for Peace in Chechnya, later renamed the American Committee for Peace in the Caucasus (ACPC).[\[453\]](#)

As John Laughland wrote in the *Guardian*, unlike anti-American terrorism, which must always be seen as motivated by the hatred of “radical Islam” toward all good and decent things, when Chechen terrorists attacked

Russian civilians, Westerners were broadly encouraged by the ACPC and the major media to focus on the “underlying causes” of Chechen violence as a response to Russian oppression.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace’s Moscow Center was widely quoted pushing this narrative after Beslan<sup>[454]</sup> and Laughland reported they had “also been assiduous over recent months in arguing against Moscow’s claims that there is a link between the Chechens and al Qaeda,” while the ACPC “compares the Chechen crisis to those other fashionable ‘Muslim’ causes, Bosnia and Kosovo—implying that only international intervention in the Caucasus can stabilize the situation there.” Laughland added that “[i]n August, the ACPC welcomed the award of political asylum in the U.S., and a U.S.-government funded grant, to Ilyas Akhmadov, foreign minister in the opposition Chechen government, and a man Moscow describes as a terrorist.” He also said the fact that the Chechen terrorists were based out of Georgia’s Pankisi Gorge, when Georgia is an American ally and had promised to eliminate the Chechens’ presence there years before, supported the notion that the U.S. was at least indirectly supporting their fight against Russia. “Putin himself even seemed to lend credence to the idea.”<sup>[455]</sup>

Just a couple of weeks after the Beslan massacre, on the third anniversary of September 11, the director of ACPC, Glen Howard, spun hard for Shamil Basayev, bin Laden’s partner’s protégé and the butcher of hundreds of civilians in Moscow and Beslan: “Basayev has no ties with international terrorism. He has no contact either with al Qaeda or with bin Laden. I repeat, this is an official declaration. Moreover, Basayev has no

foreign bank accounts, he is not seeking a foreign visa. Basayev is a warrior.” That was not true. As mentioned, he was connected to bin Laden through Khattab and his own multiple trips to Afghanistan to meet the al Qaeda leader and train in his camps, along with hundreds of his Chechen followers.[\[456\]](#)

Howard continued that Basayev “is someone who is seeking vengeance. He is using the same methods as the enemy, who uses those methods against Chechen civilians. It is eye for eye. His chief target is the principal structure of the Russian state, the FSB or ex-KGB.” Howard revealed that he knew the terrorist leader personally. “Unfortunately, he and I disagree about this. I say that it is necessary to fight Russia in an organized way, with a unified diplomatic policy and unified military strategy and tactics. I condemn methods which lead to the suffering of innocent civilians. Basayev has his own methods.” Still, Howard assured us, “he has nothing to do with international terrorism.”[\[457\]](#) He also told the press that Putin and Russia were more “morally culpable” than the terrorists who had done the Beslan attack.[\[458\]](#) Howard’s colleague at the Jamestown Foundation, Brian Williams, also argued that, sure, the Chechen Arab-based mujahideen are bin Ladenite terrorists in ideology—but “their real enemy is Russia.” Like the KLA, they were no threat to the West. And we were to believe they were totally different because they took hostages and made demands instead of simply blowing stuff up, sometimes. Williams did, however, acknowledge the very real danger of international jihadists who had traveled to Chechnya to help in the fight.[\[459\]](#)



In the summer of 2005, ABC News, evidently taking their cues from the neoconservatives, framed the issue not with Russia in the same position as the U.S.—desperately trying to prevent America, Britain and Saudi Arabia’s former pet terrorists from slaughtering their own civilians and destabilizing their state—but instead by interviewing Basayev, sympathetically portraying him as a freedom fighter against the real enemy, Russia. “Basayev admitted he was a ‘terrorist,’ but said that each Russian had to feel the impact of war before it would stop in Chechnya,” they stated. “Responsibility is with the whole Russian nation, which through its silent approval gives a ‘yes’ [gives its consent],” Basayev told them.[\[460\]](#)

Well, that was just about exactly what Osama bin Laden said about the U.S.,[\[461\]](#) but ABC would never air that due to pretended concerns about “secret messages” to sleeper cells hidden in the text.[\[462\]](#) When it came to the Russians, though, it turns out it was possible that their irresponsible government had provoked this violence against them.[\[463\]](#) ABC apologized after getting kicked out of Russia.[\[464\]](#)

Basayev was killed in July 2006.[\[465\]](#)

## **Double Game**

And what about the British, who had their own interests in the Caucasus and their own longstanding ties to bin Ladenite terrorist groups? Stratfor noted, “Russian intelligence sources say that London, a close Washington ally, was initially even more active than the United States in supporting Chechens.” Apparently the British have been arming Chechens against the Russians since the 19th century, while in the First Chechen War (1994–

1996), “retired UK special forces officers trained British Muslim recruits in British territory to fight in Chechnya; some militants who attended that training and were later captured told the Russian government.” Later, they said, noting the British-Russian crisis of 1997–1998, when British contractors supposedly teaching de-mining were accused by Russia of training Chechen fighters,[\[466\]](#) the memo’s author said they were also “displeased” with Washington’s double standard when it came to supposed charities raising money for Chechen terrorists after they had clamped down so hard on others after September 11. “Washington and London have recognized and provide political support . . . for the rebel government of [Chechnya], which represents the . . . insurgency’s nationalist wing as opposed to its Islamist wing.” Though of course, the “nationalist and Islamist wings of the Chechen militancy are intertwined,” making Russia hesitant to give in to Washington’s demands to negotiate with the nationalists. “Moscow fears that talking with one wing would lead to talking to both wings and eventually put Russia in an untenable position,” they said, “where making peace with Chechen militants would lead to Russia’s withdrawal and, thus, complete defeat in Chechnya and the Caucasus.”

After September 11, the *Post* reported that “Britain has become a hub for Middle Eastern opposition movements,” including “dozens of activists allegedly linked with bin Laden’s al Qaeda movement or associated groups. Over the years, some dissidents suspected by foreign governments of involvement in terrorist acts have been protected by the British government for one reason or another from deportation or extradition.” This is how it

was supposed to work: “The dissidents were a valuable source of intelligence and could be used as a subtle means of political pressure against authoritarian regimes, from Libya . . . to Yemen.”[\[467\]](#) The *Post* explained the other side of the ledger, and what they meant by “dissidents” and “activists”: “By hosting the dissidents, the theory went, Britain was also buying itself immunity from acts of terrorism on its soil.” But after September 11, “[f]ears are growing that Britain could become a target for a major terrorist attack, particularly if, as Prime Minister Tony Blair has pledged, British troops join in U.S. military action against Afghanistan.”[\[468\]](#)

Abu Musab al-Suri, a Soviet-Afghan war vet and bin Laden associate who lived in London in the 1990s, explained the arrangement: “John Major’s government was very clever and served the security of Britain and the interest of its people by accepting our truce . . . that we would never target Britain . . . as long as the security forces left us alone.”[\[469\]](#)

This included the al Qaeda-tied, Afghan war veteran-founded Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG),[\[470\]](#) made famous when, after they returned from fighting U.S. troops on al Qaeda’s side in Iraq War II, U.S. President Barack Obama, UK Prime Minister David Cameron and French President Nicolas Sarkozy took their side in the jihadist uprising against Muammar Gaddafi in the Libya war of 2011.[\[471\]](#) Back in 1996, MI6 had tried to use the bin Ladenites to murder Gaddafi, as exposed by MI5 whistleblower David Shayler.[\[472\]](#)

“The rules of the game have changed,” Magnus Ranstorp, a terrorism expert at St. Andrews University in Scotland, told the *Guardian*. “The

natural assumption was that, because Britain was such an important hub for Arab opposition movements, terrorists would not want to do anything to jeopardize their position here. But Britain's role as a leader of the war against terrorism means this assumption may not apply anymore.”[\[473\]](#)

The predictions about the danger of befriending such people and giving them safe haven did come to pass, with the 7/7 subway bombing in 2005, [\[474\]](#) the 2017 Manchester concert suicide bombing,[\[475\]](#) and numerous smaller bin Ladenite terrorist attacks since.[\[476\]](#)

## **Abu Qatada**

Abu Qatada was a longtime associate of Osama bin Laden and an al Qaeda recruiter living in London. In 2001, police found £170,000 in his house and, reportedly, an envelope labeled “For the mujahideen in Chechnya” with £805 in it.[\[477\]](#) Though he was wanted on terrorism charges in his home country of Jordan and the U.S. said they wanted him after September 11, accusing him of being the “spiritual leader” of al Qaeda in Europe, the Brits protected him.[\[478\]](#) When he then disappeared, French intelligence sources openly accused the UK of hiding him.[\[479\]](#) The *Guardian* reported, “Some French officials have gone so far as to brief newspapers that Qatada was allowed to escape internment because he was an ‘MI5 agent.’ They also allege that Britain was a ‘revolving door’ for Islamic militants because of lax asylum policies.”[\[480\]](#)

The London *Times* confirmed Qatada was an MI5 agent all along. He ended up being found hiding in an apartment near Scotland Yard. And they kept using him. The *Times* reported, “Abu Qatada boasted to MI5 that he

could prevent terrorist attacks and offered to expose dangerous extremists, while all along he was setting up a haven for his terror organisation in Britain.” He had recently been in contact with the chief suspect in the Madrid train bombings and Richard Reid, the attempted shoe bomber.[\[481\]](#)

Just after the September 11 attacks, in a lengthy piece explaining the role of a Saudi-supported student group, Al-Muhajiroun, which had sent numerous men to train in Afghanistan, the *Guardian* explained, “Afterwards, some recruits volunteer for active service in regions like Kosovo, Chechnya and Kashmir, while others return to Britain to help recruit others to the cause.” They continued, “Earlier this year Russian officials called on Britain to ban the organisation under the Terrorism Act. They claimed a group of ‘mercenaries’ had been recruited from the London School of Economics to fight in Chechnya in a ‘holy war’ against the Russian army.”[\[482\]](#) Over a year after September 11, the London *Times* reported, “European security chiefs still regard Britain as a safe haven for al-Qaeda units.”[\[483\]](#)

## **Hamza al-Masri**

Another al Qaeda recruiter living safely for years in England was Egyptian Abu Hamza al-Masri, infamous hook-handed preacher at London’s Finsbury Park Mosque.[\[484\]](#) Injured in an accident in 1993, he could still raise money, and had traveled to Bosnia with the mujahideen three times in 1995. His recruitment videos depicted British Muslims fighting in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Chechnya.[\[485\]](#) He had been directly tied to Zacarias Moussaoui, Richard Reid and Djamel Deghal—who plotted to

bomb the U.S. Embassy in Paris—as well as Ernest James Ujamaa, who had attempted to set up an al Qaeda training camp in Oregon.[\[486\]](#)

Al-Masri described his involvement in the Bosnian war in some detail to author Evan F. Kohlmann.[\[487\]](#) He was finally convicted on terrorism charges in the United States in 2014.[\[488\]](#) His assistant Haroon Rashid Aswat was also behind the July 7, 2005, London train bombings.[\[489\]](#) Former federal prosecutor John Loftus told Fox News they were all tied to an “organization called Al-Muhajiroun, which means The Emigrants. It was the recruiting arm of al-Qaeda in London.” He said that “they specialized in recruiting kids whose families had emigrated to Britain but who had British passports. And they would use them for terrorist work.” The group was headed, Loftus said, by “Captain Hook [Hamza], the imam in London the Finsbury Mosque, without the arm. He was the head of that organization. Now his assistant was a guy named Aswat, Haroon Rashid Aswat,” who was now “believed to be the mastermind of all the bombings in London.” The problem was that “the entire British police are out chasing him, and one wing of the British government, MI6 or the British Secret Service, has been hiding him.” Further, Loftus said, the Americans accused “MI6 of letting all these terrorists live in London not because they’re getting Al-Qaeda information, but for appeasement. It was one of those you leave us alone, we leave you alone kind of things.”

Aswat had tried to set up training camps in Oregon in the 1990s and federal prosecutors wanted to indict him. But the Janet Reno Justice Department ordered them to stand down since he was a British agent. MI6 then allegedly lied to the U.S., claiming Aswat was dead.[\[490\]](#) But that

definitely was not true because the Brits extradited him in 2014, and a year later, the Department of Justice finally prosecuted him for the Oregon plot and gave him 20 years in the penitentiary.[\[491\]](#)

## **Russian Red Lines**

The BBC explained Putin's reasoning for holding on to the restive, multi-ethnic and multi-religious provinces in the North Caucasus Mountains. If the bin Ladenites were able to seize power in Chechnya, they would then threaten largely Muslim Dagestan and Orthodox Christian Ingushetia, where major attacks,[\[492\]](#) including the Beslan massacre, had taken place. This was not the Afghan-Pakistan border. It was inside Russia. It was going to be war either way. They decided it would be better to win the fight inside Chechnya before it spread.[\[493\]](#) They had real reason to worry. Just a few years later, Chechens and Georgians from Pankisi headed off to join the Islamic State (or ISIS) in Syria and their fight against the regime of Russian client Bashar al-Assad.[\[494\]](#)

In October 2003, Akhmad Kadyrov was installed as president of Chechnya in a rigged election, where the Kremlin took a page out of the State Department playbook,[\[495\]](#) and through pressure and bribes took the puppet's main opponents out of the race before election day.[\[496\]](#)

## **Munich 2007**

### **A Serious Provocation**

In January 2007, the administration began formal negotiations regarding installation of missile defense systems in Poland and Romania.[\[497\]](#)

Russian Foreign Ministry Affairs spokesman Mikhail Kamynin responded that “the creation of a U.S.-European anti-missile base can only be regarded as a substantial reconfiguration of the American military presence in Europe. . . . [It is] a mistaken step with negative consequences for international security.”[\[498\]](#)

The next month, Putin addressed the Munich Security Conference, where he denounced the unipolar, U.S.-dominated international order and its transgressions against international law and Russia itself. To the apparently bewildered crowd of assembled national leaders, he denounced NATO expansion and the violation of American, German and other promises not to move the borders of the alliance eastward, and even compared the new lines in Europe to the Berlin Wall, calling it a “serious provocation.” He said he wondered why NATO was moving towards Russia’s borders when the enemy was international terrorism.[\[499\]](#)

Putin then accused the U.S. of restarting the arms race by installing anti-ballistic-missile systems in Romania and Poland. He said that since they could hypothetically cancel the effectiveness of Russia’s nuclear deterrent, he could either try to also build a defense system, or more and more capable nuclear missiles, and that for financial reasons he had been forced to choose the latter. He politely pretended to agree that the new missile defense systems must not be intended for use against Russia, and said he personally liked President Bush, but explained that he was forced to



react in this way. “I repeat once again that there are symmetries and asymmetries here, there is nothing personal. It is simply a calculation.”

For good measure, Putin added a swipe against the NED-backed NGOs interfering in Russia-friendly nations. Democracy, nothing, he said; this was “simply one state exerting influence on another.”[\[500\]](#)

Fifteen years later, David Ignatius wrote, “I watched Putin’s speech that day and have to admit: It didn’t make much of an impression. Sen. Lindsey O. Graham (R-S.C.) criticized it as a return of Cold War rhetoric, but America was fighting two hot wars then, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and Putin’s Russia seemed too feeble to worry about. Not anymore.”[\[501\]](#)

Senator McCain simply dismissed Putin’s rant as paranoid and insisted the ABM systems were defensive and so should not be of any concern.[\[502\]](#)

Afterwards, William Burns, then ambassador to Russia, wrote to Secretary Rice, “The Munich speech was the self-absorbed product of fifteen years of accumulated Russian frustrations and grievances, amplified by Putin’s own sense that Russia’s concerns are still often taken for granted or ignored.” He continued that “Putin was giving voice to the pent-up frustrations of many Russians, not just striking an expedient pose.”[\[503\]](#)

New Eurasia Foundation president Andrey Kortunov told Burns that “Putin had clearly embarked on an ‘integrationist’ foreign policy at the beginning of his second presidential term, which was fueled by the 9/11 terrorist attacks and good relations with key leaders like President Bush” and other major NATO allies. “However,” he said, “a string of perceived anti-Russian initiatives,” which included Bush’s withdrawal from the Anti-

Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty and “further expansion of NATO,” ultimately “dashed Putin’s hopes.”[\[504\]](#)

Years later, President Bush was pranked by Russian radio show hosts. When asked about Secretary Baker’s promise not to expand NATO, Bush just laughed and said, “That’s right. Listen, times change. Baker was secretary of state for my dad, which was years ago.”[\[505\]](#) In fact, the overall circumstances in which these countries were being added were changing only for the worse. While France and Germany—“Old Europe,” as Bush’s Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld had called them—wanted to prioritize peaceful relations with Russia, the new, smaller, weaker states of Eastern Europe and the Baltics were much more anti-Russian in their outlook and supported NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia next. As Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gahr Støre put it in an important article in April 2008, this was “in order to clearly limit Russian dominance and to better secure their own independence from Russia.” He also said that “the newer members of NATO supported U.S. missile defense plans, not necessarily because they supported the idea, but because they want the U.S. present in their nations.”[\[506\]](#) The administration’s priorities may have lined up with those of these smaller nations who were welcoming of U.S. support, but the interests of the American people were with our older allies.

Russia suspended their implementation of the Conventional Forces Europe treaty later that year in protest after the NATO countries refused to ratify the 1999 update to the treaty until a final agreement could be reached over Russian troops in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, two breakaway provinces of former Soviet Georgia,[\[507\]](#) and Transnistria on the Moldova-

Ukraine border.[\[508\]](#) After negotiations stalled, the Obama administration announced that they would “cease carrying out certain obligations” under it. Russia quit the treaty altogether in 2015.[\[509\]](#)

## **‘Nyet’ Means ‘Nyet’**

### **The Memos**

In February 2008, Amb. Burns wrote a memo for Secretary of State Rice titled “Nyet Means Nyet.”[\[510\]](#) In the memo, Burns wrote:

During his annual review of Russia’s foreign policy January 22–23, Foreign Minister Lavrov stressed that Russia had to view continued eastward expansion of NATO, particularly to Ukraine and Georgia, as a potential military threat. While Russia might believe statements from the West that NATO was not directed against Russia, when one looked at recent military activities in NATO countries (establishment of U.S. forward operating locations, etc.) they had to be evaluated not by stated intentions but by potential. Lavrov stressed that maintaining Russia’s “sphere of influence” in the neighborhood was anachronistic, and acknowledged that the U.S. and Europe had “legitimate interests” in the region. But, he argued, while countries were free to make their own decisions about their security and which political-military

structures to join, they needed to keep in mind the impact on their neighbors. . . .

During a press briefing January 22 in response to a question about Ukraine's request for a MAP [NATO Membership Action Plan], the MFA said "a radical new expansion of NATO may bring about a serious political-military shift that will inevitably affect the security interests of Russia." The spokesman went on to stress that Russia was bound with Ukraine by bilateral obligations set forth in the 1997 Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership in which both parties undertook to "refrain from participation in or support of any actions capable of prejudicing the security of the other Side." The spokesman noted that Ukraine's "likely integration into NATO would seriously complicate the many-sided Russian-Ukrainian relations," and that Russia would "have to take appropriate measures." The spokesman added that "one has the impression that the present Ukrainian leadership regards rapprochement with NATO largely as an alternative to good-neighborly ties with the Russian Federation."

Ukraine and Georgia's NATO aspirations not only touch a raw nerve in Russia, they engender serious concerns about the consequences for stability in the region. Not only does Russia perceive encirclement, and efforts to undermine

Russia's influence in the region, but it also fears unpredictable and uncontrolled consequences which would seriously affect Russian security interests. Experts tell us that Russia is particularly worried that the strong divisions in Ukraine over NATO membership, with much of the ethnic-Russian community against membership, could lead to a major split, involving violence or at worst, civil war. In that eventuality, Russia would have to decide whether to intervene; a decision Russia does not want to have to face.

Dmitriy Trenin, Deputy Director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, expressed concern that Ukraine was, in the long-term, the most potentially destabilizing factor in U.S.-Russian relations, given the level of emotion and neuralgia triggered by its quest for NATO membership. The letter requesting MAP consideration had come as a "bad surprise" to Russian officials, who calculated that Ukraine's NATO aspirations were safely on the backburner. With its public letter, the issue had been "sharpened." Because membership remained divisive in Ukrainian domestic politics, it created an opening for Russian intervention. Trenin expressed concern that elements within the Russian establishment would be encouraged to meddle, stimulating U.S. overt encouragement of opposing political forces, and leaving the U.S. and Russia in a classic confrontational posture.

With respect to Georgia, most experts said that while not as neuralgic to Russia as Ukraine, the GOR [government of Russia] viewed the situation there as too unstable to withstand the divisiveness NATO membership could cause. Aleksey Arbatov, Deputy Director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, argued that Georgia's NATO aspirations were simply a way to solve its problems in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, and warned that Russia would be put in a difficult situation were that to ensue.

The GOR has made it clear that it would have to "seriously review" its entire relationship with Ukraine and Georgia in the event of NATO inviting them to join. This could include major impacts on energy, economic, and political-military engagement, with possible repercussions throughout the region and into Central and Western Europe. Russia would also likely revisit its own relationship with the Alliance and activities in the NATO-Russia Council, and consider further actions in the arms control arena, including the possibility of complete withdrawal from the CFE and INF Treaties, and more direct threats against U.S. missile defense plans.

Burns added in his personal comment at the end:

Russia's opposition to NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia is both emotional and based on perceived strategic concerns about the impact on Russia's interests in the region.

It is also politically popular to paint the U.S. and NATO as Russia's adversaries and to use NATO's outreach to Ukraine and Georgia as a means of generating support from Russian nationalists. While Russian opposition to the first round of NATO enlargement in the mid-1990's [sic] was strong, Russia now feels itself able to respond more forcefully to what it perceives as actions contrary to its national interests.

[\[511\]](#)

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange sacrificed his life and liberty to the darkest dungeons of the empire for years to bring us this information. [\[512\]](#)

In March, soon after the United States officially recognized Kosovo's "independence" under continued EU stewardship over Russia's strenuous objection, [\[513\]](#) Burns met with Putin, telling him that the U.S. would push to offer a NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Ukraine and Georgia, but that this "should not be seen as threatening." Putin responded:

No Russian leader could stand idly by in the face of steps toward NATO membership for Ukraine. That would be a hostile act toward Russia. Even President Chubais or President Kasyanov [two of Russia's better-known liberals – Burns] would have to fight back on this issue. We would do all in our power to prevent it. If people want to limit and weaken Russia, why do they have to do it through NATO enlargement? Doesn't your government know that Ukraine is unstable and immature politically, and NATO is a very

divisive issue there? Don't you know that Ukraine is not even a real country? Part is really East European, and part is really Russian. This would be another mistake in American diplomacy.[\[514\]](#)

In a personal email to Secretary Rice from April 2008, Burns advised her not to do it:

I fully understand how difficult a decision to hold off on MAP will be. But it's equally hard to overstate the strategic consequences of a premature MAP offer, especially to Ukraine. Ukrainian entry into NATO is the brightest of all redlines for the Russian elite (not just Putin). In more than two and a half years of conversations with key Russian players, from knuckle-draggers in the dark recesses of the Kremlin to Putin's sharpest liberal critics, I have yet to find anyone who views Ukraine in NATO as anything other than a direct challenge to Russian interests. At this stage, a MAP offer would be seen not as a technical step along a long road toward membership, but as throwing down the strategic gauntlet. Today's Russia will respond. Russian-Ukrainian relations will go into a deep freeze. . . . It will create fertile soil for Russian meddling in Crimea and eastern Ukraine. . . . The prospects of subsequent Russian-Georgian armed conflict would be high.



If, in the end, we decided to push MAP offers for Ukraine and Georgia, you can probably stop reading here. I can conceive of no grand package that would allow the Russians to swallow this pill quietly.[\[515\]](#)

Burns said that though he thought Rice and Defense Secretary Gates shared at least some of his concerns, momentum was still behind a “legacy-building effort” to begin the process of bringing the two into the NATO alliance. Burns later wrote in his memoir, recalling George Kennan’s warnings against expansion in the 1990s, that he thought Kennan had spoken too soon regarding the first and even second major wave of NATO expansion under Clinton and W. Bush:

It damaged prospects for future relations with Russia, but not fatally. Where we made a serious strategic mistake—and where Kennan was prescient—was in later letting inertia drive us to push for NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia, despite Russia’s deep historical attachments to both states and even stronger protestations. That did indelible damage, and fed the appetite of a future Russian leadership for getting even. . . .

Yeltsin had gnashed his teeth over the first wave, but couldn’t do much about it. Putin offered little resistance to Baltic membership, amid all the other preoccupations of his first term. Georgia, and especially Ukraine, were different animals altogether. There could be no doubt that Putin would

fight back hard against any steps in the direction of NATO membership for either state.

In Washington, however, there was a kind of geopolitical and ideological inertia at work, with strong interest from Vice President Cheney and large parts of the interagency bureaucracy in a “Membership Action Plan” (MAP) for Ukraine and Georgia. Key European allies, in particular Germany and France, were dead set against offering it. They were disinclined to add to mounting friction between Moscow and the West—and unprepared to commit themselves formally and militarily to the defense of Tbilisi or Kyiv against the Russians. The Bush administration understood the objections, but still felt it could finesse the issue.[\[516\]](#)

But the administration was whistling past the graveyard. In 2005, while admitting that the population of Ukraine would not support joining the NATO alliance, Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Daniel Fried told Maurice Gourdault-Montagne, an adviser to French President Jacques Chirac, wisely, that there was a distinct lack of consensus for alliance membership in Ukraine. However, he added, foolishly, that a minor issue like Ukrainian public opinion was a greater impediment to the policy than the determination of the Russian president to prevent it. According to a State Department summary, Fried “dismissed prospects for Russia intervening militarily in the Ukraine, noting the

capacity of the latter's army and cautioned against exaggerating the split between Eastern and Western Ukraine.”[\[517\]](#)

## **French Plan for Ukrainian Neutrality**

In September 2005, Gourdault-Montagne warned the ambassador that the Russians were upset about the expansion and that “if there remained one potential cause for war in Europe, it was Ukraine.” He also said that “one could wonder whether the Russians might launch a move similar to Prague in 1968, to see what the West would do.”[\[518\]](#) At least five more State Department cables detailed French concerns about the U.S. seeking to move forward on alliance membership for Ukraine.[\[519\]](#) Gourdault-Montagne was sent to Russia in 2006 to meet with diplomat Sergei Prikhodko. There they sketched out a deal for Ukrainian neutrality to be overseen by the NATO-Russia Council. He said the Russian told him, “It’s very interesting for us, because it solves the question of Crimea for us.” Gourdault-Montagne said that when he showed it to Secretary of State Rice, she angrily replied, “You, the French, for a long time you held up the first wave of East European countries joining NATO, you will not hold up the second wave.” This was also notable since this would have been the third, not second, wave of expansion. As previously mentioned, that had gone relatively smoothly in 2004.[\[520\]](#)

## **Bush Pushes Ahead**

At times, the people in charge act as though NATO membership is just a fancy cocktail party circuit for powerful international government socialites. Instead, it is a mutual defense pact, a war guarantee.[\[521\]](#) Now they were moving on to Ukraine and Georgia. The Bush administration had already started the process with their announcement of a “NATO-Ukraine Action Plan” toward alliance membership back in 2002, though progress on implementing it had stalled.[\[522\]](#)

Defense Secretary Gates, who as retired CIA director in the 1990s had opposed NATO expansion to Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic, later took a swipe at Bush. Not only did he oppose inviting Ukraine and Georgia to join the alliance, but said after the first round of expansion, “I believe the process should then have slowed. U.S. agreements with the Romanian and Bulgarian governments to rotate troops through bases in those countries was a needless provocation.” He noted, “The Russians had long historical ties to Serbia, which we largely ignored,” and that “[t]rying to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was truly overreaching. The roots of the Russian empire trace back to Kiev in the ninth century, so that was an especially monumental provocation.” He asked rhetorically, “Were the Europeans, much less Americans, willing to send their sons and daughters to defend Ukraine and Georgia? Hardly.” Gates concluded, “So NATO expansion was a political act, not a carefully considered military commitment, thus undermining the purpose of the alliance and recklessly ignoring what the Russians considered their own vital national interests.”[\[523\]](#)

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization was supposed to welcome in Ukraine and Georgia, which are so far away that if they were much farther they would start to get closer again from the other direction. So why the move to bring in those two? Why not Morocco or Mauritania? They are at least on the Atlantic Ocean. Perhaps it is because they offer no advantage against Russia.[\[524\]](#)

After being rebuffed by the U.S. on his Gabala radar station proposal, [\[525\]](#) Putin made himself clear to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko at a joint press conference in February 2008, just a couple of weeks after Burns's "Nyet Means Nyet" memo was sent. "It is horrible to say and even horrible to think that, in response to the deployment of such facilities in Ukrainian territory, which cannot theoretically be ruled out, Russia could target its missile systems at Ukraine. Imagine this just for a second," he said.[\[526\]](#)

France and Germany remained adamantly opposed, and for only one reason: they considered it an unnecessary provocation against Russia.[\[527\]](#) Bush himself acknowledged this, later writing in his memoir that "Angela Merkel and Nicolas Sarkozy . . . were skeptical. They knew Georgia and Ukraine had tense relationships with Moscow, and they worried NATO could get drawn into a war with Russia."[\[528\]](#)

The Germans in particular were not enthusiastic about the missile defense systems installed in Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic, but still thought if it was to be done, the Russians should be "brought along" on the project. They thought that if the alliance offered a new Membership

Action Plan to Ukraine and Georgia, it would undermine that more important goal.[\[529\]](#)

Less than three months after Burns's "Nyet Means Nyet" memo and just days after his "knuckle-draggers" email to Rice—and despite all the warnings from his own government, U.S. allies and Putin—at the urging of then-NATO Ambassador Victoria Nuland,[\[530\]](#) Bush announced America's intention to invite Ukraine[\[531\]](#) and Georgia into the alliance at a summit in Bucharest in April 2008.[\[532\]](#) The president also declared the creation of the NATO-Georgia Commission[\[533\]](#) and an expansion of the NATO-Ukraine Commission[\[534\]](#) to begin the process.

Bush had been pushing hard to announce a Membership Action Plan for Ukraine and Georgia right then, but German Chancellor Angela Merkel, supported by French President Nicolas Sarkozy, "put their foot down," as Professor John J. Mearsheimer said, absolutely refusing to go along.[\[535\]](#)

The alliance instead released an official statement declaring that Georgia and Ukraine would both be put on a path to NATO membership.[\[536\]](#) "NATO welcomes Ukraine's and Georgia's Euro-Atlantic aspirations for membership in NATO. We agreed today that these countries will become members of NATO. Both nations have made valuable contributions to Alliance operations," it said, adding, "We welcome the democratic reforms in Ukraine and Georgia and look forward to free and fair parliamentary elections in Georgia in May."[\[537\]](#)

Putin had threatened to boycott the meeting if a full-fledged MAP was offered to Ukraine and Georgia. Amb. Burns wrote in a secret cable to the State Department that Andrey Rudenko, head of the NATO section at the

Russian Foreign Ministry's Department of European Cooperation, told them that Putin "had intended" to "give a positive signal" in Bucharest "that NATO and Russia should cooperate further." His speech would not be "another Munich," because Putin was seeking to "break the current impasse" by focusing on areas in which they had successfully worked together. However, the Russians saw the offering of MAPs to Ukraine and Georgia as "a point of no return," which would entirely change Russia's relationship with the U.S. and NATO as well as with Ukraine and Georgia. The ambassador elaborated:

Defense and security experts note that NATO enlargement is one of the few security areas where there is almost complete consensus among Russian policymakers, experts and the informed population: they are strongly against NATO's enlargement eastward, particularly to Ukraine and Georgia. Aleksandr Belkin, Deputy Executive Director of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, said Ukraine was the "line of last resort." If Ukraine becomes a member of NATO, "Russia's encirclement will be complete." . . . He anticipated that if MAP were offered to Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest, the GOR would feel obligated to cut off cooperation with NATO. Putin did not want this, he added, because Putin did not want to leave a negative heritage to his successor or leave his post "as a loser." [\[538\]](#)

Since the allies decided that neither Ukraine nor Georgia would get an official MAP at the NATO meeting, Putin did attend. He gave a speech denouncing the half-measure Bush had announced, telling the Western leaders, “We view the appearance of a powerful military bloc on our borders, a bloc whose members are subject in part to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, as a direct threat to the security of our country.” He continued, “The claim that this process is not directed against Russia will not suffice. National security is not based on promises. And the statements made prior to the bloc’s previous waves of expansion simply confirm this.”[\[539\]](#) According to Russian journalist Mikhail Zygar, Putin angrily warned Bush in a private meeting, “Ukraine is not even a country. Part of it lies in Eastern Europe, and the other, more significant part was given by us as a gift! If Ukraine joins NATO, it will do so without Crimea and the eastern regions. It will simply fall apart.”[\[540\]](#)

Foreign Minister Lavrov told reporters, “We will do all we can to prevent Ukraine’s and Georgia’s accession into NATO and to avoid an inevitable serious exacerbation of our relations with both the alliance and our neighbors.”[\[541\]](#)

Bush’s half-measure was just as bad a provocation as an engraved invitation would have been. As Zbigniew Brzezinski had said back in 1997, “states that are in a position to begin and are invited to undertake accession talks with the EU should automatically also be viewed hence-forth as subject in effect to NATO’s presumptive protection.”[\[542\]](#) As we have seen, the implied protection was not actually forthcoming, but the provocation was evidently real enough.



Citing Putin's 2007 speech in Munich, Christoph Heusgen, German Chancellor Merkel's diplomatic adviser at the time, said that Merkel believed that Putin would see NATO invitations as a direct and deliberate threat. "She was also convinced Ukraine and Georgia would bring NATO no benefits as members," Heusgen said.[\[543\]](#)

Her deputy national security adviser, Rolf Nickel, warned the Americans, "While Georgia was 'just a bug on the skin of the bear,' Ukraine was inseparably identified with Russia, going back to Vladimir of Kiev in 988." He and another Merkel adviser warned the European deputy assistant secretary of state, David Merkel, that if the proposed MAP "were pushed forward too quickly in Ukraine, where public opinion is bitterly divided on the issue of NATO membership, it could prove destabilizing and 'split' the country."[\[544\]](#)

## **Down Hill**

Fiona Hill, a Russia expert from Bush's NSC, now says that anyone bringing up this history is just sadly falling victim to a Russian "psychological operation," which causes them to blame NATO or Washington for provoking Russian reactions.[\[545\]](#)

But that is odd because she also told the *New York Times* that in 2008 the intelligence agencies recommended against declaring a path to membership by Ukraine and Georgia, because so many of our NATO allies opposed it, and that she, personally, and wisely, had warned President Bush and Vice President Cheney not to do it.[\[546\]](#) She later claimed, according to the *Times*, that she told Bush and Cheney the move could be "problematic

[because] . . . Russia viewed NATO with suspicion and was vehemently opposed to neighboring countries joining its ranks.” Hill told Bush that Putin “would regard it as a provocation, which was one reason the United States’ key NATO allies opposed the idea.” She claimed Cheney then stormed out of the room because of how bravely she was telling the truth about their policy. President Bush simply responded, “I like it when diplomacy is tough.” The *Times* declared that “Hill’s prediction” came true when “[s]everal other leaders at the summit objected to Bush’s recommendation,” forcing him to settle for the meager Bucharest Declaration instead of real MAPs.[\[547\]](#)

Besides Hill’s blatant, self-serving hypocrisy on this issue, and smearing of people who think the same things as she does, the more important point is that if she is to be believed, Bush simply changed the subject from Russia’s objections being the cause of German and French concern, to the whole matter simply coming down to whether he can persuade the leaders of the latter two nations, with no regard for the former at all. Even then, he was sure the French would follow the Germans’ lead. “This is about me and Angela,” Bush told his staff.[\[548\]](#)

Hill says she also warned that promises of alliance expansion could cause war in Georgia. She told Bush that he was already pushing his luck by bringing in the Baltic states and that it would be dangerous to push further. In the very same article where Hill claimed one would be a victim of a Russian “psychological operation” if they listened to her, understood what she said perfectly and agreed, she went on to explain: “I think there’s been a logical, methodical plan that goes back a very long way, at least to

2007 when [Putin] put the world, and certainly Europe, on notice that Moscow would not accept the further expansion of NATO.” She added, “And then within a year in 2008 NATO gave an open door to Georgia and Ukraine. It absolutely goes back to that juncture.” She said the National Intelligence Council then did an estimate about Russia’s potential reactions to the announcement of the “Open-Door Policy,” assessing that Putin could launch preemptive wars against both countries.[\[549\]](#)

## **Russell’s Report**

At the end of May, Chargé d’Affaires Daniel Russell wrote home from the Moscow embassy that Bush’s declaration was an absolute disaster. “The consensus here,” he wrote, “is that Yushchenko’s ‘clearly anti-Russia’ agenda and his ‘blind pursuit’ of NATO membership have hijacked Russian-Ukrainian relations.” The Russians told the Americans that in meetings with Ukrainian officials, they had threatened to use every means available to prevent their entry into NATO, “including undermining Ukraine’s territorial integrity.” Lavrov said they would have to do anything possible to oppose their joining the alliance due to the “disastrous consequences for Europe, Russian-Ukrainian relations, and NATO-Russia relations” that would be certain to follow. Russell added that they were extremely concerned about Yushchenko’s anti-Russian culture war, the danger to Russia’s relationship with military-industrial firms in Ukraine’s east and the future of their naval base at Sevastopol.

Russell said it was clear “their endgame is the status quo.” Russia had accepted the fact of Ukraine’s moves toward Europe and partnership with

the alliance, “but NATO membership and the establishment of a U.S. or NATO base in Ukraine remain clear redlines. Ideally, Russia aims to secure a written neutrality pledge from Ukraine.” Russell warned if NATO pushed ahead with a true Membership Action Plan, it could lead to a complete break between Russia and the West, and that Russia could easily “weaken Yushchenko’s grip on Eastern Ukraine,” or “fan the flames of separatism in Crimea.” Russell concluded, “If Georgian Membership is Hard to Swallow, Ukraine’s Membership. . .Impossible.”[\[550\]](#)

## **Worst of All Worlds**

Amb. Burns and scholars Goldgeier, Charap and Sarotte all called the Bucharest Declaration halfway deal the “worst of all worlds,” since it was likely to provoke a violent Russian response without ever granting the war guarantee that they thought would prevent one.[\[551\]](#)

Before the meeting, in March 2008, Merkel traveled to Russia to meet and congratulate the new President-elect Dimitry Medvedev and then-outgoing President Vladimir Putin. Medvedev had been a close associate of Putin since their days together in St. Petersburg. Within a few months of becoming president in 2000, Putin had placed the loyal Medvedev as chairman of the board of the oil giant Gazprom, as he reconsolidated state control over Russia’s most important and profitable company.[\[552\]](#)

According to a State Department document, during the visit, Putin once again “argued strongly against extending the NATO Membership Action Plan (MAP) to Georgia and Ukraine at Bucharest.”[\[553\]](#)

In June, after Bucharest, Medvedev traveled to Germany to return the visit with Merkel. U.S. Ambassador to Germany William R. Timken wrote home in a cable about their meeting: “On foreign policy, he reiterated well known Russian positions on NATO enlargement, missile defense, Kosovo, and the centrality of the UN in international affairs.”

Medvedev then gave a speech in Berlin, demanding a new trans-European security treaty that would preclude “bloc thinking.”<sup>[554]</sup> Chargé d’Affaires Russell wrote in a secret cable to the State Department that no one should make too much of it since he had not issued any specific proposals. However, he said, “Behind Medvedev’s polite demeanor, Russian opposition to NATO enlargement remained a red-line, according to both conservative and moderate observers.” He added that “the new Russian President provided no basis to conclude that old Russian objections to NATO enlargement, U.S. missile defense plans, or CFE [Conventional Forces Europe Treaty] had lapsed.”<sup>[555]</sup>

Nevertheless, as the NATO website informs us, the next year they took measures toward reforms “aimed at implementing Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic aspirations, in line with the decisions of the 2008 NATO Summit in Bucharest. . . . The NATO-Ukraine Commission (NUC) enables consultation between the Allies and Ukraine on security issues of common concern, and directs cooperative activities. The NUC also convenes prior to a meeting of the NATO-Russia Council.”

Former Senator Bill Bradley, who had signed Susan Eisenhower’s warning letter in 1997 and ran for president in the Democratic primaries in 2000, later said: “The United States made a fundamental blunder in the . . .

'90s by expanding NATO. We had already won the Cold War, and . . . unfortunately, the idea of expanding NATO was pushed forward without much consideration.” He said he had recently spoken with former Soviet Premier Gorbachev, “where he mentioned that Jim Baker had assured him there would be no NATO troops in what was then East Germany. However, after reunification, NATO started to expand, going back on that assurance.” He added that “this expansion caused concerns among Russians, who saw it as a military alliance encroaching on their borders.” Bradley said that NATO expansion had given cover to the return of authoritarians to power in Russia. “It was a monumental blunder, as we could have chosen a different path. A strategic partnership with Russia focusing on common threats and long-term cooperation would have been more beneficial.” Instead, he lamented that “we lost an opportunity to have Russia as a crucial partner . . . [when] we could have avoided the tensions and challenges we face today. It’s a missed chance for a better and more cooperative future.”[\[556\]](#)

## **Saakashvili’s War**

### **Instigation**

Bush administration officials later acknowledged how provocative and counterproductive their actions had been. One said that “three train wrecks”—recognition of Kosovo’s independence, installation of ABM sites in Romania and Poland, and the continued expansion of the NATO alliance —“Doing all three of those things in kind of close proximity . . . sort of fed his sense of people trying to take advantage of Russia.”[\[557\]](#)

Putin decided to draw his line in the Southern Caucasus Mountains in the summer of 2008. The five-day Georgia conflict of August 2008 could have turned into a very real war. Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili—victor of the U.S.-backed Rose Revolution of 2003—had long planned to invade the breakaway provinces of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, then enjoying autonomy under the protection of Russian peacekeeping troops, [\[558\]](#) just as Putin had long planned to force him back out again if he tried it.[\[559\]](#)

Saakashvili had been incentivized to take bigger risks due to President Bush's Bucharest Declaration just four months before, U.S. military support and vague security assurances the Bush government had given his government that spring.[\[560\]](#) The U.S. began a massive joint training exercise in the country on July 15, "Immediate Response 2008," to "increase the cooperation and partnership between U.S. and Georgian forces."[\[561\]](#) The mercenary group MPRI, who had trained the Croatian military before Operation Storm in 1995,[\[562\]](#) trained Georgian special forces just before this war as well.[\[563\]](#) Even Bush's own staff later told the press they worried Saakashvili had interpreted the president's statements as a "flashing yellow light," indicating the U.S. would support him in a war with Russia.[\[564\]](#)

## **Motivations**

One of the stipulations of the NATO treaty is that no new country can join if its borders are the subject of a dispute, even a dormant one, that could commit the U.S. and our allies to war.[\[565\]](#)

When the Soviet Union broke apart in 1991, Georgia declared its independence,[\[566\]](#) but so did the Southern Caucasus territories of South Ossetia and Abkhazia,[\[567\]](#) which Georgia considered to be part of its sovereign territory.[\[568\]](#) This was in reaction to Georgia's attempt to claim previously autonomous regions under the USSR and force the culturally and linguistically distinct minorities who lived there to adopt the Georgian language.[\[569\]](#) In fact, South Ossetia intended to sign the New Union Treaty in early 1991, before the final unraveling of the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the failed August coup.[\[570\]](#) They both had declared autonomy from Georgia as the USSR was disintegrating in 1989. Georgia, beginning under President Zviad Gamsakhurdia, went to war with them, South Ossetia in 1991–1992[\[571\]](#) and then Abkhazia in 1992–1994. In 1992, the new Georgian president, former Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, and Russian President Boris Yeltsin agreed to create the Joint Peacekeeping Forces (JPKF) for South Ossetia. The Russians and Georgians came to an agreement brokered by America's European Union allies under which both sides would deploy peacekeepers to the region to preserve the status quo.[\[572\]](#) In May 1994, they reached a similar agreement over Abkhazia.[\[573\]](#)

But the Georgian government did not give up its claim to its lost territories, and Saakashvili knew he would have to clear up this dispute before his country could join NATO. So when NATO declared its intention to add Georgia at Bucharest while this dispute was still ongoing, Saakashvili decided he should take action on South Ossetia.



It is worth noting that while Vice President Cheney had pushed hard to arm the Georgian military with Stinger shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, according to the *New York Times*, “Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor Stephen J. Hadley and William J. Burns, the new undersecretary of state for political affairs, argued that such a sale would provoke Russia, which would see it as arrogant meddling in its turf.”[\[574\]](#)

They did, however, deeply embed the U.S. military, uniformed and civilian side, along with the State Department, in training, equipping and helping expand the Georgian army, including working out of offices in their defense ministry and military. In 2004, U.S. Army Major Doug Peterson, head of the Office of Defense Cooperation, said, “These military experts work to restructure and reform the Ministry of Defense and General Staff, as well as implement NATO compatible structures, systems and doctrine, since Georgia is considered one of the real candidates for joining NATO.”[\[575\]](#)

After Western recognition of Kosovo’s independence in February 2008,[\[576\]](#) the Russians responded with the symbolic acts of repudiating previous limits on trade with Abkhazia and declared their intention to expand travel, when both limits had never been enforced anyway. The Duma also passed a resolution calling for Putin to recognize the province’s independence. Saakashvili panicked and sent troops to the border and expanded drone surveillance missions over the territory, leading to Russian MiG fighter jets then shooting them down.[\[577\]](#)

## **He Started It**

On August 7, after days of small skirmishes at the border between the Georgian army and separatist forces,[\[578\]](#) Saakashvili pulled out of the agreement Georgia had made with the Russians, withdrew Georgian peacekeepers, and launched an attack on South Ossetia,[\[579\]](#) including deliberate strikes against the capital of Tskhinvali and its civilian population.[\[580\]](#)

The Russians, suffering casualties in the initial assault, quickly struck back, destroying Georgia's invading force and securing South Ossetia's final break from Georgian rule. Russia officially recognized both South Ossetia and Abkhazia's independence on August 26.[\[581\]](#)

Was this legal under international law? That depends whose side you are on. Former nations such as Georgia are recognized as having a right to secede from an empire like the USSR. However, as we learned from the breakup of Yugoslavia, the Western-dominated international community, invoking a sketchy precedent of *uti possidetis* ("As you possess, so shall you possess"), will recognize one level of secession from a larger nation, but not a smaller level of secession from there.[\[582\]](#) The separation of ethnic-based enclaves is nowhere recognized, leaving this ultimately to be a civil war which no foreign state has the right to intervene in—no more right than Bill Clinton and NATO had in Kosovo, that is.[\[583\]](#) Then again, just two years later, the International Court of Justice ruled that there was nothing in international law that prevented secession in the case of Kosovo.[\[584\]](#) They had apparently just invoked that rule against the Bosnian Serbs in the previous war because they wanted to.

Regardless, in this war, Georgia lost badly, and so Russian President Putin got to decide what the law said. And it turns out, they had all the fair warning in the world. Burns described a private meeting between Secretary Rice, Putin and Lavrov. After Rice warned Putin not to escalate tensions there, Putin got up and wagged his finger at her. “If Saakashvili uses force in South Ossetia, which we are convinced he is preparing to do, that would be a grave mistake, and the Georgian people would suffer the most. If he wants war, he will get it,” Putin warned, continuing, “Saakashvili is nothing more than a puppet of the United States. You need to pull back the strings before there’s trouble.” He warned that “[i]f Georgia causes bloodshed in Ossetia, I will have no alternative to recognizing South Ossetia and Abkhazia, and responding with force. . . . We could talk for ages about this, but that’s the point I want you to understand. If Saakashvili starts something, we will finish it.”[\[585\]](#)

Rice then passed on a word of caution to Saakashvili, but, according to Burns, the hawks in the vice president’s office kept encouraging him.[\[586\]](#)

The “Kosovo precedent” cannot be undone. Every diplomat in the West recognizes the chasm that Clinton had cut into the international law with his aggressive 1999 war against Serbia. Burns wrote in his memoir about a conversation he had with Putin in March 2008, just after Western recognition of Kosovo’s independence and shortly before the Bucharest summit. The Russian president told him, “Your government has made a big mistake on Kosovo. Don’t you see how that encourages conflict and monoethnic states all over the world? I’m glad you didn’t try to tell me that Kosovo is not a precedent. That’s a ridiculous argument.” Burns wrote, “I

smiled a little to myself, grateful that that was one point I had persuaded my colleagues in Washington to delete in the drafting process” for the ambassador’s statement to Putin.[\[587\]](#)

Russian peacekeepers were stationed in South Ossetia under a deal sanctioned by international law, and at least two were killed in Georgia’s initial assault on Tskhinvali. New Russian President Dimitry Medvedev’s decision to intervene was inevitable at that point—though Russia immediately called for a meeting of the UN Security Council to demand a ceasefire, but the U.S. intervened to prevent it.[\[588\]](#)

Victoria Nuland’s husband, neoconservative theoretician Robert Kagan, assured the public that “[t]he details of who did what to precipitate Russia’s war against Georgia are not very important,” as he predictably compared Russia’s defensive response in South Ossetia to Nazi Germany’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938.[\[589\]](#)

“I know I speak for every American when I say . . . today, we are all Georgians,” declared then-senator and Republican Party presidential nominee John McCain.[\[590\]](#) But even David Ignatius, considered the man at the *Washington Post* closest to the CIA,[\[591\]](#) wrote that Bush administration officials did not believe Saakashvili’s claim that the Russians had started the war by moving troops through the Roki Tunnel under the Caucasus Mountains when Saakashvili launched his attack.[\[592\]](#) They could be certain, since more than 100 American military advisers were embedded with the Georgian military at the time, and even more civilians within its government.[\[593\]](#)

Andrew Cockburn reported in *Harper's*, "Saakashvili worked hard at ingratiating himself with the friendly superpower, supplying a Georgian contingent for the U.S.-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan, and offering hospitality to American intelligence operations in Georgia itself." He added, "NSA interception facilities began sprouting on suitably sited hilltops. . . . [T]he Georgian president basked in bipartisan favor among influential figures such as Richard Holbrooke, as well as Senator McCain whose close adviser was Saakashvili lobbyist Randy Scheunemann."

"By 2008," Cockburn wrote, "he was unabashedly provoking Moscow, apparently confident that he could win a war with his immense neighbor." Saakashvili's friend, Lockheed's Bruce Jackson, told Cockburn that "Misha was trying to flip us into a war with Russia." Because Rice and National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley were afraid Vice President Cheney might convince Bush to intervene in the war, Hadley ordered his NSC aide, none other than the very prescient Fiona Hill, to spy on Cheney and warn Hadley if he was headed to the Oval Office "so that they could sprint to Bush's side and dissuade him from any dangerous notions dripped in his ear by the vice-president."[\[594\]](#) This is especially notable since Hadley, a former partner in the law firm of Shea & Gardner which represented Lockheed and Boeing, had been very close to the neoconservatives[\[595\]](#) and had been identified as "Cheney's mole" on the NSC during Bush's first term by Secretary Powell's right-hand man Dick Armitage.[\[596\]](#)

Years later, Amb. Richard Miles admitted that Saakashvili started the war and that he would not have done so if the U.S. had not sold him

“offensive weapons, self-propelled artillery systems, heavy-armor vehicles, attack aircraft and other equipment.”[\[597\]](#)

## **Media Consensus**

Another important part of the story was that the American media just went along with the lie that Russia had “invaded Georgia.” It was simply a case of “Russian aggression!” they all agreed, seemingly following the lead of then-Republican candidate for president McCain.[\[598\]](#) His opponent, Democratic Senator Barack Obama, echoed the same lie.[\[599\]](#) They all must have known it was a lie, since the truth had been widely reported by NPR and the European media in real time as the war began.[\[600\]](#) The *New York Times* and AP caught up the next day.[\[601\]](#) For his part, George W. Bush certainly knew that Georgia started the war. His Deputy National Security Advisor James Jeffrey told him the news correctly the first time in line at a ceremony at the Olympics in Beijing.[\[602\]](#) They all made a decision to tell the American people another story.

The *Times*, which had been honest about it at first,[\[603\]](#) before changing their story,[\[604\]](#) finally went back to admitting the truth almost four months later: Saakashvili started the war. After noting his claims, they said all credible indications were that after firing mortars into South Ossetia and declaring their own ceasefire earlier on August 7, “Georgia’s inexperienced military attacked the isolated separatist capital of Tskhinvali . . . with indiscriminate artillery and rocket fire, exposing civilians, Russian peacekeepers and unarmed monitors to harm.”

Reports from the OSCE were conclusive that on August 7 and 8, “Georgian artillery rounds and rockets were falling throughout the city at intervals of 15 to 20 seconds between explosions, and within the first hour of the bombardment at least 48 rounds landed in a civilian area.” They added, “The monitors have also said they were unable to verify that ethnic Georgian villages were under heavy bombardment that evening, calling to question one of Saakashvili’s main justifications for the attack.” The Georgians announced they were invading South Ossetia in a defensive move after the shelling of their own territory first. “According to the monitors, however, no shelling of Georgian villages could be heard in the hours before the Georgian bombardment,” the *Times* belatedly reported. “At least two of the four villages that Georgia has since said were under fire were near the observers’ office in Tskhinvali, and the monitors there likely would have heard artillery fire nearby.” Ryan Grist, a former British Army captain and senior OSCE representative in Georgia, told the *Times*, “It was clear to me that the attack was completely indiscriminate and disproportionate to any, if indeed there had been any, provocation,” and that “[t]he attack was clearly, in my mind, an indiscriminate attack on the town, as a town.”[\[605\]](#)

C.J. Chivers of the *Times* wrote a follow-up story two years later, after Julian Assange’s WikiLeaks published State Department cables showing how the U.S. ambassador to Georgia, John F. Tefft, and his staff had identified too closely with their charges and allowed themselves to believe Saakashvili’s propaganda: “The cables show that for several years, as Georgia entered an escalating contest with the Kremlin for the future of

Abkhazia and South Ossetia . . . Washington relied heavily on the Saakashvili government's accounts of its own behavior." While contrasting their takes with those of diplomats assigned to other countries, Chivers wrote, "In Georgia, diplomats appeared to set aside skepticism and embrace Georgian versions of important and disputed events." When Saakashvili was moving his troops into position for the attack, the embassy wrote to Washington that they were just "in a heightened state of alertness to show their resolve." But, Chivers again confirmed, "Georgia would launch a heavy artillery-and-rocket attack on Tskhinvali, the South Ossetian capital, at 11:35 p.m. on Aug. 7, ending a ceasefire it had declared less than five hours before." The next day, embassy staff simply repeated Georgian claims that the Ossetians had begun the war by shelling Georgian villages in their reports back home and ignored the OSCE's information to the contrary.

[\[606\]](#)

The Georgian government tried to claim the Russians had invaded five minutes before their artillery attack, but never provided any evidence for this. Their own press release from early in the morning of August 8 mentions only paramilitary volunteers from North Ossetia, and they did not change their story until 2:30 in the afternoon. The official excuse for this, provided to journalist Hans Mouritzen, was that "the first [story] was meant to provide a 'fig leaf' for the Russians, so they could withdraw without losing face in front of the international community."[\[607\]](#)

The German magazine *Der Spiegel* ran a revealing report explaining how everyone at NATO headquarters agreed that Georgia's "actions were more calculated than pure self-defense or a response to Russian



provocation.” Regarding the small exchanges of mortar fire in the previous few days, they thought that “by no means could these skirmishes be seen as justification for Georgian war preparations.” Saakashvili had sent 75 tanks and armored personnel carriers along with 12,000 troops in an attempt to push through and close the Roki tunnel. They attacked with mortars, rocket launchers and cluster bombs on the night of August 7. The Russians did not get involved until early the next morning, when they fired one short-range missile. Their troops did not start coming through the tunnel until 11 in the morning. “This sequence of events is now seen as evidence that Moscow did not act offensively, but merely reacted,” they reported.[\[608\]](#)

The International Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Georgia, on a mandate from the European Union, also proved that Saakashvili was the aggressor, noting that at the start of the fighting, the commander of the Georgian contingent to the Joint Peacekeeping Forces deployed in South Ossetia “stated that the operation was aimed at restoring the constitutional order in the territory of South Ossetia.” It was only “[s]omewhat later [that] the Georgian side refuted [his] statement as unauthorized and invoked the countering of an alleged Russian invasion as justification of the operation.”

On the question of whether the Georgian attack may have been a legal act, the EU investigation concluded, “It was not.” In fact, “Georgia had acknowledged that the prohibition of the use of force was applicable to its conflict in South Ossetia in specific legally binding international documents.” They said that even if the Russians had started the war, the way Georgia waged it still would have been illegal. “It is not possible to accept that the shelling of Tskhinvali during much of the night with GRAD

multiple rocket launchers (MRLS) and heavy artillery would satisfy the requirements of having been necessary and proportionate in order to defend those villages.” On whether it was legal for Saakashvili to attack Russian peacekeepers in South Ossetia under the theory that the Russians were building up forces in preparation for an attack on them, the EU investigators ruled that “[a]gain the answer is in the negative.” There was no attack for them to repel, and “Georgian claims of a large-scale presence of Russian armed forces in South Ossetia prior to the Georgian offensive on 7/8 August could not be substantiated by the Mission,” adding, “Consequently, the use of force by Georgia against Russian peacekeeping forces in Tskhinvali in the night of 7/8 August 2008 was contrary to international law.”[\[609\]](#) The Moscow bureau chief of the U.S. government’s own Voice of America, James Brooke, later ran a piece confirming the same facts.[\[610\]](#)

After being called out for their lies, State Department Deputy Spokesman Robert Wood said it did not matter who started the war after all. “I think we need to get away from looking at who did what first, because, as I said, I don’t think we’ll ever really get to the bottom of that,” he insisted.  
[\[611\]](#)

Former Soviet Premier Gorbachev was unequivocal. “Russia did not want this crisis. The Russian leadership is in a strong enough position domestically; it did not need a little victorious war. Russia was dragged into the fray by the recklessness of the Georgian president, Mikhail Saakashvili.” He was unfazed by Bush and Rice’s statements threatening to kick the Russians out of the G8, abolish the NATO-Russia Council and prevent their joining the WTO. “These are empty threats. For some time

now, Russians have been wondering: If our opinion counts for nothing in those institutions, do we really need them? Just to sit at the nicely set dinner table and listen to lectures?” he asked. “Indeed, Russia has long been told to simply accept the facts,” Gorbachev complained. “Here’s the independence of Kosovo for you. Here’s the abrogation of the Antiballistic Missile Treaty, and the American decision to place missile defenses in neighboring countries. Here’s the unending expansion of NATO.” He continued, “All of these moves have been set against the backdrop of sweet talk about partnership. Why would anyone put up with such a charade?”[\[612\]](#)

Ambassador Burns later admitted that a sense of unreality based in American hubris and arrogance had helped to bring on the war. After winning the Cold War and the catastrophe of September 11, “[r]estraint and compromise seemed unappealing and unnecessary, given our strength and sense of mission. They seemed especially unappealing with Putin’s Russia, a declining power with a nasty repressive streak.”[\[613\]](#)

Essentially agreeing with skeptics that Bush’s Bucharest Declaration had been all provocation and no deterrent, Ambassador to NATO Kurt Volker was adamant this had happened not because of the provocation, but the lack of deterrent. “The German-led Allies argue that the Bucharest decision on eventual membership provoked the Russian aggression, while most others (including the new members and Canada) see it as we do: that Russia interpreted the denial of MAP as a green light for action against Georgia,” he wrote in a leaked State Department cable.[\[614\]](#)

Immediate consequences of Saakashvili’s folly included a deepened reluctance on the part of European officials to include Georgia in NATO—

though the Bush administration remained just as determined on their way out.[\[615\]](#) It also prompted Azerbaijan's decision to increase oil sales to Russia in order to diversify their risks[\[616\]](#) and a revamping of Russia's old naval base at Tartus on Syria's coast, announced just after the end of the war and Syria's recognition of Abkhazian and South Ossetian independence.[\[617\]](#)

In 2015, Stratfor's George Friedman observed that the Russians did not really care about Georgia, and that Putin's feelings about Saakashvili were irrelevant. The United States, Friedman said, "had staged a series of colored revolutions throughout the Russian periphery, one of which was in the Ukraine, the Orange Revolution." The Russians, he said, "saw in this Orange Revolution the intent of the Americans to destroy the Russian Federation." Drawing a line, especially for the purpose of warning Ukraine, the Russians crushed Georgia to demonstrate to the former that "[t]his is what an American guarantee is worth."[\[618\]](#)

Elsewhere, he wrote that "U.S.-Russian relations never really recovered." Even though they all knew for a fact it was not true, "From the U.S. point of view, the Russo-Georgia war was naked aggression," while "[f]rom the Russian point of view, it was simply the Russian version of Kosovo, in fact gentler in that it left Georgia proper intact."[\[619\]](#)

Certainly, Mearsheimer wrote in 2014, "Russia's invasion of Georgia in August 2008 should have dispelled any remaining doubts about Putin's determination to prevent Georgia and Ukraine from joining NATO."[\[620\]](#) But too few were listening.

## **A Heartbeat Away**

Hadley and Rice's idea to protect Bush from Cheney seems to have been a good and necessary one. The vice president reportedly proposed missile strikes against the Russian troops coming through the Roki tunnel under the Caucasus Mountains—luckily, the much wiser George W. Bush had decided better than to listen to Cheney by that late date.[\[621\]](#) Former Ambassador to Ukraine Steven Pifer told the same story to an audience at Southern Methodist University, though he later clarified that he had heard the proposal was coming from someone on Cheney's staff, rather than the vice president himself.[\[622\]](#) Journalist Peter Baker reported it the same way in *Foreign Policy*.[\[623\]](#) But former State Department official and journalist Ron Asmus has it that Cheney himself was advocating for strikes.[\[624\]](#)

Apparently, the United States government did not expect the Russians to react the way they did. That is what they had gotten used to—the Russians might not like it, but they would not dare get in our way. Even as it was, then-President Dimitry Medvedev's forces did not march on Tbilisi or disrupt the BTC pipeline. After driving tens of miles into Georgia, they stopped,[\[625\]](#) and eventually pulled back to Ossetia itself.[\[626\]](#)

Rice took credit for this by describing the somewhat limited intervention Bush did authorize, bringing Georgian forces home from Iraq, and claiming that was what stopped the Russians' march on Tbilisi, which she called a “democratically elected government.”[\[627\]](#)

Russian Human Rights Ombudsman Ambassador Vladimir Lukin, a liberal, revealed in a meeting with U.S. Ambassador to Russia John Beyrle that they suspected that Saakashvili must have had a green light from the United States to launch the war. Beyrle noted that even though he was

“someone disposed toward cooperation with the U.S.,” Lukin’s “statements on recognition, Russian perceptions of one-sided American media coverage of the war and U.S. culpability for arming Georgia under Saakashvili reflect the thinking of the majority of Russian foreign policy elite.”[\[628\]](#)

In Ukraine, despite opinion polls showing the majority of the country was against it, President Yushchenko demanded immediate accession to NATO membership in reaction, while the Germans and French were more determined than ever to deny it.[\[629\]](#) Senator McCain then called to bring Georgia into NATO immediately, despite the fact it was illegal at the time since they were at war, and even though doing so would be equivalent to a declaration of war against Russia over a border dispute 6,000 miles east of Washington. And for what? Imagine, Georgia, this tiny, weak nation in the South Caucasus, between the Black and Caspian Seas, being included in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. You may have thought Turkey was pushing it. But what value could Georgia possibly add to the alliance, other than to get the people of this country into the worst kind of trouble over issues that are absolutely none of our business?

So why is the U.S. government doing this? The obvious answer is that Georgia is an important listening station for American high-tech surveillance against Russia,[\[630\]](#) and sits right on real and potential oil pipeline routes through the Caucasus Mountains or westward through Turkey. They think the price is worth it.

Cheney visited Azerbaijan and Georgia just after the war to promise billions in foreign aid and encourage the development of new pipelines to bypass Russia.[\[631\]](#) “Azerbaijan and Georgia are both pivotal in plans for

the Nabucco pipeline, a project backed by Washington and Brussels to break Moscow's stranglehold on the transit of Central Asian gas by shipping it to Europe around Russia's southern flank," Reuters helpfully noted. Not that Moscow has a dominant position in the Caspian Basin. They could have marched all the way to Tbilisi and cut the BTC pipeline right in half while they were at it, but did not. That the Americans were upset about their inability to cut Russia out altogether was plain enough.[\[632\]](#)

## **Sour Grapes**

In the aftermath of Georgia's defeat, Stratfor wrote that Russia may have won this round, but never forget, we still have terrorists: "It will take some time before the United States frees itself up from the Middle East to effectively confront the Russians in Eurasia, but there are other options in the covert world that U.S. intelligence can employ to keep the Russians occupied." Here comes the part about the liberal, rules-based international order: "Such a strategy would likely involve three key ingredients: Chechens, Tatars and Saudis." So far, so good. "Russia's internal security largely depends on its ability to contain Muslim separatist aspirations in its two main belts of Muslim populations: one in the mountainous Northern Caucasus . . . and the other along the western side of the Ural Mountains." As luck would have it, "Chechnya borders the former Soviet state of Georgia, which is always ready and willing to support (as it has in the past) a Chechen insurrection against Moscow to weaken the Kremlin's grip in the Caucasus," they wrote, reminding readers of U.S., Saudi and Turkish support for Basayev and Khattab's forces in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Not only should the U.S. and its allies return to supporting Chechen terrorists, but “Tatarstan, in the Volga-Ural region, controls all of the Siberian oil, gas, road, rail and transport routes [and] also is a prime candidate for a covert strategy that aims to inflame Russia’s Muslim minorities.”

The Stratfor analyst wrote that “[t]his Muslim belt is key because it separates the ethnically Russian portions of Russia from sparsely populated Siberia and runs through all of Russia’s transport networks (road, rail and pipeline),” adding that “[i]f Tatarstan, which has become more independent in developing its vast oil wealth, revved up a resistance movement against Moscow, Russia would have no choice but to focus its efforts on quashing the rebellion at home rather than spreading its influence abroad.” Though Putin’s man in Chechnya, Ramzan Kadyrov, seemed to have things under control, “money talks in this region, and there are a fair number of dissenters in Chechnya who would turn against Kadyrov for the right price. Even Kadyrov himself has proven he can be bought.” If not, assassination might help: “With Kadyrov as the keystone of the current Chechen power structure, his removal (and he has had a fair share of death threats) could very quickly cause the region to go up in flames.” Al Qaeda’s war against the U.S. notwithstanding, “[r]amping up Muslim fighters in Chechnya and Tatarstan is a logical step for the United States to take in coordination with its Saudi allies,” Stratfor advised. “If Washington and Riyadh do decide to play the Islamist militancy card, however, Moscow will be ready for it.”[\[633\]](#)



It does not appear that the W. Bush administration took this advice at that late date, but it goes to show the way the national security state thinks, and the position that particular firm is coming from when confirming what should be some of the most controversial accusations against them.

## **Democrat**

Not long after its defeat, the *Times* explained that Georgia is not really a democracy at all. Saakashvili was not a loyal and wonderful friend, but a tyrant who sent armed thugs to shut down independent media and fired rubber bullets at peaceful protesters against his “semiauthoritarian . . . one-party state.” Even Soros’s Freedom House, the *Times* reported, “ranked Georgia, in terms of press freedom, on a level with Colombia and behind Nigeria, Malawi, Indonesia and Ukraine.” A Georgian investigative journalist, Nino Zuriashvili, said, “The paradox is that there was more media freedom before the Rose Revolution.”[\[634\]](#)

In 2007, Saakashvili was accused of ordering murders by his own former Interior and Defense Minister Irakli Okruashvili. “Saakashvili’s governing style has exceeded all limits [and] has made it an everyday thing to have immorality, injustice [and] oppression of human beings.” He claimed to be witness to the fact that “[d]aily repressions, destruction of houses and churches, robbery of citizens, and murder—and I want to underline murder—have become routine practices of our government.”[\[635\]](#) Two days later, Okruashvili was arrested[\[636\]](#) and his friends tortured.[\[637\]](#) After that, he recanted.[\[638\]](#) Saakashvili was later accused by Georgian prosecutors of ordering the assassination of billionaire

Badri Patarkatsishvili,[\[639\]](#) an ally of Russian oligarchs Boris Berezovsky and Roman Abramovich,[\[640\]](#) in London.

In 2012, mass protests broke out across the country against the systematic rape and torture of male inmates, revealed to the public by leaked videos[\[641\]](#) and testimony of former prisoners and guards.[\[642\]](#) In October of that year, the Georgians threw Saakashvili out[\[643\]](#) despite his and his American allies' attempts to suppress his opponent, Bidzina Ivanishvili, his party and supporters.[\[644\]](#)

## **Thomas Graham's Lament**

### **You Want Information Dispersal, This Is Information Retrieval**

Thomas Graham, then a National Security Council official, formerly chief of the political unit at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow in the Clinton years, tried to warn the Bush administration that the Russians saw the color revolutions as American-backed coups, and that they thought the U.S. might try it in Russia next. But Graham was just given the same propaganda line as everyone else: "All we're doing is promoting democracy," so it makes no sense for the Russians to complain, and we do not have to listen.

"But you're the Russia expert," a reporter from the *Times* objected. "But Ukraine is not a Russia issue," Graham answered. "It's a Ukrainian issue. There's a bureau for European affairs that oversees Ukrainian issues." During the Orange Revolution, the Europe desk at the NSC was run by the anti-Russia hawk Daniel Fried,[\[645\]](#) who continued to push for more American support for pro-American governments in Russia's former sphere

of influence, particularly Georgia and Ukraine. The guy who knew better was over in another department. “My main contribution was preventing things from being worse than they could have been,” Graham insisted.[\[646\]](#) He later wrote that U.S. support for the Orange Revolution was one of the major issues that ended Putin’s friendship with W. Bush and convinced him to change his mind about working with the United States.[\[647\]](#)

Graham later explained that when Putin came to power, he was intent on restoring Russia’s global stature back to the rank of a first-rate power. “His plan was to do that not in opposition to the United States, however, but in partnership with it. Close ties with the world’s preeminent power, he was convinced, would validate Russia’s own worth.” He wrote, “Putin’s initial hopes thus presented the George W. Bush administration with an opportunity to put U.S.-Russia relations on an enduring, constructive track.” Graham knew this because, he “saw that firsthand as the president’s senior Russia expert on the staff of the National Security Council from June 2002 to February 2007. . . . [G]enuine partnership [was] plausible for the first time since the end of the Cold War.” He recalled Putin’s cooperation with the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, providing American forces with bases and intelligence to help with the war, and that “[a]t the Moscow/St. Petersburg summit in May 2002, Bush and Putin issued a joint declaration that laid out a framework for strategic partnership.” The two nations had agreed to work together “on counterterrorism, the nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, transnational organized crime, the Middle East peace process and other regional conflicts, missile defense, and nuclear arms control.” They even “set up a group that would consult on strategic

security and pledged to develop a new relationship between NATO and Russia.”

But Bush messed it up. Despite the second round of NATO expansion to the Baltic states in 2004, Graham wrote, “Putin was prepared to live with the alliance—at least until the U.S. pushed for membership for Ukraine and Georgia at the 2008 NATO summit in Bucharest.” That ruined everything, since it “crossed a bright red line, threatening Russia’s preeminence in two states that it considered critical to its own security and, in the case of Ukraine, its very essence as a great power.”

And it pointed, Graham said, to “the decisive factor” causing the tension between the U.S. and Russia: “Washington’s progressive encroachment on Russia’s interests in the former Soviet Union.” The Russians believed if they were cooperative with the United States on terrorism and other issues, America would respect their influence in their own near abroad. This was a mistake because “spheres of influence were decidedly out of favor in Washington”—for any country other than America and its allies anyway. Japan may continue to dominate Okinawa and “allow” the United States to do the same, for example, because Japan is not Russia.[\[648\]](#)

So instead of cooperating with Russia, the Bush administration “redoubled its efforts” to limit Putin’s ambitions, beginning with expediting work to complete the BTC pipeline to cut the Russians out. Then Bush urged negotiations after Beslan and spent tens of millions of dollars overthrowing the government of Ukraine in the Orange Revolution, which Putin feared was a dress rehearsal for his own overthrow. Graham then laid

out the truth, which the Russians had inferred from the Bush administration's actions, and which he himself authoritatively attested to, but spoke as though it was just some crazy conspiracy theory. "And so, according to the Kremlin's dubious logic, Beslan and the Orange Revolution, seen against the background of mounting U.S. activism in the former Soviet bloc, revealed the United States' ultimate goals vis-à-vis Russia." This included "its eviction from the other former Soviet states, the erosion of its territorial integrity, and regime change—in short, its demise as a great power." Graham said, "To be sure, Putin overreacted, conjuring up conspiracies and threats far beyond anything Washington intended or was capable of. But the key point is that he was reacting. He was not driving events; the United States, by far the superior power, was." And it did not have to be this way. Even a recovered Russia was no threat to Eastern Europe. Acceleration of NATO expansion and launching the color-coded revolutions were needless provocations. "Rather, the United States could have focused on building more constructive relations with Russia—which was also Putin's initial goal—and it could have given Russia time to adjust to its new geopolitical circumstances."

Graham also admitted to W. Bush's treason on behalf of bin Ladenite terrorists in Chechnya. The president had said to the world that they were either with the United States or with the terrorists. But "Washington made an exception for the Chechen rebels, many of whom were not, to be sure, terrorists but were nevertheless cooperating with terrorist groups in their struggle against Moscow." By "terrorist groups," Graham literally was referring to agents of Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri: Ibn al-

Khattab and Shamil Basayev and their Arab-Afghan army. Again, at least 10 of the al Qaeda hijackers who carried out the September 11 attack on the United States had fought in, or at least traveled to, Chechnya in the years leading up to the attack.[\[649\]](#)

“Washington could have prevented representatives of the Chechen government-in-exile from operating freely in the United States,” Graham continued. “It could have pressed moderates among the Chechen rebels to cut their ties to known terrorist organizations.” He said, “Such steps would have laid a firmer foundation for long-term counterterrorism cooperation and debunked the view that Washington was using terrorism as a tool against Russia.” But the administration thought it was more important to abet bin Laden’s forces, who had slaughtered thousands of American civilians, as long as they were killing Russians, who had not.

There is no indication that Putin ever accused the U.S. of being behind the Beslan attack specifically, only that the Bush administration was still supporting the people who were behind it. When his foreign minister, Lavrov, complained about American and British support for wanted Chechen exiles, he was as polite as could be. “We are far from accusing the leaders of major countries . . . of deliberately preserving this double standard” on terrorism, he said. Instead, Lavrov blamed automatic processes of the government left over from the last Cold War, saying that “the inertia is still very strong. . . . It is difficult to get rid of outdated stereotypes, but, although I don’t want to look immodest, we are managing to do this faster than our partners.”[\[650\]](#)

In Ukraine, Bush could have favored neutrality, his former chief Russia analyst at the NSC complained. They could have also “ratcheted down its democracy promotion programs in Russia, which were of marginal value but raised fears in the Kremlin that Washington was seeking to erode the regime’s domestic position.”

Graham also said Bush’s push to bring Georgia and Ukraine into NATO in 2008 “was ill-advised at best” and “guaranteed to provoke a powerful Russian backlash.” He noted that “[k]ey allies, notably France and Germany, were adamantly opposed,” cited Amb. Burns’s warning that this was the “brightest of red lines” for the Russians and blamed the move for helping to start the Georgia war.

Perhaps Bush should have listened to his top Russia expert on the NSC instead of the War Party in the vice president’s office.[\[651\]](#)

# Barack Obama

“He who defends everything, defends nothing.”

—Frederick the Great

“Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself.”

—Carl Gershman

“The West is leading Ukraine down the primrose path, and the end result is that Ukraine is going to get wrecked.”

—John J. Mearsheimer

“A lot of what we did set the stage for what Putin is doing.”

—Joe Cirincione

“I don’t want to talk about the Azov Battalion.”



—Cathy Young

“Biden is willing.”

—Victoria Nuland

“Another barrier to combatting disinformation is that certain Kremlin-backed narratives are factually true.”

—UK Foreign Office

“The demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one.”

—Henry Kissinger

# The Great Reset

## Meet the New Boss

The Democrats especially attack Russia, but perhaps they should take responsibility. President Barack Obama (2009–2017) continued down the same destructive path as his predecessors. In the beginning, Obama and his secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, made a big deal about their attempted “reset” with Russia. In March 2009, Clinton held a ceremony with Foreign Minister Lavrov where she gave him a big red plastic button meant to symbolize leaving the bad old days of the Bush administration in the past. It was supposed to read “reset,” but had been mistranslated and instead read “overload.”[\[1\]](#) At that time, Hillary seemed to agree with later-President Donald Trump that the U.S. should try to mend relations with Russia to assist in the “pivot to Asia,” that is, China, which she declared America’s top priority in a 2011 *Foreign Policy* article.[\[2\]](#) “We are ready to move beyond Cold War mentalities and chart a fresh start in relations between our two countries,” Obama and new Russian President Medvedev said in a joint statement in April 2009,[\[3\]](#) though the administration mocked W. Bush’s supposed gentle naivete, saying they would not be seeking to forge “some buddy-buddy relationship” with Medvedev the way Obama’s predecessor had tried with Putin.[\[4\]](#)

Obama and Medvedev were getting along at first. Russia joined the WTO, worked with the West to pass UN sanctions against Iran in coercive diplomacy toward a new nuclear deal and got the New START Treaty

signed and ratified. In his first year, Obama told Poland and the Czech Republic that he was reversing Bush's policy on missile defense in their countries.[\[5\]](#) They also made an agreement to reopen the northern route into Afghanistan when the Pakistanis got mad and closed the highway through their country in 2012 after U.S. forces killed some Pakistani troops assisting Afghan Taliban fighters on the border.[\[6\]](#)

In Medvedev's few years as president, he saw through numerous reforms liberalizing the electoral system especially, but also on corruption and opening the media to opposition figures.[\[7\]](#)

## **Not Impressed**

Obama later described his first trip to Russia as president and meeting with Putin in the summer of 2009. The Russian leader slammed George W. Bush's record on Iraq, the ABM Treaty, missile defense, NATO expansion and the color-coded revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. "As far as Putin was concerned, the Americans had been arrogant, dismissive, unwilling to treat Russia as an equal partner and constantly trying to dictate terms to the rest of the world. All of which, [Putin] said, made it hard to be optimistic about future relations," Obama wrote.[\[8\]](#) He put some effort into making Putin simply sound petty, but all those points were sound. Bush had made disastrous decisions. If he had been deliberately attempting to sabotage America's relationship with Russia, he would have done a pretty good job. Why should it have been difficult for Obama to understand Putin's point of view? He had been nominated and then elected in reaction

to Bush's leadership on everything. But after all, it was his superficial differences and real similarities with Bush[\[9\]](#) that got him the job.[\[10\]](#)

## **Medvedev's New Treaty**

In November 2009, President Medvedev proposed a somewhat vague new treaty to provide a common security system for Europe which would freeze NATO's growth while integrating it with the EU, OSCE, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)[\[11\]](#) and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),[\[12\]](#) though not the GUAM, and giving Russia an equal voice in deliberations on European security matters.[\[13\]](#) Medvedev told the media, "I'm convinced that Europe's problems won't be solved until its unity is established, an organic wholeness of all its integral parts, including Russia." Rather than taking a chance on beginning negotiations on a new structure that could prevent future wars, the allies dismissed the proposal out of hand.[\[14\]](#) This was true even though Amb. Burns had noted that numerous Russian analysts believed Russia was currently attempting to consolidate the CSTO to balance against China and the growing power of its Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Central Asia, which was their higher priority.[\[15\]](#)

Shortly after Obama took office, a congressional delegation traveled to Russia to meet with a group of national security officials. In their meeting, Aleksandr Belkin of the Russian Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, explained that while Georgia mattered a great deal to them, "it was not as important to Russians as Ukraine." He said he was worried that the people in charge in the States did not understand the historical and cultural issues

involved. Further, he warned them that “[t]he U.S. pushing policies such as NATO membership for Ukraine only helped the ‘America haters come to power’ in Russia and gave legitimacy to the hardliners’ vision of ‘fortress Russia.’”

Burns said another local expert had explained that Putin believed Russia must engage with the United States, while new President Dmitry Medvedev represented a faction which did not. “The ‘disengagers’ did not want confrontation with the U.S., but neither did they see a need to work with it,” the ambassador wrote. Instead, “[t]hey preferred to seek alternative spaces where the U.S. could be kept at a distance.” This “explained Russian interest in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Central Asia, as well as the still evolving RIC (Russia-India-China) and BRIC (Brazil-Russia-India-China) groupings.”[\[16\]](#) If the Americans would not have them, they would begin to turn east.

## **New START**

Presidents Obama and Medvedev signed the New START Treaty in April 2010. It went into effect in February 2011. The deal was a double-edged sword because Congress, led by the Senate “ICBM Caucus,” insisted on administration approval for a trillion-dollar renovation of America’s entire nuclear weapons industry and arsenal in exchange.[\[17\]](#) It is certainly still better than not having it. All the old agreements are dead. New START is the last remaining treaty restricting U.S. and Russian stockpiles and deployments of strategic nuclear weapons.[\[18\]](#) Or maybe was. Russia suspended participation in the treaty in 2023.[\[19\]](#)

## **Hot Mic**

Obama got caught on a hot microphone promising Medvedev he would have “more flexibility” to remove the anti-ballistic missile stations in Romania and Poland after he was safely reelected. “I will transmit this information to Vladimir,” Medvedev had responded.[\[20\]](#) The program eventually went ahead anyway and was officially inaugurated in 2016.[\[21\]](#) What was one more broken promise at that point?

## **Overload**

### **Round 3**

President Obama chose not to see the reset through. In addition to the installation of ABM systems in Eastern Europe, the administration continued NATO expansion by adding the Balkan states Albania and Croatia to the alliance in 2009. As absurd as the idea might be to Americans that these nations could do anything to bolster our national defense, it was probably only a minor irritation to the Russians. They had interests in Montenegro,[\[22\]](#) but were not in any serious contest with the U.S. over Croatia and Albania. Still, it was contrary to the administration’s attempts to restore a positive spirit to America’s relationship with the Russian Federation.

## **Libya**

Obama and Clinton then turned around and made a chump out of the new Russian president while Putin temporarily occupied the prime minister position in the Duma. They lied him into abstaining on the 2011 Libya war resolution in the UN Security Council. Obama's government claimed that NATO, operating far out of its "area" against a country that was not threatening them, was only going to launch a "no-fly zone" to protect civilians in the city of Benghazi in Libya's east—against the pretended threat that Gaddafi meant to slaughter the entire civilian population there, which was a ridiculous hoax. He did not say that, and his men had not massacred civilians in the towns they had already taken back from the so-called "rebels."[\[23\]](#) Obama and his allies then used the resolution as cover to launch a nine-month-long regime change war on behalf of the Libyan veterans of Iraq War II. That included those who had fought for al Qaeda in Iraq:[\[24\]](#) the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), the same faction that MI6 had tried to use to assassinate Gaddafi back in 1996,[\[25\]](#) and Ansar al-Sharia, the group that attacked the U.S. consulate in Benghazi a year later, killing Ambassador Chris Stevens, foreign service officer Sean Smith and two CIA contractors.[\[26\]](#) Both groups have helped turn the country into a free-fire zone in the decade since.[\[27\]](#)

Then-Prime Minister Putin complained about Medvedev's decision, for which the new president embarrassingly reprimanded him, buying himself an imminent demotion.[\[28\]](#) Secretary Gates later wrote about how much the Russians resented the way the Obama administration took advantage of them: "The Russians later firmly believed that they had been deceived on Libya. They had been persuaded to abstain at the UN on grounds that the

resolution provided for a humanitarian mission to prevent the slaughter of civilians.”

Humorously, Gates added, as though he had simply been a spectator to all this rather than second-in-command in launching an unconstitutional and illegal aggressive war against a country which could never have threatened America, and in fact had made a normalization deal with the previous administration only seven years before,[\[29\]](#) “as the list of bombing targets steadily grew, it became obvious that very few targets were off limits and that NATO was intent on getting rid of Gaddafi.”[\[30\]](#)

Just like with Bush at Bucharest, Gates enjoyed criticizing his presidents’ bad decisions, but he sure never resigned over them. Of course, in Libya he was responsible for carrying out those illegal orders, and did so unhesitatingly. Though he retired a few months into the Libya war, no one considered it a resignation in protest. He had announced it a year before.  
[\[31\]](#)

And though Obama had already publicly declared his intention to abandon the anti-ballistic missile system in Poland,[\[32\]](#) along with his overheard assurance to Medvedev, he changed his mind and delayed it over political difficulties in Poland and Czechia.[\[33\]](#) “Russia’s attitude and possible reaction played no part in my recommendation to the president on this issue,” Gates wrote in the *New York Times*.[\[34\]](#) “While there certainly were some in the State Department and the White House who believed the third site in Europe was incompatible with the Russian ‘reset,’ we in Defense did not. Making the Russians happy wasn’t exactly on my to-do list,” he later wrote in his memoir.[\[35\]](#)



## **Martyr Made**

So what difference at this point does it make? As historian Darryl Cooper pointed out, though Putin was still exercising influence from behind the scenes, it was significant that a leader as powerful as him would step down, even for a little while. This raises the possibility in the public mind that perhaps they need not be so dependent on their one great leader, but can get by without him. He was also, by at least going through the pretense of stepping down to obey the constitution, rather than simply overriding it, seeming to show an intent to leaving something approximating a republican form of government behind, even if he eventually died in office.[\[36\]](#) But Medvedev was totally discredited after signing onto Obama and Hillary's 2011 war against Libya, and so that was the end of that experiment. They had proven Putin indispensable to the Russian state after all.[\[37\]](#)

## **Biden's Big Trip**

In early 2011, Vice President Joe Biden traveled to Russia to "build on" the supposed reset. There he met with President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin, laid a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier and such.[\[38\]](#) Biden then summoned all the top opposition leaders, including Vladimir Ryzhkov, Leonid Gozman, Garry Kasparov, Grigory Yavlinsky, and Boris Nemtsov, to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. He told them that he had "looked into Putin's eyes and saw no soul," mocking W. Bush's alleged naïveté and at the same time insulting the power still behind the throne, whose face he had just smiled in. Biden insisted Putin should not run for president again. A

sensational report in the Russian media claimed that Biden’s “main goal” of the trip was to try to pressure Medvedev into running for a second term. Perhaps not. But it was certainly a credible enough story in the context of the rest of the visit to make it believable from their point of view.[\[39\]](#)

## **The Snow Revolution**

Putin repeatedly accused the Obama administration—and specifically Secretary of State Hillary Clinton—of bankrolling dissenters protesting the Russian parliamentary elections of 2011.[\[40\]](#) Though Putin’s party United Russia lost 77 seats, Secretary Clinton denounced the elections as unfair anyway.[\[41\]](#)

The State Department admitted to the media that they and allied NGOs spent money promoting the democratic process, but swear none of their activities favored any particular group, which was not very believable since their friends in major Western media even had an Otpor-style theme worked out and everything. They called it the Snow Revolution and had protesters wear white ribbons.[\[42\]](#) America’s favorite Russian dissident, Alexei Navalny,[\[43\]](#) a right-wing nationalist who called Muslim immigrants “cockroaches” and terrorists, and his buddy Eduard Limonov, leader of the “National Bolsheviks,” attended, but the crowd of 30,000 did not seem to indicate overall popular support behind their movement. Still, Navalny threatened revolution. “I can see that there are enough people here to seize the Kremlin and the [Russian] White House right now.” He continued, “We are a peaceful force and will not do it now. But if these crooks and thieves

try to go on cheating us, if they continue telling lies and stealing from us, we will take what belongs to us with our own hands.”[\[44\]](#)

Putin publicly blamed Clinton for the disruption. “I looked at the first reaction of our U.S. partners. The first thing that the secretary of state did was say that they were not honest and not fair, but she had not even yet received the material from the observers,” he said, adding that “[s]he set the tone for some actors in our country and gave them a signal. They heard the signal and with the support of the U.S. State Department began active work.”

Often when Putin refers to something he knows is conspiratorial-sounding but true about the United States, such as American and British support for terrorists in Chechnya, he will preface it with “We are all adults here.” So he did in this case, continuing, “and we understand that some . . . of the organizers act in accordance with a well-known scenario and in their own mercenary political interests.” He claimed that “hundreds of millions” of NGO dollars were being spent in the country, and said, “We need to work out forms of protection of our sovereignty, defense against interference from outside. . . . [O]ur people do not want the situation in Russia to develop like it was in Kyrgyzstan or not so long ago in Ukraine.” He continued, “We have to think of ways to tighten accountability for those who carry out the aims of foreign states to influence domestic political processes.”[\[45\]](#)

The Central Election Commission recognized 10 percent of complaints about the Duma elections as valid. This was not perfect, but did not seem to be indicative of wide-scale fraud by the ruling party.[\[46\]](#) Even the *Times*

acknowledged that upper-middle-class educated urban youth protests do not represent overall public opinion.[\[47\]](#)

The Americans also endlessly promoted Navalny, the Russian media dissident and later-alleged poison victim. The *Washington Post* could hardly contain their excitement when he won 27 percent of the vote in the Moscow mayoral race of 2013.[\[48\]](#) However, the *Times* also admitted Navalny was not a liberal at all. He was far to the right of Putin. But that was still okay. Apparently he could be a rabid Russian nationalist and still a traitor to his country.

“In recent years, the nationalist movement has become large and increasingly malignant, responsible for a pattern of racist violence against non-Slavs that includes kidnapping, torture and murder,” the *Times* noted. “Nationalists have taken responsibility for several beheadings.” Nevertheless, “in the effort to drive out Mr. Putin, the opposition, driven by liberal and middle-class Russians, has nonetheless reached out to nationalists, seeing them as a vital bulwark at a critical moment.” Anatoli Baranov, a leftist leader in the protest movement, told the *Times*, “Without cooperation with the nationalists, this movement would not be possible.” Though claiming it must be a cynical political stance, the *Times* conceded that Putin represented a “soft” authoritarianism compared to the nationalists, including their “undisputed leader” Navalny, and that Putin had publicly denounced their ethnic separatism, such as their slogan, “Russia for ethnic Russians.” The Russian president attacked “provocateurs and enemies” whom he accused of trying to “rip out Russia’s core with false talk of the rights of ethnic Russians to self-determination and racial purity.”

Putin wrote, “I am deeply convinced that attempts to propagate the idea of building a Russian ‘national’ mono-ethnic state contradict all of our thousand-year history.”[\[49\]](#) For all of their hyperbole about Putin’s alleged Hitlerianism, this establishes him firmly as a center-right conservative, not the kind of right-wing ethnic nationalist that America’s liberal foreign policy establishment and its first-ever black president would have preferred.

The Obama administration also publicly complained about the lack of opposition in the elections of 2012,[\[50\]](#) after which Putin kicked USAID, the IRI and NDI out of Russia. Reuters complained that Putin was making foreign-funded NGOs register as “foreign agents,”[\[51\]](#) which is exactly the law in the United States, though it is selectively enforced since so much of the population of Washington, D.C., is on the take in one way or another.

[\[52\]](#)

On his second day in Russia, new Ambassador Michael McFaul, along with then-Deputy Secretary of State for Political Affairs William Burns, met with the opposition, prompting Russian politicians and media to denounce McFaul and accuse him of plotting another color-coded revolution.[\[53\]](#) Burns later dismissed their concerns while acknowledging the role the U.S. government had played in helping to create them.[\[54\]](#)

It may be hard to imagine Washington going so far as to attempt a real color-coded coup in Russia to depose the president. But they certainly seem to look for puppets to boost and opportunities to exploit wherever they can find them, at the very least playing into Russian paranoia and making cooperation that much harder.

## **The Once and Future President**

Putin returned early to the presidency in May 2012 with broad public support. In an American presidential debate later that year, Obama ridiculed former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney's statement that Russia was America's "number one geopolitical foe," saying, "The 1980s are now calling to ask for their foreign policy back, because the Cold War's been over for 20 years." But by then Obama himself had already helped push the United States and Russia towards future confrontation and would continue to drive us down that dark path.

## **Brzezinski Warns Ukraine**

In 2009, Zbigniew Brzezinski sat down for an interview with Voice of America for Ukraine. He denounced the post-Orange Revolution regime in Kiev for its self-serving corruption and infighting. Obliquely referring to Yulia Tymoshenko's gas deal[\[55\]](#) after her split with Viktor Yushchenko, [\[56\]](#) Brzezinski accused Ukraine's elite of selling out the country to a foreign power—Putin's Russia. Scolding them for their corruption, he said, "You [Ukrainians] cannot expect the Europeans west of Ukraine, or the people here in America to be more Ukrainian than the Ukrainians." He warned there were elections approaching the next year and if the pro-Western factions could not get their act together, they would lose, and from there they could lose their independence or even pieces of their territory.

Brzezinski also warned that NATO could not accept Ukraine unless there was "significant national unanimity" in the country, adding that "it's not going to help Ukraine because it will become itself a source of division, which other powers [read: Russia] can exploit."[\[57\]](#)

Just a few months before, Brzezinski's position had seemed to be shifting in favor of recognizing the reality of rising Asian powers and the limits of America's ability to influence that part of the world. While insisting the U.S. needed to do everything possible to remain dominant in Europe and that the combined West should do everything it could to influence the East, he said that we should "consolidate security in Europe by drawing Russia into a closer association with the Euro-Atlantic community, and to engage Russia in a wider web of global security that indirectly facilitates the fading of Russia's lingering imperial ambitions."

He proposed a major new deal with them, saying the U.S. should sign an agreement with Russia on security cooperation between NATO and the CSTO. "In return for this concession—which Moscow has long sought," Brzezinski said, "such an arrangement should be made conditional on provisions that confirm the right of current nonmembers to seek membership of their own choice in either NATO or the CSTO." Then, rather than urging this new NATO-Russia entente to take on the Chinese, he urged the same approach to them, saying the West should create a "joint NATO-Shanghai Cooperation Organization council, thereby indirectly engaging China in cooperation with NATO, clearly a desirable goal." He proposed that "given the changing distribution of global power, NATO should soon consider more direct formal links with several leading East Asian powers—especially China and Japan—as well as with India."[\[58\]](#)

This call of Brzezinski's for an early end to the new Cold War was a far cry from non-interventionism, but it was at least a few notches below the arrogance of the foreign policy community consensus of that time. Of

course, they do not listen when it is something they do not want to hear, even from their most revered figures.

## **Yanukovych Returns**

In July 2009, Vice President Biden traveled to Kiev and promised that the new Obama administration would continue to support Ukraine's bid for NATO membership, saying the U.S. did not recognize any Russian sphere of influence in Ukraine. The AP wrongly said this was complementary to President Obama's at least stated position that "NATO seeks collaboration with Russia, not confrontation," though they noted that a solid majority of Ukrainian citizens were against joining the alliance.[\[59\]](#)

Viktor Yanukovych was elected to the presidency in a race ruled free and fair by EU and other international monitors in 2010. Council on Foreign Relations expert Jeffrey Mankoff admitted the election was widely seen as a referendum on the results of the Orange Revolution, and American ally Viktor Yushchenko's rule in the years since. He was crushed in the first round.[\[60\]](#)

Almost immediately upon assuming the presidency, Yanukovych officially dropped the Ukrainian state's goal of joining the NATO alliance, saying, "Entry into NATO is not realistic for our country today. NATO conditions would require us to have the support of the majority of the population."[\[61\]](#) Parliament soon joined him, passing a resolution to officially abandon the nation's NATO ambitions.[\[62\]](#)

According to Professor Mearsheimer, after Yanukovych won in 2010, the National Endowment for Democracy "stepped up its efforts to support



the opposition,” the will of the people be damned.[\[63\]](#) A cable from 2006 also shows the State Department knew perfectly well that in Ukraine there was “low public support for membership” in the alliance; thus they needed to “become more actively involved in the public outreach and education campaign about NATO and why it is in Ukraine’s national interests to join the Alliance.” They wrote that “[t]he low level of public support for NATO membership may well prove to be the Achilles’ Heel of Ukraine’s ambitions to be invited sooner (in 2008) rather than later to join NATO.” They admitted that “[t]here is an unusual chasm between the views of Ukraine’s policy- and opinion-making elite, which overwhelmingly supports NATO membership, and the general population, which currently does not.” Though polls were somewhat sketchy, they concluded it was “safe to say” that only 30 percent or so of Ukrainians wanted to join NATO.[\[64\]](#) As Charap and Colton noted, “Washington was thus going far beyond support for Ukraine’s aspirations, as it often claimed. It was selectively reading those aspirations, focusing on parts of the elite and not the public, and attempting to alter them.”[\[65\]](#)

Yanukovych also signed a new 30-year lease deal with the Russians over their naval base at Sevastopol, Crimea, in exchange for discounted natural gas supplies.[\[66\]](#)

## **The Vaudeville Coup**

In October 2016, the Kremlin allegedly attempted a coup d’état against longtime president Milo Đukanović in Montenegro. The whole thing seems quite unbelievable, though.[\[67\]](#)

It all started when the Obama administration invited Montenegro, the small Balkan nation on the Aegean Sea, to join NATO at the end of 2015. At least that was allegedly the motive. Certainly the Russians were as angry as ever about further expansion. “They are ready to admit even the North Pole to NATO just for the sake of encircling Russia,” the chairman of the Duma’s defense committee complained. He said it proved that NATO “was and remains an adversary.” Russians have significant interests there. Oligarch Oleg Deripaska’s company took control of their bauxite mine and aluminum smelter in 2005, and he and his partners built a marina for superyachts. The country is a major Russian tourist destination.[\[68\]](#)

The *Times* said that the star witness to the coup plot, Aleksandar Sindjelic, “a former convict . . . [and] veteran anti-Western activist from neighboring Serbia,” had become “a key informant” and “a suspect” in the scheme. The prosecution’s claim was that two Russian military intelligence officers plotted with as many as 500 others to sack the parliament, assassinate the prime minister and install a pro-Putin regime that would keep the country out of NATO.[\[69\]](#)

While the Russians have business interests there, and would probably prefer the nation not join the Western alliance, it is the West that puts the highest priority on their compliance. As the *Times* reported, “Montenegro . . . controls the only stretch of coastline where warships can dock between Gibraltar and eastern Turkey not already in the hands of the alliance.” As far as the coup attempt, the *Times* said that even the country’s pro-Western leaders thought that Đukanović’s move to join NATO was a cynical ploy to preserve his own power, and they virtually all rejected the

story of a coup plot as a bad joke. “[W]hen Mr. Đukanović announced that his government was the target of a Russian-backed plot in October, opposition politicians—both pro- and anti-NATO—as well as much of the news media and many independent observers dismissed the claim as a fairy tale.” The government initially claimed 20 Serbs had been part of the plot, but the *Times* seemed skeptical since “some . . . turned out to be elderly and in ill health.”

They also noted that police and prosecutors failed to show the weapons supposedly seized from the plotters and quoted the opposition saying their decision to release prime suspect Sindjelic proved the whole event was a “cheap . . . Vaudeville coup.”[\[20\]](#)

British intelligence officials insisted to the *Telegraph* that it was all true, and that the plan was for Serbian nationalist conspirators to dress up like police, infiltrate the building, assassinate then-Prime Minister Đukanović and then massacre the crowd. They speculated that if the plot was run by the two accused Russian agents, it must have been the Russian state behind it, rather than some other financial interest, because “[y]ou are talking about a plot to disrupt or take over a government in some way. You can’t imagine that there wasn’t some kind of [official] approval process.” They go on to say that the Russians had important interests in Montenegro, though they did not say why it would have made sense for them to take over the country in a bloody Balkan coup, and just weeks before the American presidential election.[\[21\]](#) They also never explained why anyone should believe the police and military would just accept the rule of their new

Russian overlords and carry out their orders, or why the plotters would have believed they would.

Montenegrin prosecutors told the *Telegraph* they were not accusing the Russian government at all, only Russian nationals.[\[72\]](#) Their lead prosecutor later said it was the Russian government[\[73\]](#) before changing his mind and saying it was not them again.[\[74\]](#)

Twenty people were arrested on the day of the election. Six of them were released. They included a bunch of regular townspeople who were obviously set up or falsely accused. The other 480 were never accounted for.[\[75\]](#)

The story goes that a former policeman named Mirko Velimirovic, who was hired to arrange the weaponry for the plot, turned himself in two days before. He said he threw all the rifles in a lake. They were never produced as evidence. Velimirovic later recanted his statement, then recanted his recantation.[\[76\]](#)

Prosecutors later accused a CIA officer, Joseph Assad, of being part of the pro-Russian coup. Why anyone should believe he would work so hard in favor of Russia's interests in the middle of a major political contest over whether the tiny nation would be brought into the NATO alliance, or how he could have possibly believed his bosses back in Virginia would not know about it, was never explained. He and his supposed client, Israeli politician Aron Shaviv, agree he was only there to provide basic security advice. Assad had been working for Soros's Freedom House since leaving the agency.[\[77\]](#)

After the trial, the government's central witness, Sindjelic, was deported to Croatia where he had been convicted of theft and murder in an unrelated case.[\[78\]](#)

While locals staging such an event for public relations sounds as crazy as the Russians actually doing it, it should be noted that Milo Đukanović is a criminal. In fact, in 2015, the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project named Đukanović the international “Person of the Year in Organized Crime and Corruption.”[\[79\]](#) Like Putin, he has engineered it so that when he was not the president he was still the prime minister from 1997 to 2023, and has made millions from his association with various drug lords and smugglers.[\[80\]](#) But when NATO officially invited Montenegro to join in 2015, it caused massive dissention, and even threatened Đukanović's hold on power. There was a decent chance he could lose. On the other hand, staging a fake coup on the day of the election, and hiring a cop and a CIA officer to provide the guns and the escape route, seems like pretty bad planning no matter who was behind it.[\[81\]](#)

Who really knows what happened? After a lower court convicted the two Russian supposed agents in 2019,[\[82\]](#) an appeals court threw out the whole case and released all the prisoners in 2021, saying the original process was illegal and illegitimate. Even if that decision were purely political—the lower judge accused the higher court of taking bribes in the case—it would imply enough corruption in their system to raise the same possibility on the lower court's level too.[\[83\]](#)

This is important because Senator McCain and other hawks used it as another talking point in their ongoing anti-Russia public relations

campaign,[\[84\]](#) and it helped to solidify Montenegro's addition to the NATO alliance in 2017.[\[85\]](#) From the Russian point of view, it must have been just another example of the American government and its friends' willingness to lie against them any chance they had.

## **Culture Wars**

Cultural and foreign policy critic Richard Hanania wrote an interesting piece about the role Putin plays in the American center-left liberal imagination. While it may have been overlooked by others with a focus on geography and grand strategy, Hanania says that when the Russian government arrested the leftist activist band Pussy Riot for desecrating a church in 2012 and passed a law banning gay propaganda toward minors in 2013, "[t]he U.S. response . . . was nothing short of hysterical, and coverage of Russia, a country that had previously been viewed largely with indifference by American elites, has never been the same." He added that "as someone who was studying international relations at the time on a university campus and who paid close attention to American politics, it felt as if some Rubicon had been crossed and any move towards friendlier relations was impossible."[\[86\]](#)

It is true that Putin's conservatism has certainly hurt him among American liberals, many of whom seem to have internationalized their partisan politics and used him as a stand-in for the Republicans they despise here at home. Not that it has won him any but the most insignificant support on the right. American conservatives tend to see Putin's Russia as a rival if not an enemy.[\[87\]](#)

# **Sergei Magnitsky**

## **An Important Accountant**

A significant part of the current tension with Russia can be traced back to the case of Sergei Magnitsky, a tax accountant who died in jail awaiting trial in Russia in November 2009. In his name, in December 2012, Congress passed and President Obama signed the Magnitsky Act, which leveled an array of sanctions against 18 Russian officials and helped lead to a severe worsening of tensions between the two countries. Putin retaliated by banning adoptions of Russian children and passing sanctions against several American officials.[\[88\]](#) In 2017, Congress passed and President Trump signed the Global Magnitsky Act, authorizing sanctions against countries for alleged human rights violations anywhere in the world. At least four other nations have passed similar laws.[\[89\]](#) This was one major reason for the unraveling of the reset.[\[90\]](#)

## **Browder**

It all started with William Browder, the American hedge-fund investor, former Putin supporter[\[91\]](#) and grandson of the former general-secretary of the Communist Party U.S.A. (CPUSA), Earl Browder.[\[92\]](#) The founder of Hermitage Capital Management, at one time the largest foreign investment firm in Russia, Browder had renounced his U.S. citizenship so he would not have to pay income taxes after moving there. As admirable as it might be to deny the U.S. government revenue, it seems likely that his motive was

simple greed. Browder got rich during the 1990s voucher auctions. The *New York Times* called him “a foreign version of the Russian oligarchs who earned their fortunes in the mass privatization after the fall of the Soviet Union.”[\[93\]](#) It turns out that the same Republic National Bank from the Money Plane story[\[94\]](#) was owned by Browder’s partner Edmond Safra, Hermitage Capital’s original financier.[\[95\]](#) He was denied a visa to return to Russia in 2005 and is accused by them of a \$230 million tax fraud, for which he claims he was framed by the authorities.[\[96\]](#)

## **Firestone Duncan**

Sergei Magnitsky was an accountant[\[97\]](#) who worked for the law firm Firestone Duncan, with which Browder’s firm often did business. Browder has repeatedly claimed that Magnitsky was a heroic whistleblowing tax lawyer who was helping him find the real fraudsters,[\[98\]](#) and said it was the same two cops who were investigating him for tax fraud who perpetrated this whole other massive tax fraud scheme right under his nose, then imprisoned and murdered Magnitsky for accusing them of it.[\[99\]](#)

## **Der Spiegel**

The German magazine *Der Spiegel* showed that Browder’s claim that Russian authorities only began investigating him in 2007, supposedly for retaliatory reasons, was false. His visa had been suspended over a tax avoidance investigation back in 2005. The European Court of Human Rights found that the investigation had begun back in 2004, “long before he



complained that prosecuting officials had been involved in fraudulent acts.”[\[100\]](#)

Citing a 2006 letter from Russian tax authorities, *Der Spiegel* pointed out that Magnitsky was questioned in the tax case the same year and stipulated in his October 2008 interrogation that officers had requested company documents in May 2006.[\[101\]](#) In their answer to Browder’s response to their original article, *Der Spiegel*’s editors wrote, “Browder describes Magnitsky as a crucial whistleblower. But that is a construct that was concocted after the fact.” They added that “[s]everal people from Browder’s team had leveled the same or similar accusations against Russian officials, and some of them did so before Magnitsky.”[\[102\]](#)

They named three of Browder’s colleagues and cited articles in Bloomberg News,[\[103\]](#) the *Financial Times*,[\[104\]](#) *Wall Street Journal*[\[105\]](#) and *New York Times*[\[106\]](#) which were published early in 2008, months before Magnitsky first mentioned the tax fraud case in testimony that October. They conclude, “This timeline of events is one reason why observers have their doubts as to whether Magnitsky was really murdered so that he would cease making accusations against law enforcement officials.” It made no sense, since “[t]he accusations against Russian officials were already public, independent of Magnitsky’s testimony.”[\[107\]](#)

Referring to the dozens of major interviews Browder has given on the subject accusing two Russian police officers—Artem Kuznetsov and Pavel Karpov—*Der Spiegel*’s Benjamin Bidder noted other inconsistencies in Browder’s story. In his book, Browder had written that after discovering the fraud, Magnitsky had made an appointment and then “provided the

evidence and gave his witness statement, explicitly naming Kuznetsov and Karpov.”[\[108\]](#)

But the “protocol” of the meeting does not support that claim. Magnitsky mentioned the investigators’ names in the context of the search of his law firm, “[b]ut at no point does he make a concrete accusation against them personally.” Bidder also noted how the document showed that he had been questioned as part of an investigation, “not . . . entirely of his own free will,” and that in another interrogation on October 7, “Kuznetsov and Karpov are not mentioned at all.”[\[109\]](#) Magnitsky was arrested shortly after the second interrogation, in November 2008.

## **Motive Makes No Sense**

*Der Spiegel*’s investigation showed that, if anything, the Russians were trying to force Magnitsky to testify against or at least accuse Browder of a crime. There is no real indication that they were trying to get him to retract his accusations against anyone else, certainly not Kuznetsov and Karpov, whom he never directly accused as Browder had claimed.[\[110\]](#)

The tax scam in question was based around a maneuver where three firms managed by Hermitage Capital were supposedly re-registered by fraudsters, who then filed for \$230 million worth of tax refunds. In Browder’s version of the story, in 2007, cops raided his company for the sole purpose of taking all their stamps and original incorporation documents. He says Magnitsky told him he had figured out what had happened. The cops had transferred ownership of the companies to themselves, opened accounts at two banks and immediately deposited

amounts equal to the taxes the companies had previously paid but then had gotten refunded. So the cops and the mob hadn't stolen from Browder's company, but from the state.

However, Moscow lawyer Andrew Pavlov claimed he had been hired by a convicted felon named Viktor Markelov to get a court order based on a fake liability for the Hermitage companies, which they could then use to claim a tax refund. As journalist Lucy Komisar wrote, "At his trial, Markelov testified that one of the people he worked with to secure the fraudulent tax refund was Sergei Leonidovich," which was Magnitsky's patronymic. She added that though Browder said he and Magnitsky had found out about the theft of the companies in October 2007, they did not immediately go to court to challenge those fraudulent re-registrations, and that in addition, HSBC bank records showed money had been put aside for those legal expenses by the end of July that year.[\[111\]](#)

## **Death in Jail**

As far as the man's death, an independent Russian commission found that Magnitsky was denied medical care for an inflamed pancreas and was probably beaten before he died,[\[112\]](#) though, as *Der Spiegel* noted, "the report, however, makes no such assertion of an intentional killing."[\[113\]](#) An independent report by Physicians for Human Rights, hired by Browder to confirm his claims, declined to do so. They concur with the Medical Commission report that the man died of heart failure as a result of medical neglect.[\[114\]](#) That is still wrong and a symptom of Russia's inhumane prison system. It is just that it is different from Browder's more dramatic

claim, which was that the man was tortured to death, murdered to prevent him from further implicating these cops for setting up Browder.[\[115\]](#) The head doctor at the prison was charged with negligence in Magnitsky's death, but he was acquitted after the prosecutors dropped their case.[\[116\]](#)

## **USA v. Prevezon Holdings**

In September 2013, the U.S. Justice Department filed a civil forfeiture lawsuit against Prevezon Holdings based on their claim that its owner, Denis Katsyv, was involved in tax rebate fraud. This claim in turn was based on information provided by Browder. After numerous attempts to serve him with a subpoena,[\[117\]](#) lawyers for the firm representing Prevezon deposed Browder for seven hours in April 2015.

Browder was unable to produce key pieces of evidence to back up his story, particularly a letter he claimed to have received informing him that the tax case against him had been closed in 2005. Prevezon's lawyers showed that Magnitsky had been questioned about it in October 2006, and as *Der Spiegel* noted, this was "long before Magnitsky is said to have first exposed the big tax fraud that Browder says caused him to fall out of the authorities' good graces." They also showed that the seals used in the fraud were not the same ones taken in the raid, like in Browder's story, and that his associate Vadim Kleiner was aware of that fact. Browder also conceded that his knowledge of the big meeting in Cyprus where the cops and tax officials all met to conspire came from travel records that he could not find that he said he got from a whistleblower who he could not identify.

Browder, who never stops spinning to media figures and legislators, when confronted by lawyers under oath, told them, “I don’t know,” “I can’t remember” and “I’m not an accountant,” over and over again. Though they settled, the agreement specifies that Prevezon’s owners and management concede no part in the tax fraud or the Magnitsky case.[\[118\]](#)

Prevezon’s Russian lawyer, Nataliya Veselnitskaya, met with then-candidate Donald Trump’s son and son-in-law at Trump Tower in June 2016 in an attempt to plead her case to get the Magnitsky Act repealed. This meeting later became part of the years-long Russiagate scandal.[\[119\]](#)

## **Nekrasov’s Film**

A man named Andrei Nekrasov, a critic of Vladimir Putin,[\[120\]](#) made a documentary disputing Browder’s claims called *The Magnitsky Act: Behind the Scenes*.[\[121\]](#) Nekrasov had been hired by Browder originally to make a “docudrama,” a supposedly nonfiction film with reenactments by professional actors to tell the story. But in the process of doing so, Nekrasov says he realized he was being used for a lie and decided to tell the truth instead. In the film it is clear that Nekrasov originally thought Magnitsky was a martyr and Browder a hero. He says they also had a common enemy: “the Russian regime” which had been after Nekrasov and his friends and whom he hated and feared. He had previously made a film about the death of Alexander Litvinenko.[\[122\]](#) Nekrasov consulted with Browder repeatedly and had intended for him to narrate the film. He had already shot quite a bit of material for the docudrama before changing his mind about it.  
[\[123\]](#)

Once finished, the film was suppressed in America in Soviet fashion. It showed once at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., it ended up at least unofficially blacklisted and censored from the public debate. Browder, the now-British citizen, in testimony before Congress, insisted the filmmakers and those who hosted the screening of their film should be prosecuted for violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act.[\[124\]](#) He threatened the Newseum with legal action if they showed it, and used similar threats to prevent a screening before the European Parliament.[\[125\]](#) Journalist Robert Parry complained, “If the documentary is as flawed as its critics claim, why won’t they let it be shown to the American public, then lay out its supposed errors, and use it as a case study of how such fakery works?”[\[126\]](#)

One of the accused officers, Pavel Karpov, agreed to speak to Nekrasov. He said he had no motive because he had never seen a single piece of paper signed by Magnitsky accusing him of anything. Karpov appeared to debunk the claim that he must have bought his Moscow apartment at bubble prices with his stolen fortune, by presenting a title which shows he put his money down on the place back in 2004, three years before the alleged theft. Same for a car and two small plots of land. There was no reason to believe the man somehow possessed a quarter of a billion dollars in any form. He says they would not have had to raid Hermitage or Firestone Duncan for the documents they needed, and that Browder’s story was an elaborate scheme fit for Hollywood.

Karpov said he started investigating Browder in 2004, so Nekrasov went back and got the 2008 documents. The first thing he found was that the questioning of Magnitsky was an interrogation as part of a criminal

probe, whereas Browder had portrayed him as simply going down there voluntarily to report a crime and make an official statement. When Nekrasov asked Browder why the actual documents did not contain any evidence or accusations against the two officers, Browder cut off contact.

Before the October deposition, a newspaper reported on the scam and said it had started six months prior based on a tip by a woman, Rimma Starova, a corporate figurehead. She said Magnitsky was a suspect, not an informant. His June and October 2008 police interrogations would seem to bear that out. Browder in an interview with Nekrasov said that she had just been brought in by the bad guys as a smokescreen. But when challenged on the timeline, he immediately pleaded ignorance.

Nekrasov also found that there was no violent raid at all. Browder had embellished all that, even included using an old picture of Jim Zwerg, a U.S. civil rights activist from 1961, to claim that one of his employees had been beaten.[\[127\]](#)

## **UK Libel Suit**

Pavel Karpov, one of the tax investigators accused by Browder, tried to sue him for libel in England. The case was thrown out because the judge ruled that Karpov had no local reputation to lose, but still seemed to think his case had merit.[\[128\]](#) The justice wrote that Browder was a “story teller,” and that he did not “come close to pleading facts which, if proved, would justify the sting of the libel.” The judge said his verdict should be understood as “a measure of vindication” of the officer.[\[129\]](#) It perhaps seems odd that Browder did not wish to take the opportunity to have a trial

and demonstrate the guilt of his persecutor and accuser. Instead, he pushed to have the case thrown out. It turns out even Magnitsky's lawyer, Dmitry Kharitonov, has said that Karpov was not involved in prosecuting the dead accountant.[\[130\]](#)

In other words, there is no reason to believe Browder's story that Magnitsky had ever even accused the cops of being in on the fraud, the alleged motive for his imprisonment and supposed murder.

The *Der Spiegel* reporter Benjamin Bidder met with Browder for a four-hour interview in 2019. Browder handed over dozens of documents that he said would bolster his case. But Bidder found that “[n]ot all of them would stand up to further scrutiny.” This included an email that did not show him to be a whistleblower, but a “stand-in for the CEO of a letterbox company who investigators in Moscow had actually wanted to speak to,” and an article that cited Magnitsky before his arrest that did not cite the name of either cop, and did not otherwise seem to provide motive for it.[\[131\]](#)

Again, for the sake of argument, assume it is all true, though there is so little reason to believe it: Some Moscow cops stole money from the Russian treasury, framed an ex-American for it and then killed his accountant to help cover it up. So what? How in the world could our government be so short-sighted to let such a non-event with no international implications play such a large part in ruining the relationship between our countries? The fact that they have done so based on such a thin series of claims is unforgivable.

**XKeyscore**



## Tapping My Telephone

In the spring of 2013, Edward Snowden, a contractor with Booz Allen Hamilton working for the National Security Agency, liberated a trove of documents essentially proving that all the previous NSA whistleblowers like Russel Tice,[\[132\]](#) Edward Loomis,[\[133\]](#) J. Kirk Wiebe,[\[134\]](#) Thomas Drake[\[135\]](#) and William Binney,[\[136\]](#) and great journalists like James Bamford, author of *The Puzzle Palace*, *Body of Secrets* and *The Shadow Factory*,[\[137\]](#) had been right on and much worse. The NSA, Snowden's leak proved, was violating the civil liberties of virtually all Americans, working with telecommunications and Silicon Valley firms to compile endless amounts of metadata and cellphone location data, search, web traffic, email and instant messenger histories.[\[138\]](#) This is all not to mention their wide-scale surveillance of the rest of the people of the planet, in cooperation with the "Five Eyes" of the Anglosphere alliance, which includes Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand[\[139\]](#)—six if one counts Israel.[\[140\]](#) Snowden's leak to journalists Glenn Greenwald, Laura Poitras, Ewen MacAskill and Barton Gellman was a heroic service to the American people and to mankind.[\[141\]](#) Snowden has said he was motivated to do this when he saw National Intelligence Director James Clapper[\[142\]](#) perjure himself before Congress,[\[143\]](#) falsely denying that the NSA was collecting data on innocent Americans.

The U.S. government, which was apparently too busy keeping tabs on all of us to take care of their own secrets or track down their missing contractor, was embarrassed. So naturally they lied, claiming Snowden was a spy working for Russia and China. Well, he had originally gone to Hong

Kong, and the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act warrant he released was the most recent version. You just have to imagine the rest of the case, because those total non sequiturs were all they ever had beyond wild anonymous claims.[\[144\]](#)

## **Stranded**

To this day people accuse Snowden of being a Russian spy just because the Obama administration deliberately stripped him of his passport while he was stuck there on a layover in his attempt to make it to Ecuador.[\[145\]](#) The Democrats decided that it would be better to leave him in Russia, where the security services could presumably forcibly interrogate him about everything he knows, just for the public relations mileage they would get out of tarring his name with that of Putin and the Russian Federation. He would have been much easier to arrest in Ecuador if they had let him continue on his way. When they later mistakenly assumed he was escaping on the Bolivian president's plane, the administration ordered their Western European clients to deny them entry to their airspace, forcing the plane to land in Austria in what would have been an absolute outrage if any country other than the U.S. had done it.[\[146\]](#) Then, after Putin granted Snowden temporary asylum, Obama canceled a previously scheduled side meeting with Putin at the G-20 meeting in September 2013, making this self-inflicted diplomatic blunder another cause for worse relations between our two countries.[\[147\]](#)

Importantly, Snowden denies that he has ever revealed a word about his previous work for U.S. intelligence to Russian operatives. He has also

sworn he would return to the United States if Congress would amend Woodrow Wilson's Espionage Act of 1917,[\[148\]](#) which currently forbids defendants from even attempting a "just cause" defense for violating the law.[\[149\]](#) In other words, if he could get a fair, American-style trial in America.

It is clear that Snowden is a patriot who liberated those documents out of a public-spirited concern for the American people's rights.[\[150\]](#) Those who accuse him of serving foreign nations are simply desperate liars, and those who accuse him of refraining from criticizing the Russian government are wrong,[\[151\]](#) as even Michael McFaul has acknowledged.[\[152\]](#)

If it is true that Putin is taking the opportunity to provide the hero safe haven from his U.S. government tormentors for public relations reasons,[\[153\]](#) that is their fault. They could do the right thing and drop the charges at any time.

## **Boston Strong**

### **Dropped Ball**

On April 15, 2013, two immigrant brothers from Dagestan, ethnic Chechens, Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, 26 and 19 years old, set off two bombs at the Boston Marathon, killing three people—including an 8-year-old boy—and wounding 264[\[154\]](#) in a terrible example of backdraft terrorism against the United States. The older brother, Tamerlan, widely agreed to be the decision-maker behind the plot, was accidentally killed by the younger brother, Dzhokhar, who ran him over trying to escape during a

shootout with police a few days later,[\[155\]](#) after they also murdered a local campus cop.[\[156\]](#) Dzhokhar was then taken alive, tried and sentenced to death for his crime.

The Carnegie Endowment had warned back in 2002 that the jihadist movement in the Northern Caucasus Mountains was spreading and that “[t]he next ‘soft target’ of North Caucasian terrorism could be a Western one.”[\[157\]](#)

It turned out the Russian FSB had sent the FBI a warning and request for information about the Tsarnaevs two years before the bombing, in March 2011,[\[158\]](#) saying the brothers were tied to Chechen terrorist groups. An FBI statement read that the Russians had requested information about Tamerlan “based on information that he was a follower of radical Islam and a strong believer, and that he had changed drastically since 2010 as he prepared to leave the United States for travel to the country’s region to join unspecified underground groups.” A “senior law enforcement official” told the *New York Times* that the Russians “had something on him and were concerned about him, and him traveling to their region.”

In a strange show of cognitive dissonance in the immediate aftermath of this domestic disaster, the *Times* maintained that “Chechen extremists pose a greater threat to Russia than they do to the United States, counterterrorism specialists say, though some of the groups have had ties to Al Qaeda.”

But Tamerlan had already come to the feds’ attention. They had first questioned him and his family in January 2011, apparently due to concerns he had been looking at bin Ladenite websites. This entire section of the

department's IG's report is redacted.[\[159\]](#) Regardless, the Russian warning would have come two months later, on top of whatever it was they had found suspicious in the first place. NBC News summarized the FSB letter, saying it "included contact information, with addresses and phone numbers, for many of the members of the Tsarnaev family, including Tamerlan and his mother," and that it "warned that Tamerlan was known to have associated with violent radical Islamists, including a Canadian Muslim convert named William Plotnikov who was later killed while fighting for the mujahideen in Dagestan."[\[160\]](#)

His father said they had questioned Tamerlan "two or three times" before he had ever left for Dagestan in January 2012.[\[161\]](#) According to the IG report, when the FBI talked to him in April 2011, they did not ask him about his move toward Salafi Islam or connections with any violent Dagestani groups.[\[162\]](#)

In October 2011, a few months after their first warning, the Russians again contacted the Americans, this time the CIA, who decided to put him on the anti-terrorist watchlist.[\[163\]](#)

## **Trip to Dagestan**

However, after the older brother took a trip to Dagestan for seven months in 2012, the FBI claimed to have not scrutinized him any further,[\[164\]](#) at first maintaining they did not have cause to continue investigating, even though obviously his returning home to bin Ladenite-ridden, civil war-torn Dagestan for half a year would be reason enough.[\[165\]](#) Perhaps that is why the bureau changed their story to say they did not even know Tamerlan had

left the country due to a spelling error in a security database. If not for an extra letter “y,” they said he would have been detained at the airport on return to the United States. The FBI also said they closed their investigation of Tsarnaev in June 2011.[\[166\]](#) The IG report says the FBI had failed to interview the man’s ex-girlfriend, wife, employers or anyone from the local mosque he frequented. Nor did the feds ask his parents about his interest in “separatist groups.”[\[167\]](#)

However, the Department of Homeland Security said that the system had “pinged” them when Tsarnaev left the country, though he was not pulled aside for questioning.[\[168\]](#) According to the IG report, the Customs officer at JFK airport also almost certainly manually notified the FBI as Tsarnaev was leaving the country in January 2012 as well.[\[169\]](#) It also turns out they lied in claiming the FBI was not alerted to Tsarnaev’s travel. Then-FBI Director Robert Mueller admitted that the bureau, and specifically Tsarnaev’s case agent on the Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), was in fact notified as he was coming and going.[\[170\]](#) The FBI’s excuse about the misspellings only covers his return trip, when, they claim, the first travel alert with the correct spelling had already expired.[\[171\]](#) But that story only works if the outgoing ping had not functioned as intended, which we know it did. And he had no problem getting back into the country, even though he did not even have a passport, having left his brand-new one behind in Russia,[\[172\]](#) and paid cash for his ticket.[\[173\]](#) It was also false that the alert on Tsarnaev had expired. Instead, it had somehow been changed to no longer require Customs agents to pull him aside.[\[174\]](#)

No one at the FBI, CIA or DHS told any local police agency about the Russian information or their interviews with Tsarnaev or his family, or anything about his trip to Dagestan, even though they all had members on the JTTF.[\[175\]](#)

The unnamed FBI counterterrorism agent pleaded ignorant about Tsarnaev's trip to Dagestan, but told the IG that if he had known about it, he still would not have reopened the investigation. But his also-unnamed supervisor threw the agent under the bus, saying he would have done his job and continued investigating if only his underling had told him about the trip.

The IG also noted some meaningful information that the FBI, at least officially, failed to collect while they were not investigating Tsarnaev, which was only revealed after the bombing. That includes statements he had made about wishing to "pursue jihad," comments by his former girlfriend about his shift toward religious extremism, anything about his time in Russia or sharing terrorism-related videos online for almost a year before the attack.[\[176\]](#)

## **No Ties**

The FBI later claimed the two brothers had no ties to radical Chechen individuals or groups, and instead were simply radicalized and learned how to make their bombs by reading al Qaeda propaganda on the internet.[\[177\]](#) However, staff from Representative William Keating's office said they "could confirm, from nongovernmental sources, reports from ABC News and elsewhere that Tsarnaev had been in touch with at least two such

individuals, Mahmoud Mansour Nidal and William Plotnikov,” during his time in Dagestan—both of whom were shot dead by Russian police in May and July 2012.[\[178\]](#) Evidently, it was a Russian interrogation of the Canadian Muslim convert Plotnikov that first led to their scrutiny of Tsarnaev.[\[179\]](#) Tamerlan returned home two days after Plotnikov was killed in a massive paramilitary police raid and shootout.[\[180\]](#)

ABC News called Nidal a “known militant recruiter,” said that “Tsarnaev was repeatedly seen leaving a controversial mosque in Makhachkala,”[\[181\]](#) and met with him at an apartment there numerous times in 2012.[\[182\]](#) According to a Russian dossier about his stay in Dagestan, they had the “date, address and apartment number where the meeting took place,” and apparently an informant said the two talked about how Tsarnaev could help raise money for Nidal’s group.[\[183\]](#)

His father confirmed they had gone to Chechnya during his visit as well.[\[184\]](#) Officials also said they “believed that Mr. Tsarnaev posed a far greater threat to Russia.”[\[185\]](#) Zaur M. Zakaryayev, a member of a Salafi advocacy organization, the Union of the Just, stated, “He already had jihad views when he came; I think because he was Chechen, he was rooting for his homeland.” The Russians assumed Tsarnaev’s cousin Magomed Kartashov had radicalized him, but the cousin and several others insisted that he had tried to prevent Tsarnaev from “going to the forest”—in other words, joining one of the groups fighting a guerrilla war against the local police.[\[186\]](#) Kartashov told journalist Michele McPhee that Tsarnaev was talking about “going to the forest” and then on to Syria from the moment he arrived.[\[187\]](#)



The locals said though he frequented the Salafi al-Nadira Mosque while he was there—the same mosque that welcomed the later al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in 1997[\[188\]](#)—they thought Tsarnaev had been successfully dissuaded from joining local militia forces in the civil war. Instead, he decided to take his fight to the people of Massachusetts in the name of avenging innocents killed by U.S. forces in Iraq and Afghanistan. [\[189\]](#)

As a House Homeland Security Committee report later said, it remained unclear whether local jihadi groups in Chechnya or Dagestan put the brothers up to their Boston attack. “However, it is reasonable to assume that Tamerlan Tsarnaev was at least inspired by their activity and ideology, and driven to take part in the vision of global jihad which they share with al Qaeda.”[\[190\]](#)

## **Informant?**

According to the younger brother’s lawyers, the FBI had attempted to recruit the elder brother as an informant.[\[191\]](#) His mother—seemingly not the most reliable source—later said he had been in contact with the FBI for five years.[\[192\]](#) He had been arrested in 2009 for assaulting his girlfriend. Author Masha Gesson has speculated that he may very well have been recruited then. She said it was highly suspicious that the FBI pretended not to recognize the two men from the surveillance videos of the crime scene. They did not release surveillance photos of the brothers for three days, then asked the public to help identify them when they knew good and well who they were.[\[193\]](#) They also ignored a tip from the brothers’ aunt positively

identifying them, and kept local police out of the information loop while targeting the Tsarnaevs' apartment in Cambridge before their shootout with police.[\[194\]](#) They claimed not to know who the suspects were until after fingerprinting the elder Tsarnaev's corpse. Multiple local police officers told McPhee they were certain the FBI knew who the suspects were for days and refused to share the information, even with the suspects armed and dangerous and on the run.[\[195\]](#) After the younger brother escaped, he only drove the car about half a mile before pulling over and fleeing on foot. When Boston police arrived with a dog to follow the perp's blood trail, the feds stopped them, ordering them to "keep beyond the perimeter."[\[196\]](#) Gesson reasons this was "because it needed to ensure that no other law enforcement got to Tamerlan Tsarnaev before the FBI had captured—or killed—him. In other words, the explanation that best fits the facts is a cover-up."[\[197\]](#)

Former FBI Executive Assistant Director Stephanie Douglas conceded at least the likelihood of a relationship between the bureau and the terrorist, telling CBS that after agents left their business cards, "Tamerlan did call. He did call to set up that interview. So it wasn't like we had to go hunt him down. And I think he actually even volunteered to provide assistance if the FBI ever wanted assistance in the future."[\[198\]](#)

In her book *Maximum Harm: The Tsarnaev Brothers, The FBI, and the Road to the Marathon Bombing*, McPhee concluded that the elder Tsarnaev had been flipped into an informant in exchange for U.S. citizenship in late 2010,[\[199\]](#) which he could not otherwise get due to his domestic assault charge,[\[200\]](#) a deal which FBI agents are trained to make.[\[201\]](#) An April

2011 FBI 302 form—used to document interviews with subjects—noted how important American citizenship was to Tamerlan, and that he was “open to all [future] contact with the FBI.”[\[202\]](#) Further, the Tsarnaevs were originally granted resident status as asylum-seekers. For Tamerlan to go back home for six months, typically, would cause an alert and possible deportation. Instead, Tsarnaev’s application was apparently fast-tracked despite his conflicts, being reopened in August 2012, just after his return from Dagestan,[\[203\]](#) and getting through to the last stage of the process in just five months instead of the usual year or two. When a U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) officer expressed concern over Tsarnaev’s presence on a terrorist watchlist, FBI agent David Cedarleaf told him, “There is no national security concern related to [Tsarnaev].” Since he had no “derogatory information,” he had “no opposition to Tsarnaev’s naturalization.”[\[204\]](#) McPhee told Boston’s WBUR radio that despite all the stories of law-abiding Muslims with good jobs being unable to get citizenship, here “you have an unemployed Muslim who’s on multiple terror watchlists, who is connected to drug dealers, and this guy is the perfect candidate that the FBI is pushing him through? It makes no sense.”[\[205\]](#)

McPhee also showed that even though Tsarnaev had been recommended for citizenship at his meeting with the USCIS on January 23, 2013, one supervisor still had to sign off on it and he was told no. Not realizing how close he still was, Tsarnaev allegedly stormed out and, perhaps feeling double-crossed by the FBI, within two weeks began buying

the fireworks he would need to cannibalize to build the bombs for the race.  
[\[206\]](#)

## **Blaming Russia**

The FBI also claimed that despite “several requests,” the Russians had refused to share more information until after the bombing, such as a conversation from an intercepted phone call where Tsarnaev had discussed “jihad” with his mother. In a declassified summary of a Justice Department IG report, they swore the FBI did “all they could,” even while claiming they did not know he had left the country and acknowledging they had not followed up after he returned.[\[207\]](#) The fact that the Russians had warned the feds about the guy two full years before the bombing, and that he had traveled to Dagestan where he hung out with terrorists in the meantime, would seem to render that argument null and void. Further, McPhee reported that the original Russian letters to the FBI and CIA were very detailed, and went far beyond Tsarnaev mentioning the word “jihad.” It described text messages between Tamerlan, his mother, and her second cousin, Magomed Kartashov, a former Dagestan police officer who had become a leader of the Union of the Just, which Russian authorities had banned and considered an enemy terrorist group. The Russians also provided detailed information, again, including addresses and phone numbers for all of Tsarnaev’s family in the U.S.,[\[208\]](#) and warning that he was preparing to join armed groups in the Caucasus.

McPhee quoted Boston cops who believed Tsarnaev must have been sent to help “track and kill the men with whom he was in contact.” The

Russians did say they had an informant. This seems possible. It is notable that the Russians allowed Tamerlan into the country at all since they were the ones who first alerted the Americans about him. Or perhaps he was just building up his reputation for when he got back and could return to the Boston mosque? As McPhee noted, they had already picked up Plotnikov. He was the one who told them about Tsarnaev in the first place, though seemingly back before they had anything on him.[\[209\]](#)

The “Caucasus Emirate” group, led by Doku Umarov, the notorious terrorist leader who picked up where Shamil Basayev had left off, released a statement praising their dead martyrs after Plotnikov and his comrades were killed.[\[210\]](#) The more likely explanation, in the words of a Russian official quoted in the *Novaya Gazeta* newspaper, was that “[a]fter Nidal and Plotnikov were destroyed and he lost his contacts, Tsarnaev got frightened and fled.”[\[211\]](#)

## **Busy with BS**

Trevor Aaronson is an investigative reporter and author of *The Terror Factory*, about the FBI’s post-September 11 policy of entrapping American Muslims into bogus, headline-generating terrorist plots[\[212\]](#)—for example, the Detroit 5,[\[213\]](#) Liberty City 7,[\[214\]](#) Fort Dix Pizza Plot,[\[215\]](#) JFK Airport fuel depot plot,[\[216\]](#) Portland Christmas tree plot,[\[217\]](#) Lodi pole-vaulting plot,[\[218\]](#) one of the New York subway plots[\[219\]](#) (the other was real),[\[220\]](#) the Newburgh Air Force Base and Bronx Synagogue plot,[\[221\]](#) the Baltimore military recruitment station plot,[\[222\]](#) Garland cartoon attack[\[223\]](#) and the Kansas City train station plot,[\[224\]](#) to name but a few.

Aaronson showed that in the case of the Boston attack, the local FBI office had been busy entrapping someone in a fake terrorism case as the bombing plot was unfolding under their nose. While the FBI had interviewed Tamerlan and checked his internet history, they dropped that investigation, therefore taking no notice of his communications with his brother about “jihad” from Dagestan.[\[225\]](#) Meanwhile, they were entrapping an American-born U.S. citizen, Rezwan Ferdaus, into an elaborate plot to attack the U.S. Capitol in Washington with remote control airplanes in an investigation initially based on the word of a heroin addict informant they paid \$50,000.[\[226\]](#) The operation almost certainly helped to distract agents from the actual terrorists in their midst.[\[227\]](#)

Even if Tamerlan were a government informant, it does not appear the Boston bombing was the result of such a sting. More significant is the way the feds seemed to go easy on Tsarnaev in the time preceding the attack, which would still constitute outrageous negligence if it was verified that their earlier association was to blame.

## **Musa**

But what about Musa Khadjimuradov? Voice of America reported that he was a former aide to exiled Akhmed Zakayev and a former Chechen “resistance fighter” who had been in contact with Tamerlan Tsarnaev less than one month before the bombing, though he denied ever discussing religion or politics with the man at all, which seems strange.[\[228\]](#)

## **No Motive**

Humorously, Radio Liberty noted that even though the Dagestani insurgents did not deny contacts with Tsarnaev, “the insurgency had no motive whatsoever to attack the United States, especially given that Washington has reportedly just added Chechen Republic head Ramzan Kadyrov’s name to the Magnitsky list of people sanctioned by the U.S. government and banned from entering the United States.” They also argued, really, that it could not have been them because they like to commit their terrorist attacks against innocent civilians indoors in more confined spaces, rather than outside.[\[229\]](#)

Shortly after he returned from Dagestan, Tsarnaev posted videos suggesting he had taken the side of the Wahhabi radicals against the country’s traditional Sufis in the low-level civil war that was brewing in that land after the insurgents’ defeat in Chechnya.[\[230\]](#) He also caused trouble at his local mosque, interrupting a sermon to denounce the imam’s mention of Martin Luther King Jr.’s message of nonviolent protest in the same breath as a lesson from Mohammed.[\[231\]](#)

## **Motive**

Just like 100 percent of anti-American terrorists of that era, those entrapped by the FBI, so-called “lone wolves” and the occasional actual al Qaeda member, the Tsarnaev brothers were motivated to attack the United States as revenge for George W. Bush and Barack Obama’s wars in the Middle East and South-Central Asia.[\[232\]](#) Surely believing he would soon be killed, the younger brother scrawled on the inside of the boat where he was hiding, “The U.S. Government is killing our innocent civilians but most of

you already know that. As a Muslim I can't stand to see such evil go unpunished. Now I don't like killing innocent people it [sic] is forbidden in Islam but due to said [bullet hole] it is allowed.”[\[233\]](#) Ruslan, their father's brother, blamed his sister-in-law: “[T]hey are all like their mother. Evil spawn from an evil woman.”[\[234\]](#)

## **‘Trust Deficit’**

The bottom line is that the attacks clearly could have been prevented if the American national security state had prioritized working with the Russians to protect American lives over keeping their pro-al Qaeda options open in the North Caucasus Mountains. As the *Times* noted, the bombings “led to increased cooperation between Washington and Moscow,” which they called “a jarring shift” after “weeks of rancor over American criticism of Russia’s human rights record.”

Reuters news service also noted what they called a “trust deficit” between U.S. and Russian intelligence services when it came to counterterrorism. Saying the Americans handled the Russian information about the Tsarnaevs “professionally, although not as a top-priority matter,” they quoted a senior State Department official who attributed this to the fact that “[t]he Russians typically file spurious requests on people that are not really terrorists, and that’s why somebody might have discounted it. One wouldn’t automatically take what the Russians say at face value. You’d always have to look for a second corroboration.” Just like with Zacarias Moussaoui and the September 11 hijackers,[\[235\]](#) the U.S. national security



state's sympathy for bin Ladenite terrorists in the Northern Caucasus again had gotten Americans killed.[\[236\]](#)

By way of excusing the official negligence in allowing another deadly terrorist attack against innocent civilians to take place on their watch, instead of resigning in disgrace, James Clapper, Obama's director of national intelligence,[\[237\]](#) had the temerity to tell the American people, including the families of the slain—"with a shrug," according to Reuters—that "[w]henver the Russians say something about arms control issues, well, we're very suspicious. We're supposed to trust but verify, not accept what the Russians say. But in this case, we [should] accept it, whatever they say without question?"[\[238\]](#) Those things have nothing to do with each other: promises about nuclear warhead stockpile reductions versus warnings about individual bin Ladenite terrorists on our soil. Was he just bluffing through his answer as he thought of it? No one said the FBI was not supposed to verify the Russian warnings. The complaint was that they should have done so and acted to protect the public.

Though this was the responsibility of the FBI counterintelligence and counterterrorism divisions, it was Clapper's as well. As DNI, he is supposed to coordinate information-sharing and cooperation between the agencies, including the FBI, to prevent terrorist attacks against the United States. No government employees were held responsible for their failures in this case in any way, especially not the people in charge.

## **Who Made the Bombs?**

No one knows who made the explosives used in the Boston attack. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* magazine had run an article called "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom."[\[239\]](#) At the younger brother's trial, prosecutors argued Tamerlan had simply copied the magazine. But the U.S. attorney had filed a motion stating, "These relatively sophisticated devices would have been difficult for the Tsarnaevs to fabricate successfully without training or assistance from others."[\[240\]](#) ABC News was told that "many within the FBI, law enforcement and counterterrorism strongly disagree that they could have become good enough to make the improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from online how-to's and suspect an expert taught or instructed Tamerlan on the craft of bombmaking while he was overseas in 2012." They said that, in fact, the Boston bombs "had a much more sophisticated design than the one in the online magazine, including differences in the initiators, power source and switch/trigger, which utilized a toy car remote control." *Inspire* had only included instructions for using a motorcycle remote starter.[\[241\]](#) No black powder was found at any Tsarnaev location.[\[242\]](#)

There were a few different friends and associates of the Tsarnaev brothers that the feds seemed to take an extreme disinterest in. The most compelling of these is the case of Daniel Morely. In June 2013, he attacked and threatened his mother and stepfather, who called the police. After the cops took him away, they found a veritable pressure-cooker bomb workshop in his bedroom, including the same make of cooker and same type of fuse used in the Boston attacks, along with numerous guns, rifles and swords.[\[243\]](#)

Morely had disappeared on the day of the bombing and for another day afterwards, with an unlikely alibi that he had gone fishing with a friend. Though there are no concrete ties between Morely and the elder Tsarnaev, there are possible connections, since they went to the same community college and trained at the same gyms at the same time. Morely later seemed to incriminate himself to his mother when she asked about that friend, saying he had done something “really bad” and, “I’m sorry for what I’ve done . . . and I will have to answer only to God.” Perhaps the Department of Justice had already given him his get-out-of-jail-free card. The man’s stepfather, who immediately after the bombing had been suspicious that Morely was involved, started receiving flyers from the same New Hampshire vendor who sold Tsarnaev the fireworks used in the Boston attack. Morely had searched the address of a gun range where the Tsarnaev brothers went to practice 10 days later. The feds were still not interested.

[\[244\]](#)

On the night the local police officer was killed, April 18, someone robbed a 7-Eleven clerk for less than \$30 while talking on his phone. At first the cops assumed it was the bomber brothers, but they later dropped that accusation. When Michele McPhee showed the surveillance photos to Morely’s stepfather and friends, they were all certain it was him. McPhee’s theory is that the brothers were there at MIT that night to try to break into the lab, where Morely formerly worked, to steal more explosive precursors, and that Morely’s robbery of the store was meant as a deliberate distraction.

[\[245\]](#)

## **Unsolved Murders**

It turns out the Boston Bombing case was really lousy with unsolved murders, including of a witness who was shot to death by FBI agents while he was being questioned in his apartment. Really.[\[246\]](#) The cops say the man, Ibragim Todashev, implicated himself and Tamerlan Tsarnaev in the murder of three men on September 11, 2011, before attacking and being killed by his interrogators.[\[247\]](#) At least four different friends had mentioned Tsarnaev's name to police after the killings, and again when Tsarnaev failed to show up for the funeral or memorial for one of the victims who had been his good friend. But the police never talked to him. Nor did they question the people at the victims' regular hangouts.[\[248\]](#)

Referring to an ongoing case against Eritrean cocaine dealers with alleged connections to al-Shabaab in Somalia, police sources told McPhee that the reason they did not investigate Tamerlan for the triple murder was that "he was too valuable as an asset working for the federal government on a drug case with ties to overseas terrorism and as an informant who had infiltrated a mosque around the corner from his house with ties to radical Islam and convicted terrorists."[\[249\]](#)

## **Lockdown**

The governor of Massachusetts issued a "stay in place" order, and the people of Boston, Cambridge and Watertown obeyed it. The *Times* described the scene: "SWAT teams and Humvees rolled through residential streets. Military helicopters hovered overhead. Bomb squads were called to several locations. And Boston, New England's largest city, was essentially

shut down.” That included the buses and colleges, trains, ballgames and concerts all day and into the evening.[250]

It was a hunt for one young man who they knew had fled on foot from his abandoned vehicle and could only be within one small isolated area. Cops went door to door searching innocent people’s homes,[251] while SWAT teams from every possible jurisdiction rolled up and down every street, not searching for Dzhokhar, but simply making a show of force, including pointing their rifles at homes, and specifically at citizens looking out their windows.[252] “An elderly man left his home and was promptly surrounded,” ABC News reported. “They had this robot go up and take some things off him,” then-Boston Police Super-intendent William Evans told them. “There were a lot of false alarms. People are running scared.”[253]

Of course, the lockdown actually prevented the cops from finding the younger brother. Only when they finally lifted it did local citizen George Henneberry go outside to fix the tarp on his boat, parked on a trailer in his backyard, which he had noticed hours before had been disturbed. Once he was allowed to go into his own backyard, he finally investigated and saw the suspect lying inside.[254]

Trigger-happy cops then unloaded 126 rounds on the unarmed suspect and threw in multiple flashbang grenades, destroying the man’s boat and still missing the younger Tsarnaev brother completely.

## **Solidarity**

The Russians too were still dealing with bin Ladenite terrorism. In 2011, a suicide bomber killed 36 people in an attack on Moscow's Domodedovo airport.[\[255\]](#) Putin told a local audience, "I just urge that this tragedy push us closer together in stopping common threats, one of the most important and dangerous of which is terrorism. And if we really unite efforts we would stop such strikes and such losses." Radio Liberty noted that "Putin accused the West of providing 'informational, financial, and political' support to militants in the North Caucasus that Russia considers terrorists." They were reporting on the aftermath of a suicide bombing at a civilian airport. "Russia itself has been a victim of international terrorism, one of the first such victims," Putin said. "And I have always been annoyed when our Western partners and your colleagues from the Western media called our terrorists—who committed brutal, bloody, sickening crimes on the territory of our country—called them insurgents and almost never called them terrorists."[\[256\]](#)

## **The Maidan Revolution**

## Association Agreement

The war in Ukraine began in 2014. That is the view of the head of Ukraine's armed forces from 2021 to 2024, General Valerii Zaluzhnyi. He told the *Economist* in 2022, "For us, for the military, the war began in 2014. For me personally in July 2014."[\[257\]](#) Even the *New York Times* commonly refers to events in the 2022– war with the phrase "since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion,"[\[258\]](#) conceding implicitly that the fighting began well before that. Well, who started it?

Too often, blind to history and context, many Americans see these problems only through TV news anchors' eyes—or those of the "current thing" on social media. For example, most caught up in the modern narrative about undiluted Russian aggression do not know that in 2014, the U.S. government backed a violent street putsch against Viktor Yanukovych—the elected president of Ukraine, the same man they had helped prevent from taking power in the Orange Revolution of 2004—or how that led to the current crisis. This so-called "Euromaidan Revolution," or "Revolution of Dignity," was in fact the "most blatant coup in history," in the words of Stratfor's George Friedman.[\[259\]](#)

"Freedom is being threatened by Russian aggression!" the narrative went,[\[260\]](#) which could not have been further from the truth. It was a battle over spheres of influence. Russia's is inside their own borders only, and only for the time being. America's is the entire sphere.

Then-National Endowment for Democracy head Carl Gershman, a card-carrying neoconservative from the Social Democrats USA and the

Committee on the Free World,[\[261\]](#) wrote in the *Washington Post* in September 2013, just before the U.S.-backed Ukrainian Euromaidan movement began, concerning America's high-stakes contest with Russia for influence in Eastern Europe. He declared that "Ukraine is the 'biggest prize'" in the negotiations, and acknowledged that President Yanukovych was attempting to make the reforms necessary to strike a deal with the EU. Gershman explained that the "restoration of [Russian] imperial greatness . . . would be inconceivable if Ukraine joined Europe." He then threatened, "Russians, too, face a choice, and Putin may find himself on the losing end not just in the near abroad but within Russia itself."[\[262\]](#)

Yanukovych, from the eastern Party of Regions, bullied and insulted by the Russians and heavily lobbied by the EU, was dead set on signing[\[263\]](#) an association agreement with the European Union.[\[264\]](#) According to three witnesses, he told those in his cabinet who favored stronger ties with Russia, "Forget about it . . . forever!"[\[265\]](#) The cabinet had already approved the agreement.[\[266\]](#) The U.S. then issued an international warrant and had the government of Austria arrest Dmitry Firtash, a major oligarch patron of Yanukovych, on charges he had bribed an official in India. "If Yanukovych were to be persuaded to change his mind, threatening to put his sponsor Dmitry Firtash behind bars was a potent lever to apply," journalist Andrew Cockburn noted. "Four days later, Yanukovych signaled he was ready to sign, whereupon Washington lifted the request to shackle his billionaire ally."[\[267\]](#) But the EU drove too hard a bargain.

## **EU Sabotage**



Before signing the deal, the Europeans insisted on a severe austerity regime, the freezing of government salaries and pensions, an end to subsidies for heavy industry in Ukraine's east, and huge hikes in utility rates. Both the EU and IMF were reluctant to lend Ukraine nearly as much as they needed to stay solvent.[\[268\]](#) The EU also demanded that Yanukovich release his imprisoned political rival, the billionaire "Gas Princess" Yulia Tymoshenko, short-lived co-victor of the 2004 Orange Revolution.[\[269\]](#)

Since Russia and Ukraine signed a new trade agreement in 2003,[\[270\]](#) Putin's government worried that a new deal between the EU and Ukraine would flood the Russian market with cheaper finished goods from Europe, undermining their own exports to Ukraine and industrial capacity.[\[271\]](#) This caused concern among many decrepit old firms and the population in Ukraine's industrial east as well.[\[272\]](#) There was also a history of enmity between the international financial institutions and Ukraine's elected leader because Yanukovich had refused to enact tax and pension reform bills and gas subsidy cuts the IMF had demanded in 2011.[\[273\]](#)

## **Russian Hardball**

The Russians told the Ukrainians that if they signed with the EU, their trade pact would be canceled,[\[274\]](#) though Putin also at least publicly contradicted that, saying he did not mind if Ukraine signed the EU association agreement as well.[\[275\]](#) However, it was clear that any benefit from a new deal with Europe would not come close to making up for all the money Ukraine had to lose if their trade agreement with Russia fell through.[\[276\]](#) Putin had ordered "quality checks" at the border that were already

severely restricting trade as an example of what would happen if they continued on the path to an EU deal,[\[277\]](#) while ultimately offering a \$15 billion loan and billions more in discounts on natural gas if Ukraine would go with Russia's Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) instead.[\[278\]](#)

Yanukovych had signed a \$10 billion deal with Chevron to develop Ukrainian shale oil on November 4. This may have been part of Russia's motive to drive such a hard bargain. "I'm very determined to cooperate with the Ukrainian government in strengthening Ukraine's energy independence. There are several areas on the road to this goal," Geoffrey Pyatt, the U.S. ambassador to Ukraine, told the International Business Times.[\[279\]](#) Ukrainian Energy Minister Eduard Stavytsky, who signed the deal, said, "This is one more step towards achieving full energy independence for the state. This will bring cheaper gas prices and the sort of just prices which exist (elsewhere) in the world." The reporters added helpfully, "Late last month, Russia's gas export monopoly Gazprom demanded Ukraine pay a \$882 million overdue gas bill urgently."[\[280\]](#)

European Union officials had previously explained that Ukraine could not sign an association agreement with the EU if they were members of Russia's customs union.[\[281\]](#) The EU was trying to force Yanukovych to end his deal with Russia,[\[282\]](#) though this may have had the effect of driving the Ukrainian president toward Russia without reassuring them against the alleged threat of a flood of cheaper European finished goods.

Ben Aris, editor of *Business News Europe*, formerly with the UK's conservative *Telegraph*—who said he was "very sympathetic to the protesters," and that "Yanukovych is corrupt and should be voted out in

2015”—explained why the Ukrainian president backed out of the EU association agreement: Kiev was bankrupt. The EU was only offering \$160 million per year in loans, “while just the bond repayments to [the] IMF were greater than that.” The Russians, on the other hand, offered \$15 billion and immediately handed over \$3 billion of it. He said it was false that Yanukovych was Putin’s puppet; it was just that “[h]ad Yanukovych accepted the EU deal, the country would have collapsed.” The EU deal also limited Ukrainian exports while forcing them to allow all imports.[\[283\]](#)

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters, “I feel like I’m at a wedding where the groom has suddenly issued new, last-minute stipulations.”[\[284\]](#) But George Soros agreed with Aris, blaming Merkel for the trouble. “True to form,” he wrote, “the EU under German leadership offered far too little and demanded far too much from Ukraine,” causing the deal to fall through.[\[285\]](#) Merkel then hinted that perhaps Ukraine could sign a deal with the EU while keeping their free trade deal with Russia, which the failed association agreement had forbidden. “It cannot be that a situation arises where a land that lies between Russia and the European Union must make a basic decision, that will always be seen as either for the one or the other,” she belatedly acknowledged.[\[286\]](#)

The EU accord also contained a clause obligating Ukraine to standardize its military with NATO, stating that they “shall aim at increasing policy convergence and effectiveness, and promoting joint policy planning.”[\[287\]](#)

The U.S. ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, had dismissed Moscow’s concerns about the EU deal. It is just an association agreement,

and no cause for alarm, he had told them.[\[288\]](#) He failed to persuade. The Russians offered a better deal. Accepting it on November 21, Yanukovich announced a delay in signing the EU agreement.[\[289\]](#)

## **Maidan Protests Begin**

The Maidan protest movement kicked off that night, November 21, after Ukrainian activist Mustafa Nayyem, the co-founder of the USAID and George Soros-backed[\[290\]](#) Hromadske TV, announced the onset of protests.[\[291\]](#) On November 24, the anniversary of the Orange Revolution, opposition leaders Vitali Klitschko, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Oleh Tyahnybok jointly coordinated a pro-EU march, which succeeded in bringing tens of thousands out to the Maidan encampment.[\[292\]](#)

Contrary to the mythology that the Yanukovich regime struck first on November 30,[\[293\]](#) the first clashes began the night of the 24th,[\[294\]](#) which the pro-Maidan *Kyiv Post* said started when the protesters attacked the cops' van.[\[295\]](#)

On the morning of November 30, the Berkut national police used batons, tear gas and stun grenades to clear Independence Square, a major gathering point for the demonstrators.[\[296\]](#) But the move backfired. Protesters rallied, and tens of thousands more showed up, including people bused in from cities across Ukraine's west.[\[297\]](#) The *Kyiv Post* reported, "Interestingly, the EU ambassador and nine ambassadors from EU countries (notably, Poland, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Sweden, and Finland) joined the demonstration, clearly on orders from their capitals."[\[298\]](#)

On December 1, protesters smashed the windows of the city council building and took it over, along with the Trade Union House. In their attempt to seize the presidential administration office, neo-Nazi umbrella group Right Sector and their allies attacked police with hammers, bricks and Molotov cocktails. They also seized a bulldozer and used it to smash through their lines and the front gate of the building. Approximately 100 officers were wounded, along with 50 protesters. The Svoboda Party's Oleh Tyahnybok called for a general strike and a "social and nationalist revolution."[\[299\]](#) On December 2, police withdrew, allowing protesters to put up barricades and seize the city council building.[\[300\]](#) The next day, Yanukovych survived a confidence vote in the Rada.[\[301\]](#)

## **Taking Sides**

Victoria Nuland is the wife of neoconservative theoretician Robert Kagan.[\[302\]](#) She had previously been chief of staff to Strobe Talbott in the 1990s, deputy national security adviser to Vice President Cheney and then ambassador to NATO in the 2000s, State Department spokeswoman under Hillary Clinton in Obama's first term (2009–2013),[\[303\]](#) and in 2014 was assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs under Secretary of State John Kerry. On December 10, Nuland went to Kiev to meet with protest leaders and show her support. With Ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt, she passed out cookies and sandwiches to the protesters and police,[\[304\]](#) though it was the former group which got more attention.[\[305\]](#) Senators John McCain and Chris Murphy stood on stage with Oleh Tyahnybok of Svoboda and Arseniy Yatsenyuk of Yulia Tymoshenko's

Fatherland Party, and announced that the U.S. government supported their cause.[\[306\]](#)

The Americans openly admitted their success would be devastating to Russia's position. McCain told CNN, "There's no doubt that Ukraine is of vital importance to Putin. I think it was Henry Kissinger, I'm not sure, [who] said that 'Russia, without Ukraine it's an eastern power, with Ukraine it's a western power.' This is the beginning of Russia, right here in Kiev."[\[307\]](#) It was actually Zbigniew Brzezinski who wrote something like that,[\[308\]](#) but he and Kissinger were virtually interchangeable anyway.  
[\[309\]](#)

## **Nuland's Big Claims**

In the middle of it all, on December 19, 2013, Nuland gave a speech to corporate big wigs at the U.S.-Ukraine Foundation in Washington, which is financed by the U.S.-Ukraine Business Council, with a giant Chevron logo behind her. After claiming "the people of Ukraine" want to be integrated into Europe, she said the government's clampdown on the protesters had become a renewed reason for them, as well as a basis for threats from her. "I spent more than two hours with President Yanukovich. It was a tough conversation but also a realistic one," Nuland said. "I made absolutely clear to him on behalf of the United States that what happened December 10 and more generally what has been happening in security terms is absolutely impermissible in a European state, in a democratic state."

She added, "I also made clear that the United States believes there is a way out for Ukraine, that it is still possible to save Ukraine's European

future, and that that is where we wanted to see the president lead his country.” To that end she instructed him to restart negotiations with the EU and IMF. Nuland told the assembled corporate chiefs that “the reforms that the IMF insists on are necessary for the long-term economic health of the country,” and that “a new deal with the IMF would also send a positive signal to private markets and would increase foreign direct investment that is so urgently needed in Ukraine.” Nuland added, “So it is time to finish the job, as Vice President Biden said in remarks last night.”

Then she really started cutting loose: “While these are challenging times in many ways, we also can’t lose sight of the fact that this is a time for great optimism as well. You only have to be on the Maidan to feel the energy; to feel the hope of Ukrainians coursing through the center of Kiev.” She said that the United States had spent more than \$5 billion since 1991 supporting supposed pro-democracy (read: pro-Western) groups[\[310\]](#) and that they were now ready to choose their “pro-European future.” Nuland could feel the Ukrainians agreeing with her, she claimed.[\[311\]](#) Except that polls showed half of them did not agree.[\[312\]](#)

Her assertion that the revolution was simply a grassroots movement that pitted “the people of Ukraine” against the evil Yanukovych regime was just not true. Half the country supported him and opposed joining the EU. He was elected twice, after all. That is why the most powerful country in all of world history, ours, had to resort to this intervention—staging two phony revolutions—in theirs.

Then-Prime Minister Mykola Asarov said that Nuland threatened that Yanukovych had better not attempt to end the protests with force “or you’ll

fall.”[\[313\]](#)

The *Washington Post* went uncharacteristically hard against the consensus with a piece they ran 10 days before the coup, certainly putting the lie to Nuland’s claim to be channeling the will of the entire population. “Ukrainians are pretty clearly divided,” they reported. No surveys “show a significant majority of the population supporting the protest movement and several show a majority opposed.”

They added, “The protesters’ inability to garner greater support is surprising given the fact that Yanukovych’s popularity is far below 50 percent (although he is still apparently the most popular political figure in the country).” They said that “[o]ne reason for this failure is that anti-Russian rhetoric and the iconography of western Ukrainian nationalism does not play well among the Ukrainian majority,” adding, “The anti-Russian forms of Ukrainian nationalism expressed on the Maidan are certainly not representative of the general view of Ukrainians.” They also noted plurality support, but “hardly a clear mandate” for membership in the European Union.[\[314\]](#) Further, far greater than a supermajority, 83 percent, of the protesters on the Maidan were self-described Ukrainian speakers and ethnically Ukrainian, and merely 2 percent were from the east or south of the country.[\[315\]](#)

Just a quick look at a map of electoral results from 2004 and 2010 shows a stark representation of the ethnic, linguistic and political divide inside Ukraine.[\[316\]](#) The sharp division in party and region goes to show why the Americans favored one side over the other and why many in the



east reacted the way they did after the U.S. intervened against their same elected president twice in 10 years.

## **Intercepted**

On February 7, 2014, someone leaked an intercepted phone call between Nuland and Ambassador Pyatt.[\[317\]](#) They were simply caught red-handed deciding which major protest leaders would fill what positions in Ukraine's new government. Vitali Klitschko, the boxer, UDAR Party (Ukrainian Democratic Alliance for Reform) leader, and later member of parliament and mayor of Kiev, was to be kept out of leadership but in the public spotlight. He was to be handled by Oleh Tyahnybok, the Hitler-saluting former member of the Rada, former presidential candidate[\[318\]](#) and leader of the Svoboda Party, formerly the "Social Nationalist Party" if you can believe it.[\[319\]](#) In 2005, as a member of parliament, Tyahnybok wrote several "open letters" to President Yushchenko demanding he stop the "criminal activity of organized Jewry."[\[320\]](#) One of his party's demands was for Ukrainian citizens to have their ethnicity printed on their passports.[\[321\]](#) He told his group in 2004, "It's time to give back Ukraine to Ukrainians. [You are the ones] that the Moscow-Jewish mafia ruling Ukraine fears most." This led to his expulsion from Viktor Yushchenko's party, Our Ukraine.[\[322\]](#)

But "'Yats' is the guy," Nuland declared, referring to Arseniy Yatsenyuk, from Yulia Tymoshenko's party, Fatherland, whom she wanted to be prime minister. A State Department cable by Ambassador William Taylor identified Yatsenyuk as being closely tied to oligarch Viktor

Pinchuk, who is the son-in-law of former President Leonid Kuchma and close to the West.[\[323\]](#) His foundation gave at least \$8.6 million to the Clinton Foundation while Hillary was secretary of state in Obama's first term, for example.[\[324\]](#) Presumably it was the Russians who intercepted and posted the audio on YouTube where everyone could hear it two weeks before the overthrow. They just went through with it anyway.

The State Department did not deny the audio was authentic or claim it was edited. Instead, they simply apologized for the foul language—"Fuck the EU," Nuland had said—a limited hangout if there ever was one.[\[325\]](#) It was clear U.S. officials had been plotting a coup weeks before they finally carried it out.[\[326\]](#)

Hawks often claim that, in fact, Nuland and Pyatt were talking about compromising in a new deal with Yanukovych. Under pressure from the Americans and Europeans, Yanukovych dismissed his prime minister and cabinet in late January.[\[327\]](#) But the U.S., EU and UN forcing the president to accept their hand-picked prime minister and hold early elections is still a coup, even if the worst was still to come. It was major foreign powers who were "midwifing," "glueing" and "sticking" the transition, "making it sail," as Nuland and Pyatt said on the call. Besides, Yanukovych had already offered to make Yatsenyuk the new prime minister, but this deal had been rejected out of hand by the leaders of the Maidan. They were still holding out for the president's resignation while the U.S. continued to support them.[\[328\]](#) And though Nuland and Pyatt are recorded discussing why they did not want Tyahnybok in the new government, he had not been offered a position in Yanukovych's proposal, another indication they were not

considering that deal, but planning to force through their own. Tyahnybok did, however, credit the role of his Svoboda party “ultras” on the side of the Maidan for Yanukovych’s willingness to compromise, boasting, “We put the squeeze on him.”[\[329\]](#)

The *Christian Science Monitor*’s Dan Murphy—certainly no Putin apologist[\[330\]](#)—explained the context of the intercepted Nuland phone call: “Her strong statement of preference for how Ukraine’s government should be formed—and apparent confidence that the U.S. has major influence over that—is a reminder of the disconnect between U.S. government assurances that it doesn’t meddle in nations’ internal politics and its actual behavior.” He added, “This was not a conversation analyzing unfolding events and how to respond to what comes next. This was about molding a situation according to U.S. interests.”[\[331\]](#)

Journalist Keith Gessen wrote, “What was remarkable about the episode was the utter confidence with which Nuland seemed to speak for the United States and its policy.” He added, “From the start of his administration, President Barack Obama had tried to lower tensions with Russia and refocus American attention on a rising China; he had made clear he wanted no part in the problems of the post-Soviet periphery.” But, he noted, the neocons do whatever they want: “Yet in the middle of the uprising in Kiev, there was Nuland, encouraging protesters and insulting European allies. And after the call leaked, it was Nuland, as much as Obama, who came to personify American policy for everyday Russians.”[\[332\]](#)

That was written in 2018. But at the time, the *Times* went along with the rest of the major media in crafting a meaningless narrative to explain away the important truth that had been revealed: Nuland said a *bad word* on a phone call. CNN's Christiane Amanpour and other leaders of the news narrative had their hook: "Top U.S. Diplomat Launches F-bomb on EU in Leaked Recorded Conversation."[\[333\]](#) And that was that.

But why was she cursing the EU anyway? Are they not our friends? Was not the whole point to force Ukraine into an association agreement with them? Nuland's complaint was that the Germans were moving too slowly and seeking compromise. So she decided to get Robert Serry, a former Dutch ambassador to Kiev, who was Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's new representative at the UN, and the men in Vice President Biden's office to "glue" the deal instead. Nuland told Pyatt she'd just heard from Biden's then- and later-national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, that the vice president was "willing," and said she would arrange a conference call between him and the new pending regime so that Biden could give an "attaboy" and "get the deets [details] to stick." The *Post* confirmed Biden and Yanukovych had spoken several times in January and February 2014 as well.[\[334\]](#)

But once Yanukovych was forced to accept the deal in negotiations with the UN and EU, overseen by the United States, he was quickly deposed by local actors.

## **The Same Old NGO Scam**

The NED's Carl Gershman himself later referred to this revolution as a successful “overthrow” of Yanukovych.[\[335\]](#) Apologists for this intervention like to cry that accusers are “denying the agency” of the Ukrainians who did the coup. But that is ridiculous. Every CIA- or NED-backed coup plot in history has relied on local forces to agitate and then ultimately take over the country. Domestic opponents who accepted U.S. help to replace Shukri al-Quwatli, Mohammad Mosaddeq, Jacobo Árbenz, Ngo Dinh Diem, Sukarno, João Goulart, Cheddi Jagan, Patrice Lumumba, Rafael Trujillo, Gough Whitlam, Salvador Allende, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, Vladimír Mečiar, Franjo Tudjman, Slobodan Milošević, Eduard Shevardnadze, Askar Akayev, Manuel Zelaya, Muammar Gaddafi, Mohamed Morsi, Evo Morales, Viktor Yanukovych, etc. all had “agency,” alright: they were the sock puppets of “the Agency”—the American CIA and their junior partners at USAID, the NED and the rest of the regime change industry.

The question is regarding the motives behind and extent of U.S. government intervention and whether it helped to make a difference in the success of the regime change. As former CIA Director of Operations Ray S. Cline put it, in reference to the successful 1953 Iran coup, what counted was “supplying just the right bit of marginal assistance in the right way at the right time. Such is the nature of effective political action.”[\[336\]](#) The Ukrainians and their factions are the pieces, while major powers America and Russia are the players in this game of chess.

For example, Center UA was a “civil society” group run by Oleh Rybachuk, the former chief of staff of ex-President Yushchenko,[\[337\]](#) who

had been central to the CIA-MI6 scheme to work with the Ukrainian SBU against Yanukovych during the Orange Revolution of 2004,[\[338\]](#) and bankrolled by American oligarchs Pierre Omidyar—who donated \$335,000 in 2011 alone[\[339\]](#)—and, though he later denied it,[\[340\]](#) George Soros. The Open Society Foundation was happy to take credit where it was due. “The International Renaissance Foundation played an important role supporting civil society during the Euromaidan protests,” they boasted, adding that they had paid for legal aid for “activists, protesters and journalists,” as well as medical care and assistance to Hromadske TV and other pro-Maidan media.[\[341\]](#) The *Kyiv Post* reported in 2014 that USAID gave Center UA more than \$500,000 in 2012 through an NGO called Pact Inc., adding, “Nearly 36 percent came from Omidyar Network, a foundation established by eBay founder Pierre Omidyar and his wife.” And, of course, Soros’s International Renaissance Foundation and NED picked up the rest.[\[342\]](#) With the help of USAID-backed Pact Inc., Rybachuk’s Center UA organized approximately 60 different NGOs and provided grants to at least 80 more. Rybachuk also headed up the Civic Expert Council, advocating for Ukraine to sign the new association agreement with the EU.[\[343\]](#)

As soon as Amb. Pyatt got to Kiev, he approved a \$50,000 USAID grant to Hromadske TV. Their editor-in-chief Roman Skrypin worked for the U.S. government’s Radio Liberty and the also-U.S.-funded *Ukrainska Pravda*. He got another \$30,000 from Soros’s International Renaissance Foundation. Skrypin also helped to set up the Channel 5 TV network with money from the IRF in time for the Orange Revolution in 2004. USAID gave Pact Inc. \$7 million in 2013.[\[344\]](#) “Euromaidan Press,” official

mouthpiece of the Maidan movement, admitted two years later that they got the vast majority of their funding from Soros's Renaissance Foundation.

[345] Their website still reads, "Euromaidan Press is grateful for the longtime support of the International Renaissance Foundation," and for "the past support of GPD Charitable Trust, British Embassy Kyiv, and National Democratic Institute." [346]

IRF beneficiary Viktoria Siumar from Hromadske Radio thanked Soros for all his generosity, saying that "without those efforts the revolution might not have succeeded. . . . Partners of the IRF were the main driving force and the foundation of the Maidan movement." [347]

This is how it works. As the *Financial Times* reported, "Kiev-based New Citizen, headed by Rybachuk . . . played a big role in getting the protest up and running weeks ago when Yanukovych backed out of signing far-reaching association and free trade agreements with the EU." [348] The plan had been in the works for years. As Rybachuk told the *Financial Post* back in 2012, "We now have 150 NGOs in all the major cities in our 'clean up Parliament campaign.' . . . Facebook had 300,000 members a year ago and now has two million. The Orange Revolution was a miracle. . . . We want to do that again and we think we will." [349]

Mustafa Nayyem, co-founder of Hromadske TV, explained in an article for Soros's Open Societies Foundation that he had kicked the protests off on November 21 with a Facebook post asking people to meet at the Maidan. [350] But as journalist Kit Klarenberg explained, "Nayyem was no ordinary 'online journalist.' In October 2012, he was one of six Ukrainians whisked to Washington, D.C., by Meridian International, a State Department-

connected organization that identifies and grooms future overseas leaders, to ‘observe and experience’ that year’s Presidential election.” The group met with Senator John McCain among others while they were in town.[\[351\]](#)

Also interestingly, Klarenberg found that “[i]n the hours following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, NED hurried to remove any and all trace of its funding for organizations in Ukraine from its website.” He noted that while the NED grants database for Ukraine returned no results, “a snapshot of the page captured February 25th [2022] reveals that since 2014, a total of 334 projects in the country have been awarded a staggering \$22.4 million,” adding that “by NED President Duane Wilson’s reckoning, Kiev is the organization’s fourth-largest funding recipient worldwide.”[\[352\]](#) Journalist Will Porter found scrubbed NED records showing they had spent \$4.5 million on 70 separate projects in 2013–2014 alone.[\[353\]](#) Is the NED leadership not proud of the assistance they have given? Evidently they find it preferable to keep their name out of the prehistory of this terrible conflict.

*Forbes* magazine dug even deeper into Hromadske TV’s funding and found contributions from the U.S., Swiss and German embassies, various Canadian and Swiss government agencies and assorted NGOs, as well as the European Commission’s Ukrainian delegation office. “[D]onations from the European Commission are a particularly interesting reveal,” *Forbes* noted, “given the anti-Russian government news . . . coming out of Hromadske.”[\[354\]](#) Rather than a grassroots effort of “the Ukrainian people,” as Nuland claimed, USAID’s annual report from 2013 makes it clear that Ukraine’s entire “civil society” was nothing but American and



Western European astroturf. Their NGOs spent at least tens of millions of dollars picking and choosing winners across many different fields.[\[355\]](#)

Soros's Freedom House even sent out a fundraising appeal based on their intervention in this case. "More support, including yours, is urgently needed to ensure that Ukrainian citizens struggling for their freedom are protected and supported."[\[356\]](#) No point in their being modest. The group's David J. Kramer had issued an official statement demanding Yanukovych resign on December 9.[\[357\]](#)

Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoysky, who controlled vast oil, gas and banking interests in the country,[\[358\]](#) had an old grudge against Yanukovych from previous fights over the semi-private oil company Ukrtatnafta.[\[359\]](#) He quickly employed his TV channel 1+1 in service of the protest movement.[\[360\]](#)

## **A Violent Putsch**

### **The Radical Right**

Down in the street where it counted, violent neo-Nazis were the counterparts to the American superpower's string-pullers from on high, completing the overthrow of the Yanukovych government with violence and credible threats to take his life.

Five days after the protests began, groups including Patriot of Ukraine, Stepan Bandera's Trident, the Ukrainian National Assembly-Ukrainian People's Self-Defense (UNA-UNSO) and White Hammer joined forces to create Right Sector.[\[361\]](#) Other Nazi militias on the street included

Common Cause and the Svoboda Party's militia C14,[\[362\]](#) which is named for the 14 words of American neo-Nazi David Lane's slogan, "We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children."[\[363\]](#) The brother of Soros's Hromadske TV's Mustafa Nayyem, who first called for the Maidan protests in November 2013, is C14's lawyer.[\[364\]](#)

Without a doubt, it was these groups who completed the overthrow of Yanukovych's government. This reality was covered by many Western press agencies for years—it is a great news story—before they dropped it in favor of the opposite narrative, that only pro-Russian partisans would ever tell such a lie.[\[365\]](#) In that case, many major media outlets and other publications, including numerous scholarly journals and books by credentialed mainstream American and European academics who have covered the Maidan Revolution, must have all been spouting Russian talking points too. The *New York Times* admitted, "While foreign reports on the unrest in Kiev often depicted peaceful scenes of tens of thousands waving European flags, some of those hurt said it was always clear to them that violence would be needed for real change."[\[366\]](#)

Perhaps it is important to note here that though it is currently common in American political culture for liberals and leftists to falsely characterize anyone to the right of the so-called political center as a "fascist,"[\[367\]](#) the reader can be certain that is not what is taking place here. These guys are actually national socialists, white supremacists and ethnic nationalists who admire Adolf Hitler and his agents—exactly the kind of people who show those accusations[\[368\]](#) against American conservative and populist Republicans[\[369\]](#) to be false.

As Lev Golinkin wrote in *The Nation* in 2016, “Ukraine had an established far-right movement long before the Maidan upheavals of late 2013–early 2014,” including the Social-National Assembly and Svoboda Party, led by Oleh Tyahnybok, one of the big three opposition leaders that Senators McCain and Murphy shared the stage with during the protests.

[\[370\]](#)

*The New Yorker* published a piece admitting that the openly declared “fascists” of Right Sector (*Pravyi Sektor*) “played a crucial role, providing muscle to protesters who were largely unequipped to do their own fighting.”[\[371\]](#) And even Hannah Thoburn, a pro-Maidan hawk from neoconservative ringleader Bill Kristol’s Foreign Policy Initiative, still admitted that Svoboda and Right Sector were Nazis and potentially dangerous to Ukraine’s Jews, all while still spinning for their side.[\[372\]](#)

Relatively early on in the process, the *Times* described Tyahnybok’s Svoboda thugs as “among the most fearsome demonstrators [who] have led some of the more provocative efforts to occupy buildings and block government offices.”[\[373\]](#)

The BBC wrote about Right Sector in early February, just weeks before the coup, calling them a “key factor behind the recent violence in Kiev.” They were not afraid to fight the police either. “The group’s account on the VKontakte social network that day encouraged members to come to the scene, bringing bottles for Molotov cocktails and bombs.” The outlet said that while Right Sector played a key role in the pro-EU protests, their ultimate goal, in the words of one leader, “is not having closer ties with Brussels but ‘staging a nationalist revolution.’”[\[374\]](#) Leading up to the

coup, Svoboda bused in 600 men per day to the Maidan in Kiev from Lviv in Ukraine's west.[\[375\]](#) On February 18, their political council member Yury Noyevy also said they did not favor joining the European Union, but wanted to use the unrest to finalize their turn away from the East: "The participation of Ukrainian nationalism and Svoboda in the process of EU integration is a means to break our ties with Russia."[\[376\]](#)

*Time* magazine reported that Common Cause had seized the Agriculture Ministry, the Energy Ministry and Justice Ministry buildings by the end of January and that the more moderate protest leaders like Vitali Klitschko had no control over the radical right in the Maidan.[\[377\]](#)

## **Uprisings Across the West**

Right Sector seized dozens of local and regional government buildings across western and central Ukraine in late January to help ensure the success of the revolution, or to guarantee a base of insurgency were it to be crushed.[\[378\]](#)

The *Guardian* reported on January 24 that they had sacked the regional governor of Lviv Oblast and forced him to resign, adding that "[t]housands also stormed regional administration headquarters in Rivne, breaking down doors and demanding the release of people detained in the unrest there." They said, "In the town of Cherkasy, 125 miles south of Kiev, about 1,000 protesters took over the first two floors of the main administration building and lit fires outside," and that "[s]imilar action took place in Ternopil, Ivano-Frankivsk and Khmelnytsky in western and central Ukraine."[\[379\]](#)

For months, photos came in of neo-Nazis among the crowd, picking fights with police and waving their red and black Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) flags alongside those of Svoboda.[\[380\]](#)

Just as the demonstrators seemed to be running out of enthusiasm, [\[381\]](#) on January 16 the Rada passed the so-called “dictatorship laws,” essentially outlawing the protest movement. In response to this, Right Sector, seeing a “chance to revolutionize the situation,” in the words of their leader Dimitry Yarosh,[\[382\]](#) led a group of protesters toward the Rada, and attacked the police with rocks and Molotov cocktails, setting the cops’ buses on fire. From at least that point on, Right Sector was the dominant force on the Maidan.[\[383\]](#) Yarosh, co-founder of Stepan Bandera’s Trident in 1994, is an avowed fascist, bent on revolution and the creation of an all-powerful, “purified,” ethnic Ukrainian state.[\[384\]](#)

## **Just Imagine**

What would Barack Obama or any other American presidential administration’s police and military forces have done about a semi-permanent encampment of thousands of protesters occupying federal government buildings in the heart of Washington, D.C., knowing all along that they were led by armed groups of Aryan Nations, the KKK and other avowed white supremacist revolutionaries and financed by, say, Russia? They would have used any amount of violence necessary to remove them is what, on the second day if not the first. And the protesters would not have to be neo-Nazis to provoke such a response. In 1932, President Herbert Hoover sent soldiers to attack the World War I veterans’ peaceful Bonus

Army,[\[385\]](#) camped out across the Potomac River, forcing them out at bayonet point. The vets had not even threatened to overthrow the government; they were simply demanding their war bonuses early in a desperate attempt to survive the Great Depression.[\[386\]](#) American police at all levels use violence to break up protests regularly.[\[387\]](#)

But on February 19, President Obama insisted that Yanukovych let the protesters win: “[T]hat includes making sure the Ukrainian military does not step into what should be a set of issues that can be resolved by civilians.” Obama continued, “Ultimately our interest is to make sure the Ukrainian people can express their own desires and we believe a large majority of Ukrainians are interested in an integration with Europe and the commerce and cultural exchanges that are possible for them to expand opportunity and prosperity.”[\[388\]](#)

Imagine America’s “interests” being defined so broadly as to include making sure people in some country 7,000 miles away can “express their desires” to sign an “association agreement” with another continent’s trade pact, especially considering how this “large majority” of Ukrainians favoring ties with the EU never existed. It was a good enough excuse to intervene though.

## **Snipers**

On February 20, 2014, protesters clashed with the security forces. Hidden snipers also opened fire on police who then fired into the crowd. When it was over, 102 protesters had been killed. They quickly became known as the “heavenly hundred.” The U.S. government and allied media claimed the

shooting was all the responsibility of Yanukovych, who possibly had help, or at least encouragement, from Russia.[\[389\]](#) But from the very beginning, many different witnesses have suspected that the snipers were part of the revolution, shooting people from both sides in order to heighten the crisis.

## **In the Conservatory with a Rifle**

The initial firing on the police came from snipers placed in the Music Conservatory building early in the morning of the 20th. Parliamentarian Andriy Shevchenko said the police called him asking if he could do anything. So he asked the Svoboda Party's Andriy Parubiy to stop the guys firing from the conservatory, obviously indicating they knew perfectly well who controlled that building. "Later in the day," according to ABC News, they came looking for them.[\[390\]](#) Parubiy said he sent men to locate the snipers but found none.[\[391\]](#)

Avowed Nazi groups like C14 and Right Sector certainly had the capability and the motive to murder. In an interview with the BBC, Parubiy did not deny the shooter's claims that weapons were stashed in the post office the night before.[\[392\]](#) The *Times* also reported "the arrival of guns stolen from a government depot in the western Ukraine city of Lviv," for use by the protesters' side.[\[393\]](#) Right Sector's Yarosh admitted to *Time* three weeks before the coup that they had amassed an "arsenal," and that his men were ready to carry on the fight if negotiations failed. "It is enough to defend all of Ukraine from the internal occupiers," he said, referring to the elected government.[\[394\]](#)

*Foreign Policy* ran a piece based on an interview with one of the snipers, Ivan Bubenchik, who claimed to have shot at least two police officers.[\[395\]](#)

The BBC also published a story about a sniper who said he was recruited and armed by a Euromaidan group on the 19th, and that he had stashed his weapons in the post office the night before. He admitted to firing from the Music Conservatory building beginning on the morning of the 20th. He said another man was with him, firing too.[\[396\]](#) Yet another sniper told them he was recruited in January by an ex-military officer, who, he said, advised him to refrain from joining a radical group on the street and instead bide his time. He agreed with another BBC reporter that he was being “groomed” for his role.[\[397\]](#)

## **Chronology**

On February 18, the Social-National Assembly (SNA) attempted to storm the building of the parliament, the Supreme Rada. They also set fire to the Party of Regions headquarters in Kiev, blocking the exits, killing one worker and seven Berkut and Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVS) police. It was in response to these murders that Yanukovych approved a plan to clear the square.[\[398\]](#) That night the Berkut raided Right Sector headquarters, where they claimed to have discovered a cache of weapons,[\[399\]](#) and riot police stormed the Maidan.[\[400\]](#)

The next day the big three protest leaders, Klitschko, Tyahnybok and Yatsenyuk, signed a joint statement with Yanukovych calling for a truce.[\[401\]](#)



But the Nazis were not going to tolerate that. On the morning of the 20th, police used water cannons to force the crowd away from the major government buildings, toward the Maidan. Interior Ministry troops, the Berkut, then joined the riot cops, linking arms and driving the protesters even farther back, appearing on the verge of clearing the Maidan square. That was when the snipers opened fire on the police from the Conservatory, forcing them to retreat. As they did, the crowd ran after them, apparently intent on setting up barricades further up the hill. Some of the police began firing as they withdrew. Reporter Graham Stack wrote, “The man apparently in charge of the riflemen in the Conservatory was 27-year-old Volodymyr Parasyuk. [T]oday [he is] an MP, but at that time [was] simply leader of one of the ‘Hundred’ units, responsible for the defense of the city center protest camp.”[\[402\]](#)

Parasyuk, a member of the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists,[\[403\]](#) confirmed his role to the German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine*. “When the first men from the Berkut were injured, everyone rushed forward. Everyone who was on the barricades began to storm Instytutska Street. Our boys only used their weapons once, when they stormed,” he said. But the violence got worse from there. The BBC also showed leaders encouraging people to move forward toward the cops while they were still firing.[\[404\]](#)

In total 102 demonstrators and 13 police officers were killed.[\[405\]](#)

While several officers were ultimately convicted for 31 of those deaths, [\[406\]](#) people were still being shot by snipers after the police had ceased firing. Multiple reports and footage from that day show continued gunfire

from the opposition-controlled Hotel Ukraine even after they had withdrawn.[\[407\]](#)

## **The Hotel Ukraine**

A BBC documentary has audio of the police identifying a sniper in the window of the Hotel Ukraine.[\[408\]](#) Their reporter, Gabriel Gatehouse, also reported sniper fire that morning, and had even seen the shooter himself.[\[409\]](#) Gatehouse wrote that control of the hotel was in dispute as it was still behind government lines, but his own and other footage from inside and outside the hotel that day appears to show the entire building firmly under the control of the protesters.[\[410\]](#) Gatehouse wrote that “[i]t seems clear that, apart from Berkut and government snipers positioned on top of buildings around the Maidan, and some protesters with guns shooting from the conservatory building, there were also unknown gunmen shooting from the hotel.” He added that “they seemed to be shooting at both sides. As to who they were or how many they killed, I’m afraid I don’t know.” On the question of whether police snipers had fired at protesters, he said “no idea beyond what seemed to come out of their intercepted communications. Which I must add I wasn’t able to independently verify.”[\[411\]](#) But the cops’ intercepted transmissions only showed their desperate effort to locate and neutralize the snipers, whoever they were. Gatehouse observed that the recordings show “confusion” as the sniper massacre begins, “and possibly that they were not alone.”[\[412\]](#)

During the shooting, some journalists were tweeting about gunfire from the hotel aimed at the police.[\[413\]](#)

## **Vladislav Surkov**

President Petro Poroshenko[\[414\]](#) and the head of Ukraine's state security service, Valentyn Nalyvaichenko,[\[415\]](#) made completely unsupported claims that Vladislav Surkov, then-adviser to Russian President Putin, had personally coordinated the sniper operation. He did not even arrive until the massacre was over.[\[416\]](#)

Svoboda's Andriy Parubiy himself said that he thought shots were being fired from the Hotel Ukraine, without admitting who actually controlled the building.[\[417\]](#) Prosecutor General Oleh Makhnitsky confirmed the same from the beginning.[\[418\]](#)

Would neo-Nazis murder protesters if ordered to? We are told police officers would and did. Many local and major international media organizations were in the Hotel Ukraine, and while there are plenty of pictures and videos showing Ukrainian Maidan groups, no evidence of outside infiltrators was ever shown. Russian or pro-Russian soldiers sneaking into the hotel to murder protesters, in effect framing the Ukrainian president they favored for doing so, would not seem to make much sense, but that is what they would have us believe.[\[419\]](#)

## **Georgians**

Later a group of Georgians—Zalogi Kvaratskhelia, Koba Nergadze and Alexander Revazishvili—claimed in interviews with the Russian outlet Sputnik,[\[420\]](#) Italian GM News[\[421\]](#) and Israeli documentarian Anna Stephen[\[422\]](#) to have been hired by former Georgian President Mikhail

Saakashvili's right-hand man, Mamuka Mamulashvili, later leader of the Georgian Legion, and ordered by arms dealer Serhiy Pashinsky to shoot police and protesters alike. While their story may seem too perfect to be true, one of them also testified to it in a deposition for the lawyers of the police officer defendants prosecuted for the killings, and seemingly credibly so.[\[423\]](#)

## **Olga Bogomolets**

A doctor from National Medical University named Olga Bogomolets, who led a first aid team at the Maidan, told the BBC that she believed the snipers must have been professionals because of the first 13 gunshot victims brought in, all were shot “to heart, to neck, to lung,” leaving them no chance to be saved, as she put it.[\[424\]](#)

It was her belief that both sides were being killed by the same snipers. In early March, Catherine Ashton, EU high representative for foreign affairs and security, like Nuland, had a private phone call intercepted and released, presumably by the Russian government.[\[425\]](#) In this case, she was speaking with Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Paet, who relayed an earlier conversation with Bogomolets.[\[426\]](#) He told Ashton, “And, in fact, what was quite disturbing, the same Olga told that, well, all the evidence shows that the people who were killed by snipers from both sides, among policemen and people in the street. That they were the same snipers killing people from both sides.” He added, “And she also showed me some photos and she said that as a medical doctor, she can say that it is the same handwriting [and the] same type of bullets. And it's really disturbing that

now the new coalition, that they don't want to investigate what exactly happened," and concluded: "So that there is now stronger and stronger understanding that behind the snipers, it was not Yanukovych, but it was somebody from the new coalition."[\[427\]](#) The Estonian government confirmed the audio was authentic,[\[428\]](#) though Bogomolets later denied telling Paet any such thing.[\[429\]](#)

Oleksandr Yakymenko, the former head of the SBU, blamed Parubiy's men, firing from the Music Conservatory and Hotel Ukraine.[\[430\]](#)

## **Consensus**

One thing both sides agree on is that whoever was shooting was killing people on both sides to heighten the tension. New Health Minister Oleh Musiy told the AP that "the similarity of bullet wounds suffered by opposition victims and police indicates the shooters were trying to stoke tensions on both sides and spark even greater violence, with the goal of toppling Yanukovych," and that "I think it wasn't just a part of the old regime . . . but it was also the work of Russian special forces who served and maintained the ideology of the regime." The SBU deputy chief Hennady Moskal contradicted the party line and blamed Russia. He said it was the SBU and Interior Ministry who had done it, and that "snipers received orders to shoot not only protesters, but also police forces," which was intended to "escalate the conflict" and "justify the police operation to clear Maidan."[\[431\]](#)

Andriy Parubiy agreed the snipers killed people on both sides. In one interview, he said the snipers' "task was to destabilize the situation as much

as possible, to incite confrontation, to create crisis situations at diplomatic missions.”[\[432\]](#) But that seems counterintuitive. Why would the Russians or Yanukovych, the sitting president, want things to be any less stable when he was barely clinging onto power as it was?

Deputy Interior Minister Mykola Velichkovych also told AP that “the similarity of the bullet wounds led him and others to conclude that snipers were targeting both sides of the standoff at Maidan,” and that “the shootings were intended to generate a wave of revulsion so strong that it would topple Yanukovych and also justify a Russian invasion.”[\[433\]](#)

So Yanukovych ordered his troops to kill each other and the protesters to deliberately get himself overthrown so that Russia could invade the country—or the Russians did this to their ally who was already going along with their wishes. This is supposed to be the more reasonable explanation?

## **If It Doesn’t Fit, You Must Acquit**

In 2016, the Ukrainian government finally charged five men with ordering and participating in the massacre.[\[434\]](#) After they were brought to trial, one of the commanders, Dmitry Sadovnyk, escaped, leading the Reuters news agency to side with him, saying the most likely explanation was that he “was being framed, and saw flight as his best option.” They reported “serious flaws” in the case against the man and his subordinates. “Among the evidence presented against Sadovnyk was a photograph. Prosecutors say it shows him near Kiev’s Independence Square on Feb. 20, wearing a mask and holding a rifle with two hands, his fingers clearly visible.” The only problem was that “Sadovnyk doesn’t have two hands. His right hand, his

wife told Reuters, was blown off by a grenade in a training accident six years ago.” When the state introduced the image at a hearing in April, Sadovnyk took off his glove and showed his stump to the judge. They also pointed out that between February 18–20, 189 police officers suffered gunshot wounds, 13 of them fatal ones, yet no one had been charged by the new regime for any of those. Multiple witnesses also told them the commander arrived too late to have given any orders to fire.[\[435\]](#)

In October 2023, a court convicted three police officers in absentia on 31 counts of murder and 44 counts of attempted murder, while acquitting one and convicting another only of “an abuse of power” and letting him go with time served.[\[436\]](#) But they also said the Hotel Ukraine was under the control of the opposition, that snipers certainly did fire from it and that “unknown persons cannot be ruled out” in eight deaths and at least 20 woundings that day.[\[437\]](#)

If it is stipulated for the sake of argument that there were no false-flag killings of protesters at all, the proven attacks on the police from the Music Conservatory building are still what provoked them to fire into the crowd during their retreat, as is widely reported, and shown in the BBC documentary. Even a conservative take on the evidence of Right Sector snipers running wild would still leave us with a violent uprising against an elected government. This is not to justify the Berkut’s overreaction and killing of innocents, only to contrast the reality of the situation with the common narrative American audiences were sold about the idealistic, peaceful and pro-Western protest movement overcoming all odds to save freedom.[\[438\]](#) There were many peaceful people on the Maidan. But they

are beside the point. Men with rifles, firing on police from hidden recesses, make the nonviolent protesters irrelevant as far as the alleged moral authority of the movement goes.

Or one might think. Instead, the massacre became the reason for the final stage in the overthrow of Viktor Yanukovych.

## **Legitimacy Lost**

After the massacre, the EU, represented by the French, Germans and Poles, as well as the Americans, insisted that Yanukovych sign a new agreement with the protesters.[\[439\]](#) In it, the president agreed to revert to the old constitution of 2004, which was more restrictive of the government's powers—and the Rada did so the next afternoon. The deal demanded that the opposition be brought into the government and that they would all work together on a package of constitutional reforms. Yanukovych also agreed to hold new elections by December and to pull the police back from their “confrontational posture” if the protesters would withdraw from their camps and occupied buildings and surrender their illegal weapons: “Both parties will undertake serious efforts for the normalization of life in the cities and villages by withdrawing from administrative and public buildings and unblocking streets, city parks and squares.” It also promised an investigation into the sniper fire and killings on the Maidan.[\[440\]](#) The deal was supported by Moscow, whose representative signed it as a witness.[\[441\]](#) Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski later said that it was Putin who convinced Yanukovych to sign the deal.[\[442\]](#) Putin and Obama spoke on the phone that night and agreed on the need to implement it.[\[443\]](#)



## No Sellout

But the Nazis did not respect their side of the bargain. As Svoboda's Parubiy later explained: "On February 21, there was a meeting of the Self-Defense centurions, during which a military council was created, which included representatives of the Self-Defense and the Right Sector." He continued, "At this council, we agreed that it was impossible to wait until November, when Yanukovych was thinking of holding early presidential elections. This was the decision of the institutional bodies of the Maidan."[\[444\]](#)

After the self-appointed protest leaders announced the deal with Yanukovych, the fascist groups simply proclaimed a new deal of their own. [\[445\]](#) When Vitali Klitschko spoke in defense of the deal, the crowd yelled "Shame!" Then, the *Times* reported, "an angry radical who did not give his name but said he was the leader of a group of fighters, known as a 'hundred'" seized the microphone. He declared, "We gave chances to politicians to become future ministers, presidents, but they don't want to fulfill one condition—that the criminal go away!" The man "vowed to lead an armed attack if Mr. Yanukovych did not announce his resignation by 10 a.m. on Saturday." The crowd shouted: "Yes! Yes!"

Right Sector leader Yarosh also denounced the deal. "The agreements that were reached do not correspond to our aspirations," he said. "Right Sector will not lay down arms. Right Sector will not lift the blockade of a single administrative building until our main demand is met—the resignation of Yanukovych." He added, the *Times* said, "that he and his

supporters were ‘ready to take responsibility for the further development of the revolution’ The crowd shouted: ‘Good! Good!’”

The *Kyiv Post* elaborated on the mysterious man referred to by the *Times* as the leader of the Hundred who threatened to kill Yanukovych: “The man, who goes by the nickname Bandera (after legendary Ukrainian nationalist Stepan Bandera who lived from 1909 to 1959), could not be immediately reached.”[\[446\]](#) But they later added an editor’s note: “The man who became famous for his warning is Volodymyr Parasyuk, currently a member of parliament.” This is the same man identified by reporters Graham Stack and Konrad Schuller as the commander of the snipers who shot police on the morning of the 20th from the Music Conservatory.[\[447\]](#)

## **President Flees**

But there was no need for a raid the next morning. According to Stack, since the security forces had pulled back, it was likely Parasyuk’s threat that had convinced Yanukovych to flee the capital. “Suddenly roles were switched: Yanukovych was left almost entirely without security, while the Maidan camp remained intact and had shown that it could shoot.” Parasyuk has since been credited for this by those who celebrate the act. Reuters called him the “toast of Kiev,” acknowledging his central role in forcing Yanukovych to leave town.[\[448\]](#) There has never been a real investigation into the matter.[\[449\]](#)

The leaders of the Berkut reportedly fled because of their belief that Yanukovych would scapegoat them for the killings on the Maidan, due to the promises of a criminal investigation in the EU-backed deal, as well as

reports of automatic weapons seized from armories in Lviv, rumored to be on their way to Kiev. When the bosses fled, the mid-ranking guys also decided to board buses and leave.[\[450\]](#)

Polish Foreign Minister Sikorski[\[451\]](#)—who had helped lead the EU negotiations between Yanukovych and the protest leaders—told another, more amusing version of what happened. He claimed Yanukovych had simply and stupidly left the capital city for a previously scheduled meeting the next morning, “without appreciating the psychological impact it would have,” adding that under the deal, Yanukovych “had no obligation to remove the security forces from the government buildings, and this allowed the opposition to occupy them without firing a shot.”[\[452\]](#)

Either way, by foolishly bowing down to EU pressure to withdraw his forces from the Maidan and leaving the capital, Yanukovych had evidently signaled to his men that they should not bother to stay to guard the rest of the government buildings either.

Once the police abandoned their posts, Right Sector and C14 walked right in, seizing government buildings in downtown Kiev unopposed, decorating them with Nazi banners, Celtic crosses and Confederate battle flags,[\[453\]](#) and forcing Yanukovych to flee to the eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv and ultimately to Russia. From Kharkiv, he claimed his car had been shot at.[\[454\]](#) Once the cops returned to roust the C14 members from the city council building, they took refuge in the Canadian Embassy.[\[455\]](#)

## **Nazis Take Credit**

Though some academics play down the role of the far right in the protest movement,[\[456\]](#) ultimately it was Right Sector and C14's violence that carried the day on the Maidan.[\[457\]](#) The *Times* approvingly quoted a Right Sector leader taking credit for the coup: "Roman Koval, the head of the Rivne branch of Right Sector, acknowledged that [violent] methods perhaps played into Russian propaganda, but added that . . . peaceful protest alone could not always bring real change." They added, "Ukraine's February revolution, said Mr. Koval, would never have happened without Right Sector and other militant groups."[\[458\]](#)

In an interview with *Ukrainska Pravda*, the confessed Maidan sniper leader Volodymyr Parasyuk explained how they essentially kidnapped parliament and forced lawmakers to impeach Yanukovich. After Klitschko announced he would begin the process to remove the president, "our people simply went to the Verkhovna Rada [and] detained the Verkhovna Rada deputies so that they would sit and work and not run away."[\[459\]](#)

Svoboda leader Parubiy announced the complete takeover of the government by his forces. "The Seventh Hundred is located inside the Verkhovna Rada. Also there is a division of the Right Sector protecting the cabinet." He added, "The Nineteenth and Third Hundreds are guarding the Presidential Administration. The Fifteenth Hundred guards the Ministry of Internal Affairs."[\[460\]](#)

Yevhen Karas, the leader of C14, later disputed liberal spin that Nazis like him had been marginal. "Maidan was the victory of nationalist ideas. Nationalists were the key factor there, and clearly at the frontlines," he said. "LGBT groups and foreign embassies are saying, 'there were not a lot of

nationalists on Maidan, maybe about 10 percent of real ideological ones.’” That was nonsense. “[S]uch a thing could only be said by a moron that never was at war and doesn’t understand that those 10 percent—maybe even less, 8 percent—but how much they are more effective in the proportion of influence, how much their effectiveness was: endless,” he continued. “If not for those 8 percent, the effectiveness [of the Maidan movement] would have dropped by 90 percent.” He mocked a liberal group playing down their influence: “‘There were that many nationalists, they had that much influence.’ Influence? If not for nationalists, that whole thing would have turned into a gay parade.” He also stipulated this revolution was not about the EU, but Ukrainian nationalism. “The Maidan was a victory for nationalist forces, unequivocally because it was under our banners, our slogans. All the ‘Euro-integration’ and the rest of such banners disappeared somewhere.”[\[461\]](#)

There is no other side to the story other than a bunch of intelligence-insulting garbage. For example, PBS *Frontline* ran a documentary about these events titled, “The Battle for Ukraine.” The report ignored the dangerous influence of the Right Sector brigades, saying ‘some people’ call them Nazis, implying the viewer should doubt it, right as they were introducing a protest leader wearing Nazi symbols. Better, *Frontline*’s producers actually made a conscious decision to give their narrator this line to read out loud: “The clashes galvanized Yanukovych’s opponents, and within days he fled across the border to Russia.” That was not just a set-up line before telling the story; that was them telling it. One might get the idea that no matter how hard they tried, the U.S. government-funded

propagandists at PBS could not figure out how to portray any part of this bloody, avowed fascist-led street putsch as a democratic revolution, so they simply skipped it.[\[462\]](#)

Liberal protesters later admitted they had to “collaborate” with the “extremist groups” in their attempt to “vie for the attention of possible recruits.”[\[463\]](#) One activist named Tetiana Vasylyk said, “They are radicals but without them we would not have coped, it’s for sure. Because we were too liberal. They understood what it could lead to, they predicted aggression from the police.” She continued, “They understood all this stuff and they were prepared for it. We were not. They knew how to organize the tent camp, how to make fire in the barrels . . . how to defend it, how to put on the guards and so on.”[\[464\]](#)

In other words, as the sympathetic leftist academic Volodymyr Ishchenko[\[465\]](#) put it, “violent radicalization was a strategic solution for Maidan protesters to the inefficiency of nonviolent protests that failed to build sufficient leverage against Yanukovych’s government.”[\[466\]](#)

The argument that the Russian media made a big deal out of these facts, therefore somehow nullifying their reality, is nothing but a red herring.[\[467\]](#) Of course they did. It made their opponents look terrible.

Defending his institution from attacks by the Pentagon-funded journalistic smear factory NewsGuard,[\[468\]](#) Joe Lauria, the editor of Consortium News, wrote, “NewsGuard calls these events a ‘revolution,’ yet revolutions in history have typically been against monarchs or dictators, not against democratically-elected leaders. . . . Coups have been against both elected and non-elected leaders. Revolutions change political systems,

usually from monarchies to republics. Ukraine's political system was not changed, only its leader." Lauria concluded, "By any measure, Yanukovych's ouster was an unconstitutional change in government. His 'impeachment' without his party present for the vote came after government buildings had been seized and after violence drove him from the capital."[\[469\]](#)

As Artem Skoropadskyi, a spokesman for Right Sector, explained, "We are not democrats. We participate in elections only because they are a step to revolution . . . We want to change the whole system. New people, new order, new rules in the state system of Ukraine. We oppose Russia, and we are against Ukraine joining the European Union and NATO." He added, "Our organization is designed to take power. If circumstances warrant, that could happen by nondemocratic methods. Believe me, we are very capable of acting in extreme situations. At the Maidan we had only 300 activists, and look what we did."[\[470\]](#)

As Lauria's predecessor Robert Parry put it, "In the upside-down world that has become the U.S. news media, the democratically elected president was a dictator and foreign-sponsored coup makers who overthrew the popularly chosen leader were 'pro-democracy' activists."[\[471\]](#)

They called it the "Revolution of Dignity," of all things, spearheaded by a bunch of neo-fascist street goons who succeeded in installing Oleksandr Turchynov, an agent of "Gas Princess" Yulia Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party,[\[472\]](#) as interim president.

The U.S. then had Austria reinstate the charges against Yanukovych's ally Dmitry Firtash, who immediately posted \$174 million bail and cut a

deal for the notoriously corrupt billionaire candy oligarch Petro Poroshenko[\[473\]](#) to take the presidency, and in which the boxer Vitali Klitschko would assume the position of mayor of Kiev. Then—without eastern voters to get in the way—they held an “election.” That was how Poroshenko was chosen in the new, democratic Ukraine.[\[474\]](#) He ran on a campaign promising peace with the people of the east.[\[475\]](#) In fact, part of Poroshenko’s deal with Firtash for his backing in the presidential race was a promise to end the war in the Donbas.[\[476\]](#) Instead he doubled down.

Sitting on top of the ladder of U.S. authority during this regime change was none other than Vice President Joe Biden, who had been appointed to lead Ukraine policy.[\[477\]](#) Detailing his heavy influence in 2016, *Foreign Policy* magazine wondered what Ukraine would do without their “Uncle Joe” there to help them along.[\[478\]](#)

## One For the Books

### Impeachment

On February 22, the Rada voted to impeach Yanukovych. However, Daisy Sindelar, editor-in-chief of the U.S. government’s own Radio Liberty, explained that the move was unconstitutional and illegitimate. After noting that Yanukovych had initially returned to the 1996 constitution, but later agreed to revert to the one ratified in 2004, she said both documents allowed impeachment only if the president “commits treason or other crime,” and required a three-fourths supermajority. They were 10 votes short.[\[479\]](#)



Ukraine's rule of law seemed to be a meaningless concept to the Obama administration officials working so hard to create a Western-style constitutional democracy there. It may not have been their plan to have the fascists storm government buildings and chase the president out of town, but once Yanukovich fled the capital, American-picked puppets were installed in a new "interim government," with Arseniy Yatsenyuk in the prime minister spot just as Nuland had wanted. And though Yanukovich insisted he was still the president,[\[480\]](#) the new junta was immediately recognized as "legitimate" by Secretary Kerry's State Department. The "interim president," Oleksandr Turchynov, also from gas oligarch Tymoshenko's Fatherland Party, immediately announced a turn to Europe.  
[\[481\]](#)

Stratfor founder George Friedman's December 2014 interview with Boris Berezovsky's old outlet *Kommersant* on the question of America's policy in Eastern Europe is highly revealing. He said Russia did not want to completely dominate Ukraine, but was intent on preventing them from joining the EU and NATO. "The authorities of the Russian Federation cannot allow a situation in which the Western armed forces will be located a hundred kilometers from Kursk or Voronezh." On the other side, he said, "The United States was interested in forming a pro-Western government in Ukraine. They saw that Russia was on the rise and sought to prevent it from consolidating its position in the post-Soviet space." This was all balance-of-power geopolitics. Democracy and freedom had nothing to do with it. "The success of pro-Western forces in Ukraine would make it possible to contain Russia." He added, "Russia calls the events of the beginning of the year a

U.S.-organized coup d'état. And it really was the most blatant coup d'état in history.” The interviewer asked, “Do you mean the termination of the agreement of February 21 or the whole Maidan?” Friedman responded, “All together. The United States openly supported human rights groups in Ukraine, including with money. And the Russian intelligence services have missed these trends. They did not understand what was happening, and when they realized, they could not take measures to stabilize the situation.”[\[482\]](#)

## **Victory Laps**

As soon as the putsch was complete, Amb. Pyatt declared it “[a] day for the history books.”[\[483\]](#) Michael McFaul said his colleagues sent him “high-five emails” celebrating their victory.[\[484\]](#) President Obama opened the American people’s wallets, announcing \$300 million in direct payments and a \$1 billion “loan guarantee,” which means U.S. taxpayers had to pay it back.[\[485\]](#) When economist Jeffrey Sachs went to Ukraine right after the coup, American NGOs boasted to him about their role in the “revolution.”[\[486\]](#)

Around the same time, former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice wrote an op-ed for the *Washington Post* declaring, “Since Ukraine’s Orange Revolution, the United States and Europe have tried to convince Russia that the vast territory should not be a pawn in a great-power conflict but rather an independent nation that could chart its own course.” By this, she meant that now the United States and not Russia would chart Ukraine’s course. Rice had to defend her record, being the secretary of state who pushed to

announce a future for Ukraine and Georgia in NATO back in 2008. Or perhaps it had something to do with Chevron's massive investment in the country. She did, after all, once sit on their board of directors and famously even had an oil tanker named after her.[\[487\]](#) Rice argued in the piece that Europe should cease all imports of Russian oil and gas while predicting that soon North American oil would flood the market and bankrupt the Russian regime.[\[488\]](#)

Perhaps people make too much of the neoconservative movement's roots in the Trotskyite Communist left.[\[489\]](#) Perhaps not. The American National Endowment for Democracy (NED) and its associated groups are in a sense analogous to the Soviet Union's old Communist International (Comintern). As Justin Raimondo wrote, the dangerous new Cold War had created a "role reversal" from the original. It was now the United States supporting "revolution" all over the world and Russia positioned as the more "conservative" force.

Raimondo wrote in the aftermath of the Maidan revolution, "This is not to say there aren't many sincere people in the ranks of the protesters—undoubtedly the majority—who are tired of the corruption and just want a better life. They are the biggest victims of this coup." But, he predicted: "The U.S. government has poured millions into the Ukrainian protest movement, and they want their money's worth—even if it means spilling oceans of blood." The War Party's interests and those of the Ukrainian people "are diametrically opposed: Washington's manipulations can only lead to yet another 'revolution' betrayed. The tragedy is that the long-suffering people of that country may learn this lesson far too late."[\[490\]](#)

Raimondo thought the NATO expansionists would welcome intervention by Russia. “If the West tries to impose its government on the East, then you’re gonna see actual fighting. And then what will Putin do? Will he call in the troops? Well, certainly, the neocons hope he will,” he said.[\[491\]](#) Pat Buchanan said he believed there was a perverse nostalgia for the Soviet Union within this apparatus: “I think there’s a real desire on the part of some people really to get back to the Cold War. They were happy in that kind of division.” There was nothing like the excitement of running “[b]ack and forth, going to conferences and moving chess pieces around the board and all the rest of it. They’ve missed it.”[\[492\]](#)

Citing the naming of Yatsenyuk as favored choice for prime minister in the leaked Nuland-Pyatt phone call, Nuland and McCain’s participation in the Maidan protests and Pyatt’s tweet celebrating after it was over, John Mearsheimer wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “[a]lthough the full extent of U.S. involvement has not yet come to light, it is clear that Washington backed the coup. . . . No wonder Russians of all persuasions think the West played a role in Yanukovych’s ouster.”[\[493\]](#)

In April 2014, Vice President Biden told the Ukrainian parliament, “I speak for the President of the United States, and he shares the same opinion . . . that this is a second opportunity to make good on the original promise made by the Orange Revolution.” Shortly after, the Rada reinstated military conscription, which had been abolished by Yanukovych in 2013.[\[494\]](#) Interim President Turchynov implemented it at the start of May.[\[495\]](#)

## **Mr. Funny Man**

There is an insightful clip of *Foreign Affairs* editor Gideon Rose on *The Colbert Report* on Comedy Central from February 24, 2014, bragging about the Kiev coup two days before, how easy it was and how the U.S. was stealing this important strategic asset from Russia while Putin was distracted with the Sochi Olympics. Rose said Ukraine is formerly part of “the old Soviet bloc,” and that “[i]t’s basically Robin to Russia’s Batman. And the challenge here is to try to attract it to the West, to get it to flip sides.”

Explaining Yanukovych’s decision to turn away from the EU association deal, Rose compared Ukraine to a woman in a dysfunctional relationship “with its boyfriend from the hood,” trading up to “a nice Yuppie,” the EU, until Putin offered the Ukrainian government a bribe of \$15 billion. When Colbert confirmed the “good guys are winning now,” and asked why Obama was not “spiking the football” and mocking Putin for the success of the coup, Rose explained, “We don’t want Russia to intervene and kick over the table like a game of *Risk*, and take Ukraine back.” Yes, Putin could send troops, he conceded, but said that’s why the U.S. should tell the Russians, “Oh, look, you got the highest medal count. You did really well. And so focus on the Olympics.”

Colbert gleefully added, “Look, a shiny object, we’ll just take an entire country away from you!”

“Basically,” Rose confirmed.[\[496\]](#)

**Pwned**

Just over a month after the coup, before any elections had been held, the new prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, instituted the IMF's austerity plan without condition,[\[497\]](#) including, according to *Forbes*, “a 47 percent to 66 percent increase in personal income tax rates; a 50 percent increase in monthly gas bills; a 40 percent increase on gas tariffs for heating companies; and an increase in taxes on agribusiness.” He characterized this as a “kamikaze mission,” destined to cause a massive drop in short-term GDP and induce price inflation, but signed anyway.[\[498\]](#) “I will be the most unpopular prime minister in the history of my country,” he predicted.[\[499\]](#)

In Biden's speech to the Rada, he demanded they cut their old age pension programs so they could afford to pay back Ukraine's foreign creditors rather than risk “tenuous support” from the international community.[\[500\]](#) Due to high inflation and major cuts to the welfare state, many Ukrainians saw their living standards collapse.[\[501\]](#) Meanwhile, corruption prevailed, with the wealthiest allowed to avoid taxes while officials embezzled as much as \$15 billion of government funds in 2014 alone.[\[502\]](#) When the Rada prepared to vote no confidence in Yatsenyuk's leadership, Amb. Pyatt and Vice President Biden personally intervened to prevent it and instead arranged for the prime minister to resign on his own, so that he would not also bring down the rest of the cabinet and force early elections, which could have helped the pro-Russian parties.[\[503\]](#) Biden joked that he spent more time on the phone with Poroshenko than his own wife.[\[504\]](#)

Oligarch Igor Kolomoysky was given the governorship of Dnipropetrovsk Oblast and started using his TV channel 1+1 to attack opponents of his oil interests in the Rada.[\[505\]](#) Another billionaire oligarch, Serhiy Taruta, chairman of the massive steel firm ISD Corporation, was made governor of Donetsk.[\[506\]](#)

Seven months after the coup, new President Poroshenko signed the deal with the EU that his predecessor Yanukovych had rejected.[\[507\]](#) The Ukrainian moratorium on foreign nations and corporations buying up land in the “breadbasket of Europe” was ignored. At that time, Ukraine was the world’s third-largest exporter of corn and fifth-largest exporter of wheat. At IMF insistence,[\[508\]](#) the Poroshenko government allowed Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland (ADM), Monsanto and other major Western multinational agribusiness firms to consolidate control over millions of hectares of farmland.[\[509\]](#)

By the end of the year, they had repealed Yanukovych’s neutrality law and again officially set their sights on membership in America’s NATO military alliance.[\[510\]](#)

In 2015, Bloomberg News’s Leonid Bershidsky wrote that “Americans are highly visible in the Ukrainian political process. The U.S. Embassy in Kiev is a center of power, and Ukrainian politicians openly talk of appointments and dismissals being vetted by U.S. ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt and even U.S. Vice President Joe Biden.” He quoted Ukrainian investigative reporter Sergei Leschenko saying that “Pyatt and the U.S. administration have more influence than ever in the history of independent Ukraine.”[\[511\]](#)

The next year, Nuland boasted to Congress that the United States had just about taken over the Ukrainian state, all in the name of the highest American values, of course. The U.S., she said, had given over \$760 million in direct aid and another \$2 billion in guaranteed loans. Almost unbelievably, she said that “U.S. advisors serve in almost a dozen Ukrainian ministries and localities and help deliver services, eliminate fraud and abuse, improve tax collection, and modernize Ukraine’s institutions.” American forces were training and equipping their police, soldiers and guardsmen, paying the salaries of legal aid attorneys, and were deeply “embedded” in Ukraine’s National Bank.[\[512\]](#) Despite or because of this, and unlike in the promises of the “Revolution of Dignity,” Bershidsky wrote that Ukraine was still run by “just another incompetent and corrupt post-Soviet regime.”[\[513\]](#)

## **Putin’s Reaction**

For his part, Vladimir Putin instructed his government to crack down on foreign-backed NGOs inside Russia. In a speech to the FSB, he warned that he would not accept a situation like that in Ukraine, where Western NGOs supported “the nationalist and neo-Nazi groups and militants, who became the shock troops in the anti-constitutional coup d’état.”[\[514\]](#)

Seven months later, Putin threatened European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, an Italian, “If I wanted to, I could take Kiev in two weeks.” Statements like these should have been taken much more seriously at the time.



## Chris Murphy Takes Credit

On February 25, 2014, just a few days after the successful coup, Senator Chris Murphy of Connecticut, who had shared a stage on the Maidan with Oleh Tyahnybok,[\[515\]](#) assuring the crowd of U.S. support,[\[516\]](#) told C-SPAN's *Washington Journal*, "With respect to Ukraine, we did not sit on the sidelines. We have been very much involved." He emphasized how "the members of the Senate who have been there, members of the State Department who have been on the square, the Obama administration has passed sanctions—the Senate was prepared to pass its own set of sanctions." It was certain, he said, "that the clear position of the United States has in part been what has helped lead to this change in regime." The senator added, "I think if ultimately this is a peaceful transition to a new government in Ukraine, it'll be the United States on the streets of Ukraine who will be seen as a great friend in helping make that transition happen."

After a caller asked about the danger of violent conflict with Russia, Murphy conceded, "There certainly is some concern about what Russia is going to do over the course of the next week or month." However, he said, "I think it's irresponsible to talk about the potential for Russia to move some kind of offensive force into the Crimea, which is the, um, coastal region of Ukraine that has a Russian military base and a lot of the important ports."

It was "irresponsible" not for the U.S. to intervene and overthrow a foreign government, leading to war, but for American C-SPAN callers to raise the prospect of a reaction by Moscow. Murphy said, "That would be a fundamental, grave mistake on behalf of the Russians. And I think they

know that that would essentially lead to a descent to madness.” Therefore, he did not “worry that this is going to result in any kind of military confrontation between the U.S. and Europe and Russia.” After dismissing any danger, Senator Murphy went back to taking credit for the overthrow. “I think America’s strong voice in support of the peaceful protest movement is a big part of the story as to why there is an opportunity now for the Ukrainian people to get what they want.” He added, “We came down hard on Yanukovych when he violated that peace. . . . I think it was our role, including sanctions and threats of sanctions, that forced, in part, Yanukovych from office.”[\[517\]](#)

There, see? The U.S.A., under the command of President Barack Obama, did, “in part,” overthrow the president of Ukraine in a coup d’état in February 2014. But did the senator not know Crimea is a peninsula?

## **Yes, Nazis**

### **Reds vs. Browns**

It is an idyllic scene, repeated all over the former Soviet Union. This one is from 2014: a massive statue of founding Soviet dictator Vladimir Lenin lies toppled on its back in a park in the city of Stryi, in Ukraine’s western Lviv region. A crowd seems to be enjoying themselves at the sight. But on a particle board sign behind them, someone has spraypainted SS lightning bolts, along with a Celtic Cross, long a symbol of white supremacist groups. [\[518\]](#) In America, Republicans and Democrats smear each other as Communists and Nazis. In Ukraine, they really have a point.

The War Party has put great effort into whitewashing the reality of the Ukrainian very-far right, especially since the major part of the war broke out in February 2022. They have achieved some success, therefore putting the burden of overwhelming proof on non-interventionist critics.

## **Screwed at Versailles**

So, just what in the world is going on here? Hitler-idolizing Nazis as a major political and military force in Europe in the 21st century? Where do these people even come from? The World Wars, of course.

Perhaps the analogy to the cold peace at Versailles is even more apt in the case of Ukraine, since they were victims of the post-World War I order in much the same way they have become victims of the post-Cold War order. The League of Nations turned predominantly ethnic Polish Galicia in western Ukraine—nearly seven million people—over to Poland after the war at the Conference of Ambassadors of the allied powers in 1923.[\[519\]](#) The minority ethnic Ukrainians' new Polish rulers then outlawed the use of their language in local government documents and proceedings, shut down schools and gave away their property to returning Polish war veterans.[\[520\]](#) These policies helped set the stage for Ukrainian nationalist revenge when the tables turned in the next war.

## **Holodomor**

Lenin established the modern eastern border of Ukraine by decree after the post-Revolution civil war—in which the Communists severely persecuted

the Don and Kuban Cossacks of eastern Ukraine and Crimea.[\[521\]](#) In the famine of 1921–1922, induced by Lenin’s “war communism,” five million starved to death.[\[522\]](#) Correcting his massive error, Lenin then instituted the New Economic Policy, which allowed people to own property and keep some profits. But then under Joseph Stalin, between 1932 and 1933,[\[523\]](#) the Soviet Union reversed that correction and inflicted what became known as the “great famine,” or Holodomor (Ukrainian for “death by hunger”), on the people of Ukraine, Kazakhstan and the Northern Caucasus Mountains. Between four and five million Ukrainians were deliberately starved to death by the Communists in one of the greatest atrocities in history.[\[524\]](#)

They suffered terrible crop failures due to the inefficiencies of collectivization under the Five-Year Plan of 1928–1933.[\[525\]](#) And in January 1928, the Politburo unanimously passed a measure declaring an “emergency” and the right to confiscate all grain from the “Kulaks”[\[526\]](#)—a term with malleable definitions.[\[527\]](#) Typically, it meant any peasant farmer with three or more cows or any hired hands.[\[528\]](#)

The famine was clearly the result of Communism. The main targets were the Kulaks,[\[529\]](#) who made up between 3 and 5 percent of all peasant farmers, but were responsible for as much as a fifth of all grain production.[\[530\]](#) But to the Reds, even the poorest peasants on the steppe had indulged in the evil of property ownership. So they had also been stripped of their meager holdings and forced to work on collective farms. When robbing the Kulaks was not enough to meet the central government’s quotas, they simply robbed the poorest peasants—“sub-Kulaks”—as well.[\[531\]](#) They took the people’s land, took their farm animals, took whatever food they

had grown and left them to starve.<sup>[532]</sup> In order to feed all the workers forcibly moved to factory towns in his great industrialization, and to break the will of the Ukrainian peasantry to resist Communist rule, Stalin simply “requisitioned” their grain.<sup>[533]</sup> Those who resisted were exiled or shot.<sup>[534]</sup> While farmers went hungry, the government exported what little food they had produced to buy machinery and engines for the Plan.<sup>[535]</sup> The Joint State Political Directorate (OGPU, the successor to the Cheka secret police, precursor to the NKVD<sup>[536]</sup>) then prevented the starving masses from fleeing to the cities or other countries.<sup>[537]</sup> By the onset of the worst part of the famine, in early 1932, collectivization in Ukraine was more than 70 percent complete.<sup>[538]</sup>

Welsh journalist Gareth Jones wrote the truth about the catastrophe for numerous publications, including a short book.<sup>[539]</sup> Unlike his fellow Western journalists sitting at their comfortable hotels back in Moscow, Jones went out to see the countryside. After a tour of the USSR in the summer of 1931, Jones reported that people were already starving.<sup>[540]</sup> He wrote in October 1932, predicting widespread famine in the coming winter, that “the harvest is failed and the food is not there.” One young peasant told Jones, “It’s a dog’s life now, ever since they’ve forced us into collective farms. 1926 and 1927 were fine years when we still had our own land. But it will be better to be under the earth than to live now.” He continued, “Land, cow and bread they’ve taken away from us. Nearly all our grain—and it was little enough—has been carted away and sent to the towns and we’re afraid to speak. What will we do during the winter?”

“He ended with a groan of despair,” Jones wrote. “That is what I heard from the mouths of peasants in many parts of Russia. ‘Why should we work?’ they asked, ‘When our land and cow have been taken away from us. Give us our land back.’” He described the vicious cycle: after having lost their own property to the state, “they do not cultivate the land so thoroughly.”[\[541\]](#)

In another article, Jones showed how completely twisted and thoughtless the Communists were when he talked to one confident young commissar who boasted of his “great victory” in exiling 14 families to go chop down timber instead of growing food.[\[542\]](#)

Jones said that even official government media, while blaming the peasants, acknowledged that results were falling far short of the official plan. So you can see why people were going hungry. But how did millions starve to death? The Communists simply continued the policy for years. The less the people produced, the more the government assumed they were holding out and needed the whip cracked harder. Based on the theory that ownership of anything is theft from everyone else (read: the government), in August 1932, Stalin declared all collective farms were state property and anyone guilty of such “offenses” would be considered an enemy of the people and imprisoned or killed. Under this theory, it was a crime for any peasant to keep (or “steal” back) virtually anything to eat, a little bit of wheat, potatoes or corn.[\[543\]](#) Legions of government goons patrolled the land, confiscating even the smallest quantities of contraband grain from starving, desperate victims.[\[544\]](#)

Jones took his last trip to the Soviet Union in 1933. Upon his return he told the *Evening Post*: “Millions are dying of hunger. . . . Everywhere was the cry, ‘There is no bread. We are dying.’” He predicted worse starvation to come since there was not enough seed and the people were already too weak to work. And they had no trust that the government would not simply steal every last grain they grew again.[\[545\]](#) In another piece from March 1933, Jones wrote, “The main result of the Five-Year Plan has been the tragic ruin of Russian agriculture. This ruin I saw in its grim reality.” He said, “I tramped through a number of villages in the snow of March. I saw children with swollen bellies. I slept in peasants’ huts, sometimes nine of us in one room. I talked to every peasant I met, and the general conclusion I draw is that the present state of Russian agriculture is already catastrophic but that in a year’s time its condition will have worsened tenfold.” He said all the peasants he spoke with agreed that the current famine was far worse than 1921. That had been more localized. “But today the famine is everywhere, in the formerly rich Ukraine, in Russia, in Central Asia, in North Caucasia—everywhere.” He said, “The Five-Year Plan has built many fine factories. But it is bread that makes factory wheels go round, and the Five-Year Plan has destroyed the bread-supplier of Russia.”[\[546\]](#)

The Communists had also seized everyone’s horses and cattle, collectivizing them. In the first place, this caused farmers to slaughter many of them rather than give them up, and in the second, since the Communists had no idea what they were doing, and were not prepared to handle large new herds, they just let them starve or die in the elements. Collectivization also meant that “six or seven millions of the best farmers (i.e., the Kulaks)

in Russia have been uprooted and have been exiled,” Jones wrote. Even though the Soviets had declared victory over the Kulaks two years before, they continued to crack down on poorer and poorer people. Any peasants who owned property were deemed “the capitalists of the village,” Jones said, continuing: “Their land and livestock taken away from them, they have been condemned to the status of starving, landless serfs.”[\[547\]](#)

Though the story was heavily censored in the Western press, Jones’s reporting was confirmed at the time by journalists Malcolm Muggeridge[\[548\]](#) and Whiting Williams.[\[549\]](#) Later scholarship on the issue is vast.[\[550\]](#) Historian Robert Conquest summarized the horror of Ukraine in 1933: death rates in Ukrainian villages ranged from 10 to 100 percent. Typically, the areas with the highest death rates reached approximately 20–25 percent; doctors, who were state employees, consistently listed people’s cause of death as “sudden illness,” “senile weakness,” “exhaustion” or “flux” to save their own lives. Corpses piled up on the frozen ground with no one strong enough to dig the graves. Entire towns were cordoned off and a black flag hung to indicate an epidemic had struck. The dead were left in their homes to rot. People were reduced to cannibalism. And in the end, many of the rank-and-file Communist “activists” who had so zealously enforced collectivization and confiscation were left to starve with the rest of them.[\[551\]](#)

“So the Ukraine now lay crushed: its Church destroyed, its intellectuals shot or dying in labor camps, its peasants—the mass of the nation—slaughtered or subdued,” Conquest concluded. No pun intended.[\[552\]](#)

**Walter Duranty**



Walter Duranty of the *New York Times* pretended to debunk Gareth Jones, and assured the American people that everything was fine. On the same day Jones published “Famine Rules Russia” in the *London Evening Standard*[\[553\]](#)—this is late in the story, at the end of March 1933—Duranty told *Times* readers in his article, “Russians Hungry But Not Starving,” that sure, the Soviets had made a mess out of food production, “But—to put it brutally—you can’t make an omelet without breaking eggs.”[\[554\]](#) Besides, Duranty claimed, “Here are the facts. . . . There is no actual starvation or deaths from starvation, but there is widespread mortality from diseases due to malnutrition. . . . These conditions are bad but there is no famine.”[\[555\]](#) He told the same lies in *Time* magazine.[\[556\]](#) Though Duranty’s Pulitzer Prize was awarded for an earlier series, rather than his work pretending to refute the famine,[\[557\]](#) those articles were terrible pro-Communist propaganda too.[\[558\]](#)

## **The OUN**

When the Germans and Soviets made their deal to conquer and divide Poland in 1939, the USSR also conquered all the land in between, including the Baltics and Galicia, subjecting those territories to the horrors of communism for two years until Hitler changed his mind and betrayed Stalin instead.

When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, many in Ukraine, Crimea,[\[559\]](#) the Baltics[\[560\]](#) and other places took the opportunity to join the German side to throw off their Communist oppressors.

The Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN, Ukrainian for *Orhanizatsiia Ukraïns'kykh Natsionalistiv*) had been founded in the early 1920s,<sup>[561]</sup> originally for the purpose of killing any Polish or Ukrainian leaders who favored compromise on the issue of ethnic Ukrainians living in Poland.<sup>[562]</sup> Their campaign of terrorism against Polish and Jewish civilians and officials continued through the 1930s.<sup>[563]</sup>

The group formed two major factions: the OUN-B, headed up by radical nationalist agitator *Providnyk* (Leader) Stepan Bandera, and the slightly less-murderous OUN-M under Andriy Melnyk.<sup>[564]</sup> In 1934, Bandera and his partner Mykola Lebed assassinated the Polish interior minister, Bronisław Pieracki, and were sent to prison.<sup>[565]</sup> It was during this trial that OUN leaders coined their still-used salute, “*Slava Ukraini!*” (“Glory to Ukraine!”).<sup>[566]</sup> They were allowed to escape when the Nazis and Soviets invaded Poland five years later.<sup>[567]</sup> The two led the radical faction after the split, serving the Germans in the SS (*Schutzstaffel*) and occupation police forces.<sup>[568]</sup> Bandera organized the *Nachtigall* (“Nightingale”) squadrons, while Lebed went to Gestapo training school. The Nazis poured in money for the two years between the joint invasion of Poland and the German invasion of the USSR.<sup>[569]</sup>

They were avowed fascists. Writing in the OUN’s journal *Rozbudova Natsii* in 1929, author Iurii Mylianych described Ukrainian Jews as “an alien and predominantly hostile body within our national organism.” The journal’s editor, Volodymyr Martynets, later said Jews were “parasitical,” “morally damaging,” “corrupting,” a “hostile element” and “racially unsuited for miscegenation and assimilation.” He urged for all Ukrainian

Jews to be “totally isolated” from the rest of the population, assuring they would emigrate or starve.[\[570\]](#)

OUN ideologist Iaroslav Orshan wrote that “Ukrainian nationalism uses the term nationalism in the same way German and Italian nationalisms use the terms ‘National Socialism’ and ‘Fascism,’” saying they were just “different national expressions of the same spirit.”[\[571\]](#) Their doctrine held that different “species” of humans, by which they meant nationalities, are in “a constant struggle.” And they demanded ethnic purity, vowing to ban all inter-ethnic marriage, stating: “We regard their very existence and the making of such unions a crime of national treason.”[\[572\]](#) They also built links with other fascist groups across Europe, from Italy to Germany to Serbia and Croatia, and attended the Fifth Congress of National Socialists Abroad in Stuttgart, Germany in 1937.[\[573\]](#) OUN Nazi collaborator Kost Pankivsky later wrote that for years before the war, the OUN “had contacts with the Germans, who were ideologically linked with fascism and Nazism, who in word and in print and in deed had for years been preaching totalitarianism and an orientation on Berlin and Rome.”[\[574\]](#)

One of their chief ideologists, Dmytro Dontsov, wrote that the rights of the state must remain “above the life of any given individual, above the blood and deaths of thousands, above the wellbeing of a given generation, above abstract mental calculations, above universal human ethics, above any imaginary concept of good and evil.”[\[575\]](#) He compared Hitler to Jesus Christ and Joan of Arc.[\[576\]](#) Historian Grzegorz Rossoliński-Liebe wrote that “Dontsov became one of the main propagators of anti-Semitism among Ukrainian ideologists. On the one hand, he attacked Jews as a ‘race.’ On the

other hand, he adapted anti-Semitism to the Ukrainian situation by associating Jews with the Soviet Union which he viewed as the main occupier of Ukrainian territory and main enemy of Ukrainians.”[\[577\]](#)

Bandera’s OUN-B adopted Dontsov’s position outright. When they published their tract, “Resolutions of the Second Great Assembly of the OUN,” they repeated his accusations “almost verbatim,” according to Rossoliński-Liebe.[\[578\]](#)

After Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, the OUN wrote up a new constitution for Ukraine in which the state was to be a totalitarian dictatorship, with one great leader holding a lifetime appointment, which defined statehood in an ethnic sense and so guaranteed citizenship only to ethnic Ukrainians. All other political parties would be banned—“One nation, one party, one leader,” they wrote.[\[579\]](#) The OUN killed thousands of Poles especially, but also Jews and other political opponents in Galicia and Volhynia during this period.[\[580\]](#)

Just before the Nazi invasion, in April 1941, the OUN-B proclaimed they would “combat Jews as supporters of the Muscovite-Bolshevik regime.” They demanded “Ukraine for the Ukrainians!” and declared “Death to the Muscovite-Jewish commune! Beat the commune, save Ukraine!”[\[581\]](#) In May, their manual on *The Struggle and Activities of OUN in Wartime*, written by Bandera and other top leaders of the OUN, including Shukhevych and Yaroslav Stetsko,[\[582\]](#) identified their enemies as “Muscovites,” “Jews,” “Asiatics” and “Poles.”[\[583\]](#) Historian John-Paul Himka noted that Bandera’s call for interning all Jews did not come to pass because they were simply murdered instead.[\[584\]](#)

On orders from Nikita Khrushchev, who was then first secretary of the Communist Party of Ukraine,[\[585\]](#) the Soviet NKVD massacred at least 15,000 political prisoners in Galicia as they withdrew in the face of the Germans' invasion, enraging the population, and especially their fascist enemies.[\[586\]](#) Since the individuals responsible had withdrawn with the rest of the Red Army, it was local Jews who took the blame and the punishment for this atrocity when the Nazis arrived.[\[587\]](#)

Once the Third Reich reached Galicia in June, the OUN did not say to resist the invaders, but instead distributed leaflets across Lviv urging people to murder their own civilian countrymen: “Don’t throw away your weapons yet. Take them up. Destroy the enemy . . . People!—Know this!—Moscow, the Hungarians, the Jews—these are your enemies. Destroy them.”[\[588\]](#)

## **Declaring a State**

Bandera attempted to declare his new state on June 30, 1941, seeking recognition by their “natural allies,”[\[589\]](#) Hitler’s regime, and announced that they would “cooperate closely” with the Germans. “The newly formed Ukrainian state will work closely with the National-Socialist Greater Germany, under the leadership of its leader Adolf Hitler which is forming a new order in Europe and the world and is helping the Ukrainian People to free itself from Moscovite occupation.”[\[590\]](#)

A few days later, Bandera’s deputy Yaroslav Stetsko promised the new state would “cooperate closely with National Socialist Greater Germany . . . under the Führer Adolf Hitler.” He sent letters to Hitler, Mussolini, Franco and Croatian *Ustaše* leader Ante Pavelić, declaring himself loyal to the new

order of fascist Europe.[\[591\]](#) They hung up banners across Lviv proclaiming, “Long Live Stepan Bandera and Adolf Hitler.”[\[592\]](#)

## **Premeditation**

Though Bandera specifically said that Ukrainian Nationalism was Ukraine’s version of “Hitlerism,” this evidently did not fit with the German dictator’s plans. He meant to colonize Ukraine, not ally with it.[\[593\]](#) After the Nazis demanded the OUN withdraw the declaration,[\[594\]](#) Bandera eventually surrendered to “honorary detention.”[\[595\]](#) However, he and the other OUN leaders remained partners with the Germans and were allowed to continue their organizational work from house arrest in Berlin until August 1942, when Bandera was moved to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. While there, he was held in far better conditions than the other prisoners.[\[596\]](#) Bandera’s partner Mykola Lebed escaped to lead the OUN-B at war.[\[597\]](#) Instructions to their militia said the war was their opportunity to start murdering civilians: “In the time of chaos and confusion it is possible to permit the liquidation of undesirable Polish, Muscovite, and Jewish activists, especially supporters of Bolshevik-Muscovite imperialism.” They continued, “Destroy the officer staff, shoot the Muscovites, Jews, NKVD men, the political instructors, and all who want war and our death!” They had explicit orders for how Jews and Poles were to be removed from their jobs “to avoid sabotage” and said if they needed to enslave a Jew to work, “one of our militiamen must be placed over him, and should liquidate him for the slightest transgression. Only Ukrainians, not foreign enemies, can be leaders in the various branches of life.”[\[598\]](#)

The Ukrainian nationalists identified Jews with the Communists and the terror of the Holodomor.<sup>[599]</sup> Omer Bartov, Israeli-born professor of Holocaust and genocide studies at Brown University, wrote that “[i]n part, the fact that Jews were indeed proportionally overrepresented among the Communists encouraged this view; and in part, it also reflected the reality that Soviet rule had provided opportunities for Jews—young Jews especially—that the anti-Semitic Polish state had blocked.” He added, “The consequences of this perception were of course disastrous when the Nazis made the Jewish population the main target of persecution and murder.”<sup>[600]</sup> Bandera’s partner Yaroslav Stetsko had written, weeks after the torture and murders in the initial pogroms in Lviv had begun, “I . . . support the destruction of the Jews and the expedience of bringing German methods of exterminating Jewry to Ukraine, barring their assimilation and the like.” According to author Marco Carynnyk, “The Council of Seniors (Rada Sen’ioriv), which had been established in Lviv on 6 July 1941 to advise the Stets’ko administration, took up the question of Jews and other ‘minorities’ in Ukraine at a session on 18 July.” At the meeting, the OUN-B’s Oleksa Hai-Holovko said, “Jews are very insolent. . . . They have to be treated very harshly. . . . We must finish them off. . . . I like the German view very much.” The OUN-B’s propaganda chief, Stepan Lenkavs’kyi, agreed. “Regarding the Jews,” he said, “we will adopt any methods that lead to their destruction.”<sup>[601]</sup>

Bandera’s competitor in the OUN-M, Andriy Melnyk, was no less slavish in his devotion, writing, “We collaborate closely with Germany and invest everything in this collaboration. . . . Because we believe that Adolf

Hitler's new order in Europe is the real order, and that Ukraine is one of the avant-gardes in Eastern Europe, and perhaps the most important factor in strengthening this new order. . . . Ukraine is the natural ally of Germany.”[\[602\]](#)

In June 1941, when the Germans sacked Lviv, the OUN distributed pamphlets to the city's Jews which read, “You welcomed Stalin with flowers. We will lay your heads at Hitler's feet as a grave.”[\[603\]](#) And that is exactly what they did.

## **Helping the Holocaust**

The OUN ultimately helped the Germans kill hundreds of thousands of innocent Poles and Jews in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia in the Holocaust, butchering men, women and children in some of the cruelest ways imaginable.[\[604\]](#) Historian John-Paul Himka wrote that the OUN were the “key actors” in the first phase of the Holocaust in Ukraine, just after the invasion, rounding up Jews, murdering them or turning them over to the Germans to be enslaved in work camps or executed.[\[605\]](#) In the first two days of July, they launched a massive pogrom against the Jews of Lviv in the name of avenging those prisoners slain by the NKVD during their retreat. Between 7 and 8 thousand were beaten, humiliated and otherwise tortured, raped and murdered. The OUN-B and members of the Nachtigall Battalion participated.[\[606\]](#) They did it again in late July, killing another 1,500.[\[607\]](#)

Professors Richard Breitman and Norman J. W. Goda are co-authors of *U.S. Intelligence and the Nazis*[\[608\]](#) and *Hitler's Shadow: Nazi War*



*Criminals, U.S. Intelligence, and the Cold War*, both based on declassified CIA and Army records. They wrote in the latter, “Indeed pogroms in East Galicia in the war’s first days killed perhaps 12,000 Jews.” Back in Berlin, Stetsko reported it all to Bandera.[\[609\]](#) Historian Per Anders Rudling, a professor at Lund University in Sweden and researcher on Ukrainian extremists, documented the OUN’s participation in the Holocaust in detail. He says credible estimates of their murders of Jews in the summer of 1941 range between 13,000–35,000. “The Nachtigall Battalion, consisting almost exclusively of OUN(b) activists serving in German uniforms under [Roman] Shukheyvch’s command,” he writes, “carried out mass shootings of Jews near Vinnytsia in July 1941.”[\[610\]](#) In Volhynia and Bukovina, it was the same way. The OUN participated in as many as 100 pogroms against Jews that summer, killing thousands.[\[611\]](#) Historian Alexander Kruglov estimated that between 38,000–39,000 Jews were killed in pogroms across Galicia and Volhynia that summer.[\[612\]](#)

In August 1941, in Kamianets-Podilskyi, in Khmelnytskyi Oblast, the SS, with help from local nationalists, rounded up and executed 23,600 Jews.[\[613\]](#) Just weeks later, in September,[\[614\]](#) the Nazis massacred more than 33,000 Jewish civilians over two days at the Babi Yar (or Babyn Yar) ravine outside of Kiev. Ukrainian auxiliary police, predominantly members of the OUN, participated.[\[615\]](#) Kruglov writes that between 61,000 to 62,000 Jews were shot by the OUN and especially the Germans in August 1941; another 136,000 to 137,000 in September.[\[616\]](#) That was only the beginning.

The National World War II Museum notes, “Before the killing centers opened at Birkenau, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, and Majdanek, more than 1.5 million Jews had already been murdered by the Germans, their Axis allies, and local collaborators in Ukraine, Belarus, and other USSR republics.”[\[617\]](#) Some estimate an equal number of them were killed just in Ukraine,[\[618\]](#) half in Galicia and Volhynia in the west.[\[619\]](#)

The OUN then joined the police in Galicia and Volhynia, where they helped round up thousands more Jews for deportation to the death camp at Belzec, or just took them out to be shot by them or their German masters.[\[620\]](#)

At the end of 1941, the Germans organized the Ukrainian National Militia into the new auxiliary police, the *Schutzmannschaften der Ordnungspolizei* (or *Schuma*).[\[621\]](#) Early the following year, they enforced the transfer of Jews from Galician and Volhynian cities into new ghettos, murdering thousands along the way, then took jobs as guards outside the ghettos and work camps. From the fall of 1941 through the summer of 1943, the Ukrainian police, heavily infiltrated by the OUN,[\[622\]](#) helped round up Jews for the SS to massacre, or to be shipped off to Belzec to be murdered there. And they participated in plenty of massacres themselves too.[\[623\]](#) It was also their business to hunt down and kill individual Jews hiding in basements, sewers and forests to turn over to the Germans or just murder themselves.[\[624\]](#) Historians Alexander Prusin and Gabriel N. Finder called them “the institutional epicenter of Ukrainian collusion with the Nazis in this region in the destruction of the Jews,” and all to create “Ukraine for Ukrainians.”[\[625\]](#)

The Nazi occupation converted the First Division of the Ukrainian National Army into the 14th Grenadier Division of the Waffen-SS, or the “Galicia Division,” in early 1943. Its members swore allegiance directly to Hitler.[\[626\]](#) Over 800,000 Ukrainian Jews were murdered by the Germans and their agents, such as the OUN and Galicia Division during the war—machine-gunned to death or buried alive.[\[627\]](#) Virtually the entire Jewish population of Eastern Galicia was killed, about a quarter of a million of them in camps, another quarter million shot in their own towns, “often in sight and with the willing collaboration of their gentile neighbors,” according to Professor Bartov.[\[628\]](#) In total, the OUN directly helped the Third Reich murder tens of thousands of Jews and Poles from 1941 to 1943.[\[629\]](#)

## **Justin Trudeau Toasts the SS**

The Galician SS became a small controversy when in 2023, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Canada’s Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Canadian Parliament honored an old war veteran named Yaroslav Hunka who, the speaker read out, had “fought against the Russians” in World War II.[\[630\]](#) They had seemingly forgotten that Canada proudly fought as allies of the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany in that war, at the cost of 45,000 of their lives,[\[631\]](#) and did not realize that Hunka, a veteran of the First Ukrainian Division, a.k.a., the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS,[\[632\]](#) was a likely war criminal whose unit had participated in the Holocaust while serving Heinrich Himmler and his Führer.[\[633\]](#) In 2011, Hunka described 1941 to 1943 as the “happiest years of my life.”[\[634\]](#) The

Poles immediately moved to have him extradited to be prosecuted for war crimes.[\[635\]](#)

Ukrainian SS veterans were so prosperous in Canada they donated hundreds of thousands of dollars to various universities in the country, including the Volodymyr and Daria Kubijovych Memorial Endowment Fund at Alberta University. Rudling said Kubijovych was a “chief collaborator” with the Nazis, making Hunka look insignificant in comparison.[\[636\]](#)

It was shown in 2017 that Chrystia Freeland, the former *Financial Times* reporter, deputy prime minister of Canada and anti-Russia hawk, had spent a lifetime citing the political influence of her maternal grandfather, Michael Chomiak.[\[637\]](#) It turned out he was a Ukrainian Nazi propagandist during the war who wrote for the Bandarist weekly, *Krakovski visti*,[\[638\]](#) a publication that blamed the Jews for Soviet Communism and called people to join the German Nazis to fight the “Jewish-Bolshevik threat.”[\[639\]](#) She then lied and claimed this was Russian disinformation,[\[640\]](#) but it was not, and she knew it, having helped her uncle write an article about it years before.[\[641\]](#) It also was later revealed that Freeland herself got her start writing for *The Ukrainian Weekly*, a nationalist paper which glorified Bandera and the Galician SS.[\[642\]](#)

Perhaps this should not be surprising since Canada accepted thousands of Ukrainian veterans of Hitler’s SS after World War II and to this day maintains monuments to their legacy.[\[643\]](#)

## **The UPA**

The Galician SS and OUN, under the leadership of German officers,[\[644\]](#) created the *Ukrainska Povstancha Armia*, or Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), in 1942. Rudling writes that “[t]he new leadership consisted of ruthless OUN(b) activists, most of whom were trained by Nazi Germany, and many were deeply involved in the Holocaust.” He added, “The Ukrainian gendarmerie, *Hilfsfreiwillige* (volunteers), and, in particular, the so-called *Schutzmannschaften* [‘guard units,’ actually death squads], had been central to the implementation of the Holocaust in Ukraine and Belarus,” and this included “the commanders or chiefs of staff in at least nine out of eleven military districts.”[\[645\]](#)

According to the Holocaust survivor and academic historian Philip Friedman, “Sometime in the winter of 1942–1943 the various Ukrainian partisan groups began an intense fight against all non-Ukrainians. Jews who escaped from the ghettos were seized on the highways, in villages, or in the forests, and were put to death.”[\[646\]](#) In the second half of 1942, the Nazis began liquidating all the Jewish ghettos. The people were sent to Belzec or shot. Ukrainian police made themselves useful the whole time, rounding up Jews from lists and making sure no one escaped, and participating in massacres along with the Germans.[\[647\]](#)

After the tide of the war turned against the Germans at Stalingrad and Kursk in February and July 1943, large numbers of police left to join up with the OUN-B and -M in preparation for the coming insurgency against the returning Soviet Union.[\[648\]](#)

After another massive round of ethnic “cleansing” in 1944,[\[649\]](#) it is estimated that the OUN-UPA murdered more than 100,000 civilians,[\[650\]](#)

and assisted in the killing of hundreds of thousands.[\[651\]](#) Breitman and Goda wrote in *Hitler's Shadow*, “Banderist guerrillas in western Ukraine often killed Jews. Historian Yehuda Bauer writes that Banderists ‘killed all the Jews they could find,’ surely ‘many thousands’ in all.” They continued, “Moshe Maltz, a Jew living in hiding in Sokal, heard from a friendly Polish contact ‘about 40 Jews who were hiding out in the woods near his home . . . the Bandera gangs came and murdered them all.’” Once the Soviets had forced a German retreat and had retaken eastern Galicia in the fall of 1944, “there were few Jews there left alive. But Maltz recorded that, ‘When the Bandera gangs seize a Jew, they consider it a prize catch. The ordinary Ukrainians feel the same way . . . they all want to participate in the heroic act of killing a Jew. They literally slash Jews to pieces with their machetes.’”[\[652\]](#)

“We slaughtered the Jews, we’ll slaughter the Poles, old and young, every one; we’ll slaughter the Poles, we’ll build Ukraine,” went the OUN slogan. “Death, death, death to the Poles/Death to the Moscow-Jewish commune/The OUN leads us into bloody battle . . . Each tormentor will face the same fate/One gallows for Poles and dogs,” they chanted as they marched.[\[653\]](#)

Historian Timothy Snyder, more famous for his fanatical support of Ukraine in the 2022– war, wrote in 2010 that after the Soviets started winning, the local police who had served the Germans “mass killing . . . west Ukrainian Jews,” then “went into the forest.” These men, many of them from the OUN-B, then formed the core of the UPA. “Two leaders of Bandera’s organization, Mykola Lebed and Roman Shukhevych, brought

the UPA under the control of the OUN-B.” They spent the rest of the war killing Polish and Jewish civilians as much as fighting an anti-Soviet insurgency, slaughtering them by the tens of thousands, “most of them women and children,” Snyder wrote.[\[654\]](#)

Murdering with “scythes, knives and pitchforks,” he added that the UPA would ruthlessly butcher their Jewish and Polish victims, crucifying, disemboweling and disfiguring their corpses to terrorize their victims’ survivors and neighbors.[\[655\]](#) They forced Ukrainian members of mixed Ukrainian and Polish families to slaughter their own kin.[\[656\]](#) They also cited Moshe Maltz, a Jew who was living underground in Sokal: “Bandera men . . . are not discriminating about who they kill; they are gunning down the populations of entire villages. . . . Since there are hardly any Jews left to kill, the Bandera gangs have turned on the Poles. They are literally hacking Poles to pieces. Every day . . . you can see the bodies of Poles, with wires around their necks, floating down the river Bug.” Breitman and Goda wrote, “On a single day, July 11, 1943, the UPA attacked some 80 localities killing perhaps 10,000 Poles.”[\[657\]](#)

In 1943, under Nazi protection and leadership, Bandera participated in a conference organized to set up an “anti-Bolshevik front” which they later named the Supreme Liberation Council.[\[658\]](#) The Nazis released him from protective custody in 1944, and he went right back to work for them.[\[659\]](#) As the Germans retreated, they left thousands of tons of arms and ammunition behind, which the OUN-UPA used to help delay Soviet forces on their run to Berlin.[\[660\]](#) Bandera escaped to Austria, then West Germany.[\[661\]](#)

## **Insurgency**

After the Germans' defeat, the OUN-UPA kept fighting an insurgency and assassination campaign against the Soviets for nearly a decade from hideouts in the Carpathian Mountains with help from the American military and the new Central Intelligence Agency, which were impressed by defectors' claims that they still had as many as 100,000 men under arms. [\[662\]](#) The Soviets' answer was to forcibly relocate hundreds of thousands from the civilian population out of which the insurgency was based. [\[663\]](#) Stalin's NKVD also engaged in genocidal "cleansing" and relocation campaigns during and after World War II, killing 200,000 [\[664\]](#) and moving 700,000 Poles out of Ukraine's western Galicia region. [\[665\]](#)

Rossoliński-Liebe notes that by incorporating Galicia and Volhynia into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, and cleansing the remaining Poles, Stalin was ironically accomplishing the nationalists' goals for them, as well as helping set the stage for further conflict. [\[666\]](#) Stalin also moved pro-Russian Ukrainians out of Galicia and into the eastern Donbas region after the war. [\[667\]](#) Migrant laborers moved to the Donbas from all over the USSR after World War II. They mostly spoke Russian. [\[668\]](#)

## **The Secret Treaty of Fort Hunt**

Reinhard Gehlen had been Hitler's chief of the Foreign Armies East (FHO) in the later part of World War II, and therefore in charge of all military intelligence in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Historian Carl Ogelsby wrote: "FHO was connected in this role with a number of secret



fascist organizations in the countries to Germany's east. These included Stepan Bandera's 'B Faction' of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN/B)." Soon Gehlen had effectively consolidated power as Nazi Germany's intelligence chief.[\[669\]](#)

With certain defeat looming, Gehlen came up with a scheme to keep himself off the gallows. Since the U.S.-Soviet alliance would be sure to collapse after the war, he would offer his intelligence services to the new Western superpower in exchange for his freedom. Admiral William D. Leahy, President Harry Truman's chief of staff and national security adviser, General Edwin Siebert, the head of Army intelligence in Europe, General "Wild" Bill Donovan, director of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and Allen Dulles, the OSS station chief during the war and founding director of the new CIA, among others, bought it.[\[670\]](#) As Ogelsby points out, it was only three and a half months after the war in Europe had ended, and just a week after the end of the war in the Pacific, that Gehlen made his deal with the Americans to keep himself and his SS friends in business. Ogelsby says it remains unknown whether President Truman knew anything about the deal, though historian Christopher Simpson wrote that the fact of the involvement of such high-level officials, plus Stalin's complaints about it at Potsdam, make it unlikely that he was unaware.[\[671\]](#) Gehlen himself later described the arrangement in detail in his memoir, *The Service*. They would reactivate their old networks to be the basis of a new German intelligence agency to work "with," not "for," the Americans once the West German government was ready, while the U.S. would pay for it all and receive all the intelligence. And they agreed that "[s]hould the organization

at any time find itself in a position where the American and German interests diverged, it was accepted that the organization would consider the interests of Germany first.”[672]

Gehlen wrote that this was not a problem for the Americans since their interests and those of West Germany were so closely aligned.[673] After almost a year in America, Gehlen was sent back to Germany and got to work for the new BND (*Bundesnachrichtendienst*), the West German intelligence agency, rehabilitating SS war criminals, such as Franz Six, Emil Augsburg and Klaus Barbie, the SS “Butcher of Lyon,” and giving them missions behind Warsaw Pact lines.[674] That included supporting Ukrainian nationalists fighting the Soviets in a brutal insurgency and counterinsurgency war[675] beginning in 1946[676] and continuing through at least 1953.[677] A 1948 White House intelligence study, NSC-50,[678] advocated increased relations with resistance groups in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe, including Ukraine, which resulted in further cooperation with Gehlen in an attempt to infiltrate spies into Russia.[679] “He is on our side, and that is all that matters,” new CIA Director Allen Dulles said.[680] The operation was run by the Office of Policy Coordination and cost \$100 million per year.[681] By 1954 they had trained and deployed as many as 5,000 agents. The State Department had to intervene to allow at least 200 with Nazi connections to enter the U.S. on national security grounds between 1948 and 1950.[682] Gehlen admitted in his memoirs that Bandera and UPA forces had worked for him after the war.[683] Bandera was assassinated by the KGB in Munich in October 1959.[684] The project only heightened tensions, leading George Kennan, the

architect of Operation Rollback, to lament, “The political warfare initiative was the greatest mistake I ever made.” He added, “It did not work out at all the way I had conceived it.”[\[685\]](#)

## **Lebed and the CIA**

This did not affect America’s Eastern European policy since Washington preferred Mykola Lebed’s faction and, though they had protected him after the war,[\[686\]](#) they had abandoned Bandera by the early 1950s.[\[687\]](#) Historian Christopher Simpson wrote, “The convicted assassin Mykola Lebed emerged after the war as one of the United States’ most important agents inside the OUN/UPA.”[\[688\]](#) At first the U.S. military ignored Lebed. Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) reports from 1945 and 1946 described him as “a well known sadist and collaborator of the Germans,” and called him a thief and a murderer. But in 1947 they gave in to his promises to reveal all about the inner workings of the USSR. Simpson noted that when Lebed was secretly smuggled from Rome to Munich, the operation was managed by the same American CIC agents who were “running Klaus Barbie and Emil Augsburg’s network of fugitive SS men.” They brought him to the United States in 1949.[\[689\]](#) At least 75 OUN agents were parachuted into Ukraine between 1949 and 1954, though due to deep infiltration by Communist agents, they were quickly neutralized or turned.[\[690\]](#)

The OUN continued with an assassination and murder campaign based out of West Germany that lasted well into the 1970s.[\[691\]](#) Lebed’s relationship with the CIA continued the entire length of the Cold War.

Breitman and Goda wrote in *Hitler's Shadow*, "In Project ICON, the CIA studied 30 groups and recommended operational cooperation with the [Ivan] Hrinioch-Lebed group as the organization best suited for clandestine work." They concluded that "[c]ompared with Bandera, Hrinioch and Lebed represented a moderate, stable, and operationally secure group with the firmest connections to the Ukrainian underground in the USSR." The Americans gave them "money, supplies, training, facilities for radio broadcasts, and parachute drops of trained agents to augment slower courier routes through Czechoslovakia used by UPA fighters and messengers." While Hrinioch remained in Germany, Lebed moved to New York, got U.S. citizenship and began the covertly CIA-supported Prolog Research and Publishing Institute. Breitman and Goda added, "In 1977 President Carter's National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski helped to expand the program [supporting Prolog] owing to what he called its 'impressive dividends' and the 'impact on specific audiences in the target area.'" [\[692\]](#)

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) investigated Lebed, and was told by Ukrainian expatriates that he was "one of the most important Bandera terrorists . . . [responsible] for wholesale murders of Ukrainians, Poles and Jewish [people] . . . in all these actions, Lebed was one of the most important leaders." At then-Assistant CIA Director Allen Dulles's insistence, the INS, which had been prepared to deport him, suspended their investigation, eventually allowing Lebed to become a naturalized citizen. [\[693\]](#) According to Eric Lichtblau, author of *The Nazis Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men*, [\[694\]](#) after serving the U.S. in the Cold War, "many, many thousands of Nazi

collaborators . . . got visas to the United States while the survivors did not.” This was officially sanctioned “even though they had been, for instance, the head of a Nazi concentration camp, the warden at a camp, or the secret police chief in Lithuania who signed the death warrants for people.”[\[695\]](#)

A secret CIA history, declassified under the Nazi War Crimes Disclosure Act, called *Cold War Allies: The Origins of CIA's Relationship with Ukrainian Nationalists*, says that “[a]ccording to an OSS report of September 1945, Bandera had earned a fierce reputation for conducting a ‘reign of terror’ during World War II.” Despite common spin about how the OUN and UPA fought against both the Nazis and the Communists, the CIA history admits about their allies: “Even though OUN’s enthusiasm diminished after the Nazis failed to support Ukrainian statehood, many Ukrainians continued to fight alongside the Germans until the end of the war.”

Regardless, the CIA went right into business with them, receiving official orders to go ahead in 1949. They gave them radio and cipher training along with cash. The first CIA airdrop into Ukraine in September 1949 was a bust, but got CIA leadership interested and convinced them to double down in their support of Lebed’s forces, while the British still supported Bandera’s faction.[\[696\]](#) Though the CIA ceased its airdrops to the UPA in 1953, the CIA’s own historian Kevin C. Ruffner wrote in a declassified history that “[t]he Agency, however, maintained an operational relationship with the Ukrainians that proved to be not only its first, but also among its most resilient projects with, anti-Communist emigre groups. Under Mykola Lebed, whom the CIA brought to the United States in 1949,

the ZPUHVR [a wing of the Supreme Liberation Council (UHVR)] turned to other forms of resistance activity.” He added, “With Agency funding, the Ukrainians established a research institute in New York and published a number of anti-Soviet publications, including *Suchasnist*.”[\[697\]](#)

But they were still Nazi terrorists. Their idea of fighting communism was murdering and maiming civilians. But their tactics made the population resent them as much as their Bolshevik overlords.[\[698\]](#) Nonetheless, for a decade the CIA still backed them, planning to use the UPA’s Carpathian Mountain stronghold as a base for an insurgent army to take on the Reds in World War III.[\[699\]](#)

“Your struggle is our struggle, your dream is our dream,” President Reagan told Yaroslav Stetsko, who led the OUN-B after Bandera’s death at the hands of the KGB in 1959, at a meeting in the Oval Office in 1983.[\[700\]](#)

While in exile during the first Cold War, Western emigres descended from the OUN-UPA had constructed their own nationalist historical narratives about Ukrainian victimhood, the heroic sacrifices of their members and the righteousness of the nationalist cause. During Premier Gorbachev’s *perestroika* (“restructuring”) policy in the 1980s, they began exporting their narratives and agendas to willing audiences in the ethnic Ukrainian west.[\[701\]](#)

## **Continuity**

The Social National Party (SPNU), which was later renamed *Svoboda*, was founded in 1991, and is directly descended from the OUN.[\[702\]](#) Their

militia, Patriot of Ukraine, later became the core of the Azov Battalion. [703] On June 30, 1991, Polish professor Georgiy Kasianov reports, they held their first mass celebration of the anniversary of Bandera's declaration of statehood from 1941. For the rest of the year, local authorities across western Ukraine sanctioned monuments to Bandera, Shukhevych and "OUN and UPA heroes." They also opened several Bandera museums portraying him as a great national hero. [704] The next year they produced new student textbooks that celebrated the OUN-UPA as national liberators. "Preferring to create façade structures for political and cultural activities," as Kasianov put it, the OUN created the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists in 1992, which worked through the 1990s and 2000s to rehabilitate the image of the OUN-UPA. [705] Its founder was Slava Stetsko, Yaroslav Stetsko's widow, who had taken over the OUN in 1991. Rossoliński-Liebe wrote, "In Kiev, OUN-B émigrés set up the Stepan Bandera Centre of National Revival." OUN leadership and their most important newspaper and journal soon moved their operations there. [706]

A State Department cable from 2008 confirms that the Ukrainian National Assembly-Ukrainian People's Self-Defense (UNA-UNSO) was "[o]riginally a coalition of nationalist groups that venerated Mussolini." Founded in 1990 "by Yuriy Shukhevych, son of Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) commander Roman Shukhevych," it supported Yushchenko during the Orange Revolution of 2004. [707] The *Seattle Times* also documented the UNA-UNSO's role in "providing much of the muscle behind the weeks of protests in support of opposition candidate Viktor Yushchenko" during the Orange Revolution, writing that "group member Andriy Bondarenko

said it was a key element right from the start. . . . [T]hey coordinated the weeks-long blockade of outgoing President Leonid Kuchma's office. It also provided men to serve in Yushchenko's personal security detail." Their reporter said that "the presence of the group . . . underlines concerns of Yushchenko's foes that his leadership will enflame nationalism and intense anti-Russian sentiment."[\[708\]](#)

In Ukraine, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the former Communist Leonid Kravchuk had, much like his Russian counterparts, allowed the full-scale looting of his country by other former Communists-turned-oligarchs. [\[709\]](#) In 1994, President Kravchuk and his allies accused his opponent Leonid Kuchma, George Soros's man, [\[710\]](#) of wanting to rejoin Russia and give away Sevastopol. [\[711\]](#) Out west, and in Kiev, [\[712\]](#) the Nazis started coming out to rally for the current government. They threatened civil war after Kuchma won, [\[713\]](#) and though they did not follow through that time, it was a portent of things to come. [\[714\]](#)

Ten years later, the Orange Revolution coincided with a considerable rise in violence by avowedly racist groups against Jews, Roma and other minorities, while the government obfuscated and shut down the committees and departments in charge of monitoring them. [\[715\]](#)

Supreme Rada member Oleh Tyahnybok became the leader of the Social National party in 2004 and changed the name to *Svoboda* ("Freedom"), which was supposed to be a softer presentation of the same fascist ideology. [\[716\]](#) Still, their website makes their ethno-nationalism clear: "We are not America, a mishmash of all sorts of people. . . . The Ukrainian needs to stay Ukrainian, the Pole—Polish, the Gagauz—Gagauz,



the Uzbek—Uzbek.” Tyahnybok’s adviser Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn has said the Holocaust was “a bright episode in European civilization.”[\[717\]](#) Proving their rebranding was just for show, Tyahnybok got in trouble later that year when he denounced the “Muscovite-Jewish mafia,” actually using the more derogatory phrase *Moskaly-Zhydy*, which he claimed “ruled” Ukraine.[\[718\]](#) He stood by the statement in 2012.[\[719\]](#) A U.S. State Department officer explained in a leaked cable that Svoboda spin-off group Patriot of Ukraine had “protested against Kharkiv court rulings making Russian the second official language in the city,” adding, “Its official ideology is Social Nationalism, a cult of the nation within a state, which is anti-immigrant . . . anti-capitalist and anti-globalist.”[\[720\]](#)

In 2009, five years before the second Maidan coup, the Svoboda Party was already establishing ties with ethno-nationalist groups across Europe, officially joining the Alliance of European Nationalist Movements. That same year they won their first parliamentary election in Ternopil in far-western Galicia.[\[721\]](#) In May 2010, Tyahnybok was awarded the golden cross “for his service to Ukraine” from the Canadian Brotherhood of the Veterans of the First Ukrainian Division of the Ukrainian National Army—the Galician SS.[\[722\]](#)

When Patriot of Ukraine’s Andriy Biletsky founded the Azov Regiment in 2015, he did so explicitly invoking the name of the UPA.[\[723\]](#) Other Azov-related Nazi groups include Tradition and Order, Karpatska Sich, Wotanjugend, Freikorps and NordStorm.[\[724\]](#)

# Rewriting History

## The Book of Facts

During Yushchenko's reign, his government repeatedly moved to make national heroes out of the OUN and UPA. They claimed these SS henchmen were wonderful, inclusive organizations that not only saved Jews but fought as their allies against both Hitler and Stalin.[\[725\]](#) They said all claims to the contrary were Soviet Communist and later Russian propaganda. In fact, Jewish members of the OUN during the war were essentially slaves. Only skilled doctors, nurses, dentists and shoemakers were kept in concentration camps while their families were murdered by their captors. When the Soviets returned, they were all killed, too.[\[726\]](#)

While modern-day apologists for Ukrainian Nazis like to claim the OUN and UPA also fought the Germans, that is almost entirely false. Lebed was under explicit orders from Bandera to get along with the Germans as well as possible, since "[t]he Ukrainian nationalists believe that German and Ukrainian interests in Eastern Europe are identical." This was because they were "shaped in a spirit similar to the National Socialist ideas," he wrote.[\[727\]](#) After the German defeat at the Battle of Stalingrad in February 1943, Germany organized the Romanian Iron Guard, Hungarian Arrow Cross and OUN into the so-called Committee of Subjugated Nations—which was actually subordinate to the German military—and used them to defend their rear guard as they retreated.[\[728\]](#) The Ukrainian nationalists kept their relationship as servants of the Nazis until almost the bitter end.

While there were some limited clashes,[\[729\]](#) their leaders continually forbade engagements against German forces, prioritizing their fight against the Poles, Jews and Soviets. Then, knowing what was coming, they started to rewrite history as soon as the tide turned against the Germans in the war. This included creating a predated “Book of Facts” which falsely portrayed them as refusing orders to participate in anti-Jewish pogroms in 1941.[\[730\]](#) The UPA’s Western allies and expatriates have been playing this game since the beginning of the last Cold War.[\[731\]](#) But even when they started working for the CIA and had reason to limit their anti-Semitism to make themselves more acceptable to the West, the post-war UPA underground could not restrain themselves as they threatened the country’s remaining Ukrainian Jews.[\[732\]](#)

Professor Rudling says the OUN-B censored documents that portrayed their service to the German regime, including Stetsko’s declaration of loyalty to Hitler from 1941. Their service in the SS was omitted from their biographies or “their break with the Nazis predated.” Rudling wrote that by 1946, Roman Shukhevych, who had “actively opposed attacks on German interests” during the war, began portraying the OUN as leaders of an insurgency by “the entire Ukrainian people” against the German Nazis. He added that other popular stories by Ukrainian nationalists about their alleged resistance against the Nazis, “such as Kosyk and Stets’ko’s postwar claims that the commander of the Nazi Stormtroopers (the *Sturmabteilung*, or SA), Viktor Lutze, was killed by UPA unit in Volhynia in 1943, are entirely fictional.” Many OUN-UPA refugees from the war took up

academic posts in the West, telling and whitewashing their own histories as well.[\[733\]](#)

This Ukrainian lobby spent decades trying to revise the history of their collaboration with the Nazis during the Holocaust. They argue that the OUN-UPA were not anti-Semites at all, but welcomed their Jewish friends, and if they did murder them it was only because all Jews and Poles were Communists. You say 98.5 percent of Volhynian Jews were eradicated? Sounds like a lot of them got away. How could that be true if we killed them all? And by the way, that Lebed character maybe was a Jewish false-flag leader sent by Zion to slaughter all those people just to make the nationalist right look bad. Check out these great documents we forged. Says here we rescued a bunch of Jewish doctors and gave them great jobs. Stetsko never declared his loyalty to *der Führer und Reichskanzler* Adolf Hitler. See: we edited that part out of his speech. Why, our guys never worked for the Nazis for even one day after they refused to accept our declaration of a state just after their forces arrived. And how can we be fascists if we never controlled a state for everything to be within, huh? The real German Nazis thought the OUN were not white enough to be their allies, so definitely gotcha there!

But it is all lies. The West had switched sides in their war, and so the Ukrainian Nazis had to lay the spin on thick to give the CIA and MI6 plausible deniability.[\[734\]](#) In fact, the OUN never once complained about the killings of Jews in their newspapers or pamphlets, nor did they set up any underground organization to assist them, as some Poles had done on the other side of the border.[\[735\]](#) Instead, their standing orders had been to kill

every Jew they could find—along with anyone who dared to help hide them.[\[736\]](#)

## Springtime for Hitler

After Viktor Yushchenko came to power in the 2004 Orange Revolution, these narratives invented by the diaspora about the heroism of Hitler’s loyal Ukrainian henchmen were elevated to official status. While Yushchenko himself was not exactly an ideological fascist, he was a member of the board of directors of a private university[\[737\]](#) called the Interregional Academy of Personnel Management (MAUP)—which the U.S. State Department deemed “one of the most persistent anti-Semitic institutions in Eastern Europe”[\[738\]](#)—and he welcomed the Congress of Ukrainian Nationalists, direct descendants of the OUN-B, into his *Nasha Ukraina* (“Our Ukraine”) coalition.[\[739\]](#)

They were trying to form a nation based on collective victimhood and national hero worship. The victim narrative centered around the idea that the Holodomor was essentially a Russian genocide against ethnic Ukrainians, rather than a Communist plot against reason[\[740\]](#) and farmers of all ethnicities from Ukraine to Kazakhstan,[\[741\]](#) a claim the Yushchenko government attempted to make illegal to deny.[\[742\]](#) Since there were so few heroes available, they decided instead to go with this pile of lies about how Stepan Bandera and his associates in the OUN-UPA were a bunch of great patriots, harmful only to Stalin and Hitler’s armed forces, never innocent people like you may have heard.[\[743\]](#)

Regarding Yushchenko's mandate to Ukrainian historians to rewrite the 20th century, Rudling wrote that two major components were turning the Holodomor into an ethnic genocide: exaggerated estimates of 10 million people killed, and the rehabilitation of Bandera and the OUN as the founding fathers of the nation. "Ignoring the OUN's antisemitism, denying its participation in anti-Jewish violence, and overlooking its fascist ideology, [SBU chief and later-Rada member Valentyn] Nalyvaichenko and his agency presented the OUN as democrats, pluralists, even righteous rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust."[\[744\]](#)

Yushchenko himself declared OUN-UPA leaders to be national heroes, denigrated Russian and other languages and supported the east-versus-further-east schism in the Orthodox Church.[\[745\]](#) Textbooks were rewritten to portray the new narrative. Shukhevych and Bandera were featured on postage stamps. Approximately 100 streets were named after Bandera, while at least 17 monuments to him were erected across the east in the Yushchenko years (2005–2010).[\[746\]](#)

"To establish the Galician interpretation of Ukrainian history as the new national standard," as Professor Nicolai Petro put it,[\[747\]](#) in 2006 they created the Institute of National Memory, and Yushchenko hired an associate of the Social Nationalist Party[\[748\]](#) of the Hitler-saluting Tyahnybok[\[749\]](#) named Ihor Yukhnovs'kyi to run it. Soon thereafter they created the Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement, a front for the OUN-B and what Rudling calls "an important link" between a new generation of nationalist activists and the Ukrainian diaspora, such as the

Ukrainian Congress Committee of America (UCCA), as well as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the SBU.[\[750\]](#)

One story the modern revisionists keep pushing is that of “The Jewess Stella Krentsbakh,” who was a “nurse and intelligence officer in the UPA.” They claimed that in the spring of 1945, the NKVD captured a Jewish woman by that name and sentenced her to death. But then the heroes of the UPA had rescued her, helped her escape across the Carpathians to the English zone in Austria, and from there she made her way to Israel and became a great diplomat in the Foreign Ministry. Ms. Krentsbakh wrote in her diary: “The reason I am alive today, and have been able to give all the strength of my 38 years to the free Israel, I owe, apparently to God and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army,” adding for good measure, “I became a member of the heroic UPA on November 7, 1943. In our group I counted 12 Jews, of which eight were physicians.”

The only problem is that the story is an utter and complete hoax. The woman never existed. She was made up by liars to whitewash murderers. Her story was a forgery, completely debunked by the historians Philip Friedman,[\[751\]](#) John-Paul Himka[\[752\]](#) and Per Anders Rudling.[\[753\]](#)

They pulled a similar scam with the story of Leiba-Itsko Iosifovich Dobrovskii, who wrote leaflets for the UPA in 1942 and 1943. He was included in an exhibition at the Institute of National Memory. But his legend was invented by the so-called historian Volodymyr Viatrovykh in the W. Bush-Yushchenko years. In fact, the man hid his Jewish identity from the UPA because he was terrified they would murder him, as revealed by the actual records examined by the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*. In fact, the

man himself also debunked their claims that they had fought the German Nazis. They “did not kill a single local German leader in the area” of Volhynia, he told his Soviet interrogators. “Did Viatrovych and his supporters think that no one would ever read Dobrovskii’s arrest file?” *Haaretz* reporter Jared McBride wondered.[\[754\]](#) Maybe next time.

In 2005, in the aftermath of the Orange Revolution, the UNA-UNSO—again, direct descendants of the OUN-UPA—for the first time held a rally in Kiev, instead of just the far west, to mark the anniversary of the founding of the UPA, leading to violent clashes with pro-Russian leftist counter-protesters.[\[755\]](#)

## **Erased**

In 2007, scholar Omer Bartov published *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine*, which documents the obliteration of Jews from the history of Eastern Galicia. He shows how in now-western Ukraine, the right has made a concerted effort to erase the memory of the previous Jewish population and what happened to them. While some of it can be blamed on the Soviet Communists, who for example, paved over a Jewish cemetery in Lviv,[\[756\]](#) or simple poverty and neglect in other cases, [\[757\]](#) he also showed how the Nazis had made a park out of what had been the Drohobych ghetto, featuring a giant statue of Stepan Bandera—that is deliberate.[\[758\]](#) In Kosiv, where half the population had been Jewish before the war, there is nothing to commemorate the Holocaust, but there is a museum to the legacy of the UPA in the former home of the local rabbi.[\[759\]](#)



The EU Parliament had formally complained when Yushchenko decorated Bandera with the “Hero of Ukraine” award in February 2010. [\[760\]](#) Similar awards were also posthumously given to OUN-UPA members Shukhevych, Stetsko, Olena Teliha and Oleh Olzhych. [\[761\]](#) Polish President Lech Kaczyński denounced the move, [\[762\]](#) while protesters marched on the Ukrainian Embassy in Warsaw. [\[763\]](#)

Yale’s Timothy Snyder thought this was why Yushchenko was defeated in the first round of voting in the 2010 presidential election, “perhaps in some measure because far more Ukrainians identify with the Red Army than with nationalist partisans from western Ukraine.” He wrote that “[b]y conferring the highest state honor of ‘Hero of Ukraine’ upon Stepan Bandera . . . Yushchenko provoked protests from the chief rabbi of Ukraine, the president of Poland, and many of his own citizens.” He added, “It is no wonder. Bandera aimed to make of Ukraine a one-party fascist dictatorship without national minorities. During World War II, his followers killed many Poles and Jews.” Snyder could not understand it, wondering, “Why would President Yushchenko, the leader of the democratic Orange Revolution, wish to rehabilitate such a figure?” [\[764\]](#)

## **Reversed**

When Viktor Yanukovych was elected in 2010, he had the courts declare the designation of Bandera and Shukhevych as national heroes to be illegal and repealed it. He fired the Social Nationalists from the SBU Archives and Institute of National Memory, put a Communist in charge of it, then closed it down. [\[765\]](#)

The nationalists were down but not out. According to journalist Palash Ghosh, “European and Israeli leaders expressed shock in October 2012, when Svoboda gained more than 10 percent of the electorate in parliamentary elections, entering the legislature for the first time. (In some western regions of Ukraine, Svoboda gained as much as 40 percent of the vote.)”[\[766\]](#)

## **Revenge of the Right**

But after the 2014 coup, President Petro Poroshenko decreed October 14, the anniversary of the founding of the UPA, to be “Defender of Ukraine Day.”[\[767\]](#) Journalist Max Blumenthal wrote that “[w]hen the European Parliament condemned Yushchenko’s proclamation as an affront to ‘European values,’ the UCCA-affiliated Ukrainian World Congress reacted with outrage, accusing the EU of ‘another attempt to rewrite Ukrainian history during WWII.’” On its website, the UCCA dismissed historical accounts of Bandera’s collaboration with the Germans as “Soviet propaganda.”[\[768\]](#)

The next year, the new Rada, led by the Nazis, passed supposed “de-communization laws” that prohibited criticism of fascists in Ukrainian history.[\[769\]](#) The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum issued a statement saying they were “deeply concerned” about how this law would be used to rehabilitate the OUN and UPA.[\[770\]](#)

Svoboda Party members were given jobs running the Institute of National Remembrance and Archive of National Memory to force the change in the nation’s official history through control of education and

regulation of major media.[\[771\]](#) The Lviv Center for the Study of the Liberation Movement (TsDVR)—which had been founded by the OUN-UPA and specialized in publishing books whitewashing their history of atrocities and cooperation with the Nazis during World War II[\[772\]](#)—received millions of euros from EU governments and hundreds of thousands of dollars from USAID.[\[773\]](#) Volodymyr Viatrovyh, who got his start at the TsDVR, and was happy to defend the legacy of not just the OUN-UPA, but also the Galician SS,[\[774\]](#) had previously been appointed by Yushchenko to head the Security Service of Ukraine’s archives. Poroshenko named him to run the Institute of National Remembrance. The government then transferred millions of historical documents to his group so that he could whitewash the history of the OUN-UPA.[\[775\]](#)

As Lev Golinkin documented in the *Forward*, after 2014, the new government made glorification of the OUN-UPA a national phenomenon. They began putting up shrines to “Nazi collaborators and Holocaust perpetrators at an astounding pace—there’s been a new plaque or street renaming nearly every week.” There were by then “several hundred monuments, statues and streets named after Nazi collaborators in Ukraine.”[\[776\]](#) Rossoliński-Liebe documented the same, noting dozens of statues and hundreds of street name changes, and that the effort was led by the “social nationalist” Svoboda.[\[777\]](#) Andriy Parubiy hosted the unveiling of a massive Bandera monument in Lviv in 2007.[\[778\]](#)

In April 2015, Poroshenko signed a law recognizing the OUN and UPA as “resistance fighters.” Forty historians signed a letter asking him not to. The UPA “took part in anti-Jewish pogroms in Ukraine and, in the case of

the Melnyk faction, remained allied with the occupation regime throughout the war,” they wrote.[\[779\]](#)

The coup government soon banned any media that cast relations between the two countries in a positive light, including Russian movies, [\[780\]](#) Russian language newspapers[\[781\]](#) and Russian songs on the radio. [\[782\]](#)

In 2018, while Ukraine was undergoing an “unprecedented new surge of anti-Semitism,” according to the World Jewish Congress,[\[783\]](#) the government in Kiev passed a law rehabilitating members of the OUN and UPA, giving them the status and social welfare guarantees of war veterans, [\[784\]](#) and made Bandera’s birthday a national holiday.[\[785\]](#) The Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Dr. Efraim Zuroff criticized the move: “Glorifying the person whose men committed countless heinous crimes is an insult to the victims and an unthinkable distortion of the history of the world’s most horrific genocide.” He continued, “Unfortunately in recent years, Ukraine has been one of the major propagators of a distorted version of Holocaust history which seeks to hide or minimize crimes committed by Ukrainian nationalists.” His colleague Mark Weitzman added, “It is clear that Ukraine is choosing to rehabilitate antisemitism and to censor history.” He cited the fact that the Ukrainian region of Lviv had declared 2019 would be “Stepan Bandera Year,” and that a book criticizing politician Symon Petliura, who led pogroms against Ukrainian Jews in 1919, was banned.[\[786\]](#)

Jochen Hellbeck wrote in *The New Republic* that “Ukraine makes amnesia the law of the land.” He added, “One of the laws condemns ‘the Communist and Nazi totalitarian regimes in Ukraine and bans propaganda

of their symbols.’ For the most part, however, the law focuses on the Soviet era.” When it came to the Germans and the Holocaust, “All that it has to say about Nazism is that its racial theories drove certain groups out of their professions. It makes no mention of the mass murder of Jews, let alone the participation of Ukrainians in these atrocities.” This was no accident, Hellbeck wrote, recounting the role of the UPA in the Holocaust. “The new law glorifying the UPA was drafted by Yuri Shukhevych, Roman Shukhevych’s son.”[\[787\]](#)

Since it was founded in 2006, The Institute of National Memory (INP) has promoted pro-Nazi revisionism. As Petro wrote, its first director, Ihor Yukhnovskiy, “publicly supported the neo-Nazi, Social-Nationalist Party of Ukraine, and argued that all government policies should be ‘based on the Ukrainian idea.’” They pushed the lie that OUN-UPA was a friend of Jews while building monuments to Bandera’s men at their memorial sites.[\[788\]](#) Again, it is true that in a few isolated instances the OUN-UPA also fought the Nazis when they were not collaborating with them. However, Bandera and his followers subjected all sorts of different ethnic and political enemies, including Jews, to ethnic cleansing, mass violence, crimes against humanity and intentional genocide. Welcome them, they did not.[\[789\]](#)

INP leader Volodymyr Viatrovykh was actually fired in 2019 for his efforts to rehabilitate Bandera and his followers.[\[790\]](#) But he was replaced by the philosopher Anton Drobovykh, who in practice was no better. As Drobovykh told the story, “We now know that there were people in these organizations who opposed both the Nazis and the communists, and also cooperated with, for example, the partisans against the Nazis or with locals

against the Red Army.”[\[791\]](#) This was essentially a lie, since he omitted Ukrainian nationalists’ direct collaboration with the Nazis to kill Jews, Poles and other Ukrainians, and implied they were instead some neutral third force, stuck in the middle and innocent of the others’ crimes.

In 2017, Vasily Vovk, a general with the Security Service of Ukraine—their central intelligence agency—wrote that Jews “aren’t Ukrainians and I will destroy you along with [Jewish-Ukrainian oligarch and MP Vadim] Rabinovych.” He continued, “I’m telling you one more time—go to hell, zhidi [kikes], the Ukrainian people have had it to here with you. Ukraine must be governed by Ukrainians.”[\[792\]](#)

That same year, Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, wrote about his concerns in the *New York Times*. He recounted the true legacy of the OUN’s atrocities during the war and its avowed hatred of Jews and worried about Kiev’s campaign to “whitewash” this history and glorify the guilty. He noted the 2015 law that threatened jail for anyone disrespecting these supposed heroes, the renaming of streets after OUN-UPA leaders, a proposed law to retroactively exonerate members convicted of war crimes by the USSR and unchecked vandalism of Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust memorials. “This is not just a fight over history. Virulent right-wing nationalist groups have found new prominence in Ukrainian politics in recent years,” he wrote, noting that politicians were already afraid of provoking them by saying a word against Bandera or the OUN-UPA. He also said that during a January 1, 2017, torch-lit march in honor of Bandera, the marchers chanted “Jews out.” Rada member Nadia Savchenko had recently said on Ukrainian TV, “I have nothing against Jews. I do not

like ‘kikes.’ Jews possess 80 percent of the power when they only account for 2 percent of the population.”[\[793\]](#)

It is a wonder how the *Times* has never investigated itself for collusion with Russia for posting so many too-late, but still-true articles about the mess that Nuland made in Ukraine.[\[794\]](#) They could win a Pulitzer.[\[795\]](#)

Two months later, Dolinsky denounced the city of Lviv for holding a festival in honor of Shukhevych.[\[796\]](#) They held a similar march the next year, literally “honoring the 14th Waffen Grenadier Division of the SS,” according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Dolinsky again condemned this as “a scandalous event that should not be allowed to happen in Ukraine in which murderers of Jews and others are glorified.”[\[797\]](#)

Imagine a European city with thousands of marchers demanding “Jews Out!”[\[798\]](#) and instead of becoming a great crisis deserving authorities’ full attention, it is treated like an embarrassing old skeleton in the closet, of no real importance; or worse, just the dastardly lies of the Russians and their all-powerful propaganda machine.

In 2017, over the strenuous objections of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, the Poroshenko government erected a statue of the OUN propagandist and poet Olena Teliha at the Babi Yar memorial. She was shot by the Nazis there. But she was a Nazi too. One might imagine how this was taken—as a sign of equivalent victimhood by the descendants of the OUN and a major affront by Ukrainian Jews whose forebears were slaughtered there by the tens of thousands by her then-allies.[\[799\]](#)

Soon after, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, after denouncing pogroms against Roma and desecrations of Jewish memorial

sites, also condemned “the continuing effort led by the leadership of the government’s Ukrainian Institute of National Memory to praise certain leaders of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) and cleanse their murderous records.”[\[800\]](#)

## **Russians Noticed, Too**

Perhaps it is true that the Russian government embellishes this narrative of Ukrainian fascism to smear Ukraine as “a nation unworthy of statehood,” as one local critic put it.[\[801\]](#) But they hardly need to. The country does have the largest number of influential Nazis in the world today. Nowhere else compares, and as will be shown below, the reality has been bad enough to serve as an inspiration to other neo-Nazi factions around the world. Unlike the typical establishment foreign policy advice, the purpose here is not to cry Munich and demand America invade Ukraine or support the Russians in their current war. But it is clearly enough reason to avoid getting mixed up in any conflict on the western Ukrainian nationalists’ side, as our government has been so determined to do.

## **Aftermath**

### **A Clean Nation**

Gabriel Gatehouse, the BBC reporter from the Maidan documentary, performed his own study of the post-revolution Ukrainian Nazi movement.



One young Right Sector fighter told him, “National Socialist themes are popular among some of us. The idea of one nation.” He continued, “I like the idea of one nation, one people, one country. . . . A clean nation. Not like under Hitler. But in our own way, a little bit like that.”

Svoboda’s C14 leader Yevhen Karas added, “No I don’t think I’m a Nazi. I’m a Ukrainian nationalist. . . . The main confrontation is that some ethnic groups have control [of] many business structures, some economics and political forces.” When Gatehouse asked, “Which ethnic groups?” Karas replied, “Russians and Jews and . . . it may be some non-Ukrainian group control a huge percent of some economic or political power.”

He showed a photo of members of Svoboda in parliament holding up small signs that read “14” and “88,” code for David Lane’s slogan and “Heil Hitler,” as “H” is the eighth letter of the English alphabet. Gatehouse summarized: “It’s clear that it was the radical groups who kept up the pressure on Viktor Yanukovych and many of them feel that this really is their victory. The question is how much power will that give the far right in the new Ukraine.” Leftist activist Maksim Butkevich warned that after their success in the Maidan, and the outbreak of fighting in the east, the Nazi fringe would have more influence than ever.[\[802\]](#)

## **Foreign Policy**

In March 2014, the American establishmentarian journal *Foreign Policy* ran an important article called, “Yes, There Are Bad Guys in the Ukrainian Government.” Its authors, Andrew Foxall and Oren Kessler, are foreign policy hawks associated with the neoconservative think tanks, the Henry

Jackson Society and Foundation for Defense of Democracies. But even they had to admit, “The uncomfortable truth is that a sizeable portion of Kiev’s current government—and the protesters who brought it to power—are, indeed, fascists.” They noted the influence of Oleh Tyahnybok and his party, and that “[t]oday, Svoboda holds a larger chunk of its nation’s ministries (nearly a quarter, including the prized defense portfolio) than any other far-right party on the continent.” This included the deputy prime minister, prosecutor general and deputy chair of parliament. They wrote that “Svoboda’s fresh faces are scarcely different from the old: one of its freshmen members of parliament is the founder of the ‘Joseph Goebbels Political Research Center’ and has hailed the Holocaust as a ‘bright period in human history.’”<sup>[803]</sup> Svoboda’s deputy chief, Ihor Miroshnychenko, wrote that actress Mila Kunis “is not Ukrainian, she is a Yid. She is proud of it, so Star of David be with her.”<sup>[804]</sup>

The member of parliament mentioned by Foxall and Kessler was Tyahnybok’s partner at Svoboda, Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn. He really did found an institution called “the Joseph Goebbels Political Research Center.”<sup>[805]</sup> After getting some bad publicity, he renamed it after the German conservative war veteran and philosopher Ernst Jünger.<sup>[806]</sup> Mykhalchyshyn had proclaimed at the Bandera memorial in Lviv, “Our Banderite army will cross the Dnipro and throw that blue-ass gang, which today usurps the power, out of Ukraine. . . . That will make those Asiatic dogs shut their ugly mouths.”<sup>[807]</sup> Historian Rossoliński-Liebe noted that Mykhalchyshyn’s “approach to Ukrainian history confused many patriotic and ‘liberal’ historians and intellectuals who were accustomed to deny the

fascist tendencies of the OUN and UPA, or who understood Ukrainian nationalism to be a ‘national liberation movement.’”[\[808\]](#)

When this guy says “everything within the state,” he means it. For example, he approvingly reprinted the Ukrainian Nazi poet Yurii Lypa: “Marriage is the duty of the woman to her own gender. The duty of the state, in turn, is to assist her in this . . . the 300 ovulations of every Ukrainian woman, as well as the 1,500 ejaculations of every Ukrainian man are the same national treasures as, say, energy resources, or deposits of iron, coal or oil.”[\[809\]](#) He was elected to the Rada in the new eastern and southern regions-free vote of October 2014.

Foxall and Kessler railed in disbelief at Sen. McCain’s embrace of Tyahnybok, the EU overseeing a deal including him and the State Department dismissing the far right’s influence as Russian propaganda. The U.S. denials came just as the Rada attempted to pass a law requiring all government business to be done in Ukrainian, which led to a massive backlash in Crimea and the rest of the south and east of the country. It was not that they were about to seize total power. “In fact,” the two noted, “it was the same French- and German-backed peace deal that gave Svoboda its disproportionate share of the resulting government’s ministries. Western governments, then, are at least partially complicit in facilitating Svoboda’s rise.” They advised, “Sound policy . . . can only be based on sound analysis of the players involved. That requires conceding the point—even when made by the Kremlin—that more than a few of the protesters who toppled Yanukovich, and of the new leaders in Kiev, are fascists.”[\[810\]](#)

## **Liberals**

Instead, the Obama administration went to work to rehabilitate the reputation of these Ukrainian Nazis. They talked to Reuters, saying they would never have dealt with a guy like Tyahnybok, but this time it was necessary “because he headed one of the three principal opposition factions leading the Ukrainian protests.” How else were they supposed to force the president from power? Besides, “[s]ince entering the Ukrainian Parliament in October 2012, the Svoboda leadership has been working to take their party in a more moderate direction and to become a modern, European mainstream political party,” a senior U.S. official claimed.[\[811\]](#)

To America’s liberal Democrats, conservative Republican voters are unrepentant, irredeemable, fascist white supremacists.[\[812\]](#) But actual armed militias of avowed Hitler-loving, Jew-hating, national socialists, who just launched a bloody street putsch to overthrow a democratically elected leader? Hey, they are working hard at doing better.

Hawks like to emphasize that the Nazi parties did not do very well in the October 2014 elections.[\[813\]](#) But the Nazis did. They just joined up with larger parties to gain influence. Andriy Biletsky, the self-proclaimed “White Ruler” (*Bely Vozd*),[\[814\]](#) formerly of Patriot of Ukraine and the Social-Nationalist Assembly,[\[815\]](#) won his election for parliament as the People’s Front party candidate. Shortly thereafter, he officially founded the paramilitary Azov Battalion[\[816\]](#) alongside the interior minister, Arsen Avakov, a close ally from his stint as the governor of Kharkiv[\[817\]](#) and the Maidan protests.[\[818\]](#) Svoboda’s Andriy Parubiy joined Yulia Tymoshenko’s Fatherland Party and became speaker of the Rada.[\[819\]](#)

## **10 Important Nazis**

NBC News reported that “Svoboda . . . was given almost a quarter of the Cabinet positions in the interim government formed after the ouster of President Viktor Yanukovych,”[\[820\]](#) and reminded us that in 2012 the European Parliament had passed a resolution that asked democratic parties in the Rada “not to associate with, endorse or form coalitions with this party due to its racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic views.” They added that Parubiy’s appointment to secretary of the Security and National Defense Committee has “raised eyebrows,” and went on to note, “Although now a member of the liberal-conservative Fatherland party, Parubiy led anti-Yanukovych street militias in Kiev in the wake of protests that erupted in December.”[\[821\]](#)

Historian Per Anders Rudling told Britain’s Channel 4 News, “Two weeks ago I could never have predicted this. A neo-fascist party like Svoboda getting the deputy prime minister position is news in its own right.” He continued, “There are seven ministers with links to the extreme right now. It began with Svoboda getting 10 per cent of the vote in the last election, it is certainly a concern in the long run,” adding, “According to Svoboda’s website, the party’s ideology stems from Yaroslav Stetsko, a former leader of the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN).”[\[822\]](#)

Rudling undercounted. As mentioned, Andriy Parubiy was given a senior defense position[\[823\]](#) and later made the speaker of the parliament,[\[824\]](#) a seat he held for five years.[\[825\]](#) Ihor Tenyukh, a member of Svoboda’s political council, became the interim defense minister.[\[826\]](#) Dmitry Yarosh from Right Sector was offered the role of deputy head of the National Security Council,[\[827\]](#) and later deputy chief of the national

police,[\[828\]](#) before deciding to run and win a seat in the Rada instead.[\[829\]](#) He is currently an adviser to the commander in chief of the Ukrainian military.[\[830\]](#) Svoboda's Oleksandr Sych was named deputy prime minister.[\[831\]](#) Andriy Mokhnyk, the deputy head of Svoboda and envoy to other European fascist parties, got the ministry of ecology and natural resources.[\[832\]](#) Ihor Shvaika, a right-wing big-ag oligarch, became agriculture minister.[\[833\]](#) Oleh Makhnitsky, a member of parliament from Svoboda, became acting prosecutor general.[\[834\]](#) Serhiy Kvit, also from Svoboda, was picked to lead the Education Ministry.[\[835\]](#) Andriy Biletsky, the Azov Battalion's founder, was elected to parliament, a seat he held until 2019.[\[836\]](#) Vadim Troyan, an Azov deputy commander and "leading member" of the "Patriot of Ukraine" Nazi group, was appointed as police chief of Kiev Oblast.[\[837\]](#) He was later promoted to deputy interior minister under Arsen Avakov,[\[838\]](#) then to deputy chief of Ukraine's national police, a position he held until the autumn of 2021.[\[839\]](#)

That was 10 Nazis in major positions of power in the new government.

## **Proud Fascists**

In his 2011 essay "Axioms of Social Nationalism," Svoboda Party ideologist Yuriy Mykhalchyshyn wrote that Ukraine's Nazis were defending against "a total and permanent national, class, and racial war of destruction," which "has been declared against the Ukrainians: they are trying to liquidate us as a community of blood and spirit." He outlined the "positive values" of social nationalism, including: "force," "hierarchy," "order," "authority," "discipline," "passion" and "hatred." He explained that

the social-nationalist worldview was formed “through opposition to negative, anti-human, and anti-national phenomena of today, raising its battle banners over the conquered strongholds of the enemy spirit: Anti-bourgeoisism, anti-capitalism, anti-globalism, anti-democratism, anti-liberalism, anti-bureaucratism, anti-dogmatism.”[\[840\]](#)

Dimitry Yarosh narrated a recruitment video for Right Sector: “We are the fighters of the Right Sector. This is just the beginning. The renaissance of Europe begins with our Maidan against marginal and corrupt democracy, against degeneration and totalitarian liberalism, for national morals and family values.” He said, “For healthy youth in body and mind. Against the cult of illicit gain and debauchery, against any form of integration that would be imposed on Ukraine for the unity and greatness of the Ukrainian nation, for a great Ukraine, a great European reconquest.”[\[841\]](#) That phrase is the loudest alarm for America and Britain’s liberal media establishments, [\[842\]](#) except when Ukrainian Nazis use it.

Is *The New Republic*’s Anne Applebaum an agent of a foreign power posing as an American participating in the public debate like a regular citizen or journalist might? She certainly has a massive conflict of interest, being a dual citizen married to Polish politician Radosław Sikorski. Applebaum endlessly writes hawkish screeds for American audiences that seem to coincide with his views and interests exactly. Shortly after Svoboda-C14 and Right Sector’s violent overthrow of Ukraine’s elected government, Applebaum, a self-identified liberal fighting against the evils of right-wing authoritarianism everywhere except Ukraine,[\[843\]](#) took to the pages of that most hawkish of American magazines[\[844\]](#) to promote

Ukrainian nationalism. Lamenting the failure of the Orange Revolution to abolish corruption and chaos, she called for a new order in Ukraine.

“[N]ationalism is fundamentally emotional. In truth, you can’t really make ‘the case’ for nationalism; you can only inculcate it, teach it to children, cultivate it at public events.” She said that “Ukrainians need more of this kind of inspiration, not less—moments like last New Year’s Eve, when more than 100,000 Ukrainians sang the national anthem at midnight on the Maidan.” Applebaum added, “They need more occasions when they can shout, ‘Slava Ukraini—Heroyam Slava’—‘Glory to Ukraine, Glory to its Heroes,’ which was, yes, the slogan of the controversial Ukrainian Revolutionary Army in the 1940s, but has been adopted to a new context.” Controversial. She concluded, “And then of course they need to translate that emotion into laws, institutions, a decent court system, and police training academies. If they don’t, then their country will once again cease to exist.”[\[845\]](#)

## **Torches Out for Bandera**

On New Year’s Day in 2014, in the midst of the Maidan movement, *USA Today* described a massive torchlight parade through the streets of Kiev. “About 15,000 people marched through Kiev on Wednesday night to honor Stepan Bandera, glorified by some as a leader of Ukraine’s liberation movement and dismissed by others as a Nazi collaborator.” They added, “Some wore the uniform of a Ukrainian division of the German army during World War II. Others chanted ‘Ukraine above all!’ and ‘Bandera, come and bring order!’”[\[846\]](#)



## **Jewish Leaders Concerned**

The chief rabbi of Ukraine, Moshe Reuven Asman, urged Jews to flee after several violent anti-Semitic attacks, the Israeli Embassy warned Jews not to go outside[\[847\]](#) and canceled Hanukkah ceremonies out of fear of Svoboda thugs among the protesters.[\[848\]](#) While Jews have not been targeted by the ultra-nationalist groups in large numbers, there was no mystery why local leaders were so concerned after the coup. The World Jewish Congress called for an official ban of Svoboda, a member of the Alliance of European National Movements, a group that includes the British National Party (BNP) and French National Front.[\[849\]](#) In January 2021, Israeli Ambassador Joel Lion condemned a torchlight march in honor of Bandera. In response, the Nazis held a rally at the Israeli Embassy demanding that Israel and “the Jews” apologize for Communism and the Holodomor.[\[850\]](#)

Renowned Nazi hunter Efraim Zuroff, head of the Simon Wiesenthal Center’s Jerusalem office, said the promotion of Biletsky’s deputy Troyan to police chief was “very worrying,” and “sends the worst possible message about the intentions of the new Ukrainian government. If they are appointing people like this to positions of such importance and power, it is a very dangerous signal to the Jewish community of Ukraine.” He continued, “This is a very strange way of convincing the justifiably concerned Jewish world that there is no intention to encourage fascist sympathies or neo-Nazi activities.”[\[851\]](#)

Oleksandr Feldman, president of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee and a member of the Ukrainian parliament, wrote for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he had been trying without success to get the Fatherland and

UDAR parties to break their alliance with Svoboda. He said that not only were Svoboda and Right Sector worrisome, but that there were many other anti-Semites among the Maidan movement, for example putting on an anti-Jewish play on New Year's Eve and Svoboda-sponsored torchlight parades in honor of Bandera.[\[852\]](#) Washington's own Radio Liberty described the founding ceremony of the National Corps Party, which was based on Biletsky's group Patriot of Ukraine: "That inaugural ceremony arguably had pomp more reminiscent of 1930s Germany than of postwar democracy. It included nationalist chants, raised fists, and a torchlight march through central Kyiv."[\[853\]](#)

World Jewish Congress (WJC) president Ronald Lauder wrote a letter of protest to the leader of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC) in the summer of 2013. He told the church's Patriarch Filaret, "I was horrified to see photographs . . . of young Ukrainians wearing the dreaded SS uniform with swastikas clearly visible on their helmets." He asked the church to "prevent any further rehabilitation of Nazism or the SS" in Ukraine.[\[854\]](#) In 2016, the WJC complained—along with the Wiesenthal Center[\[855\]](#)—that the government was renaming the most important boulevard in Kiev after Bandera. The group's CEO Robert Singer said that "[i]t is ironic and perplexing that the Kyiv municipality would decide to honor a man whose followers joined the German death squads in murdering the Jews of Ukraine during the Holocaust," noting that it was also at the same time "planning to build Ukraine's first Holocaust museum."[\[856\]](#)

The Washington-based National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry (NCSEJ), formerly known as the National Council for Soviet Jewry

(NCSJ), wrote to President Poroshenko to “protest in the strongest possible terms” after the Ukrainian Order of Freedom was awarded to Vasil Kvasnovsky, an anti-Semitic author who blamed the Holodomor on Ukrainian Jews and had helped found the Spanish Svoboda party.[\[857\]](#) They later put out a statement condemning recent anti-Semitic attacks in Ukraine and asked the police to investigate them.[\[858\]](#)

Then-Israeli Education Minister Naftali Bennett released a report in January 2018 saying there had been a major recent increase in anti-Semitic incidents, including violent assaults, in western Ukraine, more than any other nation in the former Soviet Union.[\[859\]](#)

In 2017, the Israeli liberal daily *Haaretz* worried when the western city of Vinnitsa dedicated a statue to Symon Petliura,[\[860\]](#) the leader of the Ukrainian People’s Republic at a time when as many as 50,000 Jews were killed in pogroms during the Russian Civil War between 1918 and 1921.[\[861\]](#)

This is the only country in the world where these questions are at issue. Other major European nationalist parties like the French National Rally and BNP do not go around making heroes out of Hitler’s death squads. In Germany, a national party leader was criminally convicted in 2024 for daring to cross that line by using a slogan of the Nazi party’s SA stormtroopers, “Everything for Germany!”[\[862\]](#)

## **De-recognizing Russian**

In 1991, the Rada had passed a Declaration of the Rights of Nationalities of Ukraine, promising official status for any major minority language group in

the country. Ukraine's 1996 constitution guaranteed "the free development, use and protection of [the] Russian [language]." [\[863\]](#) But the Yushchenko administration, after the 2004 Orange Revolution, launched a sort of codified culture war of Galician Ukrainian nationalism against the predominantly ethnic Russian people of the south and east. This included a ham-handed attempt at Ukrainianization, including efforts to marginalize the use of Russian in education and public documents. [\[864\]](#)

But under Yanukovych, in 2012, the Rada passed the Kivalov-Kolesnichenko Law, which allowed the use of other languages in official matters if regional parliaments agreed. Petro writes that "[h]alf of Ukraine's regions immediately voted to do so. The passage of this law, however, similarly galvanized Ukrainian nationalists." [\[865\]](#) After the 2014 coup, the first act of the new Rada was to repeal Kivalov-Kolesnichenko, a top demand of Svoboda. [\[866\]](#) Though ultimately Acting President Turchynov did not sign it, this was still taken as a declaration of war against the people of the east. [\[867\]](#)

Turchynov's successor, Poroshenko, signed a similar bill in 2017 that made Ukrainian the required language in all public schools from the fifth grade up. Poles, Romanians, Hungarians and Russians, all of which have large communities in Ukraine, tried to prevent it. Russia denounced the law as an attempt to "forcefully establish a mono-ethnic language regime in a multinational state." [\[868\]](#) This came after a series of measures when the Zhytomyr, Lviv and Ternopil regions banned movies, books and songs in Russian, [\[869\]](#) and the national parliament mandated quotas for Ukrainian-language broadcasting over TV and radio. [\[870\]](#)

Our government insists the regime in Kiev is a democracy, but that is little more than a hoax. Twice in 10 years, the U.S. directly intervened to put their friends in power. Russian-leaning parties are separated from their voters by the conflict in the east[\[871\]](#) or outright banned, and the new regime has waged a full-scale culture war against them. Not that they had much choice at that point. When parliament refused to honor Bandera and the UPA in October 2014, approximately 8,000 members of Right Sector and C14 descended on Kiev and attacked police guarding the building.[\[872\]](#)

## **Even Freedom House?**

April Gordon from George Soros's Freedom House, in a report about rising nationalism and racialism across Eurasia, wrote that though the most right-wing parties in Ukraine had not done so well in the 2019 election, "the narrow vision of pro-Ukrainian nationalist orthodoxy and vehement anti-Russian rhetoric championed by Svoboda and its allies became a dominant political narrative" within "mainstream political discourse." They had already won. "With his slogan 'Army, language, faith!' former President Petro Poroshenko helped to popularize an exclusivist brand of patriotism that continues to draw significant support from both moderate and radical segments of society." She added, "Poroshenko's political rhetoric ultimately culminated in a series of severe legal measures purporting to preserve Ukrainian identity, but which often infringe upon the rights of the country's minority groups."[\[873\]](#) Not that they said they were sorry for installing these people in power.

# **Losing Crimea**

## **Oops**

Far from getting away with the coup cleanly, the reaction came right away. On February 22, 2014, Reuters reported that the U.S. had warned Russia not to invade in the aftermath of the coup after fistfights had broken out in Crimea and some eastern cities between what they called “supporters of the new, pro-EU order in Kiev and those anxious to stay close to Moscow.” Obama’s National Security Advisor Susan Rice went on TV to try to talk them out of it. The administration had won the first round. Now they were trying to call “time out.”[\[874\]](#)

## **Crimean History**

Russia, under Catherine the Great, won the Crimean Peninsula from the Turks back in 1783, the same year Benjamin Franklin, John Jay and John Adams negotiated America’s peace with Great Britain after the Revolutionary War, four years before our Constitution had even been written. It is part of Russia like Virginia is part of the United States of America. Think about how important West Point is to New Yorkers or the Alamo is to Texans. The Russians lost more than 200,000 soldiers fighting to keep Crimea out of the hands of the Brits, French and Ottomans in the Crimean War in the 1850s, an attempt to kick them out of their Sevastopol base.[\[875\]](#) Crimea lost another 100,000 to the Germans and Romanians in World War II, a sacrifice which may have helped to save the USSR from

being conquered by the Third Reich.[\[876\]](#) The peninsula hosts Russia's Black Sea Fleet at their only year-round warm-water port at Sevastopol, granting direct access to the Mediterranean.[\[877\]](#) You could see why they consider it important. Let some foreign power try to take San Diego away from the U.S.A. and see what happens to them.

The only reason Crimea was under Ukrainian control at all was because Soviet First Secretary and Premier Nikita Khrushchev gave it to them in 1954 as a "gift" to commemorate the 300th anniversary of the union between the two nations[\[878\]](#) and strengthen Ukrainian Communist Party support for his own rise to power after the death of Stalin. He also needed to consolidate Ukraine's place in the Soviet empire after finally crushing the U.S.-backed nationalist UPA uprising in the country's west.[\[879\]](#) At that time it made no real difference since the "republics" were all answerable to the Kremlin first anyway.

Due in part to ethnic cleansing by Stalin's regime in the 1940s,[\[880\]](#) the population in Crimea is something like 60 percent Russian, 13 percent Turkic Tatars and 25 percent Ukrainian.[\[881\]](#) In the generation between the fall of the Soviet Union and the events of the last decade, Crimea had maintained a great deal of autonomy from the central government in Kiev.

## **Post-USSR**

In January 1991, more than 90 percent of Crimea's voters chose to break away from Ukraine and join the Union Treaty with Moscow.[\[882\]](#) But after the failed Communist coup that August, Ukraine immediately declared independence from the USSR and the Crimean parliament chose to stay

with Ukraine until attempting to declare independence themselves in a short-lived political maneuver in May 1992.[\[883\]](#) At that time, the British spy agency MI6 warned Prime Minister John Major that Ukraine would surely intervene to prevent the election, which “will arouse passions among nationalists in Kiev and Moscow and could stir up inter-ethnic conflict within Crimea.” One analyst warned Major, “There must be a real possibility that the situation will slip out of control. That could mean violence in Crimea, and serious confrontation between Russia and Ukraine.” Luckily the situation did not come to a head then, but it just goes to show that Western leaders knew—or should have known—what kind of fire they were playing with when intervening in such hotly contested territory. Rodric Braithwaite, the former ambassador to Moscow, told the prime minister, “It is not entirely clear, even to the Ukrainians, still less to the Russians, that Ukraine is a real country. Hence the tensions between the two. For Russians, the Ukraine is an integral part of Russia, its history and its culture.”[\[884\]](#)

Sergei Stankevich, President Yeltsin’s envoy to the Soviet Republics in the last days of the USSR, explained that they had made a handshake deal with Ukraine’s new President Leonid Kravchuk to update the arrangement over Crimea after independence: it would remain part of Ukraine, but with almost complete autonomy from the central government, while Russia would keep the Black Sea Fleet and lease the Sevastopol base. Yeltsin’s priority was convincing Ukraine to give up the nuclear weapons left on their territory and maintaining control of Sevastopol, so he decided not to



create a new controversy over reincorporating the peninsula under direct Russian control.[\[885\]](#)

In May 1992, the Crimean Supreme Soviet, as it was still called, pushed for a referendum on independence “in alliance with other states” to be held in August. Nikolai Bagrov, the chair of the body, then clarified that it was not a vote for secession from Ukraine, whose new constitution declared sovereignty over Crimea. Kiev reacted harshly though, demanding the referendum be canceled. Through negotiation they compromised. Ukraine passed a new law recognizing Crimea as an “autonomous republic” with the right to its own constitution, and Crimea canceled the independence vote, amended its constitution and passed new laws to get into compliance with Kiev.[\[886\]](#)

In the fall of 1993, Yeltsin made a deal with President Kravchuk whereby Russia would forgive a \$2.5 billion debt in exchange for Ukraine’s part of the Black Sea Fleet and continued control of the Sevastopol naval base. President Clinton approved of this deal, only worrying that the Ukrainians would back out.[\[887\]](#)

In 1994, Crimea elected a president, Yuri Meshkov, who wanted to separate from Ukraine and join Russia. Later that year, after Leonid Kuchma became president of Ukraine, Crimea held a referendum to declare more autonomy from Kiev, establish dual Ukrainian-Russian citizenship and increase the power of the Crimean president. The Clinton administration sent John Quigley of the OSCE to negotiate a deal. They were very far apart, but Russia was too weak to get involved and incorporate Ukraine, so Quigley came up with a plan for autonomy

including international supervision. He wrote it up as a treaty and proposed it to the OSCE official in charge of minority issues. The boss was “horrified” and killed it. Rather than resolving anything, the OSCE got nothing done beyond holding one conference in Italy.[\[888\]](#)

The Ukrainian Rada then abolished Crimea’s 1992 constitution and the presidency itself and otherwise strengthened Kiev’s control over the peninsula.[\[889\]](#) With Yeltsin’s support, they sent special forces to arrest the Crimean government and deport its new president to Russia.[\[890\]](#) According to the State Department, there had been “overwhelming support” for the Crimean president’s moves to allow dual-citizenship and assert more power away from Kiev.[\[891\]](#) Ukraine and Russia continued to quibble about their shared ownership of Sevastopol and the status of the Black Sea Fleet for a few more years,[\[892\]](#) and in February 1998 Crimea held another referendum on joining Russia, reinstating the 1992 constitution and adopting Russian as the official language. But by October the Crimeans had backed all the way down: they ratified a new constitution that made Ukrainian the official language of the peninsula—even though 97 percent spoke Russian—and reaffirmed its subordinate status to Ukraine. That was the end of the major post-Cold War disputes over Crimea until 2014.[\[893\]](#)

After the successful Maidan putsch, which the *Washington Post* editorial board supported, they still warned against the danger that Ukraine “will split along geographic lines as Russian speakers in the east of the country, perhaps supported by Moscow, reject the new political order.” They said it was important that the new coup regime “adopt conciliatory policies that reassure Russian-speaking Ukrainians that they will not face

retaliation or discrimination and that democracy and the rule of law will prevail.” They added that “[m]embers of Mr. Yanukovych’s party ought to be included in the new cabinet and criminal investigations of the ousted regime limited.”[\[894\]](#) Their columnist Eugene Robinson also cautioned Obama, saying he should “anticipate that if far-right figures shape the policies of the new government, tensions between the eastern and western parts of the country will get worse, not better.” He said that in eastern cities they do not want to rejoin Russia, but that could change if Kiev discriminated against them.[\[895\]](#) This sound advice was not followed.

Once the new government was firmly in power, the three former post-USSR Ukrainian presidents, Kravchuk, Kuchma and Yushchenko, all called for the government to break the Kharkiv Pact with Russia, which allowed the Russian Black Sea Fleet to remain in Sevastopol on lease after the Cold War.[\[896\]](#)

As recently as December 2013, in the midst of the Maidan protest movement, the Russians were still offering discounted methane gas in exchange for “better terms” for the stationing of the Black Sea Fleet at Sevastopol, as they had done when they struck a bargain with Yanukovych to extend the lease in 2010.[\[897\]](#)

Harvard Professor Graham Allison wrote just before the referendum that Obama and the allies should propose what he called the “Belgian solution”—permanent neutrality—for Ukraine to prevent the “special case” of Crimea and eastern and southern Ukraine from blowing up into a war, since “Ukraine’s current borders are both artificial and accidental.”[\[898\]](#) Again, it is enough to show that things could have gone another way.

## **Korsun Bus Attack**

On February 20, 2014, in the Cherkassy region, a group of counter-protesters on buses traveling back to Crimea after losing the protest wars in Kiev were ambushed by Right Sector, who broke all the windows, forced the passengers out and set the buses on fire. People were beaten and threatened. One man described his experience in a documentary, saying they put a gun to his head and asked him, “Well, will you come to Kiev again, Russian bastard?” He added, “They tore my passport and wrote ‘traitor’ in it. When I left the bus, I was batted in the head and fell into a ditch. When I came to my senses, they brought me to my knees and forced me to sing the national anthem of Ukraine and shout ‘Glory to the heroes!’” Another told them, “[W]e will come to Crimea, and if you do not speak Ukrainian we’ll slit your throats.”[\[899\]](#)

## **Little Green Men**

Though Putin later said that he had decided to seize Crimea on the night of the coup in Kiev,[\[900\]](#) it was not until after the former presidents’ threat to kick the Russians out of Sevastopol that he moved to take control of the peninsula. On February 27, armed men seized the parliament and oversaw the supposed election of a new prime minister and passage of a resolution declaring a referendum on autonomy, which was later changed to a vote on rejoining the Russian Federation.[\[901\]](#) The next day, Putin ordered his men to leave their bases and take control of the peninsula in a single, successful coup de main.[\[902\]](#)

Reportedly, four people were killed in total: two Ukrainian soldiers apparently shot by Russian marines or sailors,[\[903\]](#) as well as one local cop[\[904\]](#) and one Russian shot by a Ukrainian.[\[905\]](#) The Crimean Supreme Soviet then held a referendum, and more than a supermajority of the people voted to join the Russian Federation.[\[906\]](#) Contemporaneous exit polling,[\[907\]](#) and later independent polling by American and European firms, including Pew and Gallup, confirmed the results.[\[908\]](#) It is too bad for the minority who didn't want to change allegiance—the Tatars boycotted the vote[\[909\]](#)—but these are nation states and supermajority votes are as close as humanity can get to full consensus on such large questions involving independence and sovereignty. Forcing all Crimeans to stay with Ukraine despite overwhelming opinion against it could be even more unjust. Support for independence and/or reintegration with Russia had remained above 50 percent since the end of the Soviet Union.[\[910\]](#) In 2017, the vast majority of Crimeans surveyed said they preferred the status quo, or would vote to rejoin Russia again if given the opportunity.[\[911\]](#)

Journalist Rick Sterling traveled to Crimea in March 2023 with the Center for Citizen Initiatives (CCI), a group that has long promoted closer ties between America and Russia. They are not supported by Russia, though they used to take money from USAID in the 1990s. Sterling interviewed a wide range of Crimeans, including some from the Tatar minority. All agreed that they preferred to be part of Russia, citing the 2014 coup, language law, Korsun bus attack and other provocations against them and their culture, as well as infrastructure improvements that they say the neglectful Kiev government never made. The change of sovereignty there may have been

illegal, but then, as Sterling points out, so was America's support for the breakup of Yugoslavia, the seizure of Kosovo and CIA-backed secession of South Sudan.[\[912\]](#)

Crimean leaders and Putin referred to the "Kosovo precedent" to justify their coup, with the Russian president directly quoting from their arguments in the international courts. "We keep hearing from the United States and Western Europe that Kosovo is some special case. What makes it so special in the eyes of our colleagues? It turns out that it is the fact that the conflict in Kosovo resulted in so many human casualties. Is this a legal argument?" he asked. "The ruling of the International Court says nothing about this."[\[913\]](#) And of course they lied about those casualties to start that war.[\[914\]](#)

Putin explained that "NATO remains a military alliance, and we are against having a military alliance making itself at home right in our backyard or in our historic territory." He joked, "I simply cannot imagine that we would travel to Sevastopol to visit NATO sailors. Of course, most of them are wonderful guys, but it would be better to have them come and visit us, be our guests, rather than the other way around."[\[915\]](#)

For their part, the Obama administration and other Western leaders focused their efforts on castigating Russia, demanding their withdrawal and threatening consequences if they did not, rather than engaging in any good-faith diplomacy to dial down tensions.[\[916\]](#) They kicked Russia out of the Group of Eight Industrialized Nations (G8), closed the Russia-NATO Council, suspended scheduled EU-Russia meetings and announced new sanctions against Russian government officials and corporations.[\[917\]](#)

Victoria Nuland all but declared that the purpose of the sanctions was to achieve regime change in Russia in testimony to the U.S. Senate. Citing various economic statistics showing their precarious position, she imagined an entire chain of consequences. First, “the current nationalistic fever will break in Russia,” which will then “give way to a sweaty and harsh realization of the economic costs.” Next, “Russia’s citizens” will conclude that the Kremlin had “squandered [their] national wealth on adventurism, interventionism and the ambitions of a leader who cares more about empire than his own citizens”—a polite way of saying the U.S. and its allies were waging an economic war in an attempt to destabilize Russia as punishment for their intervention in Crimea.[\[918\]](#)

## **Return of the King**

Russia’s taking of Crimea was a major escalation which destabilized Ukraine even further and made the country’s divisions that much deeper, not to mention heightened the distrust between Russia and the Western powers and eroded of the principle of national sovereignty.[\[919\]](#) But Vladimir Putin is not trying to recreate the USSR or even the old Russian empire. Professor Mearsheimer explained, “[T]here is virtually no evidence that [Putin] was bent on taking Crimea, much less any other territory in Ukraine, before [February 22],” adding that it took the Obama administration “by complete surprise and appears to have been a spontaneous reaction to Yanukovych’s ouster. Right afterward, even Putin said he opposed Crimean secession, before quickly changing his mind.”[\[920\]](#)

President Obama himself—at once confessing to his government’s intervention in Ukrainian affairs and dismissing propaganda that Putin was determined to reestablish Russian dominance in all of Eastern Europe and more—said, “Mr. Putin made this decision around Crimea and Ukraine, not because of some grand strategy but essentially because he was caught off-balance by the protests in the Maidan, and Yanukovych then fleeing after we had brokered a deal to transition power in Ukraine.”[\[921\]](#) The president elaborated, as paraphrased by *The Atlantic*’s Jeffrey Goldberg, “Ukraine is a core Russian interest but not an American one, so Russia will always be able to maintain escalatory dominance there.” The president told Goldberg, “The fact is that Ukraine, which is a non-NATO country, is going to be vulnerable to military domination by Russia no matter what we do.” He then challenged, “Now, if there is somebody in this town that would claim that we would consider going to war with Russia over Crimea and eastern Ukraine, they should speak up and be very clear about it.” Pretty rich for a guy who just overthrew the government there, causing the crisis, but at least he was not worse.[\[922\]](#)

Obama later told *Politico*: “There’s a reason why there was not an armed invasion of Crimea: because Crimea was full of a lot of Russian speakers and there was some sympathy to the view that Russia was representing its interests.”[\[923\]](#) His hawkish former ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, gave a similar interview to *The Atlantic* in July 2014. They paraphrased him also admitting that the seizure of Crimea and the rest of Russia’s anti-Western turn was a reaction to at least perceived U.S. intervention against Russia and its interests: “The lavish Sochi Olympics



and the decision to release imprisoned Russian businessman Mikhail Khodorkovsky were the actions of a nation trying to assimilate into the world; the crisis in Ukraine imperiled Putin's dream of creating an eastern version of the EU." He said it was the Russian president's belief—based on U.S.-financed protests in Russia in 2012, which Putin blamed on McFaul himself, as well as the violent overthrow of Yanukovych—that "American grand strategy was geared toward undermining him at every turn." Only then did Putin decide to react. "The good news is that this is not part of a grand strategy where first they take Crimea, then eastern Ukraine, then Moldova, and then a piece of Estonia. This was a response to the collapse of the government in Kiev," McFaul added.[\[924\]](#) Even then-CIA Director John Brennan later acknowledged that Putin thought Russia's loss of Ukraine was a historical wrong, but admitted that "he felt as though he needed to act," because "Mr. Putin wanted to stop also what he thought was an eastern march on the part of the Western powers, NATO [and the] EU."[\[925\]](#)

Along these same lines, Russia expert and hawk Michael Kofman later said that "the Russians are amazed that we think they want to take the Baltics. They just find it incredible. They're going to go into the Baltics—which they have no use for—and take on the world's pre-eminent military alliance? It's crazy."[\[926\]](#) RAND Corporation experts Stephanie Pezard and Ashley Rhoades wrote in 2020 that "Russia's leaders likely did not anticipate the crossing of one of their redlines as a result of the Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine, and were likely in a reactionary mode rather than implementing a predetermined strategy."[\[927\]](#)

UCLA Professor Daniel Treisman wrote an in-depth report for *Foreign Affairs* showing why Putin's move in Crimea was almost certainly a spur-of-the-moment decision to protect the naval base at Sevastopol, and not part of a long-term plan to recreate the Russian empire and absorb all ethnic-Russian populations left behind in the former Soviet states. They were completely unprepared, not even knowing whether the plan was autonomy or annexation, or which local politicians to work with.[\[928\]](#)

As Mearsheimer later told a reporter, "What happened is that this major crisis broke out, and we [the American foreign policy establishment] had to assign blame, and of course we were never going to blame ourselves. We were going to blame the Russians." He added, "So we invented this story that Russia was bent on aggression in Eastern Europe. Putin is interested in creating a greater Russia, or maybe even re-creating the Soviet Union."[\[929\]](#)

## **Princess Fiona**

In a perfect example of this mythmaking, once again boasting that she had warned W. Bush not to promise NATO membership for Ukraine and Georgia at Bucharest—after having declared that one must be a victim of a Russian "psychological warfare campaign" to agree with her about how provocative it was—Fiona Hill later had the courage to claim that just months after Bucharest, "Russia invaded Georgia. Ukraine got Russia's message loud and clear. It backpedaled on NATO membership for the next several years." Not only that, but "in 2014, Ukraine wanted to sign an association agreement with the European Union, thinking this might be a

safer route to the West. Moscow struck again, accusing Ukraine of seeking a back door to NATO, annexing Ukraine's Crimean peninsula and starting an ongoing proxy war in Ukraine's southeastern Donbas region." She concluded, "The West's muted reactions to both the 2008 and 2014 invasions emboldened Mr. Putin."

Perhaps to save space the *Times* editors decided to omit the part about Georgia attacking and attempting to reabsorb South Ossetia while killing Russian peacekeeping troops there, as well as that whole violent overthrow of the democratically elected president of Ukraine in the Western-backed "Maidan revolution," after Yanukovych opted not to sign that deal and prominent leaders began threatening the status of the naval base at Sevastopol. More likely, Hill simply preferred readers believe that Russia invaded Georgia on a whim and annexed Crimea and "started" the war in the Donbas in reaction to Ukraine's attempt to sign with the EU. So she lied instead.[\[930\]](#) It was also completely false that Ukraine "backpedaled" on NATO membership after the Georgia war. In fact, Yushchenko had demanded a MAP immediately.[\[931\]](#) The *Times*, which changes their mind about who shot first in Georgia based on whatever mood reporter C.J. Chivers is in on any given day,[\[932\]](#) uncritically relayed her disinformation: American weakness in the face of unrelenting Russian aggression had caused both conflicts.

## **Backdraft**

If "blowback" refers to the long-term consequences of secret foreign policies that catch the population off guard and leave them open to false

interpretations about the nature of a conflict,[\[933\]](#) “backdraft” is the short-term consequences of overt policies blowing up right in our face. This is borrowed from the term for when a firefighter kicks in a door, accidentally providing oxygen to a heated and fuel-filled room, causing a massive explosion.[\[934\]](#) Unfortunately, the story most often fed to the American public resembles the omission-riddled takes from Fiona Hill and the *Times* or PBS *Frontline*: Crimea is a piece of territory; Putin took it. They make no mention of the coup in Kiev, the unique history of Crimea’s sovereignty, Moscow’s important naval base, or any of the threats against the peninsula’s special status or violence against its people.[\[935\]](#)

The War Party must truncate the antecedents in this story and pretend the conflict began when Russia absorbed Crimea because it is their fault and they do not want to take responsibility for their actions. So the American people are led to believe, again, that trouble keeps finding us no matter how hard our government tries to get along with everyone.

Then, worst of all, in their supposedly defensive reaction, they doubled down and made things worse.

## **The New Cold War**

In the aftermath of Crimea and the start of the Donbas conflict in April 2014, Obama announced the onset of the new Cold War in an interview with the *Times*. That is what they called it, “an updated version of the Cold War strategy of containment.” Obama wanted to “cut off [Russia’s] economic and political ties to the outside world, limiting its expansionist

ambitions in its own neighborhood and effectively making it a pariah state.”[\[936\]](#)

The late Russia expert Stephen Cohen and his wife Katrina vanden Heuvel, publisher of *The Nation*, denounced Obama for leading America down this path with such recklessness and dishonesty: “Future historians will note that in April 2014, nearly a quarter-century after the end of the Soviet Union, the White House declared a new Cold War on Russia.” They added that “in a grave failure of representative democracy, there was scarcely a public word of debate, much less opposition, from the American political or media establishment.”[\[937\]](#)

The next year, Obama released his new National Security Strategy. The reset was officially canceled. Instead of cooperation, the new document described Russia only as a threat to be contained.[\[938\]](#)

## **Crystal City**

*Harper’s Magazine* Washington editor Andrew Cockburn reported that he had a source who had been at a big party in Crystal City outside of Washington, D.C.—an area heavy with military contractors and lobbyists—in March 2014, when it was announced that Russian sailors and marines were seizing Crimea. The mood was “borderline euphoric,” as they all started laughing and cheering and celebrating the escalation of the conflict. Forget patrolling Pashtun peasants in Paktika Province, a massive buildup against the renewed Russian Threat was exactly the conflict these men were hoping for—endangering the future of our entire species so they can keep making money for nothing.[\[939\]](#)

# Donetsk Dissent

## Protests

After the coup, repeal of their language status and bus attack, large protests broke out among mostly ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Kharkiv[\[940\]](#) and the Donbas[\[941\]](#) in eastern Ukraine.[\[942\]](#) Fistfights broke out between opposing groups of demonstrators in both places.[\[943\]](#) Protesters occupied government buildings in Donetsk and Luhansk starting on March 1, 2014, refusing to recognize the authority of the new junta. They soon held referendums declaring their intent to achieve autonomy from Kiev.[\[944\]](#) Though they are almost always referred to as “pro-Russian separatists” or “Russian-backed separatists” in Western media, former Swiss intelligence officer and UN official Jacques Baud has clarified that is inaccurate; they were suing for autonomy, not full independence.[\[945\]](#) A protester told the *New York Times*: “After Maidan, the east of Ukraine felt outside the political process. They wanted to put in their president and didn’t ask us.”[\[946\]](#)

## 1994 Referendum

Back in 1994, Donetsk and Luhansk held referendums on federalism and the status of the Russian language in the Donbas. Though it was referred to as a poll and the results were never implemented, the votes revealed the stark differences between east and west Ukraine at the time.[\[947\]](#) These divisions have remained, highlighted by parliamentary and presidential

election results ever since.[\[948\]](#) Also very importantly, surveys over the years since independence showed that Ukrainians in large numbers identified much more with their city or their region—or with Russia—rather than as Ukrainians. In 2010, only 51.2 percent identified themselves as Ukrainians first, up from about 46 percent in 1992. Whereas in the Galician west the most extreme form of nationalism is prominent, in the rest of the country, especially the south and east, a real sense of national identity was lacking, and there was much less sympathy for Svoboda Party-type collectivism.[\[949\]](#)

## **The East's Maidan**

After the 2014 coup, Yanukovych's Party of Regions fell apart, leaving more marginal and radical figures to fill the power vacuum.[\[950\]](#) They held a coincidentally preplanned "congress of people's deputies" on February 21–22 in Kharkiv. Regional governors and mayors from the south and east passed a resolution saying they rejected the new Rada and asked oblast and local governments to assume all authority in Kharkiv, Donetsk, Luhansk, Dnipropetrovsk and Crimea Oblasts. They also recalled their members of the Rada in protest and demanded a broad decentralization of power.[\[951\]](#)

"Many Ukrainians want Russia to invade," reported *Time*'s Simon Shuster, explaining that for "many in Ukraine, a full-scale Russian military invasion would feel like a liberation." He added that "across the country's eastern and southern provinces, hundreds of thousands of people gathered to welcome the Kremlin's talk of protecting pro-Russian Ukrainians against the revolution that brought a new government to power." He attributed this

to fear generated by Russian propaganda about the threat of the new regime, what with Right Sector neo-Nazi Dimitry Yarosh and others embedded in its national security apparatus and all.[\[952\]](#)

On March 1 in Kharkiv, a crowd stormed the regional state administration building, beating up a pro-Maidan group that had attempted to occupy the first floor, but were later forced out by SBU troops. On March 5, demonstrators in Donetsk, led by local leaders such as Pavel Gubarev from the Progressive Socialist Party of Ukraine, again seized the administration building and announced that they refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new regime in Kiev. Gubarev was arrested the next day.[\[953\]](#)

On April 6, the protesters declared the “Donetsk People’s Republic” and demanded that the legislative assembly schedule a referendum on autonomous status. When the assembly refused, they formed their own, and declared independence on the 7th.[\[954\]](#) The administration buildings in Luhansk and Kharkiv were also temporarily occupied before being cleared out by SBU troops.[\[955\]](#) In Nikolaev, they failed to occupy the administration building, and their tent encampment was destroyed by a pro-Maidan “People’s Militia.”[\[956\]](#)

On April 8, Acting President Turchynov publicly threatened to launch an “anti-terrorist operation” against the dissidents “taking up arms” against Kiev, even though no one had yet.[\[957\]](#) The regime then announced the new SBU Antiterrorist Center and the team that would be leading the effort to put down the potential insurrection, which included Svoboda’s Andriy



Parubiy, the new secretary of the National Security and Defense Council.  
[\[958\]](#)

Even though Kiev launched their war against the east under the excuse of a Russian invasion, all of this happened before any Russians ever arrived on the scene.[\[959\]](#) Despite Russia's role in Crimea, Kiev's attack on the east was aggression against those who rejected the rule of the new regime, rather than defense against a Russian attack.[\[960\]](#)

## **Late to the Game**

Igor Girkin, a.k.a. Igor Strelkov ("Shooter"), a retired Russian military officer, was the first to seize buildings in Crimea before Russia's so-called "little green men" could be deployed.[\[961\]](#) He then seized Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVS) buildings in the cities of Slavyansk and Kramatorsk in Donetsk Oblast on April 12. Girkin/Strelkov would later be named defense minister of the new "Donetsk People's Republic." When they captured the MVS headquarters in Slavyansk, the mayor said the mob was made up of locals, known to him, showing that they were not Russian special forces like during the takeover in Crimea.[\[962\]](#)

According to Alexander Zhuchkovsky, who fought on the side of the Donbas rebels in the summer of 2014, it was unclear exactly to what degree Girkin/Strelkov was acting on direct orders from Russian intelligence, though his efforts were backed by important Russian oligarchs, presumably with the tacit support of the Kremlin.[\[963\]](#) Either way, let us not get carried away and deny the agency of the citizens of the Donbas who came out to support their cause.[\[964\]](#) After all, they were the ones who had won the last

election fair and square, thus necessitating the Western-backed putsch they were reacting against in the first place. Three-quarters of those surveyed in the east opposed Yanukovych's forced exit from office, and they had been protesting for a month already before Strelkov arrived on the scene.[\[965\]](#)

Nuland, however, insisted there was no comparison between the armed, masked, foreign-backed, government building-seizing protesters of the west and those of the east. The Maidan demonstrators had a permit. The pro-Russian protesters of the east, on the other hand, had guns, wore "baklavas" [sic], she said, and occupied government buildings. Nuland also denied that Washington spent "any money supporting the Maidan. That was a spontaneous movement," quite different from that in the east.[\[966\]](#) "There's nothing grassroots-seeming about it," Obama's UN Ambassador Samantha Power added.[\[967\]](#)

By the time Acting President Turchynov and his neo-Nazi infested war cabinet launched their supposed "Anti-Terrorist Operation" (ATO) on April 15, 2014, there had been some incidents of violence at largely peaceful protests across the Donbas.[\[968\]](#) But the only actual change in the situation on the ground was when Strelkov took over government buildings in Donetsk.[\[969\]](#) This was nowhere near a justification for the new regime to go to war against the people of the east. But the next morning, Ministry of Internal Affairs chief Arsen Avakov announced that he was sending forces to clear out the occupiers, deploying 700 soldiers, 20 armored personnel carriers and four helicopters to attack the rebels in Slavyansk.[\[970\]](#) Locals pointed out that the air force had been flying fighter jets low over their

protests, threateningly, from the beginning, showing their willingness to use force to crush the anti-Maidan movement.[\[971\]](#)

It was a drastic overreaction to events in the Donbas, but makes more sense as a consequence of Russia's seizure of Crimea in response to their coup, and Kiev's determination to prevent the same thing from happening again. Rather than negotiating, they would simply crush the revolt. Like Yanukovych's various attempts to violently clear the Maidan, the effort backfired, only driving more people in the region away from western Ukraine and towards Russia.[\[972\]](#) It is ironic too, because the people of the Donbas were far less amenable to breaking up with Ukraine or joining the Russian Federation than the Crimeans. If Kiev had been willing to negotiate in good faith with the dissenters in the east, especially promising to protect their economic interests in dealing with the rival EU and EEU trading blocs, it may have fatally undermined support for the new self-proclaimed republics and their leaders.[\[973\]](#)

## **Nyet-Negative**

It soon became clear that Putin had decided not to seize the Donbas the way he had taken Crimea that spring. In late April, Moscow had urged restraint by rebel forces taking control of eastern cities, but the rebels chose to ignore them again.[\[974\]](#) This was apparently what led to Strelkov's replacement. He had put the Russians in a position of having to protect those who had risen up under his leadership or watch them all be imprisoned or hanged.[\[975\]](#)

Not only did Putin refrain from sending his special operations forces to seize the territory, but he essentially disavowed the separatists.

In mid-April, a few days after the major fighting started, the Russians made a deal with Kiev that the eastern rebels would disarm and withdraw from the government buildings they had occupied. The locals denounced the deal and vowed to continue the fight.[\[976\]](#) On May 7, Putin told them not to hold referendums on full autonomy within Ukraine. “We believe that the most important thing is to create direct, full-fledged dialogue between the Kiev authorities and representatives of southeast Ukraine,” he said. “Because of this, we ask that representatives of southeast Ukraine, supporters of federalization in the country, postpone the May 11 referendum in order to create the necessary conditions for such a dialogue.”[\[977\]](#)

They ignored him and pressed on.[\[978\]](#) Denis Pushilin, apparently self-appointed leader of the “We Have One Goal” party and the new Donetsk People’s Republic, who had helped push for the referendums on autonomy,[\[979\]](#) soon asked Putin to “absorb” the province into the Russian Federation. Zhuchkovsky wrote that, by then, the “overwhelming fraction of locals” supported Russian annexation of the Donbas.[\[980\]](#) Putin told them to forget it.[\[981\]](#)

Aleksander Borodai, a Russian who had been an adviser to the prime minister of Crimea, was named prime minister of the Donetsk People’s Republic for the first few months after the rebels’ counter-coup in the east. He resigned in August, saying he thought locals, such as his successor Aleksandr Zakharchenko, should be in charge.[\[982\]](#) A cynic could read him

as meaning this for public relations reasons. Zakharchenko was assassinated in a bombing by Ukrainian forces in 2018.[\[983\]](#)

In April 2014, the BBC went to interview the locals and find out what motivated them. They referred to being called terrorists by the new government. They had seen schoolchildren chanting “hang the Russians” on Ukrainian TV and seemed mystified that divisions could have become so sharp. The BBC reporter noted that “at a time when politicians are saying they have agreed that the groups here will disarm, we are now learning that in fact new armed groups are being created.”[\[984\]](#)

Valery Bolotov, the so-called “people’s governor” of Luhansk, declared an ultimatum to Kiev’s forces in the province: swear allegiance to their new army or be considered enemies. Though it was unclear who fired first, by early May, the rebels had forcibly seized the state security agency building.[\[985\]](#)

In August 2016, Ukrainian Prosecutor General Yuriy Lutsenko released “the Glazyev Tapes.” These are alleged to be intercepted phone calls between Sergey Glazyev, a Putin adviser, and Russian and Ukrainian activists in southern and eastern Ukraine, from February and March 2014. They purport to show that Russia was behind the referendums in Donetsk and Luhansk, even choosing what percent the autonomy vote should come to. These clips have not been verified, and have apparently been edited; however, they seem like they are probably real.[\[986\]](#) But if they are genuine, they appear to reveal a lack of coordination between the Russians and the Donbas leaders more than a clear conspiracy between them. The separatists seem to have no idea what they are doing, and are possibly

drunk, while the Russians are depicted complaining about a request for just a few thousand dollars.[\[987\]](#)

In 2017, Reuters ran a piece saying local rebel leaders in the Donbas had told them they were answerable to Putin adviser Vladislav Surkov dating back to at least the summer of 2014.[\[988\]](#) However, the *Guardian* reported on election day that “[t]here were huge queues of people, almost all of whom said they were voting yes to separatism.”[\[989\]](#) Journalist Keith Gessen wrote that hundreds of thousands turned out to vote yes.[\[990\]](#)

Even if it were true, that would not substantially change the case made here. For the sake of argument, if we suppose that the majority of the people of the Donbas wanted to remain under the control of Kiev, the point is still that the U.S.-sponsored coup against Yanukovich, the new government and Nazi militias’ violence, threats against the Russian naval fleet and declaration of full-scale culture war against Russian speakers in eastern and southern Ukraine are what motivated Putin to intervene to the extent he did. It does not make it right. But it does make it the superpower’s responsibility as much as that of its new client regime and the local hegemon.

In early May, semi-official CIA ombudsman David Ignatius wrote that the administration was prepared to offer Russia a permanent assurance they would not bring Ukraine into NATO on the Finland model.[\[991\]](#) They never did. The United States government was not content with a neutral, buffer-state status for Ukraine. They had to try to take it.

## **The Odesa Massacre**

Protests had been held in Odesa for weeks after the coup in Kiev.[\[992\]](#) On May 2, 2014, there was a demonstration against the new regime as well as a large rally of Right Sector militiamen and football “ultras” nearby. The pro-Russian faction began to march. At first the two sides created barricades and threw rocks and bricks at each other. But then both started shooting. One on Right Sector’s side was killed.[\[993\]](#) The pro-Kiev faction then led a major assault on the pro-Russian camp in front of the Trade Union House. A leader of Right Sector later stated, “That day, we had to finish what they had started. They—this garbage. So, with my men, we decided to put an end to the camp of the Maison des Syndicats for good.”

Leaders at the pro-Russian camp tried to get the people to go home before Right Sector arrived, but they refused and attempted to hold their ground.[\[994\]](#) The Nazis chased a group into the Trade Unions House and set it on fire with Molotov cocktails,[\[995\]](#) killing 42 people.[\[996\]](#) Eight of them died after jumping to escape the flames,[\[997\]](#) while the crowd laughed and celebrated. At least 200 were wounded.[\[998\]](#) Teenage girls were filmed happily pouring gasoline into beer bottles for firebombs that were used to kill the people.[\[999\]](#) Survivors were beaten and arrested.[\[1000\]](#) Police did nothing to stop the violence and firefighters did not respond for 45 minutes while the victims burned to death.[\[1001\]](#)

Witnesses and journalists reported that as the building burned with people inside, a crowd shouted, “Jump, you scum!”[\[1002\]](#) “Glory to Ukraine!” and “Death to enemies!”[\[1003\]](#) Right Sector repeatedly boasted about the mass murder on their website, calling it a “bright page of our national history” and heavily implying Dimitry Yarosh’s direct

involvement.[\[1004\]](#) No one was ever held accountable.[\[1005\]](#) That same day, Kiev launched a massive attack on Slavyansk in Donetsk.[\[1006\]](#)

## **‘Anti-Terrorist Operation’**

### **Brennan Orders Attack**

Why did Kiev refuse to negotiate? The dissidents of the east were simply adopting their own extreme civil disobedience-type tactics until they could be certain their rights would be protected. Their declarations of sovereignty were not quite declarations of independence. The new prime minister, Arseniy Yatsenyuk, had promised to negotiate as late as April 11, 2014.

[\[1007\]](#) But the U.S. government did not urge talks and a rapid resolution to the crisis. CIA Director John O. Brennan came to Kiev on April 12 and 13.

[\[1008\]](#) *Forbes* magazine reported that “the covert war has begun.”[\[1009\]](#)

The overt one was on as well. Just one day later, Acting President Turchynov declared their new “Anti-Terrorist Operation” against the Donbas.[\[1010\]](#) The Obama administration demanded it. Kiev “has to respond,” they publicly insisted.[\[1011\]](#) Obama sent CIA Special Activities Division paramilitaries to train Ukrainian forces on sniper techniques, Javelin anti-tank missiles, evasion, new communications equipment and other irregular warfare skills in a program that continued until just before the worse war broke out in 2022. A senior agency official told a reporter this U.S.-trained Ukrainian cadre had become the “strong nucleus” of the current larger army.[\[1012\]](#) In May 2014, the German magazine *Bild* reported that the CIA presence was “intended to help Kiev terminate the



rebellion in the east of the country and build up a functioning security structure.”[\[1013\]](#)

The Ukrainian civil war was also already a global conflict, a proxy war between the United States and its NATO allies versus Russia.[\[1014\]](#) Obama immediately sent Pentagon experts to set up a long-term system for American military trainers and advisers to assist the new government in their war.[\[1015\]](#) In September, at the NATO conference in Wales, members declared that they “highly value Ukraine’s past and present contributions to all current Allied operations,” their intent to advance military “interoperability” with the alliance,[\[1016\]](#) and held a joint training exercise in Lviv.[\[1017\]](#) British and Canadian troops soon joined them.[\[1018\]](#)

Following the Maidan coup and the outbreak of war in the east, “high-level Russian diplomats” told foreign correspondent Eric Margolis that the United States and Russia were the closest to nuclear war since the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962.[\[1019\]](#) Echoing Raimondo’s call for partition after the 2004 Orange Revolution regime change operation, Margolis urged the great powers to divide the country before the war got any worse.[\[1020\]](#)

## **CIA’s Secret War**

Ten years later, in February 2024, the *New York Times* admitted the CIA had moved in immediately after the coup and launched a covert war against Russia. In a story handed to the *Times* by President Joe Biden’s White House, based on more than 200 interviews with U.S. officials, and seemingly meant to shore up support for Ukraine, they detailed how just four days after the coup, the new head of Ukrainian intelligence called the

CIA and MI6 and asked them to help rebuild their agency “from the ground up.”

The CIA sent “scores” of spies into the country, created 14 secret bases “along the Russian border,” from each of which they ran operations inside Russia. They describe watching the path of a drone on its way to strike inside the Russian city of Rostov. In 2016, the agency created and trained a new “commando force” called Unit 2245, which captured Russian drones and communications equipment for the spies to reverse-engineer and crack. Further, they revealed that the U.S. had trained an entire “new generation of Ukrainian spies” operating across Europe and other places with large contingents of Russian government employees. “U.S. officials were often reluctant to fully engage,” they wrote, “fearing that Ukrainian officials could not be trusted, and worrying about provoking the Kremlin.” In fact, they say that in the beginning those were President Obama’s specific orders: “strengthen Ukrainian intelligence agencies without provoking the Russians.”

According to this narrative, the Ukrainians then created a new group called the Fifth Directorate staffed with young men born after the fall of the Soviet Union—presumably all from the country’s west—who had no connection to Russia, and who despised all Russian speakers. The unit was created “to deploy behind enemy lines,” to “conduct operations and collect intelligence,” including for “targeted missile strikes,” as well as conduct assassinations against leaders of the Donbas so-called separatist forces, of which the agency denied all foreknowledge. When the Ukrainians botched a covert operation at a Russian air base in Crimea, it was Vice President

Biden, still in charge of Ukraine policy for the Obama White House, who called the Ukrainians to complain that “making arguments here is a hell of a lot harder now,” the sources claimed. While some wanted to back off, CIA Director Brennan argued the relationship was important because the Ukrainians were helping him with the investigation into alleged Russian meddling in the 2016 election.[\[1021\]](#)

Just like in Putin’s later accusations against the U.S. and its allies, the *Times* reported that the CIA had organized a meeting at The Hague with the British and Dutch where they agreed to work together. “The result,” they concluded, “was a secret coalition against Russia—and the Ukrainians were vital members of it.”[\[1022\]](#)

## **Putin Refuses the Donbas**

Donbas is a portmanteau of “Donets Coal Basin.” The region is made up of the eastern provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk. Though it is the most industrialized part of Ukraine, much of it is old Soviet-era factories that could never compete with modern technology in Western Europe. This is part of the reason they resisted joining the EU. It is also why Putin was reluctant to absorb the Donbas into the Russian Federation. He would have been taking on a desperately poor region that would have consumed more in subsidies and pensions than it could contribute to the gross national product, at least in the short term.[\[1023\]](#)

It appears to be confirmed by the rebels themselves that Putin sent deniable special operations types into the Donbas region to help defend it in August 2014.[\[1024\]](#) Like that or not, up until the end of February 2022, for

eight years, they did not invade the country with any conventional force or take any territory in the east. Again, when the Donbas region held a referendum for autonomy and its leaders asked to join the Russian Federation in May 2014, Putin refused.[\[1025\]](#) He would only help to maintain their autonomy from the hostile regime in Kiev.[\[1026\]](#) By the summer, the rebels were angry and denounced Putin for not helping their cause or placing them under Russia's protection.[\[1027\]](#) While solid majorities in the Donbas preferred independence or union with the Russian Federation, Moscow seemed content to use their presence to prevent Kiev from consolidating power over the east. Putin even told the new Donetsk and Luhansk "republics" to stop flying the Russian flag in September 2014.[\[1028\]](#)

## **Status Quo Canceled**

In the case of Crimea, the U.S. and its clients were threatening Russia's vital interest in their only warm-water naval port on the Black Sea. That is the main reason Putin moved there. Though there had been political controversy over Crimea since 1991,[\[1029\]](#) the status quo held for 23 years after the USSR's red flag came down, despite majority support there for rejoining Russia.[\[1030\]](#) The Kremlin had been happy to lease the port and otherwise stay out. It was the U.S. that forced the change in the situation, and it blew up in their face.

Anthony Cordesman, an analyst for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a generally hawkish U.S. think tank, wrote about the Russian point of view just a few months after the 2014 coup in Ukraine.

Perhaps most illuminating is his assumption, probably correct, that the American foreign policy establishment has virtually no self-awareness and must have everything spelled out from another trusted insider to begin to understand things in realistic terms. Referring to Russian concerns about color-coded revolutions past and future, he said they were perceived as a new approach to war against their interests. The policy was “seen as posing a potential threat to Russia in the near abroad, to China and Asian states not aligned with the U.S., and as a means of destabilizing states in the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia, and South Asia.”

Cordesman said that at a May 23 conference, “[k]ey Russian officers and officials presented a view of the U.S. and the West as deliberately destabilizing other nations for their own ends.” He added, “They describe such actions as having failed, and as a key source of terrorism. They see the West as rejecting partnership, and as threatening Russia along all of its borders with Europe.” Almost amazingly, Cordesman wrote, “The end result is a radically different reading of modern history, of U.S. and European strategy, their use of force, and U.S. and European goals and actions from any issued in the West and in prior Russian literature.” He said Western leaders might rationalize that they are only saying this for various other reasons; however, “[w]hat is critical is that the U.S. and Europe listen to what Russian military leaders and strategists are saying. These are not Russian views the U.S. and Europe can afford to ignore.”[\[1031\]](#)

## **Geneva Talks**

In April 2014, the new Ukrainian government, the U.S., Russia and the EU held talks in Geneva and adopted a “Declaration of Principles” for stopping the war early, simply calling for an end to fighting, the withdrawal of irregular armed groups from public buildings and areas and amnesty for those involved. There was no enforcement mechanism; it was just a joint statement.[\[1032\]](#)

When Petro Poroshenko was sworn in that June, he promised an end to the war and autonomy for the Donbas.[\[1033\]](#) But political pressures west of the Dnieper, including all the way to Washington, would not allow him to follow through on those promises. Viktor Medvedchuk, a billionaire oligarch who was close to Putin, and Nestor Shufrich, a Ukrainian parliamentarian from a pro-Russian party, had been appointed by Turchynov to lead the negotiations. According to Shufrich, the Donbas rebel leaders only had three demands: to be able to use the Russian language in official documents, and to be consulted on the appointment of the local state prosecutor and the appointment of the regional governor. By the middle of June they had worked out a process for reintegration of the east,[\[1034\]](#) but just after his victory at the ballot box, the new president declared, “I am not going to hold any dialogues with the criminals. You don’t talk to terrorists. The anti-terrorist operation will not and cannot last for months, it will last just for hours.”[\[1035\]](#)

Right Sector’s Dmitry Yarosh later boasted that his failed assault on the village of Slavyansk on Easter, April 20, 2014—in which three rebels and one Right Sector fighter were killed, and which Kiev and Right Sector spokespeople insisted at the time was a false-flag attack staged by the

Russians[[1036](#)]<sup>—</sup>was still a success because it ruined the Geneva peace talks.[[1037](#)] The ceasefire was canceled. Poroshenko then launched a massive assault to retake the entire region.[[1038](#)]

## **Luhansk**

Soon after Right Sector's Easter Day attack, Luhansk held a popular assembly which declared the creation of the Luhansk People's Republic (LPR) and scheduled two referendums on autonomy within Ukraine and joining the Russian Federation. A week later, they issued their demands: Kiev must recognize the new governor, grant amnesty to the protesters, make Russian an official state language and hold a referendum on the status of the oblast. Otherwise, they would join Donetsk's insurgency. On May 11, they voted to declare Luhansk a sovereign state.[[1039](#)] Across the region, city councils recognized the LPR, and the rebels seized government buildings in most of the cities and bigger towns.[[1040](#)]

At the end of May, the new Luhansk People's Republic and Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) announced the creation of the Union of People's Republics (UPR) between the two.[[1041](#)]

## **Conscription**

In April 2014, after war broke out in the Donbas, the already unprepared Ukrainian military suffered large defections to the other side and a basic unwillingness to fight on the part of the soldiers who remained.[[1042](#)] In response, the new government instituted mass conscription of young men

and forced them to fight under the threat of criminal conviction and prison. [\[1043\]](#) They even arrested a pro-Maidan, pro-Poroshenko journalist named Ruslan Kotsaba who spoke out against the new war and the draft, saying, “Don’t bother sending me a draft notice. . . . I would rather sit in jail for three to five years than go to the east to kill my Ukrainian brothers. This fear-mongering must be stopped,” and called for “all reasonable, adequate people to refuse this mobilization.” [\[1044\]](#) They charged him with treason and sentenced him to three and a half years. [\[1045\]](#) Amnesty International deemed him a prisoner of conscience and called for his release. [\[1046\]](#) He did 18 months before a court finally set him free. [\[1047\]](#) He was charged again for the same crime in 2021. [\[1048\]](#)

## **The Azov Battalion**

### **Patriot of Ukraine**

In April 2014, so much of the army had defected or refused to fight the pro-Russian militia that Turchynov, the former interim president, said he was “forced to turn to Ukrainian patriots and ask them to voluntarily defend our country,” by which he meant attack the people in the east. When asked about whether some of these “patriots” were Nazis, he simply replied, “Honestly, some of them had a dark side.” [\[1049\]](#) Right Sector and C14 took the initiative early on, forming groups of “little black men”—as opposed to Russia’s “little green men” in Crimea—and went around terrorizing autonomy-seeking groups in the east beginning in March.



The following month, Turchynov, Interior Minister Avakov and the interim government's secretary for national security, Right Sector's Andriy Parubiy, integrated the major Nazi militias into the newly formed Azov Battalion, and sent them to the east to fight.[\[1050\]](#) They were backed in part by billionaire oligarchs Serhiy Taruta[\[1051\]](#) and Igor Kolomoysky.[\[1052\]](#) The Obama White House praised the move as a measured step toward restoring law and order.[\[1053\]](#)

The militias quickly picked up the military's slack and made themselves indispensable on the battlefield and peaceful settlement impossible. The new government released Nazis from jail—including Andriy Biletsky, leader of the “ultra-nationalist” Patriot of Ukraine gang and the Social-National Assembly (SNA), who had been charged in a plot to blow up a statue of Vladimir Lenin[\[1054\]](#)—under the excuse they were all “political prisoners.”[\[1055\]](#) The first thing he did was lead a group which murdered two pro-Russian protesters in Kharkiv on March 14.[\[1056\]](#) His fellow-convict in the statue plot, Right Sector's Igor Mosiychuk, led a gang of thugs to take over a city council meeting in Vasilkov and forced all the members of the Party of Regions to resign. This was a scene repeated across Ukraine in the lead-up to the Maidan revolution and its aftermath. They attacked opposition mayors, governors, television stations and even the Supreme Court. The governor of Kherson was forced to resign at knife point. The mayor of Kharkiv was shot in the back.[\[1057\]](#) In mid-March, SBU officials met with a group of football ultras in Donetsk and insisted they arm themselves for war with their pro-Russian neighbors.[\[1058\]](#)

Biletsky, leader of the new Azov Battalion under the auspices of the Interior Ministry,[\[1059\]](#) soon recruited young militants and neo-Nazis from across Europe, including Russians, and went to war against the anti-Maidan rebels in the east.[\[1060\]](#) They led the assault on the eastern city of Mariupol just after the coup,[\[1061\]](#) killing 22 in an attack with Right Sector and the army on a dissident-controlled police station, successfully seizing the city from pro-Russian forces.[\[1062\]](#) The Azov movement continues to cite this victory as their first successful trial by fire and even claim it as a major turning point in the war.[\[1063\]](#) Biletsky was awarded the “Order for Courage”[\[1064\]](#) by then-President Poroshenko, and promoted to lieutenant colonel of police in August 2014. That September, when Azov was officially made a regiment of the national guard, he was promoted to commander.[\[1065\]](#)

Professor Petro, a former State Department special assistant for policy on the Soviet Union during the George Bush Sr. administration, wrote in *The Tragedy of Ukraine* that when the Ukrainian military refused orders to shoot at the locals, “[a]t this critical juncture, the Right Sector stepped in to ensure that the conflict would not end in a negotiated settlement that gave the region greater autonomy.”[\[1066\]](#) As Ron Paul Institute director Daniel McAdams, an experienced chronicler of Eastern European politics, said that July, “The Right Sector and these fascist groups, or neo-fascist groups, have been subsumed into the National Guard because the regular Ukrainian army has proven itself ineffective. It doesn’t have the stomach to fight against its own citizens.” However, “the Right Sector types have no problem doing this and so they are the ones that are in the National Guard. They’re the

ones that are moving on the East in the most aggressive way—the stormtroopers.”[\[1067\]](#)

The Ukrainian government quickly became dependent on the Azov Battalion in battle.[\[1068\]](#) The *Times* reported in August 2014 on the new pattern of fighting by Kiev’s forces. “The regular army bombards separatist positions from afar, followed by chaotic, violent assaults by some of the half-dozen or so paramilitary groups surrounding Donetsk who are willing to plunge into urban combat.” They said the militias are “angry and, at times, uncontrollable. One known as Azov, which took over the village of Marinka, flies a neo-Nazi symbol resembling a Swastika as its flag.”[\[1069\]](#) PBS *Frontline* reporter James Jones caught up with the young neo-Nazi he had interviewed back during the Maidan uprising out in Donetsk, then fighting with Right Sector. He described their group attacking a building full of separatists in the town of Kramatorsk, killing “a lot of them.”[\[1070\]](#)

In December 2014, the BBC’s David Stern warned against Russian propaganda narratives that the Ukrainian government was dominated by Nazis. However, he added, “Ukrainian officials and many in the media err to the other extreme. They claim that Ukrainian politics are completely fascist-free. This, too, is plain wrong.” After noting that Poroshenko awarded a medal to a Belarusian fascist who had fought in the battle for the Donetsk airport, and the Azov Battalion’s close relationship with the security forces, he said that “although Ukraine is emphatically not run by fascists, far-right extremists seem to be making inroads by other means, as in the country’s police department.”[\[1071\]](#)

The fact that these men proudly display swastikas, sonnenrads (black suns),[\[1072\]](#) the “Wolfsangel”[\[1073\]](#) and the “Totenkopf” skull and crossbones symbol of Hitler’s 2nd *Waffen Schutzstaffel* (SS) Das Reich Panzer Division death squads all over their clothing and gear[\[1074\]](#)—the same one on SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler’s hat[\[1075\]](#)—might have been a tip-off as to what sort of men they were. Even the *Times* called them “openly neo-Nazi” a couple of times before dropping it.[\[1076\]](#)

“Ukraine’s government is unrepentant about using the neo-Nazis,” Tom Parfitt wrote in the *Telegraph*. Anton Gerashchenko, an adviser to Interior Minister Avakov, told him, “The most important thing is their spirit and their desire to make Ukraine free and independent. A person who takes a weapon in his hands and goes to defend his motherland is a hero. And his political views are his own affair.”[\[1077\]](#)

In June 2015, in response to an exposé in the Daily Beast about U.S. forces training Nazi militias,[\[1078\]](#) Congressman John Conyers of Michigan added an amendment to that year’s defense spending bill banning “arms, training, and other assistance to the neo-Nazi Ukrainian militia, the Azov Battalion.”[\[1079\]](#) But the next January, at the behest of the Pentagon, the Democratic Party leadership stripped that provision from the new version of the bill.[\[1080\]](#) However, even when the Conyers amendment was thought to be in effect, it was still unenforceable. As Will Cathcart and Joseph Epstein wrote in 2015, when they talked to Azov’s sergeant Ivan Kharkiv, he “fondly” recalled all the training and support the U.S. had given him and his men, even mentioning “U.S. volunteers engineers and medics that are still currently assisting them.” He said they were grateful for the

support they were getting from the diaspora in America. They wrote, “U.S. officials involved in the vetting process obviously have instructions to say that U.S. forces are not training the Azov Battalion as such.” The reporters were dubious. “They also say that Azov members are screened out, yet no one seems to know precisely how that’s done. In fact, given the way the Ukrainian government operates, it’s almost impossible.” This was because “the Azov Battalion is nuzzled so deeply into the Ukrainian government that they are nearly impossible to weed out.”[\[1081\]](#)

In a separate piece two years later, Cathcart and Epstein wrote of an Azov fighter going by the name of Kharkiv who denied any ties between his group and Nazism. “If we are fascist Nazis then why are people like Georgians joining us to fight?” he asked them. They wrote, “As he speaks a young soldier walks over. Kharkiv introduces him. While shaking hands a large black tattoo becomes particularly visible on the young man’s extended upper bicep. The tattoo is an image of the Nazi eagle atop a black swastika.” But it was not just him. “[T]he numerous swastika tattoos of different members and their tendency to go into battle with swastikas or SS insignias on their helmets make it very difficult for other members of the group to plausibly deny any neo-Nazi affiliations.” They said that “[t]he U.S. government is knowingly training and arming neo-Nazi Ukrainian ultranationalist paramilitary members in broad daylight in an unstable country with an unclear future,” adding, “Nineteen million dollars of U.S. taxpayers’ money is going into this. We are all paying for it. There is no denying this one.” They warned that the governments in Washington and

Kiev were “gambling with the future of the Ukrainian people—one that is not theirs to lose.”[\[1082\]](#)

In a piece called “Preparing for War With Ukraine’s Fascist Defenders of Freedom”—“with” meaning “alongside,” not “against”—*Foreign Policy* reported: “Pro-Russian forces have said they are fighting against Ukrainian nationalists and ‘fascists’ in the conflict, and in the case of Azov and other battalions, these claims are essentially true.” Their reporter noted that besides the blue and yellow Ukrainian flag over Mariupol, “another symbol is just as prominent: the Wolfsangel (‘wolf trap’) symbol that was widely used in the Third Reich and has been adopted by neo-Nazi groups.”[\[1083\]](#)

Congress again attempted to ban support for the Azov Battalion in 2018.[\[1084\]](#) Though it was hopeless, it does at least show that they knew who they were backing and for whom they were increasing support when the war escalated in 2022.

One Azov fighter told the British Sky News that to join the battalion, one must be “a proper white man. You can be nationalist, you can be fascist or national socialist. It’s not the main thing. Our future is a war—a war with Russia.”[\[1085\]](#) “Personally, I’m a Nazi,” an Azov fighter told the *Telegraph*, explaining, “After the First World War, Germany was a total mess and Hitler rebuilt it: he built houses and roads, put in telephone lines, and created jobs. I respect that.” Homosexuality is a mental illness and the scale of the Holocaust “is a big question,” he added.[\[1086\]](#) Journalist Shaun Walker of the *Guardian* wrote in 2014, Biletsky’s “Azov fighters are Ukraine’s greatest weapon and may be its greatest threat.” After he interviewed many of their men, Walker concluded that the rank-and-file

revere Hitler, deny the Holocaust, and proudly wear swastika and Wolfsangel patches and tattoos. But they were useful. When the under-funded and under-prepared Ukrainian military could not match the firepower of the separatist factions, or when they were having a hard time recruiting and even enforcing conscription,[\[1087\]](#) the Azov Battalion would often fill in to get the job done, making the military dependent on their power.[\[1088\]](#)

“I have nothing against Russian nationalists, or a great Russia. But Putin’s not even a Russian. Putin’s a Jew,” claimed a young fighter going by “Dmitry,” who “waxed lyrical about Adolf Hitler as a military leader, and believes the Holocaust never happened.” When a reporter asked if there were Nazis in the group, another said, “Of course not, it’s all made up, there are just a lot of people who are interested in Nordic mythology.” When asked about his own political beliefs, he answered: “national socialist.” Another said Ukraine needs “a strong dictator to come to power who could shed plenty of blood but unite the nation in the process.”[\[1089\]](#) Azov spokesman Andriy Diachenko admitted that 10–20 percent of them were “self-proclaimed” Nazis.[\[1090\]](#)

“Centuria” is an order of neo-Nazi military officers, tied to the Azov Regiment and embedded within the Hetman Petro Sahaidachny National Army Academy (NAA), which is described as “Ukraine’s premier military education institution and a major hub for Western military assistance to the country.” They are not to be confused with the renamed “National Militia” of vigilante street Nazis with the same name.[\[1091\]](#) The former group’s members train with the U.S., UK, Germany, France, Canada and Poland.

[\[1092\]](#) In June 2018, the Azov Regiment met with the Canadian military. The Canadians knew they were Nazis. A year earlier, their trainers in Ukraine had produced a report saying they identified themselves as such. Ottawa said they were not providing aid to Azov for that reason.[\[1093\]](#)

## **Biletsky's Rant**

Andriy Biletsky was the same guy who said in 2007:

The main mystical idea of Social Nationalism is the creation [of] the National Supercommunity—a single biological organism that will consist of New People—physically, intellectually and spiritually developed persons. Of the mass of individuals, [a] Nation should appear, and from a weak modern man, Superman. . . . From the principle of Sociality follows our complete denial of democracy and liberalism. . . . All our nationalism is nothing—a castle on the sand, without . . . the foundation of blood, the foundation of the Race. . . .

Accordingly, the treatment of our National body should begin with the Racial purification of Nation. . . . Ukrainians are part of (and one of the largest and highest quality) European White Race. . . . The historical mission of our Nation, in this turning century, to lead the White Peoples of the whole world on the last crusade for their existence. A campaign against Semitic-led untermenschen. . . .



Thus, Social Nationalism raises all the ancient Ukrainian Aryan values forgotten in modern society. Only their revival and embodiment by a group of fanatical fighters can lead to the final victory of European civilization in the world struggle.[\[1094\]](#)

The program of Biletsky's Social-National Assembly calls for a dictatorship of the "most talented" people, the prohibition of competing political parties, "[d]ismantling the economic system of capitalism as such which ensures the plundering of working classes of the population by groups of economic and political parasites," and the "[l]iquidation of all institutions and forms of political democracy as a political system that serves . . . capitalism." They demand full nationalization of all "strategic sectors" of the economy, censorship of what they call "non-objective and manipulative information," and go on to fantasize about creating a Ukrainian superstate that would dominate Eastern Europe, including Russia, and the Middle East through an alliance with Iran. "The ultimate goal of Ukrainian foreign policy is world domination." They write that under their rule, "[p]reparation for army service will begin from childhood through a network of youth paramilitary organizations, which will be provided with camps and equipment at the expense of the State and will cover all Ukrainian youth."[\[1095\]](#)

It is pretty straightforward fanatical Nazi ideology.

## War Criminals

The neo-Nazi militias, including the Azov and Aidar Battalions and their allies in the Donbas and Dnipro Battalions—“our best warriors” and “greatest heroes,” as Poroshenko later called them[\[1096\]](#)—are war criminals. In 2016, the UN’s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) accused the Azov Battalion of staging in civilian areas—such as near hospitals, putting innocent people at risk—looting, raping, torturing and “disappearing” detainees, as well as shelling civilian neighborhoods in the Donbas region, blocking railways[\[1097\]](#) and shutting off their access to food and water.[\[1098\]](#)

They are also credibly accused by major human rights groups of torture, murder, blocking civilian food supplies to Crimea and the Donbas, so-called “disappearances” and firing indiscriminately at civilian targets. [\[1099\]](#) Salil Shetty, Amnesty International secretary-general, told the *Guardian*, “The failure to stop abuses and possible war crimes by volunteer battalions risks significantly aggravating tensions in the east of the country and undermining the proclaimed intentions of the new Ukrainian authorities to strengthen and uphold the rule of law more broadly.”[\[1100\]](#)

Local Tatar “activists” blockade Crimea, read the headlines. But in fact, the text in the *Times*[\[1101\]](#) and *USA Today*,[\[1102\]](#) as well as the film *Ukraine: Masks of the Revolution*,[\[1103\]](#) revealed that it was Right Sector. The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine accused the groups of “disappearances, arbitrary and *incommunicado* detention, as well as torture and ill treatment” with a “high degree of impunity.”[\[1104\]](#) In July

2014, Human Rights Watch complained that the militias were indiscriminately firing rockets into populated areas.[\[1105\]](#)

A group calling itself the Tornado Battalion, like the others acting under the auspices of Arsen Avakov's Interior Ministry, went so wild they were ultimately prosecuted for murder, kidnapping and torture, including male rape and electric shocks.[\[1106\]](#) Their leader Ruslan Onishenko was convicted and sentenced to 11 years in prison, along with seven of his men. He was freed after only seven years by President Zelensky in 2022.[\[1107\]](#)

The pro-Democrat Vox.com wrote in early 2015 that at least the Azov Battalion had signed up with the government and was under the partial control of the Interior Ministry, whereas Right Sector was totally independent, and noted that reports from the front said the militias would not follow the military chain of command. "That is a worrying sign that the government does not have full control over the volunteer militias now, and that they could grow more independent in the future," reporter Amanda Taub wrote. She estimated there were approximately 30 of these independent militias fighting the war in the east. She noted that Interior Minister Avakov was supporting the groups and had appointed Azov's own Vadim Troyan, the chief of police, "for the whole Kiev region," and that Andriy Biletsky had been elected to parliament. Taub found that their independence, with the backing of powerful oligarchs, effectively challenged the state's authority and worried the militias would be used to "protect their interests from state interference."

When questioning whether the president might attempt to disband these independent militias, Taub worried that he may be too distracted to

solve the problem, and “it’s not clear that he has the political capital to do so anyway. Avakov, his interior minister, backs the Azov Battalion, so would be unlikely to support any policy that would undermine it.” Other problems included Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk’s need to approve any major change in policy regarding the militias and the danger that oligarchs like Kolomoysky might refuse to give them up. Taub also pointed out that “[t]he militias themselves might not go quietly either. In early February, when Poroshenko was rumored to be considering disbanding the Aydar battalion, the group marched on Kiev.” They blocked the Ministry of Defense building with burning tires until the president backed down from his threat. She quoted reports that fighters in the Donbas said they were “almost all to be intent on ‘bringing the fight to Kiev’ when the war in the east is over.”[\[1108\]](#)

The militias were not disarmed. Even after the Ukrainian military got back on its feet and the Azov Battalion was said to have been integrated into its ranks, former USAID official Joshua Cohen reported for Reuters in 2018 that the government still had prominent Nazis in positions of power, and that armed groups were still training child soldiers at their camps and actively recruiting men to leave the military and join their ranks instead. The president could not do anything about it, Cohen explained, because he was dependent on their power. “In an ideal world,” he wrote, “Poroshenko would purge the police and the interior ministry of far-right sympathizers, including Interior Minister Arsen Avakov, who has close ties to Azov leader Andriy Biletsky, as well as Sergei Korotkikh, an Azov veteran who is now a high-ranking police official.” But he could not do that because “Avakov is

his chief political rival, and the ministry he runs controls the police, the National Guard and several former militias,” leaving him in a very powerful position relative to the president. “Poroshenko has endured frequent verbal threats, including calls for revolution, from ultranationalist groups, so he may believe that he needs Avakov to keep them in check.”[\[1109\]](#)

## **Cathy Young**

In a debate with the author in June 2022, Bill Kristol protégé Cathy Young scoffed at all concerns over the Nazi sympathies of the Azov Battalion with a dismissive reference to “White Ruler” Andriy Biletsky’s stated goal of “leading the white races of the world in a final crusade . . . against Semitic-led untermenschen.”[\[1110\]](#) Young insisted, “That was written by a guy who co-founded the Azov Battalion. It is really not—I mean, the fact that there were some bad people involved with co-founding what is currently a regiment in the Ukrainian army really doesn’t mean that it’s a Nazi outfit today. He doesn’t have anything to do with it today.”[\[1111\]](#) But she was lying, or did not know what she was talking about, whichever is the more favorable interpretation.

Forget that Biletsky is author of the book *The Word of the White Leader*, which is about how much his movement hates blacks and Jews and loves national socialism,[\[1112\]](#) or how for years after the revolution he served as a parliamentarian in the Rada.[\[1113\]](#) Biletsky was only ever one man, and one small part of the overall Nazism of the men of his Azov Regiment. Biletsky himself is still a commander in the group—now the army’s 3rd Separate Assault Brigade[\[1114\]](#) (they also still control the

national guard's 12th Special Purpose Brigade)[\[1115\]](#)—and has been prominently featured in their public relations throughout the war,[\[1116\]](#) becoming a successful media personality.[\[1117\]](#) For the few years when he was not officially in command of the Azov Regiment because he was busy founding the National Corps party, he was still treated as the leader of the entire movement.[\[1118\]](#) On August 14, 2023, Ukrainian President Zelensky visited Biletsky and his men on the front lines near Bakhmut.[\[1119\]](#) In the summer of 2024, he led Ukrainian forces against the Russians in Kharkiv,[\[1120\]](#) and Zelensky awarded him for it. The press release stipulated, to prevent any confusion: “The brigade was formed on the same principles as the legendary Azov regiment and the entire Azov movement.”[\[1121\]](#)

Nothing has changed since a decade before, after his battalion was made an official regiment of Ukraine's national guard, and Biletsky declared, “We have not moved away from what we are. Everything that is behind ‘Azov’s’ soul comes from our right-wing ideology, from the heritage of the Patriot of Ukraine.”[\[1122\]](#) Biletsky is the same guy who said in 2009, “How can we describe our enemy? The authorities and the oligarchs. Do they have anything in common? Yes, they have one thing in common: they are Jews, or behind them are their real masters—Jews.”[\[1123\]](#) Young spins for this murderous Nazi and his men.

Young took the Nazis' side in a piece at Kristol's website too, calling them the “heroes of Mariupol”: “It is worth noting that the ‘neo-Nazi Azov regiment’ has never been implicated in any actual extremist acts—with the sole exception of credible reports of human rights violations, including torture of detainees, by Azov fighters in the Donbas in 2015–2016.”[\[1124\]](#)

Sure, the Ukrainian Nazis tortured and murdered some folks, but so did George W. Bush,[\[1125\]](#) and Young supported him, too.[\[1126\]](#)

## **Azov Not Changed**

Journalist Lev Golinkin castigated American apologists for comparing Svoboda and other Ukrainian fascist groups to the French National Rally party, saying that while the former have relatively fewer seats in parliament, “[w]hat Ukraine’s far right lacks in polls numbers, it makes up for with things Marine Le Pen could only dream of—paramilitary units and free rein on the streets.” He mentioned the increase in anti-Jewish violence, vandalism and threats, complaining that “[n]one of these concerns have been addressed in any meaningful way.”[\[1127\]](#)

Golinkin said no other country in the world had a “neo-Nazi formation in its armed forces,” and that Azov was still run by avowed white supremacist Biletsky, who also sat in the Rada and confirmed in 2016 that his “values” had not changed, despite all the propaganda. Golinkin also cited the Institute of National Memory and parliament featuring an exhibit celebrating the OUN’s declaration of independence from the USSR and alliance with the Third Reich. He noted official Holocaust revisionism in the form of “government-funded seminars, brochures, and board games, [and] the proliferation of plaques, statues, and streets renamed after butchers of Jews, to far-right children camps, where youth are inculcated with ultranationalist ideology.” He predicted that “[w]ithin several years, an entire generation will be indoctrinated to worship Holocaust perpetrators as national heroes.”

## Even Bellingcat Agrees

Even Bellingcat, the notorious MI6 and NATO propaganda front group, [\[1128\]](#) specialized for a time in exposing the danger of the Ukrainian Nazi movement. In 2018, their reporter Michael Colborne wrote a scathing piece for the *Forward* about Ukrainian fascist groups and their Western apologists: “I can’t count the number of times I’ve been told Ukraine doesn’t really have a problem with its far-right,” he said. “It’s all Kremlin propaganda; you’re personally helping Putin by talking about it; other countries have far-right problems too, so why single out Ukraine? I’ve heard it all.” In reality, he said “Ukraine really does have a far-right problem, and it’s not a fiction of Kremlin propaganda. And it’s well past time to talk about it.” While their electoral results had not been great, that did not matter because the Azov movement was hard at work building “a state within a state”—creating their own study groups and running martial arts gyms for the young and other programs for the old. “They’re also trying to turn Kiev into a capital of the global far-right, inviting neo-Nazis and white supremacists from around the world to visit.” He cited attacks on peaceful people while the cops do nothing, especially by government-funded street goons, questioned why they can hold a giant neo-Nazi music festival without criticism and why Poroshenko borrowed their rhetoric and ignored their crimes. He then wrote, “I’ll probably be told that I’m part of Putin’s hybrid war (really?), that I work for the Kremlin (um, no), or that I’m doing the Kremlin’s work (also no). But I didn’t invent Ukraine’s far-right, and I certainly haven’t helped them gain the prominence they’ve got heading in 2019.” [\[1129\]](#)



Bellingcat's Oleksiy Kuzmenko wrote in 2019 that Serhiy Bondarenko, a former Azov fighter and deputy head of police for the Kiev region, had made statements indicating that “incorporation of the Azov Regiment into the National Guard of Ukraine didn't affect the far-right ideology espoused by the former's members—and instead allowed Azov to obtain sophisticated weaponry and build their own political party.” In 2015, Bondarenko was quoted saying he was an operative of the far-right movement, and that he was confident “all members of Azov have permanent ideological views that won't change.” He also happened to name Azov member Vadym Troyan, the deputy-minister of Internal Affairs, as an example of a loyal friend at the top of Ukrainian law enforcement.[\[1130\]](#) This was five years after the Azov Battalion had become the Regiment and were integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard to fight the war in the east.

In March 2022, Colborne published a monograph called *From the Fires of War: Ukraine's Azov Movement and the Global Far Right*, warning that Azov was the core of “the most ambitious and dangerous far-right movements in the world.”[\[1131\]](#) Especially by 2022, this writing was published “against interest,” as they say, since Bellingcat's main focus at the time was attacking Russia and justifying U.S. and other Western support for Ukraine in the war.[\[1132\]](#) As we have seen, many Western publications, including the U.S. government's own propaganda outfit Radio Liberty, had spent years since the 2014 coup warning against the influence of these Nazi groups, though after 2022, mostly adopted the line that this was nothing but Russian propaganda against a very democratic Ukraine.[\[1133\]](#)

Colborne may have been torn about whether to throw all his hard work in the trash or go ahead anyway, but he did publish it, and proved critics right and that all his colleagues on the War Party's side are wrong at best. Colborne later told the *Times* that the problem was essentially one of public relations. It is so difficult to get Ukrainians to understand how bad Himmler's Death's Head looks to outsiders.[\[1134\]](#) He complained, "I think Ukrainians need to increasingly realize that these images undermine support for the country."[\[1135\]](#)

But in the book, Colborne says that Azov includes "open neo-Nazis" and that it is growing into a broader far-right social movement without parallel anywhere else in the world. Comparing them to other far-right nationalist groups in Europe, Colborne wrote, "The Azov movement is able to operate with a level of impunity their friends in other countries could only imagine: a literal 'land of opportunity,' as one Azov movement representative once admitted to me." He added that "this was all in plain sight, on public social media profiles, in publicly written articles in Ukrainian, Russian and English."[\[1136\]](#) And by youth camps, he meant neo-Nazi training camps straight out of the Hitler Youth.[\[1137\]](#) "Ukraine above all! Death to enemies!" the boys shouted. "We are preparing future warriors," their counselor said.[\[1138\]](#) "We don't count separatists, little green men, occupiers from Moscow, as people. So we can and should aim at them," the kids' instructor explained.[\[1139\]](#)

Humorously, Colborne still tried to downplay the violence by neo-Nazis on the Maidan on February 20, very quickly summarizing it and attempting to ridicule the Russians' criticism of what they called, and what

Colborne himself admits in so many words was, a “fascist coup.” Perhaps it was merely a coup by fascists. At least he also criticized others who wished to play down the role of the Nazis and noted that after their violent removal of Yanukovych, the fascist groups certainly considered themselves the “vanguard” of the revolution, “a view of themselves,” he said, “that would be solidified in the fires of war.”[\[1140\]](#)

And so they were. In the next year, 6,000 people would be killed in the war between these Nazis and their victims: the people of the east of their own country, most of them civilians.[\[1141\]](#)

## **The International Nazi**

Former FBI counterterrorism agent Ali Soufan has documented an international white supremacist network that includes Americans, Europeans, South Americans and Australians. In 2020, he warned that “just as jihadists exploited conflicts in Afghanistan, the Balkans and Syria, so too are white supremacists using the conflict in Ukraine as a laboratory and training ground.”[\[1142\]](#) Soufan further reported that more than 2,200 non-Russian foreign fighters had gone to Ukraine to fight in the war between 2014 and 2019. He wrote that “Ukraine [is] emerging as a hub in the broader network of transnational white supremacy extremism, attracting foreign recruits from all over the world.” Comparing them to bin Ladenites in the Middle East, Soufan wrote: “Where jihadis travel to fight in places like Syria, white supremacists now have their own theater in which to learn combat—Ukraine.” Soufan added, “the Azov Battalion has recruited 139 foreign fighters motivated by white supremacy and neo-Nazi beliefs,

including many from the West, to join its ranks and receive training, indoctrination, and instruction in irregular warfare.”

The Azov Battalion has become a symbol of resistance for neo-Nazis around Europe and the United States.[\[1143\]](#) They and their friends in the National Corps and Right Sector are obsessed with leading the so-called “Reconquista” of Europe from those they consider racial undesirables. Olena Semenyaka, a spokesperson and international secretary for the Azov Battalion and National Corps,[\[1144\]](#) has insisted the restoration of full Ukrainian sovereignty from Russian control was part of the larger mission of reinvigorating Europe and “the white race.”[\[1145\]](#) She also claimed in October 2018 that “just within 4 years, the Azov Movement has become a small state in the state.”[\[1146\]](#)

Semenyaka told Radio Liberty that in November 2017, she traveled to Warsaw to participate in the “Europe of the Future 2” conference, which was organized by the Polish white supremacist group and Azov Battalion “ally” *Szturmowcy* (Stormtroopers). She had intended to speak alongside notorious American white nationalist Richard Spencer. This was prevented when Polish authorities barred Spencer from entering the country.[\[1147\]](#) Greg Johnson, another prominent American white nationalist, was hosted by the Azov Battalion, where he gave a talk about his white power manifesto and made a special point to “listen” to Azov and learn the keys to their success, which he would like to copy in the United States and Western Europe.[\[1148\]](#) The same meeting was attended by neo-Nazis from Norway, Italy, Germany and Ukraine.[\[1149\]](#) Semenyaka said she had been on a tour meeting with white supremacist groups all around Europe in an attempt to

spread their ideals and prepare for a future where they could unite against their common enemies.[\[1150\]](#)

It was this dedication to Hitlerian ideals that inspired young Nazis from across Europe,[\[1151\]](#) and even the United States, to travel to Ukraine to join or attempt to join the Azov Battalion at war in the east.[\[1152\]](#) Azov founder Biletsky told the *Telegraph* that he had fighters from Ireland, Italy, Greece and Scandinavia.[\[1153\]](#) The BBC did a piece on a Swedish Nazi sniper fighting with the Azov Battalion.[\[1154\]](#) Brazilian police said that members of the “Misanthropic Division” had been recruiting locals to fight for the Azov Battalion in Ukraine.[\[1155\]](#) Soufan and *Der Spiegel* noted that Germans and Australians have joined them as well.[\[1156\]](#) The *Guardian* and *The Week* magazine reported on British and Polish neo-Nazis joining up to go fight[\[1157\]](#)—including Mark Jones from the banned UK neo-Nazi group National Action, who visited Azov headquarters in 2017.[\[1158\]](#) Colborne also wrote of Azov’s ties to Croatian Nazis, some of whom had gone to Ukraine to fight in 2014 and 2015, and their efforts to unite the international white supremacist movement.[\[1159\]](#)

French police, at the urging of the Simon Wiesenthal Center,[\[1160\]](#) banned an event in the city of Nantes for what the group called a “foreign legion” of different Nazi groups from around Europe who had organized the event to recruit for the Azov Battalion.[\[1161\]](#)

Bellingcat’s Oleksiy Kuzmenko also reported that Azov’s integration into the military had “not led to [their] depoliticization or dissolution.”[\[1162\]](#) After noting America’s vast influence in Kiev, Kuzmenko wrote, “Apparently deradicalizing the Ukrainian military and

security forces of far-right elements is simply not on Washington's wish-list. The same applies to other Western governments supporting Ukraine." He insisted the U.S. and its allies should press the Ukrainian government to rid its armed forces of these dangerous groups.[\[1163\]](#)

But Evelyn Farkas, who was Obama's deputy assistant secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia and later the executive director of the McCain Institute, saw it differently. "They have right now existential issues to deal with, and the far-right groups are helping defend Ukraine," she told *Newsweek*. "So at this moment in time, the Ukrainian government needs all the help it can get from its citizens, regardless of their ideology."[\[1164\]](#) Consequences for Ukraine and the rest of the West will just have to be addressed later. Soufan warned of the coming backdraft: "Just as Afghanistan served as a sanctuary for jihadist organizations like Egyptian Islamic Jihad and the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in the 1980s, so too are parts of Ukraine becoming a safe haven for an array of white supremacy extremist groups to congregate, train, and radicalize."[\[1165\]](#)

It has been claimed that Brenton Tarrant, perpetrator of the massacres of 51 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand, in 2019, had made trips to Ukraine to train with the Azov Battalion,[\[1166\]](#) though that was not true. [\[1167\]](#) Still, the *Times*, referencing the "sonnenrad," or black sun patch, said that "[o]n his flak jacket was a symbol commonly used by the Azov Battalion, a Ukrainian neo-Nazi paramilitary organization."[\[1168\]](#) Azov approvingly translated and republished Tarrant's manifesto and shared the video of his massacre.[\[1169\]](#)

In November 2022, Azov's Italian associates, a neo-Nazi group called the "Order of Hagal," were rounded up and arrested by police who accused them of stockpiling weapons and planning terrorist attacks, including against police stations and a shopping mall. One of their members could not be arrested because he was off fighting with the Azov Regiment in Ukraine. [\[1170\]](#)

## **Unite the Right**

At least two Americans from the Rise Above Movement (RAM) linked up with the National Corps in Kiev, where they helped to attack an antiwar protest before coming home and attending the infamous "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017, in which a counter-protester was run over and killed. Scott J. Bierwirth, an FBI counterterrorism agent, wrote in an affidavit in support of the indictment of a member of RAM on "conspiracy to riot" charges that they had posted pictures online of their meeting with Semenyaka, "the leader of the International Department for the National Corps," Azov's political wing formed in 2016. He added that Azov "is known for its association with neo-Nazi ideology and use of Nazi symbolism, and which is believed to have participated in training and radicalizing United States-based white supremacy organizations." Several of the RAM members attended the Charlottesville rally and posted videos of themselves fighting and attacking counter-protesters there. [\[1171\]](#)

Craig Lang and Alex Zwiefelhofer were two U.S. veterans who had traveled to Ukraine to fight with Azov in the Donbas. They eventually

returned to the U.S., where they murdered a couple for the money to go back again.[\[1172\]](#) Lang remains there to this day.[\[1173\]](#)

These Americans “came to learn our ways,” Semenyaka told Radio Liberty.[\[1174\]](#) Journalist Mariana van Zeller told *Newsweek* she had verified that U.S. extremists were traveling to Ukraine to gain battlefield experience, having interviewed members of an American neo-Nazi terrorist group called the Atomwaffen Division there.[\[1175\]](#) They reported that the National Corps “has gone international on multiple fronts with known contacts in Germany’s neo-Nazi Third Path . . . party, America’s Rise Above Movement, Italy’s Casa Pound, etc.” The *Newsweek* authors noticed the government was alarmed by U.S. Nazis’ attraction to the Azov movement and had tried to disrupt their funding, “yet at the same time is totally fine with the Regiment carrying on as a part of a Ukrainian government that receives billions of dollars in U.S. assistance.”[\[1176\]](#)

Reporter and author Tim Lister wrote an important study in 2020 for West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center, “The Nexus Between Far-Right Extremists in the United States and Ukraine.” He called the war in the Donbas the American and European far right’s “field of dreams,” and wrote, “there is a broader relationship between the Ukrainian far-right, and especially its political flagship the National Corps, and a variety of far-right groups and individuals in the United States and Europe.” Importantly, he noted that these groups were “bitterly opposed [to] any suggestion of compromise with Russia over Donbas,” and protested later attempts at concessions in 2019. “The emergence of such an overtly far-right white nationalist militia—publicly celebrated, openly organizing, and with friends



in high places—was electrifying to far-right individuals and groups in Europe, the United States, and further afield.” Lister noted an often-overlooked fascist group called Karpatska Sich, “whose members . . . attended a gathering of far-right groups in Rome in January 2019.” They also twice attended the “Festung Budapest”—“a celebration organized by Légió Hungária of the attempted breakout by Nazi and pro-Nazi forces against the Soviet advance in 1945.” They too, he wrote, “have also been enthusiastic proponents of the Ukrainian translation of the Tarrant manifesto.”[\[1177\]](#)

In 2019, *Time*’s Simon Shuster investigated the internationalization of the Azov movement. He warned that their leaders were Nazis, and that the organization itself was based on an unmistakable ideology of fascism. He went to a massive recruitment event featuring mixed martial arts, metal shows and Nazi propaganda. He met a Swede by the name of “Mussolini” who was very enthusiastic about staying to fight for the Aryan race.[\[1178\]](#)

Russian Nazis have also volunteered to fight in the war—some on Ukraine’s side. Sergei Korotkikh, founder of the National Socialist Society in Russia who was accused of filming himself beheading a Chechen migrant there under a swastika flag, fought with the Azov Battalion against Russian speakers in Ukraine’s east, where he had no problem scoring NLAW anti-tank missiles from his friends in the British government.[\[1179\]](#) In 2011, 12 members of his group were convicted of murdering 27 “mostly darker-skinned labor migrants from Russia’s Caucasus region and Central Asia, as well as Africans and South East Asians,” according to the Associated Press.[\[1180\]](#)

Jonathan Brunson, a former political analyst at the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, told *Newsweek* it was too bad the U.S. did not do more to “help neutralize” the rising power of the Banderites before the war, since they later became necessary in the fight, giving them a chance to burnish their credentials as crucial heroes and allies. The West, he said, “could have isolated the far-right, but blew it by delegitimizing all this as conspiracy theories and propaganda, even after decades of documented covert and overt support.”[\[1181\]](#)

## **We Can Do It Again**

When Right Sector got angry with Poroshenko in October 2014, Dimitry Yarosh credibly threatened to overthrow him. Though he said he did not want to destabilize the government with the Russian threat still looming, Yarosh added, “We’re all well aware that I can send several battalions to Kyiv and resolve the government issue. That’s real. Our citizens dislike the government so much that it would be easy for us to do.”[\[1182\]](#)

In 2015, they again threatened to overthrow Poroshenko.[\[1183\]](#) And he took the threat seriously. It was not only a dispute over honoring Bandera. Voice of America reported that after Right Sector got into a shootout with a local politician’s bodyguards during an argument over smuggling routes, Poroshenko called to disarm and detain the group pending an investigation. The Nazis then mobilized approximately 10,000 members and started referring to the new somewhat-elected regime as “an inner occupying force,” just as they had labeled Yanukovych’s government, and said that it was perhaps time to overthrow Poroshenko as well.

Right Sector spokesman Artem Skoropadskyi told Voice of America, “If there’s a new revolution, Ukraine’s President Poroshenko and his teammates won’t be able to make it out of the country the way the previous president did.” He added, “They can’t expect anything other than an execution in some dark vault, carried out by a group of young officers of Ukraine’s army and National Guard.” Dmytro Riznychenko, spokesman for a newly-formed armed group that was backed by the government in Kiev, told them, “The only issue is to find the right figure to be the country’s dictator and savior.”[\[1184\]](#)

After his stint in parliament, Yarosh founded another hard nationalist organization, the Ukrainian Volunteer Army. In 2015, he was appointed as an official adviser to the commander in chief of the armed forces and liaison between the military and the new Ukrainian Volunteer Corps (DUK), the name for Right Sector’s militia after it was integrated into the national guard.[\[1185\]](#) They partnered with Svoboda, Right Sector and the National Corps in the 2019 election. That year, he maintained in an interview that even though he now has Jewish friends, he still means to accomplish Bandera’s vision for Ukraine. It happens to be the same interview where he threatened to overthrow the newly elected Volodymyr Zelensky if he were to try to negotiate an end to the war.[\[1186\]](#) In November 2021, a few months before Russia’s invasion, Yarosh was again appointed adviser to the commander in chief of the Ukrainian armed forces.[\[1187\]](#)

The Azov Battalion was deployed in Kiev. There were no separatists in the capital at the time. Nor are there now. But there was, and still is, a

regime there that will be crushed by the radical right if it deviates from their ultra-nationalist agenda.[\[1188\]](#)

## **Domestic Terrorism**

In the meantime, of course, Ukraine's Nazis act just like the Brownshirts, especially against Roma (or Gypsies),[\[1189\]](#) antiwar activists[\[1190\]](#) and liberal protesters,[\[1191\]](#) as they march through the streets at night by the tens of thousands in torchlight parades, honoring Stepan Bandera and their other Hitlerian heroes.[\[1192\]](#) The BBC's Jonah Fisher went on patrol with the so-called "National Militia," later renamed "Centuria,"[\[1193\]](#) who were essentially young thugs deputized by the police to roam the streets at night dispensing their own "justice." The mayor of Kiev claimed, "If [Arsen] Avakov decided that the National Militia with their balaclavas and uniforms shouldn't exist, then it wouldn't exist." Avakov is not a Nazi, but was very happy to support them,[\[1194\]](#) along with his deputy Vadim Troyan, who is a Nazi.[\[1195\]](#) BBC asked their spokesman about their clashes with cops and smashing up businesses. He just deflected. They go to jail for that, he claimed.[\[1196\]](#)

Even the U.S. State Department complained in their 2018 "Country Report on Human Rights Practices" that the National Druzhyna organization—established, they said, with "support from the National Corps"—attacked a Roma camp in Kiev while the police stood by and watched. They referred to credible reports that "C14 and National Corps, at times committed arbitrary detentions with the apparent acquiescence of law enforcement." At a march held by a group called Ukrainian Order, Tetyana

Soykina of Right Sector declared, “We will restore order in Ukraine, Ukraine will belong to Ukrainians, not Jews and oligarchs,” the State Department report said, adding that she had used “a pejorative term for Jews.” The interior minister, Arsen Avakov, known for his support of various neo-Nazi groups, denounced her statement as something from “the dark ages,” and opened a criminal investigation.[\[1197\]](#) The State Department report said that “[t]he Ukrainian Jewish Committee condemned an April 28 march sponsored by nationalist organizations honoring the local volunteers who were in the Nazi Waffen-SS during the Holocaust. The march featured Nazi symbols and salutes.”[\[1198\]](#) In 2021, they added complaints about extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary and false arrests by government agents, a corrupted judiciary, violations of citizens’ right of free speech and free media, censorship and crimes against Jews, Roma, gays and other minorities with complete impunity. The reports go on like that at length. Not that all security forces in Ukraine are Nazis. But they sure seem to behave in ways indistinguishable from how Nazis would act, according to their own greatest benefactor, the U.S. government.[\[1199\]](#)

C14 and the National Druzhyna militia attacked a series of Roma camps in 2018, including at Kiev’s Lysa Hora nature reserve on Hitler’s birthday, April 20,[\[1200\]](#) and Holosiyivskiy Park on June 7.[\[1201\]](#) Near the end of a YouTube video posted by the assailants, uniformed Ukrainian police officers casually make conversation as the nationalists wind up their raid. Christopher Miller, reporting for Radio Liberty, wrote that it was the fourth attack in the previous six weeks. In the last, “Masked attackers hurled stones and sprayed gas as they chased terrified Romany men,

women, and children from the makeshift settlement.” He added, “Police did nothing until a video of the attack went viral online, forcing them to open an investigation, the results of which remain unclear.”[\[1202\]](#) A few weeks later, they killed someone,[\[1203\]](#) and the next month, they did it again, killing two in what the *Guardian* said was the eighth such attack in recent months.[\[1204\]](#)

After C14 near-fatally stabbed antiwar activist Stas Serhiyenko in 2017, former USAID official Joshua Cohen wrote that this was “just the tip of the iceberg. More recently C14 beat up a socialist politician while other ultranationalist thugs stormed the Lviv and Kiev City Councils.” He added, “Far-right and neo-Nazi groups have also assaulted or disrupted art exhibitions, anti-fascist demonstrations, a ‘Ukrainians Choose Peace’ event, LGBT events, a social center, media organizations, court proceedings and a Victory Day march celebrating the anniversary of the end of World War II,” noting that “perpetrators enjoy widespread impunity.” Cohen explained, “It’s not hard to understand why Kiev seems reluctant to confront these violent groups,” since many of them “played an important role early in the war against Russian-supported separatists.” And Poroshenko was scared that “these violent groups could turn on the government itself—something they’ve done before[\[1205\]](#) and continue to threaten[\[1206\]](#) to do.” He pointed to Vita Zaverukha, a famous Nazi who was on house arrest awaiting prosecution for killing two cops, yet still posted selfies with approximately 50 fellow nationalists from a restaurant in downtown Kiev, saying the case demonstrated “the far right’s confidence in their immunity from government prosecution.”[\[1207\]](#)

Human Rights Watch denounced the Poroshenko government in the summer of 2018 for failing to “respond adequately to the growing number of violent attacks and threats promoting hate and discrimination in Ukraine by members of violent radical groups.” In a joint letter, HRW and three other international rights groups insisted authorities should “condemn the attacks and carry out effective investigations.” They wrote that “C14, Right Sector, Traditsii i Poryadok (Traditions and Order), Karpatska Sich and others have carried out at least two dozen violent attacks, threats, or instances of intimidation in Kyiv, Vinnitsa, Uzhgorod, Lviv, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk, and other Ukrainian cities.” Meanwhile, “Law enforcement authorities have rarely opened investigations. In the cases in which they did, there is no indication that authorities took effective investigative measures to identify the attackers, even in cases in which the assailants publicly claimed responsibility on social media.”[\[1208\]](#)

In April 2015, Amnesty International also noted the suspicious deaths of at least eight allies of former President Viktor Yanukovich, some of which the authorities were quick to label suicides or accidents, and demanded real investigations. “Opposition politicians are facing mob violence, often carried out by groups or individuals affiliated with the right-wing,” they said.[\[1209\]](#)

## **#Banderites**

In a very telling example of the neo-Nazis’ growing influence, in 2019, a Kiev cop was caught on camera throwing a C14 protester to the ground and calling him a “Banderite.” This caused outrage and a great round of self-

abasement by the authorities. Radio Liberty's Miller reported that law enforcement officials of all ranks jumped on social media to declare that "[t]hey, too, are '#Banderites.'" As Miller put it, "Or, to be clear, supporters of militant Ukrainian nationalists who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II." He continued, "National Police chief Serhiy Knyazev says he is one. So does Interior Ministry and National Police spokesman Artem Shevchenko. Interior Ministry adviser Zoryan Shkyryak is, too," adding, "From the top on down, cops and their bosses are lining up to air their admiration for Stepan Bandera." Kiev Police Chief Andriy Kryshchenko issued a statement saying, "I personally, as the chief of police in Kyiv, want to apologize to society for the actions of this officer. Out of conviction and because of my understanding of the historical situation in Ukraine, I consider it unacceptable." He continued, "Undoubtedly, this employee will be punished." National police chief Knyazev wrote, "I apologize. I am a Banderite, too! Glory to Ukraine!" Shkyryak of the Interior Ministry also wrote on Facebook: "I am also a Banderite and I am proud of it! Bandera, my hero!"[\[1210\]](#)

Joshua Cohen wrote another piece on the subject, this time for the Atlantic Council, titled "Ukraine's Got a Real Problem with Far-Right Violence (And No, RT [Russia Today] Didn't Write This Headline)." He noted warnings from several human rights organizations that far-right groups, acting with "a veneer of patriotism" and "traditional values," have enjoyed "near total impunity that cannot but embolden these groups to commit more attacks." Cohen added, "It's not extremists' electoral prospects that should concern Ukraine's friends, but rather the state's



unwillingness or inability to confront violent groups and end their impunity.”[\[1211\]](#)

Not surprisingly, many of the prominent leaders of these Nazi groups have been accused, and some convicted, of murder and attempted murder. They act as thugs for hire for rich oligarchs,[\[1212\]](#) torture and behead Muslim migrant workers[\[1213\]](#) and stomp each other to death in business disputes.[\[1214\]](#)

## **No, Not Everyone**

No, not everyone in Ukraine is a Nazi. No one said that. And the presence of these militias and their ongoing violence against the people of the Donbas, by the author’s judgment, were still short of legitimate reasons for Russia’s 2022 invasion. The argument is that there are too many Nazis and Nazi sympathizers with too much influence in the Ukrainian government and military, which is one good reason why the United States should not support them. Many societies, including Russia, have far-right and even racist militias like Azov and C14. But how many of them outright integrate these forces into their militaries?[\[1215\]](#) And how many have a parliament run by them, where even presidents live in fear of fascist mobs outside their doors? How many of their leaders get invited to speak at official U.S. government events, like when C14’s Serhiy Bondar spoke about the group at the U.S.-sponsored America House Kiev?[\[1216\]](#) How many socialize with America’s political elite, like when in the summer of 2018 Svoboda’s Parubiy was brought to Washington, D.C., at least

twice[\[1217\]](#) to visit House Speaker Paul Ryan and Sen. McCain,[\[1218\]](#) and be warmly received by Mike Pompeo's State Department?[\[1219\]](#)

It is also important to understand why this coup led to catastrophe. It was the end of compromise between major factions. The ethnic Ukrainian nationalists who had seized power were determined to make the majority of the people bow to their will or get the hell out if they did not like it.[\[1220\]](#) When the east resisted, it was the vanguard of the neo-Nazi right who did not hesitate to wage war against their own population, further solidifying the division between them.

Ukrainian Nazis also threatened to murder Bellingcat's Oleksiy Kuzmenko and Michael Colborne for their journalism on this issue in a way that really showed a lack of appreciation for the nuance with which both men had treated the subject in their writing.[\[1221\]](#)

## **Ultraviolence**

### **Liberal Fascism**

The typical elitist liberal in Kiev felt the same way about it as the Nazis. They explained their frustration with the people of the East getting in the way of their desire to turn to the West. "This is what I heard from respectable people in Kiev," journalist Keith Gessen wrote. "Not from the nationalists, but from liberals, from professionals and journalists. All the bad people were in one place—why not kill them all?"[\[1222\]](#)

### **Kiev's Murderous War**

People talk as though Ukraine suddenly found itself in a war in the year 2022, but more than 14,000 people were killed in the 2014–2015 war and in the “low-level” fighting which continued in the meantime.[\[1223\]](#) It was not only the Nazis’ war crimes driving the Donbas toward Russia though. The Ukrainian army repeatedly attacked civilian areas under rebel control with airstrikes,[\[1224\]](#) heavy artillery[\[1225\]](#) and cluster bombs,[\[1226\]](#) with at least the publicly expressed disapproval of the Obama administration.

Gessen, referring to air and artillery strikes in Donetsk in late summer 2014, wrote: “I never once saw an actual military target—the SBU, for example—get hit, only civilian locations. Possibly the army had poor aim; possibly the army was hoping to encourage the remaining civilian population to leave. Or possibly the army didn’t care.”[\[1227\]](#) There was widespread damage to civilian homes and infrastructure across the city of Donetsk.[\[1228\]](#)

In a statement, the Council of Europe’s commissioner for human rights said he was “dismayed by persistent reports about cases of unlawful and arbitrary detention . . . summary executions, torture and ill-treatment, and lack of accountability.”[\[1229\]](#) The UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions similarly complained that groups like Right Sector were acting “on their own authority” and with “complete impunity,” threatening and committing acts of violence against “persons holding dissenting views” and “the judicial system and on other methods of accountability.” The UN rapporteur estimated that “nearly 8,000” people had been killed already, mostly by “indiscriminate shelling” by both sides, but singled out government forces for using “insufficiently precise”

weapons in urban areas while wielding precision weapons “without regard to proper Standard Operating Procedures to guide targeting.” He also complained about “secret detention,” “summary killings” of accused rebels by Ukrainian forces, as well as the nationalist militias, and that there was a standing order from the Ministry of Defense essentially banning any real investigation into the killing of civilians in rebel-held areas.[\[1230\]](#)

President Obama described Kiev’s attacks on the Donbas as “an incredible outpouring of democracy” in defense from “actions by Russia as well as certain armed militias,” whom he accused of “violating international law and international sovereignty.” Local militias that rejected the new coup government were not violating international law or sovereignty by any stretch. If Russia was doing so by backing them, the same would have to apply to U.S. and allied help for the nationalists as well, certainly in the lead-up to the coup, before they became the official internationally recognized government.[\[1231\]](#)

On Kiev’s use of cluster bombs, John McCain conceded it was true, but told Russian media that it was America’s “fault,” since Obama had been reluctant to give Ukraine the other weapons they had asked for.[\[1232\]](#)

In September 2014, the pro-Obama news channel CNN was so bold as to report from the Donbas, showing the government’s “devastating” violence inflicted on the people and property of the region. “The husband of a 34-year-old woman killed outside a block of flats last Wednesday wouldn’t talk to CNN, saying he was in shock. He made it down to the cellar with their small child but she simply didn’t have time. A 50-year-old woman was killed with his wife,” they reported. By that time, more than

2,500 people had been killed and a quarter of a million had been forced from their homes. “We are Ukrainian but they kill us, so we probably need our own country,” one man told the outlet. “Because these people in Kiev, they are not brothers for us.”[\[1233\]](#)

Regarding the killing of civilians, the International Crisis Group wrote that a “frequent comment offered by the military was that local people were getting what they had asked for in the May 2014 separatist-organized referendum on self-determination.”[\[1234\]](#)

In *85 Days in Slavyansk*, Alexander Zhuchkovsky, who fought on the side of the rebels, wrote that after May 20, “the Ukrainians began to terrorize Semyonovka with artillery, and by the end of the month Slavyansk itself. . . . [T]he Ukrainians fired mostly on civilian areas, using shells of all calibers on both the suburbs and the most densely populated parts of Slavyansk.” They did this clearly because they “wanted to instill fear in the locals, encourage them to flee the city, and to cause them to blame the militia for their misery.” Zhuchkovsky added, “It was interesting to watch how the Slavyansk locals responded to the increase in hostilities. At first, they could not accept that Ukraine, the state they had lived under for a quarter of a century, was behaving as an invader rather than a liberator.” He said that “[a]s the Ukrainians brought more artillery to Slavyansk, they repeated their disbelief more and more.” He also said he understood how the longer the fight went on, the more frustrated Kiev would become over mounting casualties and lack of progress. “It is not surprising that after a month and a half they began to terrorize the city with all the weapons they had available: combat aircraft, MLRS [Multiple Launch Rocket Systems],

and white phosphorus among them. The Ukrainians had begun a war of destruction.” He added that “[t]his was especially obvious in the last days of the siege, before the Russian retreat. The Ukrainians surrounded the city with barbed wire, mined the outskirts, and used their artillery to its fullest capability.” They killed numerous civilians, including journalists, and set the city ablaze.[\[1235\]](#)

According to the UN, the vast majority of civilian casualties in the Donbas war between 2018 and 2021, approximately 81.4 percent, occurred in rebel-held areas, while 16.3 percent were in Ukrainian government-controlled territory.[\[1236\]](#) Forget the truth; the narrative is all that counts on TV. Except in this case there is hardly even a narrative at all, just the endlessly repeated slogan “Russian aggression” without any explanation or context. Even if you take the worst interpretation of Russian intervention in the east—granting that their plan was to maintain the war on a low level just to keep the country destabilized and unable to join NATO—that would still represent a regretful reaction to a reckless American policy, and it remained far short of the Russian army smashing Mariupol and driving all the way to Kherson, which eventually did happen in 2022.

## **Russians Not There Yet**

In May 2014, *Times* reporter C.J. Chivers, a retired Marine captain and arms expert,[\[1237\]](#) traveled to Ukraine to investigate Russia’s role in supporting the “Russian-backed separatists” in the east. He said they were locals, though ethnic Russians, and in many cases Soviet army veterans and people with relatives on the other side of the border. A local commander

laughed at claims that he was under the control of Russian intelligence. “We have no Muscovites here. I have experience enough,” he told the *Times*. Chivers also found the local Donbas fighters were armed with weapons given to them by Ukrainian army divisions who had defected to their side, not the Russians.[\[1238\]](#) The Australian group Armament Research Services,[\[1239\]](#) the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)[\[1240\]](#) and Zhuchkovsky also demonstrated this at length.[\[1241\]](#) In late summer 2014, Gessen reported an estimated 10,000 local fighters with only small numbers of foreign “volunteers” mixed in.[\[1242\]](#) Two years later, the International Crisis Group quoted Ukrainian military sources admitting that “many of their adversaries [were] poorly trained locals, with little inclination to fight and drawn more by the pay,” rather than Russian regulars, though they did claim that Russian officers were making all the important decisions.[\[1243\]](#)

They later wrote, “The conflict in eastern Ukraine started as a grassroots movement, albeit one that Moscow inspired and then aggressively exploited,” adding that the “demonstrations were led by local citizens claiming to represent the region’s Russian-speaking majority.” They were upset about the “political and economic ramifications of the new Kyiv government and about moves, later aborted, by that government to curtail the official use of Russian language throughout the country. They were joined by activists and volunteers from Moscow.”[\[1244\]](#) In September 2016, the secretary-general of the OSCE, Lamberto Zannier, said that “there are no Russian units as such.” However, the Russians did seem to continue to resupply local fighters with military equipment, fuel and ammunition.

And Russian fighters were there, though they always denied working directly for the military.[\[1245\]](#)

Alexander Hug, deputy head of the OSCE's observer mission in Ukraine, told *Foreign Policy* in 2018 that he had seen Russian equipment, but not soldiers, in the Donbas. Humorously, the magazine decided to edit his comments to fit their party line. "If the question is what we have seen on the ground . . . we have seen convoys leaving and entering Ukraine on dirt roads in the middle of the night, in areas where there is no official crossing." What Hug actually said was that "we have not seen direct evidence" of Russian troops in Ukraine. But the editor fixed that for us with an ellipsis and a supposed correction at the bottom: "In an earlier version, Hug stated that OSCE had not seen direct evidence of Russian involvement in eastern Ukraine. We have removed this remark, as it did not convey his intended view."[\[1246\]](#) He issued a statement clarifying that the OSCE does not draw conclusions or provide evidence, saying, "The facts speak for themselves." In response to follow-up questions, Hug simply repeated himself and again cited the same indirect evidence he had explained to *Foreign Policy*. This is hardly a retraction on the facts. It sounded more like he got in trouble at work for saying more than he should have and undermining the party line. In fact, there was plenty of reason to think Russian troops were there, just not in the numbers the magazine's editors would have had us believe.[\[1247\]](#)

Former Swiss NATO military analyst Jacques Baud explained that in the first few months of the war, despite claims by the Poles, they did not observe direct Russian intervention or delivery of arms, which only came



later. Major parts of the military—“entire tank, artillery or anti-aircraft battalions”—defected over to the rebels’ side, he said.[\[1248\]](#) NPR News documented the same in April 2014.[\[1249\]](#)

London Sunday *Times* reporter Mark Franchetti embedded with the Vostok (East) Battalion in Donetsk for three weeks in early summer 2014. He said it was mostly made up of civilian volunteers from the Donbas and Russia. The group’s founder was one of the only members with any military experience. “I saw with my own eyes how extremist those [Maidan] demonstrators were, attacking the police and hurling petrol bombs at them,” he told Franchetti. “When Yanukovych was ousted, I understood they would come here to the east to fight. So I founded Vostok to fight them back.” A mechanic named Viktor told the reporter, “I couldn’t just sit at home and do nothing when I saw the violence spreading. We’re protecting our homes from a bunch of fascists who are backed by the West.” When they retreated to a Russian border crossing, they were not welcomed and supported, but disarmed, arrested, questioned and jailed.[\[1250\]](#)

Later, Franchetti was interviewed on a Ukrainian TV show, telling the host, “I don’t want to represent a position here. I just want to report what I’ve seen. You can say that they are terrorists, that they receive weapons and funding from Russia. But that is not true.” Instead of representing a foreign invasion, he said the fighters of the “East Battalion” were “miners and ordinary people . . . without any military experience . . . who are convinced they have been attacked by fascists.” Further, he noted that they had few weapons, and at the time were “completely convinced Russia will come to their aid at some point. They are waiting for them.” In other words, it had

not happened yet. Franchetti said he could “not confirm” whether the militia was “well armed, that there are Russian military officers among them,” nor did he locate long-rumored battalions of Chechen fighters supposedly sent to help the rebels.[\[1251\]](#)

This does not mean that Russian troops never fought in the Donbas war, but it casts severe doubt on Ukrainian government claims that conflict war was waged by Russian regulars, as opposed to local residents and military defectors, indicating small numbers of deniable clandestine Russian forces involved, at most, in the early months of the war.[\[1252\]](#) Just before the full-scale war broke out in 2022, RAND’s Samuel Charap wrote in *Foreign Policy* that Ukraine had been fighting Ukrainians, not Russian soldiers. “Russian armed forces engaged directly in the fighting only twice—in August–September 2014 and January–February 2015—and with limited capabilities, although both episodes ended in crushing Ukrainian defeats.”[\[1253\]](#) In fact, Kiev had accused the Russian military of directly intervening in August 2014, though even then their role may have been exaggerated since hard evidence of their presence was lacking at the time.[\[1254\]](#) In any case, the Donbas rebels were almost entirely local fighters, supported by at least a major segment of the local population. Even the Ukrainian interior ministry accused 17,000 policemen of joining the fight on the rebels’ side, putting the lie to their narrative that it had all been contrived by the Russians.[\[1255\]](#)

However, if the new regime thought they would be greeted as liberators, or win quick and easy, they sure were wrong. After the first six months of fighting, those in the Donbas who believed Russian intervention

was justified and those favoring separation from Kiev had both increased dramatically.[\[1256\]](#)

## **Horton's Law**

Reliable interventionist hawk Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had warned in the 1990s about the likely consequences if policymakers followed his bad advice about expanding NATO into Russia's former sphere of influence, [\[1257\]](#) now recommended neutrality for Ukraine, [\[1258\]](#) but still took the lead in advocating weapons transfers to their military fighting their supposed countrymen in the east under the excuse that they would be reserved for use against Russian invaders. [\[1259\]](#) He reasoned that if the U.S. were to send more shoulder-fired missiles, it would "permit more effective operations" to "terminate violence" and "deter" Russia. [\[1260\]](#)

However, Brzezinski still said alliance should be out of the question. "There should be clarity that Ukraine will not be a member of NATO. I think that is important for a variety of political reasons." He had finally seen the Russians' side of the story. "If you look at the map, it's important for Russia from a psychological, strategic point of view. So Ukraine will not be a member of NATO." [\[1261\]](#) He advised neutrality "along the lines of the relationship that Russia has with Finland, which is not a member of NATO but enjoys full participation in Europe as best it can, even as it enjoys also a normal relationship with Russia." [\[1262\]](#)

Horton's Law says that you can count on politicians to break all of their good promises and keep all of their bad ones. [\[1263\]](#) The new corollary

says you can always count on a politician to take the worst hawks' foreign policy advice but ignore even their own warnings.

## **Suicide Economics**

Beliefs can be powerful things. Professor Petro wrote about Kiev's economic war against the people of the east prior to Russia's 2022 invasion in his book *The Tragedy of Ukraine*: "From the standpoint of Ukrainian nationalists, the attraction of defunding Ukrainian industry is that it significantly reduces Russian investment in Ukraine." He further explained that "[t]he government has therefore systematically dismantled Ukraine's industrial base, which is disproportionately concentrated in Maloross [south-eastern, pro-Russian] Ukraine, partly in order to prevent those regions from recovering the wealth and political influence they once had."[\[1264\]](#) According to Petro, the Kiev regime is engaged in "suicide economics" intended to hurt the Russians, but which has only harmed Ukrainians instead.[\[1265\]](#) "Ukrainian foreign and defense policy is trapped by its own rhetoric, just as its economic policy is trapped into buying Russian gas at much higher prices across the border in Slovakia, to avoid calling it 'Russian gas,'" [\[1266\]](#) and buying its coal directly from Russia to avoid buying it from the Donbas, who were doing just fine exporting it to other countries anyway.[\[1267\]](#)

Exports had fallen more than 40 percent by December 2015; total industrial production was down by 22 percent. While agriculture was being subsidized in the west, the industrial Donbas was hit the hardest.[\[1268\]](#) Gross domestic product per capita fell to \$1,600 per person in 2016, down

from \$3,900 in 2013, due to a massive debasement of Ukraine's currency and the ongoing fighting in the east.[\[1269\]](#) Trade between non-Donbas Ukraine and Russia virtually ceased. Price inflation was 25 percent in 2014 and 13 percent in 2015. The Donbas had accounted for 16 percent of the country's GDP the year before the Maidan revolution.[\[1270\]](#) Its production was now almost entirely lost to both sides.

## **2014 Wales Declaration**

In September 2014, NATO issued their Wales Summit Declaration, which pretended that history began earlier that year, not with the West's illegal coup against a democratic government, but instead with "Russia's aggressive actions against Ukraine [which] have fundamentally challenged our vision of a Europe whole, free, and at peace." Stipulating their demand that Russia leave Crimea and cease all support for the rebels in the Donbas, they also reiterated their interest in bringing Ukraine into the alliance.

[\[1271\]](#)

Hillary Clinton later complained, "Moscow has taken aggressive military action in Ukraine, right on NATO's doorstep." Apparently, there was no irony intended.[\[1272\]](#)

## **Obama Afraid**

Barack Obama had supported regime change and encouraged[\[1273\]](#) the Poroshenko government to continue its brutal war[\[1274\]](#) against the people

of the east,[\[1275\]](#) but was now reportedly afraid to arm the new government due to the danger of further provoking Russia.[\[1276\]](#)

According to a “senior Defense official” cited by reporter Joshua Yaffa, Obama worried that “if we escalated, the Russians would counter-escalate, and the conflict would spiral.” Vice President Biden wanted to send weapons, and “had the position that if Putin had to explain to Russian mothers why caskets were coming back home, that could affect his calculus.”[\[1277\]](#) Moreover, “[a]ny weapons deliveries to Kiev will escalate the tensions and would unhinge European security,” Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia’s national security council, warned in February 2015.[\[1278\]](#)

Former Obama NSC official Derek Chollet wrote that everyone was for it except the president. “He had many reasons. Because Russia would simply counter with even more of its own assistance to the rebels, the president was skeptical that providing lethal support would make a huge difference in changing the military balance.” Further, “he was most worried that such support would escalate the crisis, only increasing the bloodshed, or, worse, giving Putin a pretext to go further and invade all of Ukraine.” It was not only him. “Such concerns were shared by key European governments, especially the Germans (who were vital to sanctions and diplomacy) but even the usually hardline Baltic countries, who feared Russian retaliation.” He added, importantly, “Obama has never been comfortable with [Ukraine’s leaders].”[\[1279\]](#)

But Obama did send plenty of “nonlethal” equipment,[\[1280\]](#) including MREs, body armor, night-vision goggles[\[1281\]](#) and army rangers to train

the Ukrainian military from the very beginning of the war in 2014.[\[1282\]](#) The FBI was also helping to track down and seize the assets of former President Yanukovych,[\[1283\]](#) while the *Financial Times* confirmed the U.S. was providing “crucial intelligence and advice on strategy” in the war from the beginning.[\[1284\]](#)

Obama found loopholes in his own policy, licensing the private export of arms to the battlefield. In 2015, his state and defense departments authorized approximately \$68 million worth of military aid, including weapons such as sniper rifles and RPGs. In 2016, they licensed another nearly \$27 million.[\[1285\]](#) George Friedman noted that the U.S. was going around NATO and European unanimity to do it. Obama had a higher priority. “The United States is prepared to create a *cordon sanitaire* around Russia. Russia knows it. Russia believes that the United States intends to break the Russian Federation.” He added, “I think that as Peter Laurie put it ‘We don’t want to kill you, we just want to hurt you a little bit.’ Either way we are back at the old game.”[\[1286\]](#)

The president knew this was all a bad idea while doing it anyway. In September 2014, after thousands had already been killed as a consequence of his own policy months before, he expressed second thoughts to a group of hawks he invited to the White House for dinner. “Will somebody tell me: What’s the American stake in Ukraine?” Obama asked. Strobe Talbott was shocked. “Preserving the territorial integrity of states liberated from the former Soviet Union was an article of faith in Washington,” journalist Mark Landler wrote. But if Americans are truly obligated to defend the borders of any nation that was ever part of the USSR, then what is the difference

between being a member of NATO and not? Is an “article of faith” not just a cheap excuse for having no argument? Obama at least said so, though he never acted like it: “Well, I see it differently than you do. My concern is it will be a provocation, and it’ll trigger a Russian escalation that we are not prepared to match.”[\[1287\]](#) His government kept selling Ukraine weapons anyway.

## **MH-17**

On July 17, 2014, someone brought down Malaysian Airlines Flight 17, from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, with a Buk surface-to-air missile, killing all 298 people aboard. Eight years later, a Dutch court convicted three Donbas rebels in absentia, sentencing them to life in prison.[\[1288\]](#) One defendant was acquitted.[\[1289\]](#) The court ruled that it must have been an accident. “It seems that the crew thought not to fire the missile at a civilian aircraft, but at a military aircraft,” they wrote, but said that due to the denial of the presence of Russian forces, soldier immunity does not count, and it remains a criminal act.[\[1290\]](#) Rebel commander Girkin reportedly took credit for downing the plane before it became clear it had been a civilian aircraft.[\[1291\]](#) Even though Ukrainian military planes had been shot down just days before, the airspace remained open to civilian airliners, officially due to simple carelessness.[\[1292\]](#)

Secretary Kerry repeatedly promised the U.S. would release satellite footage proving the missile’s origin of fire, but never did, which only fueled the controversy. Still in the first days, U.S. intelligence analysts said they inferred that pro-Russian forces had done it accidentally, but said they had



no hard evidence, nor did they know whether those firing the missile were trained by Russia or had previous experience in the Ukrainian military.

[\[1293\]](#)

The Joint Investigative Team (JIT) probe was not perfect, but alternative explanations, such as the Russians blaming a Ukrainian fighter jet,[\[1294\]](#) did not hold up.[\[1295\]](#) Still, there was a legitimate question as to the origin of the missile. Though Bellingcat seemed to show the Russian origin of the truck,[\[1296\]](#) on June 29 the Ukrainian government itself had said that the rebels had captured a Buk missile system from them.[\[1297\]](#) German intelligence blamed the separatists, but not Russia, saying they knew for a fact the rebels had seized the Buk truck from a Ukrainian base, rather than having been given it by the Russians.[\[1298\]](#)

It was Obama and Brennan and especially Poroshenko's fault too. They had been launching airstrikes on eastern Ukraine for months. As Obama noted, the separatists had shot down three military aircraft attacking them just in the preceding few weeks.[\[1299\]](#)

If Ukraine had done it, the U.S. would have also blamed Russia for putting them in that situation. Obama did blame Putin on that basis: "Russia has urged them on. Russia has trained them. We know that Russia has armed them with military equipment and weapons, including anti-aircraft weapons. Key separatist leaders are Russian citizens."[\[1300\]](#)

The shootdown was a huge error, and a terrible tragedy for the victims. But the massive, coordinated propaganda campaign blaming it on Putin—as though he had ordered the deliberate mass murder of a plane full of innocents, rather than his men making a bad choice to hand over such a

weapons system to militia amateurs defending themselves from air assault by an illegitimate government—was obviously meant to serve a purpose.

[\[1301\]](#)

## **The Minsk Peace Deals**

### **Minsk I**

Though Russia's multiple 2014 and 2015 invasions were mostly an invention of Ukrainian and NATO propaganda,[\[1302\]](#) after four months of bitter fighting, Moscow did intervene to help the eastern rebels defeat the Ukrainian army at Ilovaisk in August 2014.[\[1303\]](#) Up until that point, Kiev's forces, especially since being bolstered by the Azov Battalion, had the advantage against the rebels, defeating them at Slavyansk and the Donetsk airport. But after they seized the center of Ilovaisk in Donetsk Oblast, the Russians intervened with approximately 1,200 soldiers and a few dozen tanks and armored personnel carriers, giving the rebels enough support to force Kiev's troops out. Despite all the hype about tens of thousands of Russian regulars in the area for months, this far more limited incursion was Moscow's first, and came months into the war.[\[1304\]](#) Roman Zinenko, a Ukrainian veteran of Ilovaisk, admitted to the BBC that he did not see any Russian soldiers, but said that he had seen a more modern T-73B3 tank and armored personnel carriers that could only have come from Russia. Another survivor of the battle, Vadym Yakushenko, swore that he had seen at least a few members of the Russian army there.[\[1305\]](#) The

*Telegraph* later identified “several” Russians there as mercenaries with the Wagner Group, a.k.a. PMC (Private Military Company) Wagner.[\[1306\]](#)

At that time, coup participant Radosław Sikorski’s wife, the centrist Washington war hawk Anne Applebaum, went crazy. “War in Europe!” she declared. “Putin has invaded Ukraine. Is it hysterical to prepare for total war with Russia? Or is it naive not to?”[\[1307\]](#)

On September 5, reeling from their defeat at Ilovaisk,[\[1308\]](#) Poroshenko’s men, along with representatives from Germany, France and Russia, met in the capital of Belarus and hammered out what became known as the Minsk I deal.[\[1309\]](#) It included a ceasefire, prisoner exchange, withdrawal of heavy military equipment and fighters from eastern Ukraine, all to be monitored by the OSCE. There was also a promise by Kiev to a reconstruction program for the Donbas, a new “special status” of autonomy and local elections. But the fighting went on.[\[1310\]](#) Thousands had already been killed.[\[1311\]](#) Two weeks after the meeting, participants signed an addendum banning the use of fighter jets, mercenaries and offensive operations, also creating a new “buffer zone” between forces.[\[1312\]](#) The deal did not have its intended effect. The war continued, and the military kept using cluster bombs against civilians.[\[1313\]](#)

The fight over the Donetsk airport was a massive, unnecessary battle which lasted for eight months after the rebels seized control, and the national army took it right back at the end of March 2014. Kiev used it as a base to shell the city of Donetsk, while the rebels fought to take it again, which they eventually did in early 2015, completely destroying it in the

process. This was especially wasteful since the rebels had no air force, the runways had already been bombed to uselessness and the military could have shelled the city from nearby woods without endangering the airport. They were supposed to withdraw under Minsk I, but stayed an extra few months since retreat would have been bad public relations.[\[1314\]](#)

Ukraine also lost a major battle at the strategically important city of Debaltseve in January–February 2015, ending in a humiliating, bloody and disorganized retreat from the northern Donetsk town.[\[1315\]](#) As in Ilovaisk, the Russian military was said to have bolstered rebel forces in the city, again reversing their fortunes and driving out Kiev’s troops, though Moscow denied their involvement, insisting that if this was so, they must have been mere “volunteers.”[\[1316\]](#) However, Russian regulars admitted they were deployed in the battle.[\[1317\]](#) Major Amos C. Fox of the U.S. Army later wrote a study of the battle of Debaltseve, saying the purpose of Russian tactics was to force Ukraine to negotiate and secondarily, to force them to exhaust resources in protracted battles. He concluded that “[t]he battles of Ilovaisk (Aug. 7–Sept. 2, 2014) and Debaltseve demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach as they resulted in the Minsk Protocol and the Minsk II agreement, respectively.”[\[1318\]](#)

## **Minsk II**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President François Holland returned to Belarus in February 2015 to sign the Minsk II agreement. While largely rehashing the points regarding the military situation, the deal elaborated on Donetsk and Luhansk’s special status, detailed OSCE

responsibility for monitoring the ceasefire and also essentially demanded the Ukrainian constitution be rewritten to establish stronger federalism for the region and protections for the Russian language.[\[1319\]](#) Kiev never lived up to it. The Rada quickly passed a law which made implementation of Minsk II impossible by requiring Russia to transfer control over Ukraine's eastern border before new elections were held, contrary to the terms of the agreement they had signed—and a definite deal-killer.[\[1320\]](#) They ignored the mandate on local elections, as well as the requirement to pass a new law describing Kiev's adjusted relationship with the Donbas or anything else. Rather than implement the deal and make peace, they essentially just pulled back the heavy weapons and turned the war into a frozen “low-level” conflict for the next seven years.[\[1321\]](#)

The Nazis considered the deal null and void. Right Sector leader Yarosh vowed to ignore it and fight on “against the Kremlin empire, Ukraine's perpetual enemy.”[\[1322\]](#)

Hawks complain that the increased autonomy for the Donbas in the Minsk II deal amounted to a Russian “Trojan horse” inside Ukraine,[\[1323\]](#) and that they never truly implemented it due to those objections,[\[1324\]](#) but that was the deal Kiev, and our closest allies in Paris and Berlin, signed to try to end the war Washington had caused.[\[1325\]](#) Obama approved it,[\[1326\]](#) and the UN Security Council passed Resolution 2022 putting their stamp of approval on it as well.[\[1327\]](#) Is that not what the liberal, rules-based international order is all about? Winning back the territory through victory in battle was evidently never in the cards, so the choice was either sharing the country with those who favored Russia, or just letting them go.

Though they later said they were stalling for time, Berlin and Paris seemed determined to find a way to press Ukraine to live up to their end of the bargain. French diplomat Pierre Morel proposed a deal whereby the rebels would hold their elections under Ukrainian law to get the process moving toward a final settlement. The Germans supported the plan,[\[1328\]](#) but Poroshenko dismissed it out of hand as merely “Morel’s personal opinion.”[\[1329\]](#)

## **Extreme Gerrymandering**

Instead, Kiev’s strategy was to keep the stalemate going since the conflict forced the other side to divert resources from economic development toward war and supporting the local population.[\[1330\]](#) Some favored waiting until forces could be prepared to fully invade and reconquer the Donbas, which they called the “Croatian Option,” after Operation Storm and the ethnic cleansing of the Krajina in 1995.[\[1331\]](#)

Further, continuing the war, as the Crisis Group report noted, would mean “[r]emoving the [Donbas] entities from the voting process for several years would neutralize the votes of a million or more Ukrainians who, many politicians and analysts believe, would be little inclined to support the country’s present leadership.”[\[1332\]](#) Supposedly Poroshenko even offered the Donbas to Russia, though even if Putin did misunderstand the statement, the important point is that the Russian president told them to keep it, just make peace.[\[1333\]](#)

## **Ivo Daalder**

For a taste of the so-called “thinking” that is the Washington, D.C., foreign policy blob[\[1334\]](#) consensus, one might observe the statements of former ambassador and Iraq War II supporter[\[1335\]](#) Ivo Daalder in a February 2015 interview with National Public Radio (NPR), just before Minsk II was signed.[\[1336\]](#) It was on the subject of a new Brookings Institution study he had co-authored with, among others, President Clinton’s Russia hand Strobe Talbott, Admiral James Stavridis and Michèle Flournoy—the failed Afghan War “surge” proponent and implementer, former deputy secretary of defense for policy, newly wealthy “consultant” for WestExec Advisors and an “independent director” at Booz Allen Hamilton. They did not want a peace deal. They wanted war. After conceding they did not believe Ukraine could win, Daalder confirmed the goal was simply to “inflict more losses” on the Russian side. Not necessarily more than the Ukrainians, just more than before. He said the purpose was to “raise the cost” for the Russians, “preferably” to pressure them to negotiate a political solution, which, of course, they already had in the form of the Minsk I deal. When asked what would happen if Russia called his bluff and simply escalated, Daalder responded that they would just have to kill more Russian soldiers because “we know from the history in Afghanistan and other places that when Russian soldiers die, then the cost and the debate in Moscow and in the rest of Russia will go up.”

Of course, U.S. intervention before Crimea was omitted and the listener was meant to believe Russia started the conflict by seizing the peninsula and supporting separatist forces for no reason, and that Russia had actually invaded the country. That was a lie, though one obviously

necessary to make the “defensive” weaponry the U.S. was to supply seem like a simple choice: to increase Russian casualties and make the debate in Russia “go up.”[\[1337\]](#) If that heightened debate in Russia led the government to conclude lethal force was necessary instead of retreating, “hopefully, the defensive arms that are being provided would then inflict the kind of cost on Russia that would have an impact,” he said.

But Daalder’s own study conceded that “even with enormous support from the West, the Ukrainian Army will not be able to defeat a determined attack by the Russian military.” As he told the host, to “raise the cost” for the Russians as they “achieve their objective” is victory enough.

Daalder and the other Brookings authors wanted a billion per year in weapons, plus more from allies, including counter-battery radars, drones, electronic warfare devices for enemy UAVs, radios, Humvees and medical equipment. This was all to be used in the Donbas to deny the people independence with deadly violence, not protect Kiev from being conquered by Russia.[\[1338\]](#)

The Nazis were angry too. The ink on the Minsk II deal was not even dry when they announced that they did not consider themselves bound by it and went right back to war. When reading mainstream media from this time, it is interesting to see how much reporting has changed ever since the CEO of MSM Inc. handed down the memo that no one is supposed to worry about what Nazis the Azov Battalion and their friends are anymore. Back then, Reuters identified Azov as the group whose insignia “resembles a black swastika on a yellow background,” and said that “the use of symbols echoing Nazi emblems have caused alarm in the West and Russia, and



could return to haunt Kiev's pro-Western leadership when fighting eventually ends." One might think.[\[1339\]](#)

At the end of August 2015, when the Rada was considering constitutional amendments regarding autonomy for the Donbas, Oleh Tyahnybok, Nuland and McCain's friend from the Maidan Revolution, along with his Svoboda Party thugs, attempted to storm parliament. They fought with riot police until one of the insurrectionists threw a hand grenade at the cops,[\[1340\]](#) blowing off part of one policeman's foot, and wounding 14 more. At the same time, Right Sector attempted to block the roads to the building to prevent parliamentarians from attending.[\[1341\]](#) The BBC said one national guardsman was killed. They did not say which side he was on.[\[1342\]](#)

## **Soros Hacked**

In August 2016, emails from George Soros's International Renaissance Foundation were hacked and posted online. Though the Russians may have been behind it, the foundation confirmed the documents were genuine.[\[1343\]](#) One site that hosted the files altered them to implicate Soros in backing Russian dissident Alexei Navalny,[\[1344\]](#) but those changes are not in question here either way.

In a December 2014 letter to Poroshenko and Yatsenyuk, Soros wrote in favor of a "big bang" approach to privatizing Ukraine's corrupt government-controlled entities and that they needed to shrink the civil service and cut gas subsidies so they could qualify for more IMF loans. He asked them to get a firm commitment from German Chancellor Merkel for

a \$15 billion aid package and said, “I am ready to call Jack Lew of the U.S. Treasury to sound him out about the swap agreement” on their behalf.

[\[1345\]](#)

The leak also revealed that Soros, who called himself a “self-appointed advocate of the new Ukraine,” had written a proposed strategy for Kiev and its Western allies to bolster the nation’s economy and military to keep Russia at bay. He insisted the allies “treat Ukraine as a defense priority. . . . They should declare that they will do whatever it takes to help the new Ukraine succeed short of getting involved in direct military confrontation with Russia or violating the Minsk agreement.” He also advocated different schemes for raising funds from the EU and said he would invest a billion of his own money in an effort to convince other interests to join him.

Further, Soros said, “The allies must imitate Putin in the practice of deniability to deprive him of his first-mover advantage.” Appearing to reference a decision that had already been made more than making a suggestion, Soros wrote, “General Wesley Clark, Polish General [Waldemar] Skrzypczak and a few specialists under the auspices of the Atlantic Council will advise President Poroshenko how to restore the fighting capacity of Ukraine without violating the Minsk agreement.”[\[1346\]](#)

Soros also predicted, “Constitutional reform will likely be stalled because the separatists will insist on a federal constitution and Kyiv will resist it.” He did not suggest that they should live up to their end of the bargain, but instead focus on strengthening their economy in order to frustrate Putin’s plan to leave them broken without the industrial east.

Also released in the leak were notes of a breakfast meeting between Soros and the leadership of his International Renaissance Foundation and Ambassador Pyatt at the end of March 2014. When Pyatt suggested that they “figure out how to move forward with decentralization without feeding into [the] Russian agenda,” Soros rejected the idea, saying the “[f]ederalization plan being marketed by Putin to Merkel and Obama would result in Russia gaining influence and de facto control over eastern regions in Ukraine,” and that “[t]here is no good positive model for federalization in [the] region, even models of decentralization are very poor because the concept is not very common.” Soros insisted that “Obama has been too soft on Putin,” and demanded the U.S. impose sanctions until the Russian president “recognizes the results of the presidential election,” which they were about to hold without the participation of the east.[\[1347\]](#) Surprisingly, Soros also revealed himself to be a ridiculous center-left conspiracy kook when he told Pyatt that he thought Right Sector was an “FSB plot . . . funded to destabilize Ukraine.” Pyatt politely agreed and then said the question was how to “demobilize and disarm the Pravy Sector.” Instead, they sent them to war against the citizens of the Donbas.

In a meeting with the leadership of the Ukrainian branch of his IRF, Soros said they needed to improve their “strategic communications” to bolster “his own grand vision . . . to utilize the EU to save Ukraine, but also to use Ukraine to save the EU.”[\[1348\]](#)

The leak, which also included notes of meetings with Acting President Turchynov, Minister of Foreign Affairs Andriy Deschytsia, Minister of Justice Pavlo Petrenko and many others, just goes to show how deeply

involved Soros still was in Ukraine's politics,[\[1349\]](#) as he had been since helping Leonid Kuchma win the presidency back in 1994.[\[1350\]](#)

The same hackers apparently nailed General Breedlove, then supreme allied commander of NATO forces in Europe. He was revealed to have sought meetings with former Secretary of State Powell to get advice on how to pressure Obama to escalate arms transfers to Ukraine. He was frustrated because to the president, "Frankly I think we are a 'worry,' . . . i.e., a threat to get the nation drug into a conflict." So he wanted Powell's counsel on "how to frame this opportunity in a time where all eyes are on [ISIS] . . . and two . . . how to work this personally with the POTUS."

Harlan Ullman from the Atlantic Council advised Breedlove that he should talk to Vice President Biden, Gen. Douglas Lute, Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and Sen. McCain to add pressure on Obama: "[Y]ou . . . might be able to fashion a NATO strategy to leverage, cajole, convince or coerce the U.S. to react. Given Obama's instruction to you not to start a war, this may be a tough sell."[\[1351\]](#)

## **It's Sabotage**

Just before the second Minsk deal was negotiated, in late January 2015, the U.S. announced that it would send an additional group of army trainers[\[1352\]](#) to help continue the war. It raged on for seven more years as a "low-intensity conflict," which meant plenty of artillery fire was traded across the buffer zone, killing another three or four thousand people, fighters and civilians,[\[1353\]](#) though the lines did not change much.

In December 2015, Vice President Biden inaugurated the official American and Ukrainian mis- or dis-understanding of the Minsk II deal in a speech to the Rada, insisting Russia must return control of the Donbas to Kiev, including the border, before any elections were held.[\[1354\]](#)

Poroshenko later adopted the same framing. Instead of abiding by Minsk II, his government creatively reinterpreted it to mean that Russia would have to give up control of the border before elections were held, even though Ukraine had failed to implement the constitutional changes by the deadline established in the deal. In January, he said he had convinced the Americans and European allies to turn the agreement upside down. Now, only after “undeniable progress” on a “ceasefire, withdrawal of Russian troops and equipment from the occupied territories, disarmament of militants and finally, restoration of control over our border,” would they consider the constitutional changes the deal required.[\[1355\]](#)

All through 2014 and 2015, including in the time immediately after Minsk II was signed, the supreme allied commander of NATO forces in Europe, Gen. Breedlove, and other military sources repeatedly lied to the press, claiming Russia was escalating the war when they were in fact abiding by the deal and pulling back.[\[1356\]](#) The Germans were so upset about it that they ran a major article in *Der Spiegel* complaining that NATO and some in the U.S. government were putting out “dangerous propaganda” to undermine Chancellor Merkel’s diplomacy, which had been authorized and blessed by President Obama. Undersecretary Nuland was also described by the Germans as a hindrance in their search for a diplomatic solution, denigrating the chancellor’s efforts as “Merkel’s Moscow stuff”

and working with NATO to undermine European efforts at diplomacy. According to the German outlet, at the Munich Security Conference, Nuland and Breedlove, rather than trying to pull people together to figure out how to end the war, instead practiced their pitch for getting the Europeans on board for sending more weapons to Ukraine: “It is defensive in nature although some of it has lethality,” Nuland said. Breedlove added, “If we can increase the cost for Russia on the battlefield, the other tools will become more effective. That’s what we should do here.”

After all, *Der Spiegel* reported: the Americans and Europeans had entirely different goals in mind. The French and Germans wanted to end the war, while “it is Russia that concerns hawks within the U.S. administration. They want to drive back Moscow’s influence in the region and destabilize Putin’s power. For them, the dream outcome would be regime change in Moscow.”

A German official complained that “following the visit of American politicians or military leaders in Kiev, Ukrainian officials are much more bellicose and optimistic about the Ukrainian military’s ability to win the conflict on the battlefield,” adding “We then have to laboriously bring the Ukrainians back onto the course of negotiations.”[\[1357\]](#)

When Nuland testified before Congress in March 2016, she claimed she was helping to “facilitate implementation of both the security and political aspects of Minsk.” But, sounding like one of her pet neo-Nazis, she declared that “we must be no less rigorous than the Ukrainian people themselves in demanding Kyiv’s leaders take their responsibility now to

deliver a truly clean, strong, just Ukraine while they still have the chance.”[\[1358\]](#)

## **Low-Level Casualties**

By the time of the Russian invasion of February 2022, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights had tabulated the casualties as: “14,200–14,400 killed (at least 3,404 civilians, estimated 4,400 Ukrainian forces, and estimated 6,500 members of armed groups), and 37–39,000 injured (7,000–9,000 civilians, 13,800–14,200 Ukrainian forces and 15,800–16,200 members of armed groups.)”[\[1359\]](#)

At virtually any point after March 2014, Putin could have ordered the invasion and absorption of the Donbas into the Russian Federation. The Ukrainian military was certainly far less prepared then. For a man who was said to be in a hurry to conquer all of Europe, Vladimir Putin was sure taking his time. Or in his analysis, the costs still outweighed the benefits.

## **H2O**

Crimea’s access to fresh water has been under constant dispute since the coup and outbreak of war. On April 26, 2014, in an act of collective punishment against the civilian population, which is illegal under the Geneva Conventions,[\[1360\]](#) Ukraine cut off water by way of the North Crimean Canal from the Dnieper River. Crimea received 85 percent of its fresh water through the canal,[\[1361\]](#) which was built in 1961–1971 and stretches from the Kakhovka Reservoir to Kerch. Crimean Prime Minister

Sergei Aksyonov said that “Ukraine’s act of sabotage to limit the supply of water to the republic through the North Crimean Canal is nothing but a deliberate action against Crimeans.”[\[1362\]](#)

Though Russia could make up for the population’s domestic consumption, the deficit of fresh water essentially destroyed Crimea’s agriculture industry,[\[1363\]](#) driving up prices for inferior crops and severely damaging the economy.[\[1364\]](#) In July 2021, Russia brought a complaint asking the European Court of Human Rights to “suspend the blockade of the North Crimean Canal.” The court dismissed the request two days later. Economist Helena Vladich told *The Hill* that the repeated “attempts to somehow negotiate this issue” had failed since the Ukrainians refused to talk.[\[1365\]](#) After Russia invaded eight years later, they blew up the dam the Ukrainians had built and restored fresh water supplies to the peninsula.[\[1366\]](#)

## **Money for Nothing**

### **Natalie Jaresko**

Ukraine’s minister of finance between December 2014 and April 2016, Natalie Jaresko, is a thief who stole more than \$1.7 million in “bonuses” from a U.S. government-financed investment fund meant to kickstart businesses in Ukraine and Moldova. This was at a time when her actual salary was capped at \$150,000, and while the fund was losing tens of millions. As Robert Parry explained, “Jaresko’s arrangement was something like taking someone else’s money to a roulette table, placing it on black,



and claiming a share of the winnings if the ball stopped on black.” Sounds controversial for a civil servant. But he continued, “However, if the ball landed on red, then the someone else absorbed the loss, except in this case the winners were Jaresko and her associates and the losers were the American taxpayers.”

She even used the fund to finance her own new business, Horizon Capital, which she put in charge of the fund, later using its wealth to buy up other major firms for herself.[\[1367\]](#) Instead of going to prison, this criminal was granted Ukrainian citizenship and named finance minister, after which Vice President Joe Biden helped her arrange \$17.5 billion in IMF loans to Ukraine.[\[1368\]](#) From there she went on to head Promesa, the board in charge of administering aid to Puerto Rico after it was hit by Hurricane Maria in 2017.[\[1369\]](#)

## **Yats’s War on Corruption**

Yatsenyuk’s war on corruption was a joke. His closest political partners and patrons were among the most crooked people in the country. His new party, the National Front, lost terribly in the elections of October 2015, and he was forced out by the next spring.[\[1370\]](#)

More than a decade after the Orange Revolution, Ukraine was ranked the most corrupt government in Europe—by far. Transparency International’s 2014 “Corruption Perception Index” report showed Ukraine still qualified as a “corruption disgrace.”[\[1371\]](#) The NGO wrote, “This year, Ukraine scored 26 of 100 and took 142nd place of 175 in the CPI. . . .

Again Ukraine shares scores with Uganda and the Comoros as one of the most corrupt countries in the world.”[\[1372\]](#)

## Syria

### Thanks, Obama

Without question the worst things the Russian government has done in the 21st century have been their wars in Ukraine and Syria. But it is worth emphasizing that in both cases the United States started it.

The various armed uprisings against the Bashar al-Assad regime in 2011 and 2012 would have been quickly destroyed if the U.S., Britain, France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Qatar and Israel had not intervened on behalf of the supposed revolution.[\[1373\]](#) Though they claimed to only be backing the Free Syrian Army (FSA) of so-called “moderate rebels,” the uprising very quickly came to be dominated by the jihadist followers of Abu Musab al Zarqawi’s merciless terrorist group al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI, or ISI for Islamic State of Iraq), which had crossed the border to continue the fight after Iraq War II.[\[1374\]](#) As then-State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland correctly admitted in 2012, Jabhat al-Nusra was just an “alias” for AQI.[\[1375\]](#) The Obama administration, as well as their European and Middle Eastern allies, continued to back them for years anyway.

This intervention on behalf of the bin Ladenites, motivated primarily by an animus against the Assad regime for its alliance with Shi’ite Iran, led directly to the rise of the Islamic State in 2013 and 2014.[\[1376\]](#) By the latter half of 2015, there was a real threat the Syrian state could fall under a

combined assault by advancing terrorist forces. Only then, after the Obama administration and allies' treason threatened a final victory for al Qaeda and/or ISIS in Damascus, did Russia finally enter the war in November.

[\[1377\]](#)

A secretly made recording of Secretary Kerry admitting to these facts was leaked to the press in 2016.[\[1378\]](#) There is no excusing the massive so-called "collateral damage" inflicted on the people of Syria by the Russian air force flying on behalf of their government,[\[1379\]](#) but again, none of this would have happened if the U.S.A. and its allies didn't create such a dangerous situation in the first place. And the rates of civilian casualties caused by their airstrikes were no greater than those inflicted by the U.S. coalition in the anti-ISIS war in Iraq and eastern Syria at the very same time. As the experts Chris Woods and Samuel Oakford from Airwars.org have shown, it is the population density below, not the type of munitions and techniques used in dropping them, that determines civilian casualty rates from airstrikes.[\[1380\]](#)

Amb. Burns admitted in his memoir that the U.S. and its allies simply could not come up with a plausible replacement for Assad's Ba'athist regime. "In conversations with Secretary Clinton and me, Sergey Lavrov asserted that Russia was not 'wedded' to Assad, but would not push him out, and worried about who or what might come after him," he wrote. "We simply could not convince the Russians that we had a plausible theory of the case for the day after Assad."[\[1381\]](#) The Syrian National Council, originally set up by then-State Department official Liz Cheney, and the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood, along with various other attempts to create a

government-in-exile for the country, such as Hillary Clinton's National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, all eventually fell apart.[\[1382\]](#)

If you listen to them now, the hawks are very upset that Russia has returned to the Middle East after 25 years, but since it is their fault, we should not listen to them. Half the time the same people boast that the Russians cannot afford the intervention and that they like to see them bogged down in an expensive fight far from home, even explicitly comparing it to the Afghanistan trap of the 1980s.[\[1383\]](#)

Importantly, all three major chemical attacks blamed on Assad's government in 2013, 2017 and 2018 were hoaxes perpetrated by the bin Ladenites to increase U.S. support for their cause. In the latter two cases they got it. In the former, Russia brokered a deal to allow the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to destroy Syria's chemical weapons stocks as a compromise to avoid war after Obama's set his "red line" for full-scale intervention there.[\[1384\]](#) It is also worth considering Russia's help in getting the Ayatollah to sign on to the much-maligned Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA or Iran nuclear deal) of 2015, which in fact vastly scaled back Iran's nuclear program and expanded the international inspections regime[\[1385\]](#) in exchange only for returning some of their own money that the U.S. had "frozen" during the Carter administration.[\[1386\]](#) Russia's assurances to Iran during the negotiations were said to be crucial to their success.[\[1387\]](#)

## **Kosovars**

More than 300 Kosovar Albanians went to fight on America and al Qaeda's side in the dirty war in Syria.[\[1388\]](#) A UN Development Program report said that Kosovo had supplied the highest number of foreign fighters per capita in Europe and "the third highest number of foreign fighters per number of population of Islamic denomination." After two Kosovars committed suicide attacks in the ISIS war in Iraq and one was filmed beheading a man, the local authorities, backed by the UN, cracked down and arrested 78 men they said were involved in recruitment there.[\[1389\]](#)

## **Omar the Chechen**

The infamous red-bearded ISIS commander Omar "the Chechen" Abu al Shishani (a.k.a. Tarkhan Batirashvili) was the son of a Christian father, Temur Batirashvili, and a Muslim mother. He had been a military intelligence officer in the Georgian army and deployed on reconnaissance missions in the war of 2008. After being discharged from the military, he was falsely charged with a crime[\[1390\]](#) and then met an imam in prison who set him on the path toward terrorism and martyrdom in Syria.[\[1391\]](#)

Journalist Mitchell Prothero had interviewed Batirashvili back when he was being trained by American Army Rangers to fight the sometimes-U.S.-backed bin Ladenites then based in the Pankisi Gorge in northern Georgia. Prothero later covered the soldier after he switched sides and helped lead ISIS's fight in Syria, including their important success against Assad's forces at the Menagh Air Base in 2013.[\[1392\]](#) Batirashvili was later killed by a U.S. airstrike in Iraq War III.[\[1393\]](#)

Reuters ran a piece about the importance of the Chechens' battlefield experience in the war against Assad. An opposition source told them the Chechen fighters "are very significant, in some areas they are leading the fighting and some of them are leaders of Brigades. They are experienced fighters and also they are fighting based on ideological belief, so they do not want anything in return." Another source told them that among foreign fighters who had come to help the jihadists, the Chechens were second only in number to the Libyans who had come after their U.S. and NATO-supported victory in the 2011 war there.[\[1394\]](#) Journalist Marcin Mamon interviewed a Chechen fighter in Syria named Abdul Hakim who "says his aim is to liberate Chechnya. He ultimately wants the Chechens to return from Syria to the Caucasus and rise again united against Russia."[\[1395\]](#)

## **Bandar Bin Sultan**

In 2013, Reuters reported that Doku Umarov's bin Ladenite terrorists had "promised" to attack the Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. They also took responsibility for a January 2011 suicide attack at Moscow's Domodedovo airport and a 2010 double suicide bombing in the Moscow subway.[\[1396\]](#) The notorious Saudi diplomat and intriguer Prince Bandar bin Sultan met with Putin at his home outside Moscow, reportedly to offer a new arrangement with Saudi Arabia's OPEC oil cartel in exchange for Russia backing off support for Assad. And he allegedly also threatened Putin. According to Al-Monitor and backed up by other reporting as well, Bandar told Putin the Chechen fighters in Syria were controlled by Saudi Arabia and he would make sure they would not attack Russia during the games.

Instead of reaching out and cutting the man's throat, Putin is reported to have politely responded, "We know that you have supported the Chechen terrorist groups for a decade. And that support, which you have frankly talked about just now, is completely incompatible with the common objectives of fighting global terrorism that you mentioned." And allegedly concluded, "We are interested in developing friendly relations according to clear and strong principles."[\[1397\]](#)

## **Insubordination**

In September 2016, President Obama had Secretary Kerry make a deal with Putin to join forces against ISIS in eastern Syria.[\[1398\]](#) But then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter and the DoD attacked Syrian troops in what may have been a deliberate act of insubordination, ruining the deal and leading to major ISIS gains at the town of Deir ez Zor in the country's east.[\[1399\]](#) Still, even when the U.S. and Russia had some run-ins in Syria, such as when U.S. special operations forces killed approximately 200 Russian mercenaries in February 2018, the Russian Foreign Ministry played it down. Then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis later said, "The Russian high command in Syria assured us it was not their people," giving the Americans the green light to blow them away.[\[1400\]](#)

## **After Iraq War III**

Still, by that point U.S. special operations forces and air power, assisting Shi'ite troops, at times led by Iran on the ground,[\[1401\]](#) had made major

progress in destroying the Islamic State (ISIS) Caliphate they had created. By the summer of 2016, feeling the heat in Iraq, some terrorists were looking for somewhere else to fight. An Islamic State fighter vowed, “Listen Putin, we will come to Russia and will kill you at your homes . . . Oh Brothers, carry out jihad and kill and fight them.”[\[1402\]](#)

## **Ukrainian Jihad**

Speaking of growing relationships, when bin Ladenite terrorists from across the Middle East and the Caucasus were getting bombed by Russian and American air forces in Syria in the later part of the 2010s war, they realized they could strategically retreat to ground closer to their Russian enemies, in Ukraine, while being protected from airstrikes under the Minsk accords. Many of them took the opportunity. A commander of one of three Chechen battalions fighting for Kiev, subordinate to Right Sector, told the *New York Times*, “We like to fight the Russians. We always fight the Russians. . . . I am on this path for 24 years now. The war for us never ended.” The *Times* reporter explained that Right Sector and the Azov Battalion were “openly neo-Nazi,” and implied he had challenged the Chechen jihadis about that potential moral stain on their otherwise holy war.[\[1403\]](#) Perhaps the Chechens were just repaying the favor, since the UNA-UNSO had fought on their side in the war against Russia in the 1990s and 2000s.[\[1404\]](#)

The French arrested two members of one Chechen brigade, accusing them of being members of ISIS.[\[1405\]](#)

The journalist Marcin Mamon wrote a series in 2015 about fighters from the Dudayev Battalion, named after the first self-declared president of



Chechnya in the 1990s wars with Russia. “In eastern Ukraine, the green flag of jihad flies over some of the private battalions’ bases. . . . For many Muslims, like Ruslan, the war in Ukraine’s Donbas region is just the next stage in the fight against the Russian empire.” Mamon witnessed “Dima,” a young millionaire connected to Igor Kolomoysky, give the group \$20,000 and offer to buy all their black-market amber.[\[1406\]](#)

One Chechen fighter spoke to the *Guardian* from a base they shared with Right Sector. “Why are Chechens fighting for Isis, why are they fighting against Kurds who have never done us any wrong? For Kobane, which they had never heard of before? That is not a Chechen war. This, here in Ukraine, is a war for Chechens. If we defeat Russia here, we are closer to freeing our homeland.”[\[1407\]](#)

Another fighter, calling himself only “Muslim,” justified Chechen terrorist attacks on the Nord-Ost theater and Beslan school in North Ossetia: “You ask us why we killed peaceful people? Thirty per cent of our whole nation was lost; 300,000 people. We wanted them to feel the same pain that we did when our relatives died.” Still another explained they executed all Russian prisoners: “If you capture one of them, it’s too risky to bring them back across the lines, so you just give them time to say their prayers, and the last words they will hear on this earth are ‘Glory to Ukraine!’”

Right Sector’s Oleksandr Muzychko, who was apparently killed by the government just weeks after he helped launch the coup of 2014,[\[1408\]](#) had fought the Russians in Chechnya under Shamil Basayev. Now at least some Chechen fighters felt like repaying the favor.[\[1409\]](#) Right Sector’s Yarosh had asked Doku Umarov, the “Emir of the Caucasus Emirate,” to come to

Ukraine to fight.[\[1410\]](#) Mamon wrote, “The battalion is not strictly Muslim, though it includes a number of Muslims from former Soviet republics, including Chechens who have fought on the side of the Islamic State in Syria. It also includes many Ukrainians.”[\[1411\]](#)

Dmytro Korchynsky was a Ukrainian Nazi who fought in the Chechen wars. His group is called the “Jesus Christ Hundred.” They tried to start the coup a little too early. On December 1, 2013, they stormed government buildings but were repelled by police. After the loss of Crimea, Korchynsky and his associates formed the St. Mary’s Battalion to fight the rebels in the east. “We need to create something like a Christian Taliban. The Ukrainian state has no chance in a war with Russia, but the Christian Taliban can succeed, just as the Taliban are driving the Americans out of Afghanistan,” he told Mamon. “We will fight until Moscow burns.”[\[1412\]](#) That may have been their slogan since they repeated the same thing to Reuters.[\[1413\]](#)

Tragically, Stratfor’s George Friedman said it was Putin’s intervention to save Bashar al-Assad in the Obama years that made the impossibly self-righteous Americans believe Russia was taking a more aggressive stance in the Middle East and Europe, convincing themselves they were the ones on the defensive.[\[1414\]](#)

## **Reasonable Doubt**

### **That Settles It Then**

Neutrality was the official stance of the Ukrainian government until Viktor Yushchenko canceled it following the 2004 Orange Revolution. After he

was humiliated by Viktor Yanukovych in the parliamentary elections of 2006, Yanukovych was made prime minister under a deal that said Ukraine would not seek NATO membership.<sup>[1415]</sup> Yanukovych then ran on neutrality as one of his planks in the 2010 presidential election,<sup>[1416]</sup> while his opponent Yulia Tymoshenko supported joining the alliance. If the issue were ever up for a vote, it was then—six years after the Orange Revolution and two years after W. Bush’s Bucharest Declaration—when the lines were very clear. In September 2009, the American polling firm Pew Research found that “half of Ukrainians (51 percent) opposed their country’s admission to NATO, while only 28 percent favored such a step. Moreover, given the opposition to membership, it is not surprising that about half of Ukrainians (51 percent) gave NATO an unfavorable rating.” Opposition was highest in the south and east, while a solid majority in the west supported it.<sup>[1417]</sup> These numbers were consistent across time and different survey companies.<sup>[1418]</sup>

Once elected, Yanukovych reinstated the policy of neutrality, and the Rada quickly passed a resolution supporting him.<sup>[1419]</sup> He did, however, continue working with NATO under the previous agreements,<sup>[1420]</sup> just as he had maintained cooperation after becoming prime minister in 2006.<sup>[1421]</sup> Neutrality was, as Russia expert Richard Sakwa says, the actual Ukrainian tradition<sup>[1422]</sup> until America’s intervention changed it.<sup>[1423]</sup> The Ukrainian people had tried to “close the door” to NATO with their majority vote, but they could not stop the power of democracy. The State Department knew the people of Ukraine did not support the policy, so they launched an at least \$8.5 million “NATO Yes” public relations campaign to

try to shore up support, including bringing their journalists, academics, NGO representatives and politicians to the U.S. on field trips.[\[1424\]](#)

Yanukovych's successor, post-coup president Petro Poroshenko, had again repealed the neutrality law after America's second successful coup in 2014.[\[1425\]](#) He later admitted that only 16 percent of Ukrainians wanted to join NATO when he took office in 2014. It was only after the war he launched against the people of the Donbas that the number grew, he claimed, to a majority.[\[1426\]](#)

## **The Budapest Memorandum**

The reader may wonder about the Budapest Memorandum of December 1994, in which America promised to go to war to protect Ukraine if they gave up the nuclear weapons left behind by the USSR.

But the Budapest Memorandum does not say that. It contains security "assurances," not a guarantee. The most the signatories promised was to "reaffirm their commitment to seek immediate United Nations Security Council action to provide assistance to Ukraine . . . if Ukraine should become a victim of an act of aggression or an object of a threat of aggression in which nuclear weapons are used."[\[1427\]](#)

This amounts to essentially no promise at all. Russia has a seat on the Security Council. They can veto any resolution America and its allies submit. "Assistance" can mean anything or nothing. This is simply not a treaty obligating the U.S. to intervene for Ukraine, much less go to war for them. That is exactly the difference between being a member of NATO or not. In fact, even NATO's Article 5 itself is rather vague on just what

member states must do in the event one of them is attacked: “Parties agree . . . each of them . . . will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force.”[\[1428\]](#)

The Ukrainians understood the deal. They told administration officials they simply wanted a basis upon which they could “appeal for assistance in international fora when the Russians violate the agreements.”[\[1429\]](#)

The nuclear weapons Ukraine gave up at the time have unfortunately become the perfect question-begging talking point for the War Party: if Ukraine had not given up “its” nuclear weapons it would not have a problem with Russia today.[\[1430\]](#) But they did not belong to the Ukrainian government, but to the Soviet regime in Moscow.[\[1431\]](#) Without the Russian military’s codes, they were useless as weapons anyway.[\[1432\]](#) As Yuri Kostenko, Ukraine’s minister of environmental protection and nuclear safety, explained, “Ukraine did not really know the specific characteristics of the nuclear stockpile (the world’s third largest) it had inherited.”[\[1433\]](#)

The missiles in question—liquid-fueled SS-19s and solid-fueled but still very complex SS-24 ICBMs—were expensive to maintain and would have been difficult to aim at targets inside Russia even if the Ukrainians figured out how to take control of them.[\[1434\]](#)

If they had somehow made them operational, or by another means acquired nuclear weapons, that may well have provoked a Russian military response much sooner to preempt the threat. And there is every reason to believe that without American intervention, Ukraine would not have had a

problem with Russia anyway, beyond the typical disputes over Ukraine stealing Russian gas piped through their country to Europe.[\[1435\]](#)

On the other hand, the U.S. was in violation of the Budapest Memorandum itself, because with President Clinton's signature they had promised to "respect the independence and sovereignty" of Ukraine, as well as reaffirmed their support for the Final Act on the OSCE, which contains an outright ban on "direct or indirect assistance to . . . subversive or other activities directed toward the violent overthrow of the regime of another participating State."[\[1436\]](#)

## **The Monroe Doctrine**

Non-interventionists and realists sometimes bring up America's Monroe Doctrine to make the point that the Russians must feel the same way about their near abroad as Americans do about their own. Better, the Doctrine itself actually promises the United States will stay out of European affairs if they will stay out of our hemisphere in return.

Two hundred years ago, President James Monroe promised in his "Seventh Annual Message" of December 2, 1823, that "we should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety . . . [and] the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition toward the United States." However, Monroe also declared, "Our policy in regard to Europe . . . is not to interfere in the internal concerns of any of its powers; to consider the government de facto as the legitimate government for us [and] to cultivate

friendly relations with it.”[\[1437\]](#) That last part always goes unnoticed and unmentioned.

But imagine if the shoe was on the other foot, in, say, Canada. What if the Russians, after having won the Cold War, had begun incorporating all of Latin America into their Warsaw Pact military alliance, used neo-Nazis in a street putsch in Ottawa, proposed kicking the United States out of its naval bases in Alaska, then helped the new regime launch a hot war against the people of Vancouver for refusing to recognize the new junta—all while threatening to overthrow the government in Washington next?

Right. The U.S. would invade Canada and probably nuke Moscow.

We have examples from history. After the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson sent 50,000 troops to the border and threatened to invade Mexico to kick out the French occupation.[\[1438\]](#) Fifty years later, when the British intercepted the Zimmermann telegram in which the besieged Germans promised to help Mexico retake the American Southwest if they would only declare war on us,[\[1439\]](#) President Woodrow Wilson demanded a declaration and brought the U.S. into World War I.[\[1440\]](#) After the Communists took over Cuba in 1959, the CIA sponsored an ultimately failed invasion of exiles to topple the new regime, known as the Bay of Pigs, in 1961.[\[1441\]](#) When the USSR stationed nuclear missiles there the next year, President John F. Kennedy brought the entire planet to the brink of thermonuclear war with his demand that the Soviets remove the missiles.[\[1442\]](#)

Those crazy Russians though—especially that Vladimir Putin, the allegedly most dangerous, freedom-hating psychopath on the planet? Well,

they would just have to learn to get used to it. The Americans acted as if there was nothing he could ever do about it.

A civilian adviser to the Pentagon brass and intelligence executives told reporters he had posed these questions to his clients to gauge their responses over the last few years. For example, what if Mexico invited China to build military bases? They always answered: maximum pressure on Mexico and war, if necessary, to force them to change their mind. When he then asked how they thought Russia saw the United States in Ukraine, “the military and intelligence officers have been taken aback, in many cases admitting, . . . ‘Damn, I never thought out what we’re doing to Russia in that light.’”[\[1443\]](#)

And forget the Monroe Doctrine’s limitations about the Americas. Every nation must bow down to the empire in the Old World too. Those countries will be allowed no alliances against the wishes of Washington. For example, in 2015, Barack Obama put the world’s oldest constitutional republic in service of His Royal Majesty Prince Mohammed bin Zayed of the United Arab Emirates and His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed bin Salman of Saudi Arabia, helping them launch a genocidal war against Yemen. They killed hundreds of thousands of innocent people based on the theory that the new Shi’ite regime was allied with Iran, when in fact their ties had always been greatly exaggerated.[\[1444\]](#)

In 2023, when the Solomon Islands said they might join a military alliance with China, the U.S. threatened them on Australia’s behalf. The universal principle that all nations have the sacred right to choose any military alliance they wish had somehow been forgotten.[\[1445\]](#)



Putin gave a speech to the UN in 2015 claiming the United States was the “rogue nation” and that Russia was seeking to uphold the post-World War II, UN Charter-based international system. He said the U.S. and its allies “continue their policy of expanding NATO. What for? The Warsaw Bloc stopped its existence, the Soviet Union has collapsed and, nevertheless, NATO continues expanding as well as its military infrastructure.” He added that the false choice between the East and West offered by the alliance to Eastern European countries “was bound to spark off a grave geopolitical crisis.” Putin concluded, “This is exactly what happened in Ukraine, where the discontent of population with the current authorities was used and the military coup was orchestrated from outside—that triggered a civil war as a result.”[\[1446\]](#)

The CIA later threw Bush and Obama under the bus for not listening to their warnings. A former intelligence official relayed to journalist Zach Dorfman that “[w]e used to glibly tell people, if you like what happened in Georgia in 2008, or Ukraine in 2014, then by all means give either country a NATO MAP [Membership Action Plan],” because “[i]f we took a serious step toward admitting either country to NATO, we were 100 percent convinced that the Russians would find some reason to declare war” before they could join. He added, “There wasn’t even a 1 percent shadow of doubt in any analyst’s mind about that assessment.” Another CIA official said they thought Ukraine was the only country Putin might risk war over. Russia had learned to accept the loss of Poland and even the Baltics, but the analysts were certain that Georgia, and especially Ukraine, were “a different matter entirely.”[\[1447\]](#)

Life is not fair. These are the breaks for small, weak nations stuck next to large, powerful ones. President Theodore Roosevelt said, “The Monroe Doctrine is not a question of law at all. It is a question of policy. . . . To argue that it cannot be recognized as a principle of international law is a mere waste of breath.”[\[1448\]](#)

## **International Law**

After the disasters of America’s Middle East wars of the early 21st century, along with the U.S.-led financial catastrophe of 2008, it became clear that the high-water mark of American power was in 2003, when George W. Bush blew the empire’s advantage in the sands of Iraq in a war ultimately fought in favor of its regional rival Iran.[\[1449\]](#) The “unipolar moment” was already over before Obama had even had the chance to launch and lose five more wars.[\[1450\]](#)

The empire insists it is no such thing at all. The U.S. only has an interest in being a disinterested referee of the post-World War II, liberal, rules-based international order of law and cooperation and governance. But that international order has some terrible baked-in problems as well. The world’s nations all signed the UN Charter where they promise not to engage in aggressive war or attempt to otherwise change international borders by force, at least without authorization from the UN Security Council. These boundaries, as they existed after the Second World War, or at least since the end of the first Cold War, are, legally speaking, inviolable, and war is outlawed. Great. But so many borders in the world are drawn in the “wrong” places, according to the people and governments involved. Often it

is especially questions of ethnicity and language which separate people and lead them to wish to secede or join another state. But the international order does not have a system where these questions can be considered and hashed out in diplomatic negotiations instead of war. Obviously, more powerful countries would have the advantage, but they already do, and this was supposedly the point of the United Nations, so that states can negotiate in good faith instead of sending their people into battle all the time. In a better world, perhaps it could be America's job to help negotiate peaceful adjustments to these lines from time to time, instead of instigating wars over them.

## **Sane Men**

After the war broke out in the Donbas in 2014 and Russia was widely said to have invaded, the CFR's journal *Foreign Affairs* polled Western scholars to ask whether the West had "provoked Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression in Russia's near abroad by expanding NATO and the EU after the Cold War." A solid third of them agreed that it did, with many who disagreed still admitting it played at least some role.[\[1451\]](#)

John J. Mearsheimer, a professor of political science at the University of Chicago, along with his sometimes-co-author Stephen M. Walt from Harvard University, is considered the dean of the "realist" school of American foreign policy studies. Realists are not non-interventionists, and in fact may or may not favor "restraint" in any given foreign crisis. Their analysis and prescriptions are centered around a grand theory of great power politics, which emphasizes the balance of power between the

strongest nation states and the reality that those larger states, including the U.S., have interests and will pursue them, all loud protestations about international law notwithstanding.[\[1452\]](#) Walt, for example, has said he believes America should go to war if necessary to keep any single power from dominating Europe, East Asia or the Middle East.[\[1453\]](#) Compared to the liberal internationalists, who claim to launch aggressive wars for “humanitarian” reasons[\[1454\]](#) and in the name of the international law they are constantly violating to do so, or the neoconservatives, who only care about Israel and profits for arms manufacturers,[\[1455\]](#) the realists are typically not so bad. Perhaps they just specialize in not being naïve, and as academics instead of think-tankers, they have less of a conflict of interest when they dispense their advice.[\[1456\]](#)

In August 2014, Mearsheimer wrote a piece for *Foreign Affairs* called “Why the West is to Blame for the Ukraine Crisis.” After reciting much of this history, he added an important perspective about Russia’s geographic vulnerability, having no major hills, mountains or rivers serving as natural barriers for its capital’s defense. “A huge expanse of flat land that Napoleonic France, imperial Germany, and Nazi Germany all crossed to strike at Russia itself, Ukraine serves as a buffer state of enormous strategic importance to Russia.” Because of this, “No Russian leader would tolerate a military alliance that was Moscow’s mortal enemy until recently moving into Ukraine.” He also doubted “any Russian leader [would] stand idly by while the West helped install a government there that was determined to integrate Ukraine into the West.”

Mearsheimer concluded the U.S. should immediately abandon its project of bringing Ukraine into the Western alliance, cease all “social engineering” projects in the country and recommended America work instead to negotiate a position of neutrality for the country akin to that of Austria during the last Cold War. He also said, “The sad truth is that might often makes right when great-power politics are at play. Abstract rights such as self-determination are largely meaningless when powerful states get into brawls with weaker states.” He compared Ukraine to Cuba and said the reality is that Ukraine may not, in fact, join any military alliance they want. Not as long as Russia has anything to say about it, which they do and will continue to.[\[1457\]](#)

Mearsheimer said in August 2014 that if the U.S. insisted on pursuing the path to Ukrainian NATO membership, Russia would instead find a way to “wreck Ukraine,” which is after all directly on their western border, rather than let things go that far. He also warned that if many Russians are killed in a civil war in their own near abroad, they would be sure to invade to prevent it.[\[1458\]](#)

In February 2015, just before Minsk II was negotiated, and as Daalder and the Brookings group were recommending sending in more weapons to kill Russians and make the debate “go up” in Russia, Mearsheimer wrote in the *New York Times*, “Don’t Arm Ukraine.” He warned that doing so would risk escalation of the war, and that the economic and social consequences could be terrible for the country’s entire population. He again insisted on neutrality for Ukraine and said the U.S. and its allies should take NATO membership off the table. He also recommended strong federalism and

autonomy for the Donbas and said it would be better to accept Russia's sovereignty over Crimea since a refusal to do so could only hurt American-Russian relations with no real benefit.[\[1459\]](#)

After Ukraine's loss of Crimea, Henry Kissinger gave an interview to the German magazine *Der Spiegel*, not exactly accusing the U.S. of supporting a coup that was already backfiring, but then what else could he have meant? Referring to Russia's seizure of Crimea, Kissinger said, "[I]f the West is honest with itself, it has to admit that there were mistakes on its side. The annexation of Crimea was not a move toward global conquest. It was not Hitler moving into Czechoslovakia." He pointed out that Putin had just spent tens of billions of dollars on the Sochi Olympics, the theme of which was that Russia is part of Europe and "tied to" the West. "So it doesn't make any sense that a week after the close of the Olympics, Putin would take Crimea and start a war over Ukraine. So one has to ask one's self why did it happen?"

When the *Der Spiegel* reporter asked Kissinger, "What you're saying is that the West has at least a kind of responsibility for the escalation?" he responded, "Yes, I am saying that. Europe and America did not understand the impact of these events, starting with the negotiations about Ukraine's economic relations with the European Union and culminating in the demonstrations in Kiev." While criticizing Russia for Crimea and their role in the war in the Donbas, he said, "Ukraine has always had a special significance for Russia. It was a mistake not to realize that." The former secretary of state said, "I think a resumption of the Cold War would be a historic tragedy. If a conflict is avoidable, on a basis reflecting morality and

security, one should try to avoid it.” He suggested that since Crimea was long gone and the Donbas soon enough, the U.S. and Europe could simply accept those “facts of life,” while remaining committed to the old truth as far as international law was concerned, “just as we continued to treat the Baltic states as independent throughout Soviet rule.”[\[1460\]](#)

Kissinger wrote a piece for the *Washington Post* after the successful coup, but before Ukraine’s loss of Crimea back to Russia. “Far too often the Ukrainian issue is posed as a showdown: whether Ukraine joins the East or the West,” he said. “But if Ukraine is to survive and thrive, it must not be either side’s outpost against the other—it should function as a bridge between them.” He said Russia was making a mistake to try to subjugate Ukraine as a satellite due to the reaction from the West. But he added that the West “must understand that, to Russia, Ukraine can never be just a foreign country. . . . Ukraine has been part of Russia for centuries, and their histories were intertwined before then.” Kissinger also warned against helping western Ukrainians dominate the east, as this would surely “lead eventually to civil war or break up,” and that any attempt by the Obama administration to “treat Ukraine as part of an East-West confrontation” would ruin for decades the opportunity to bring Russia into the European system.

Too late to make the difference, Kissinger told Putin not to intervene in Ukraine as it would surely lead to a new Cold War, and told the Americans to stop lecturing the Russians as though they were disobedient children. He then proposed allowing Ukraine into the EU, but not NATO, and a Finland-

type independence: not exactly neutral, but “carefully avoid[ing] institutional hostility toward Russia.”[\[1461\]](#)

Professor Walt asked at the time, “[F]ew experts think this bankrupt and divided country is a vital strategic interest and no one is talking about sending U.S. troops to fight on Kiev’s behalf. So the question is: does sending Ukraine a bunch of advanced weaponry make sense?”[\[1462\]](#)

Walt insisted the American narrative was all wrong, arguing the “spiral model,” not deterrence, was a more appropriate way to understand this conflict. When a country is acting out of fear, threatening them only makes it worse. He advised that “[w]hen the ‘spiral model’ applies, the proper response is a diplomatic process of accommodation and appeasement (yes, appeasement) to allay the insecure state’s concerns.” He was clear that did not mean unconditional surrender or giving them everything they want, “but it does require a serious effort to address the insecurities that are motivating the other side’s objectionable behavior.”

Then the Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of international relations at the Harvard Kennedy School stated the absolute fact that no hawk can dispute without resorting to lies and smears: “[T]he Ukraine crisis did not begin with a bold Russian move or even a series of illegitimate Russian demands; it began when the United States and European Union tried to move Ukraine out of Russia’s orbit and into the West’s sphere of influence.” Walt continued, “Moscow made it abundantly clear it would fight this process tooth and nail. U.S. leaders blithely ignored these warnings—which clearly stemmed from Russian insecurity rather than territorial greed—and not surprisingly they have been blindsided by Moscow’s reaction.”



It does not matter one bit if the Kremlin decides to translate his statement and put it first on their list of dreaded “Russian talking points.” Walt is a patriot and an academic foreign policy expert at the top of the Ivy League. What he said was true. The U.S. government started the fight, not Russia. He added for good measure, “The failure of U.S. diplomats to anticipate Putin’s heavy-handed response was an act of remarkable diplomatic incompetence, and one can only wonder why the individuals who helped produce this train wreck still have their jobs.”[\[1463\]](#)

## **Primordial Fear**

Brzezinski warned back in 1997 that a remote but serious threat to American dominance in Europe would be a German-Russian or French-Russian entente. This is why, he said, the U.S. had to focus on uniting Europe under the EU, NATO and American leadership.[\[1464\]](#)

But what is this obsession with continuing to hit Russia all this time after the end of the first Cold War? George Friedman explained it all quite clearly in his “most blatant coup in history” interview with *Kommersant*.[\[1465\]](#) Since World War I, he said, America’s priority has been preventing any one power, such as Germany or Russia, from gaining dominance in Europe. But, “What is more, the most dangerous potential alliance, from the perspective of the United States, was considered to be an alliance between Russia and Germany. This would be an alliance of German technology and capital with Russian natural and human resources.” Part of their strategy for preventing this was intervention in Ukraine, to stop Russia from

“consolidat[ing] its position in the post-Soviet space. The success of the pro-Western forces in Ukraine would allow the U.S. to contain Russia.”

Halford Mackinder warned back in 1904, “The oversetting of the balance of power in favour of the pivot state, resulting in its expansion over the marginal lands of Euro-Asia, would permit of the use of vast continental resources for fleet-building, and the empire of the world might be in sight. This might happen if Germany were to ally herself with Russia.”[\[1466\]](#) That is what the Americans feared Merkel and Putin had in mind with their so-called Common Eurasian Home project.

Friedman reiterated this in a speech at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, during the peak of the fighting in the Donbas in February 2015, saying a German-Russian alliance would be the only power that could threaten us and that the “primordial interest of the United States” was to prevent it. So, when the U.S. sees the Russians creating an extra buffer zone in eastern Ukraine, in response to their own intervention, they react as though they have gone mad and are prepared to conquer all of Eastern Europe. The Americans have already drawn a line “from the Baltic to the Black Sea,” the question was what side of the line Ukraine and even Belarus are considered to be on.[\[1467\]](#)

As British author and analyst Anatol Lieven explained, Putin’s policy of trying to move closer to Western Europe at the expense of U.S. influence required Russian restraint in the Donbas. Even though invading Ukraine, destroying their military and seizing the far-eastern part of the country would have been much easier back in 2014 and 2015, Putin knew that if he did so, the Russian-German Eurasian Home concept would be dead. So

instead, he placed his bets on the Minsk deals to make his Ukraine problems go away. “This Russian strategy was correctly seen as an attempt to split the West, and cement a Russian sphere of influence in the states of the former Soviet Union,” Lieven wrote, adding, “However, having a European security order with Russia at the table would also have removed the risk of a Russian attack on Nato, the EU, and most likely, Ukraine.” This would have made it more likely that Russia would “exert a looser influence over its neighbours . . . rather than gripping them tightly. It was an approach that had roots in Mikhail Gorbachev’s idea—welcomed in the east at the time—of a ‘common European home.’” The author went on to say that Putin had decided to turn his back on Europe and embrace a new Asia-centric future for Russia, in line with nationalist hardliners, who now seem vindicated by the failure of his pro-European vision.[\[1468\]](#)

In 2009, Yossef Bodansky wrote of Merkel’s pressure on Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia to conform with German and Russian plans to work together on a new Southern Corridor of gas pipelines from the Caspian Basin to Europe through Russia and Turkey, and the backfiring of then-President Bush’s response. Merkel and then-French President Nicolas Sarkozy were reaching out to the Russians to consolidate the strategic partnership. “The ‘Eurasia Home,’” Bodansky wrote, “is considered the key to the joint building of a global geo-strategic and geo-economic bloc capable of withstanding both the U.S. and the PRC [People’s Republic of China].” He said that central to Bush’s policy was to “undermine Russian dominance over energy—mainly natural gas—supplies to the EU. This effort peaked in 2008 when the Bush Administration goaded Georgia into

provoking Russia. The ensuing war consolidated Russia's hegemony in the GBSB [Greater Black Sea Basin].”[\[1469\]](#)

And so the problem, as Washington and London saw it, of the too-close relationship between Germany and Russia remained.

## **Cold War II**

Obama refused to integrate Ukraine into NATO because he understood the major risks and low rewards of such an action. On the other hand, he continued to slow-walk the policy and repeatedly declared that Ukraine would indeed be brought into the alliance someday,[\[1470\]](#) thus continuing to make matters worse and foregoing the benefit of any restraint he was actually practicing.

Of course, the U.S. government had to ignore the facts of their own provocation in Kiev and pretend the problem began with “Russian aggression” in Crimea. So in 2015, Obama announced his new National Security Strategy, which focused on great power conflict with Russia and China. It said the United States would “continue to impose significant costs on Russia through sanctions and other means while countering Moscow’s deceptive propaganda with the unvarnished truth,” as well as “deter Russian aggression, remain alert to its strategic capabilities, and help our allies and partners resist Russian coercion over the long term.”[\[1471\]](#) By 2016, NATO nations America, Britain, Canada and Germany had troops on a “persistence rotational presence” in the Baltic states—a supposed loophole in their promise not to permanently station troops in the new NATO nations.

[\[1472\]](#) They also held the biggest military exercises since the 1980s, and right on Russia's western border.[\[1473\]](#)

The second Cold War had begun.

# Donald Trump

“The Americans promised that NATO wouldn’t move beyond the boundaries of Germany after the Cold War, but now half of Central and Eastern Europe are members. So what happened to their promises? It shows they cannot be trusted.”

—Mikhail Gorbachev

“It would be great if we could get along with Russia.”

—Donald Trump

“All roads lead to Putin.”

—Nancy Pelosi

“Trump’s press conference performance in Helsinki was nothing short of treasonous.”

—John Brennan

“I think you have overlearned the lessons of the pre-Iraq war reporting failures.”

—Charlie Savage

“We want no Gestapo or Secret Police. FBI is tending in that direction.”

—Harry Truman

“For the first time in history, the language of ‘arms control’ was replaced by ‘arms reduction’—in this case, the complete elimination of an entire class of U.S. and Soviet nuclear missiles.”

—Ronald Reagan

“For the first time in 25 years, the United States is facing a return to great power competition.”

—Adm. John Richardson

“War is a massive racket. We are at war constantly. At the end of the day, it’s about making money.”

—Gen. Michael Flynn

# Russiagate

## Framing Trump

In his great book on the origins of the new Cold War in the color-coded revolutions of the Clinton and W. Bush years, Canadian journalist Mark MacKinnon talks about the phony nature of Russia's "managed democracy." The country is an autocracy even if not a dictatorship. While retaining the trappings of a republican form of government, really the state and its leader are in charge, all public politics notwithstanding. Parties and elections play more of a ceremonial role to invoke the appearance of popular sovereignty without any real participation by the people or turnover of those in authority.[\[1\]](#)

That is evidently similar to what we have in the United States of America—white marble statues, ancient parchments and regular elections, again, notwithstanding, though in our system it is the bureaucracy itself, rather than the leader, that holds the permanent power. For example, the regime simply framed Donald J. Trump of all people for treason—"collusion" they called it—and invented a Russian plot to steal the 2016 election and give it to him, their blackmailed, compromised agent.

It was the CIA and FBI, as well as the Clinton campaign and their agents, that did this to Trump—the frontrunner for major party candidacy for U.S. president, later the Republican nominee, president-elect and eventually sitting chief executive. None of it was true. The false claims implicated low-level staffers like George Papadopoulos and Carter Page,



along with well-known Washington players such as Senator Jeff Sessions, General Michael Flynn and political consultant Paul Manafort, who were simply collateral damage. It was absolutely unbelievable. But millions did believe it. After failing to prevent Trump's election, the same Russiagate hoax was used to "rein in" his independence from the permanent policy, and to sway the outcome of the 2018 election and the 2020 race as well.[\[2\]](#)

Trump ran on a promise to "get along with Russia" in 2016. Not that he had any idea of what issues divided our nations, nor what should be done about them. He simply possessed the pedestrian insight that the Evil Empire ceased to exist more than a generation ago, and that his predecessors' failures to forge a peaceful coexistence with Russia should be placed at their own feet. He also repeated former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's advice that the U.S. should seek partnership with Russia to use them against China, apparently on the theory that it makes more sense to make peace with Eurasia before fighting East Asia, rather than both of them at the same time.[\[3\]](#)

Perhaps the foreign policy establishment could have handled that, even after the loss of Crimea. After all, "reset" had been the official policy of the early Obama years. But Trump was just too uncouth. It is not that he ever meant to abandon, or even scale back, America's commitment to NATO, but he disgraced and insulted the alliance, calling it "obsolete."[\[4\]](#) For those who did not understand his business style, this seemed like an attack on American dominance in Europe and the rest of the world. To the foreign policy establishment, this was spitting in church. He was making them *uncomfortable*.[\[5\]](#) As demonstrated by his presidency,[\[6\]](#) Trump was just

playing hardball to get NATO countries to spend more on their militaries.[\[7\]](#) But it is easy to see why many elites panicked over his praise for Putin's Russia[\[8\]](#) while "deriding" the Atlantic alliance, as the *New York Times* put it.[\[9\]](#)

He also severely upset the establishment with his criticism of Obama's Syria policy, taking the advice of his designated national security adviser, Gen. Mike Flynn, that though they opposed Iran, it was wrong to back al Qaeda against them in Syria,[\[10\]](#) especially after the rise of the ISIS Caliphate in 2014.[\[11\]](#) In Trump's hyperbolic language, "Obama co-founded ISIS,"[\[12\]](#) and, he mused, maybe we should just let Iran, Syria and Russia kill them for us.[\[13\]](#) When he finally ordered a halt to CIA support for al Qaeda in 2017, the *Washington Post* made it sound like treason: "Trump ends covert CIA program to arm anti-Assad rebels in Syria, a move sought by Moscow."[\[14\]](#) America's Syria policy under Obama was so twisted[\[15\]](#) that setting it anywhere close to straight was a massive repudiation of the entire War Party and had much to do with their hatred for and fear of Trump.[\[16\]](#)

Just before his first debate with Secretary Clinton, James Clapper, the director of national intelligence (DNI), released a report along with DHS saying the Russians were intervening in the election against her.[\[17\]](#) She then cited the claims in the debate. Retired U.S. Army Colonel Derek Harvey, who investigated the origins of the scandal for the House Intelligence Committee, later confirmed, "There was no evidence to support it. It was a political diversion to help Clinton."[\[18\]](#)

Chris Swecker, a former FBI assistant director, told journalist Paul Sperry that Clapper's October 7 assessment was a covert intelligence operation against Trump to keep him from winning, or failing that, to limit his power. Clapper's "pre-cooked" conclusion about Russia targeting Clinton, Swecker said, was an abuse of the powers of the intelligence community to intervene in the election. He also claimed CIA Director John Brennan had manipulated the elderly Clapper into doing it.[\[19\]](#)

## **Media Storm**

The whole thing started with a frame-up, but ultimately captured the most fevered imagination of the American establishment for the better part of three years, including the leadership of the Republican Party, and especially liberal Democratic functionaries, voters and news consumers. It was very similar to the Second Red Scare, led by Sen. Joe McCarthy back in the 1950s, and mirrored the paranoia about an all-powerful Soviet Union taking over America[\[20\]](#)—only this time it was all true! Except it was not true. But it became a cult obsession. People made religious-inspired candles in devotion to leading Russiagate crusaders, they sang songs and prayed to God to deliver us from this evil. Every middle-aged lady on TV news and opinion shows, led by CNN, MSNBC and *The View*, believed. Dozens of new fraudulent Russia and "disinformation" experts made tons of money analyzing all the latest rumors day in and day out. It was a big social psychology experiment in consensus-building. In place of facts was a shared belief about a great danger. It was a very exciting time for those who jumped on the bandwagon.

And worse, people were really scared. They were told Vladimir Putin's Russia was an enemy the likes of which America had never seen or dealt with before, that it was a terrible emergency. His supposed "attack on our democracy" in the 2016 election was repeatedly called an "act of war," and was directly compared to September 11,[\[21\]](#) Pearl Harbor[\[22\]](#) and even *Kristallnacht*—or the "Night of Broken Glass," the first significant anti-Jewish pogrom in Nazi Germany and Austria in November 1938, widely regarded as the beginning of the Holocaust.[\[23\]](#) It was accepted in all the major media that Russia was waging an all-out "influence" and "information war" to "sow discord," "disrupt and destabilize" American society and destroy our democracy. The U.S.A. was losing the fifth-generation hybrid cyberwar gap!

After BuzzFeed's Ben Smith published the so-called "Steele dossier" compiled by former MI6 officer Christopher Steele, alleging a long-term Kremlin plot to plant the real estate tycoon in the White House,[\[24\]](#) the Washington establishment went out of its mind. Paul Krugman of the *New York Times* called Trump the "Siberian Candidate,"[\[25\]](#) while neoconservative war hawk Max Boot[\[26\]](#) speculated "18 reasons Trump could be a Russian asset" in a piece for the *Washington Post*.[\[27\]](#)

Polls showed that large numbers of Americans, especially Democrats, bought the story about Putin's government rigging the 2016 election[\[28\]](#)—right down to the vote totals[\[29\]](#)—and that Trump and his campaign were in on it all. In fact, Russiagate was nothing more than a big, fake hoax. As former foreign service officer and whistleblower Peter Van Buren put it, "The short version of Russiagate? There was no Russiagate."[\[30\]](#)

The author is not and has never been a Trump supporter.[\[31\]](#) The careful reader will note that what follows contains very few defenses of the man or his antics. Instead, there are accurate charges against his enemies. If in some parallel universe, Republican hawks had done the same to President Obama and Secretary Clinton over their attempted “reset,” the truth would have deserved defending all the same. Whether one is for Trump or against him, it is simply a fact: Russiagate was a lie.

It really was one of history’s all-time greatest political dirty tricks, just a degree or two away from actual assassination. The government made itself clear: no election would stand in the way of their consensus for how their empire was to be run. It was effective, too. Despite the fact that Special Counsel Robert Mueller, W. Bush’s former FBI director, could ultimately prove no Russian interference, and did not even allege a plot by Trump associates to “collude” with Moscow,[\[32\]](#) it did not matter. A Reuters poll showed that nearly half the country still believed the lies.[\[33\]](#)

DNI Clapper, CIA Director Brennan, Special Counsel Mueller, FBI Director James Comey and the leaders of the Department of Justice knew the entire story was nonsense. The FBI investigation, dubbed “Crossfire Hurricane,” and later the special counsel’s two-year inquiry—which eventually ended with no prosecutions of any American for conspiring with Russia—were the means and the end. After two years of pretending to look into it and a few trivial convictions that had no connection to the main case, Mueller conceded, “The Special Counsel’s investigation did not find that the Trump campaign or anyone associated with it conspired or coordinated with Russia in its efforts to influence the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election.”

Even that was an embellishment. There had actually been nothing to the story at all.

John McLaughlin, a former acting director of the CIA, was asked at an event whether the “deep state” was trying to remove Trump. “Thank God for the deep state,” he answered, to applause. This was all fine, he declared, because “the problem is . . . at 1600 Pennsylvania, it’s not at the Hoover Building, it’s not at Langley, it’s not at Fort Meade.”[\[34\]](#)

Perhaps this would have been an exemplary case of honor-bound fidelity to the constitutional law if any of their accusations were true. Trump was the elected president. They were appointees and bureaucrats from post-constitutional national security departments. He had better have been guilty as hell for them to come at him this way. He was not. They were the ones who were out of line.

Years later, Special Counsel John Durham, assigned to investigate Russiagate’s origins, later put it in terms so polite as to amount to a cover-up. “It is the Office’s assessment that the FBI discounted or willfully ignored material information that did not support the narrative of a collusive relationship between Trump and Russia.” The Department of Justice inspector general (IG) concluded the same, saying the FBI “repeatedly ignore[d] or explain[ed] away evidence contrary to the theory the Trump campaign . . . had conspired with Russia. . . . It appeared that . . . there was a pattern of assuming nefarious intent.”[\[35\]](#) Durham concluded, “An objective and honest assessment of these strands of information should have caused the FBI to question not only the predication for [the investigation],

but also to reflect on whether the FBI was being manipulated for political or other purposes. Unfortunately, it did not.”[\[36\]](#)

## **DNC Podesta Leaks**

The story first came to public consciousness in the summer of 2016. When someone handed WikiLeaks a trove of emails from a Democratic National Committee (DNC) server and accounts of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) and Hillary Clinton campaign manager John Podesta, showing they had outright cheated Bernie Sanders in the primaries, [\[37\]](#) the former secretary of state approved a plan to help frame Trump for treason. It was the Russians who hacked the emails and delivered them to Julian Assange, to benefit Trump at her expense, her campaign manager Robby Mook claimed on July 24, [\[38\]](#) citing the DNC’s computer security contractor, CrowdStrike. [\[39\]](#) Ironically, Trump’s former National Security Advisor John Bolton, the notorious hawk [\[40\]](#) and self-confessed professional liar, [\[41\]](#) was closest to the truth when he suggested the entire thing was a “false flag” perpetrated by the Obama administration and Clinton campaign. [\[42\]](#) It is unlikely that the Democrats were behind the leaks themselves, but their cynical exploitation of the event and knowingly false accusations against Trump and Russia amounted to virtually the same level of deceit.

When Trump heard about Russia’s alleged hack on the DNC, he mentioned emails that had been scrubbed from Hillary Clinton’s private server: “Russia, if you’re listening, I hope you are able to find the 30,000 emails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by

our press. Let's see if that happens.”[43] For those predisposed to believe, this was taken as proof that Trump did not simply want to get along with Russia, but secretly worked for the Kremlin and would hand over the keys to the entire castle.

On June 19, 2016, just four days after CrowdStrike claimed Russia was the culprit behind the DNC hack,[44] Jeffrey Carr, a top-level computer security expert, explained that it was impossible to say with certainty who might be behind the hacks because—as was later revealed by the CIA Vault 7 leak[45]—it is too easy to leave false fingerprints, such as the supposed “tell-tale” Cyrillic script allegedly left behind in the DNC server.[46] There is only one agency in the world, Carr said, who could say for certain who was behind the hack and leak: the U.S. National Security Agency (NSA). They can essentially rewind the entire internet if they wish, and trace any electronic packet anywhere in the world.[47] This is why the document leaked by NSA analyst Reality Winner to the Intercept was so revealing, and not in the way she apparently intended.[48] The NSA was shown to have concluded, based only on an analyst's judgment, not hard facts, that a hacker working for Russian military intelligence was behind an operation targeting local governments, hacks which evidently were of no consequence anyway.[49] The Intercept's Matthew Cole recklessly sent a copy of the file directly to the NSA's media office and published it online, compromising his source who was then convicted and imprisoned[50]

Craig Murray, former British ambassador to Uzbekistan and someone very close to WikiLeaks's Assange, told the author in December 2016 that he met with the DNC leaker in Washington, D.C., and that it was an



American with no conceivable tie to the Russians. He said he also knew who phished and leaked the Podesta emails, strongly implying it was an NSA employee resentful of Clinton's reckless use of a private email server. [\[51\]](#) This may not be definitive proof, or even sworn testimony; however it remains the most credible explanation for the leaks. All other accounts were obvious, and later admitted, lies.

Only years later and too late, Congress finally released the transcripts of a classified congressional hearing from December 2017, when Rep. Adam Schiff of California, chief promoter of the Russiagate hoax in the House, asked the head of CrowdStrike, Shawn Henry, on what date the Russians "exfiltrated the data" from the DNC's servers. Henry started to say, "It is in our report," but then after a short off-microphone discussion with his lawyer admitted he had no evidence Russia had "exfiltrated" the DNC emails after all. "Counsel just reminded me that, as it relates to the DNC, we have indicators that data was exfiltrated. We did not have concrete evidence that data was exfiltrated from the DNC."

Apparently attempting to walk back that damning statement, he instead advanced it. "We didn't have a network sensor in place that saw data leave. We said that the data left based on the circumstantial evidence." He added, "When I answered that question, I was trying to be as factually accurate—I want to provide the facts. So I said that we didn't have direct evidence. But we made a conclusion that the data left the network." [\[52\]](#)

Henry told Congress under oath that his company thought it must be the hacking group "Fancy Bear" that did it, and that Fancy Bear must be the Russians, but admitted they were really just speculating. "Fancy Bear is an

actor that we associated with Russian intelligence. It's likely a group of people that are operating on behalf of a Russian intelligence service, and aggregately we have named them Fancy Bear as a way for us to kind of identify different tactics and associate it with a particular group." He admitted, "There wasn't a videotape of the Russians with their fingers on a keyboard, but the activities were consistent with what we'd seen previously, targeting other [agencies]—the State Department, for example, the Joint Chiefs, other governments." They had suspicions, but no proof. He added, "I think that when you're looking at attribution, it's—you look at an aggregate across many different attacks over a long period of time, years in many cases, and the intelligence that you collect leads you to a certain conclusion. I think that's the case here."

That was in December 2017. The completely unproven nature of the Russians' alleged DNC hack, the core of the entire hoax, was exposed—in secret—by the end of Trump's first year in office. The American people were not told until May 2020.[\[53\]](#)

CrowdStrike had already long since proven how biased and sloppy they were after falsely claiming Russia had hacked artillery apps on Ukrainian soldiers' smartphones,[\[54\]](#) which they were forced to retract after resounding criticism from various computer security experts.[\[55\]](#) One of the company's co-founders, Dmitri Alperovitch, is a Russian expatriate, opponent of Putin and a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.[\[56\]](#) They were not just a computer security firm, but had an enormous conflict of interest. CrowdStrike's original claim about the Russian hack and email leak remains one of the most deeply believed lies about the whole affair.

Court documents later revealed that the FBI never even examined the server themselves, relying on three redacted draft reports from CrowdStrike which themselves provided no evidence.[\[57\]](#)

Journalist Aaron Maté showed that attorney Michael Sussmann and Henry both lied to Congress when they denied the FBI had requested access to the servers. CrowdStrike had stonewalled the FBI both on an inspection and on “Priority Requests” for unredacted copies of their reports. He also showed that the bureau let Sussmann edit a press release to make it seem like the FBI was confirming, rather than referring to, others’ allegations. When Obama ordered the DHS to announce they were certain the Russians had hacked the Democratic emails, this was before CrowdStrike had even denied the FBI access to the servers or given them the image files.[\[58\]](#)

It was not revealed until September 2023 that some of the Russian hacking claims came from the “Georgia Tech team,”[\[59\]](#) the same people who originated the completely ridiculous and widely debunked Alpha Bank hoax,[\[60\]](#) which claimed the Trump campaign was receiving secret instructions by way of a server communicating with a Russian bank, another devastating blow to the credibility of the hacking story.[\[61\]](#)

Erik Wemple from the *Washington Post* did a deep post-mortem on the whole Russiagate affair after Special Counsel Mueller’s massive flop of a report was finally published in the spring of 2019.[\[62\]](#) But he still refused to revisit the central question of the 2016 DNC and Podesta email leaks and the unproven claims that the Russian government had anything to do with them.[\[63\]](#) A later indictment of several GU officers made assertions about

what role they had played in the hacks and leaks, but there was no proof.

[\[64\]](#)

CNN claimed to have email evidence showing that Donald Trump Jr. had advanced knowledge of WikiLeaks's plans to publish the DNC documents.[\[65\]](#) It turned out they got the date wrong.[\[66\]](#) Even if their story were true, WikiLeaks informing the Trump campaign about damaging material on Clinton would only matter if one assumed WikiLeaks was acting as a cutout for Russia—an accusation for which there remains no evidence or credible indication. In the Mueller report, the special prosecutor's office pushed the innuendo that WikiLeaks coordinated with the campaign to protect Trump's interests, claiming it was not a coincidence that the website started publishing the Podesta emails soon after a leaked tape surfaced in which Trump made crude comments about women. But that was a wild centrist conspiracy theory that had no basis in fact, which was debunked by Italian journalist Stefania Maurizi, author of *Secret Power: WikiLeaks and Its Enemies*,[\[67\]](#) who worked with the group to prepare the materials for publication. The documents were simply ready to be posted at that time.[\[68\]](#)

## **DCLeaks and Guccifer 2.0**

The Mueller report also insisted without evidence that Guccifer 2.0 and DCLeaks—which also published leaked documents—were both controlled by the Russian military intelligence agency GU (“Main Directorate,” often referred to by its former name GRU). The report claimed, “That the Guccifer 2.0 persona provided reporters access to a restricted portion of the

DCLeaks website tends to indicate that both personas were operated by the same or a closely-related group of people.”[\[69\]](#) But it also said DCLeaks was easy and had approached Assange offering to coordinate releases, while Guccifer 2.0 played hard to get. Assange had to pester them about allowing WikiLeaks to publish the material, since his site had so much more prominence, saying it would “have a much higher impact than what you are doing.” Mueller also said both alleged GRU fronts “transferred some of the stolen documents to WikiLeaks through online archives set up by the GRU,” but instead of proof, we were given a black bar redaction under the typical excuse that demonstrating a claim would reveal an “investigative technique.”

The timelines in the special counsel report and GU indictment[\[70\]](#) make little sense. Mueller conceded that Assange had discussed “emails related to Hillary Clinton . . . pending publication” on Britain’s ITV on June 12, 2016, two days before the *Washington Post* reported that the DNC had been hacked.[\[71\]](#) DCLeaks contacted Assange that day. The Guccifer 2.0 persona was not even created until one day after.[\[72\]](#)

As soon as Guccifer 2.0 went online, it immediately claimed it had thousands of files, but had given “the main part” of them to WikiLeaks.[\[73\]](#) Mueller acknowledged that WikiLeaks released approximately 28,000 emails just four days after receiving some from Guccifer 2.0, which would have given Assange and his team very little opportunity to review the emails before posting them. WikiLeaks has a strong reputation for having never published a fake or altered document because of their legendary diligence.[\[74\]](#) In this case we are told to believe they exercised none of

their usual caution—and when Assange had already announced an upcoming post of “emails related to Hillary Clinton” before this identity ever went online.

But even the truthers over at *The New Yorker* magazine noticed that what Guccifer 2.0 had leaked separately was a bunch of nothing, including fake documents and a pretended Democratic Party “dossier” on Hillary Clinton. Assange told their reporter, “We received quite a lot of submissions of material that was already published in the rest of the press, and people seemingly submitted the Guccifer archives. We didn’t publish them. They were already published.” When asked, “Why not add them to the WikiLeaks library?” Assange answered, “We might have done that. But the material from Guccifer 2.0—or on WordPress—we didn’t have the resources to independently verify.”[\[75\]](#) While Assange did ask Guccifer 2.0 to hand over whatever they had, that does not imply that any material posted by WikiLeaks came from that source. The timeline makes it unlikely that he relied on whoever it was behind the project. Also, Mueller refused to plainly assert in his report that the Russians had poached the Podesta emails, claiming only that GU “officers appear to have” done so. Always read the fine print.[\[76\]](#)

Then-CIA Director Brennan later conceded to PBS *Frontline* that they were only guessing based on circumstantial evidence, calling the accused Russian military intelligence agency “the more likely culprits in this.” One might argue that sometimes a guess is the best the CIA can do, but that was conceding a hell of a lot in this case, in which they were falsely accusing a sitting elected president of the highest crimes. “[W]e were able to put

together some bits and pieces of information and intelligence, as well as look at it against the backdrop of things that had happened previously,” Brennan said.[\[77\]](#)

## **Mueller on WikiLeaks’s Source**

Eventually, Special Counsel Mueller admitted there was nothing to the story at all. “[T]he investigation did not establish that members of the Trump Campaign conspired or coordinated with the Russian government in its election interference activities,” he said in his final report.[\[78\]](#) Further, he acknowledged there was no chain of evidence to WikiLeaks, but still wrote that “[t]he office cannot rule out that stolen documents were transferred to WikiLeaks through intermediaries who visited during the summer of 2016,” begging the question and conceding his ignorance simultaneously. DNI Clapper[\[79\]](#) admitted as much back in 2016, telling Congress, “As far as the WikiLeaks connection, evidence there is not as strong and we don’t have good insight into the sequencing of the releases or when the data may have been provided.”[\[80\]](#) No one on the Trump campaign had anything to do with the leaks, the transfers to WikiLeaks, or in any way “colluded” with the Russians on any of the above. It remains unproven that the Russians had any part in the hack or leak.

The core of the scandal was a hoax—the rest of the details too.[\[81\]](#)

## **Manafort-WikiLeaks**

Luke Harding of the *Guardian* falsely claimed that Trump's then-campaign manager Paul Manafort met with Assange at the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, presumably to plan the leaking of Democratic Party documents in ways to best help the campaign. The people who lied to Harding about this supposed meeting wanted us to believe it went entirely unnoticed at the most surveilled house in all of Britain,[\[82\]](#) which was obviously as impossible as it was false.[\[83\]](#) Like the fabled meeting between Iraqi diplomat Ahmad Ani and lead September 11 hijacker Mohamed Atta in Prague,[\[84\]](#) or George W. Bush and Colin Powell's false claims about Saddam Hussein's support for Abu Musab al-Zarqawi,[\[85\]](#) this lie was meant to establish another connection between the Trump campaign, WikiLeaks and the Russians. But it never happened, and Manafort was not serving Russian interests anyway.[\[86\]](#)

## **Roger Stone**

One major pretended piece of the puzzle was the longtime Republican Party dirty trickster and Trump associate Roger Stone. For years, the rumor was that he had early knowledge of WikiLeaks's access to the emails.[\[87\]](#) But investigative reporter James Bamford showed, citing FBI documents, that Stone's advanced knowledge of WikiLeaks activities was much more likely given to him by the Israeli government, rather than Russians. In fact, according to an FBI search warrant, on May 17, the same day that Stone began communicating with a lawyer named Isaac Molho, who *Haaretz* described as one of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's most trusted agents,[\[88\]](#) Stone began Googling "dcleaks" and "guccifer." This was



almost a month before Assange let it be known he had information on Clinton and those websites went live. He and his friend Jerome Corsi both also showed foreknowledge of the Podesta emails' upcoming release.[\[89\]](#) There was no indication they got this information from those identities or WikiLeaks. Bamford appeared to take it for granted that the hack was done by the GU, and that the Israelis must have simply figured that out through their own surveillance, and then told them. But the revelations would seem to raise more reason to doubt the Russians were behind the leaks if the Israelis knew so much about it, though as shown, it does not appear either dcleaks or Guccifer 2.0 were the source of the DNC leaks anyway. The timeline at least allows for the possibility they provided the Podesta emails. Mueller's office certainly failed to charge Stone with any crimes regarding Russia or to demonstrate that this knowledge must have come from the Russians.[\[90\]](#)

## **Electoral College**

After the leaks about Russia's supposed DNC hack failed to stop Trump's 2016 election, a group calling themselves the "Hamilton Electors" and the Clinton campaign demanded that Acting CIA Director Mike Morell brief the Electoral College that Trump cheated with the Russians to win and so they should throw the election to Clinton, or at least to the House, which could then name Congressman John Kasich of Ohio, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, former House Speaker Paul Ryan or former Secretary of State Colin Powell to take his place.[\[91\]](#) Morell had nonsensically accused Trump of being an "unwitting agent" of Russia.[\[92\]](#)

That plan went nowhere. Those electors come from the state parties, not the D.C. suburbs, and there was no way in the world they were going to give Trump's win to anyone else.

## **Brennan's ICA**

Then, on January 17, three days before Trump's inauguration, DNI Clapper released an "Intelligence Community Assessment" (ICA) written by five people admittedly "hand-picked" by John Brennan[\[93\]](#) in place of a real National Intelligence Estimate (NIE). President Obama had ordered them to prepare the document,[\[94\]](#) titled "Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent Elections." While conceding that they "did not make an assessment of the impact" of Russia's alleged meddling, its authors claimed, "Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election. Russia's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency." They added, "We further assess Putin and the Russian Government developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump," but admitted that the National Security Agency had only "moderate confidence" in that assessment when they were the ones who should be able to testify for a fact whether or not it was true. This seemed to indicate they were following the CIA and FBI's lead and simply being agreeable rather than making the positive claim themselves at all. The ICA claimed Russia was the source for WikiLeaks as well as Guccifer 2.0 and DCLeaks, but again, did not demonstrate this.

The report contained exactly zero substance, and even disclaimed that its judgments were “not intended to imply . . . proof that shows something to be a fact.”[\[95\]](#) The public version included a nine-page “annex” about the supposed influence of the Russian-backed TV channel Russia Today (RT), much of it leftover from the 2012 U.S. presidential race, seemingly to pad the paper’s length, as a high school student might do.[\[96\]](#) Brennan included information from the Steele Dossier in the classified version of the report.[\[97\]](#)

Clinton and the major media pretended this so-called “ICA” somehow proved the devastating truth that Trump had only won the election because Russia had rigged it for him, leaving him the usurper of his rival’s rightful throne. He was, as Clinton claimed on several occasions, an “illegitimate president.”[\[98\]](#) She and much of the media[\[99\]](#)—including all the self-appointed, supposed “fact-checkers”[\[100\]](#)—also repeatedly lied that “all 17 intelligence agencies,” referring to the NIC, agreed that Russia had rigged the election against her, with the *Times* only much later admitting that was a lie.[\[101\]](#)

We learned three years later from journalist Paul Sperry that in fact, “career analysts disputed Brennan’s take that Russian leader Vladimir Putin intervened in the 2016 election to help Donald Trump clinch the White House,” leading him to sideline them and bring in a “political ally,” Andrea Kendall-Taylor, who had donated to the Clinton campaign, to write the report in their place. “It was not an intelligence assessment. It was not coordinated in the [intelligence] community or even with experts in Russia House [a department within Langley officially called the Center for Europe

and Eurasia],” the official told Sperry. “It was just a small group of people selected and driven by Brennan himself . . . and Brennan did the editing.”[\[102\]](#) A former White House staffer later said that he was allowed to read a classified version of the House investigation report, including their conclusion, based on CIA records and interviews with agency officials, that the Russians preferred that the more predictable Clinton win the election. That was a judgment call about what they assumed Putin wanted, but the point is that Brennan lied and pretended to believe that not only did they prefer Trump, but intervened in the election to steal it for him. He also excluded the State Department’s Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) and DIA, which had primary responsibility for tracking the GU, from the assessment.[\[103\]](#)

As Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer told MSNBC’s Rachel Maddow, Trump was “very dumb” to take on the CIA. “Let me tell you, you take on the intelligence community, they have six ways from Sunday at getting back at you,” he said, adding that CIA officials were “very upset with how he has treated them and talked about them.”[\[104\]](#) The president-elect had very rudely disputed their outrageous lies about him.[\[105\]](#)

Trump seemed to get the message. The day after his inauguration, he traveled to CIA headquarters to try to make nice with his supposed partners in power. Instead, he stood in front of what the Agency calls their “sacred wall,” dedicated to officers killed in the line of duty, and ranted about how the media had unfairly portrayed his inauguration crowd as smaller than he thought it was.[\[106\]](#) This may have been typical self-centered Trump, but as Brennan later recounted to PBS *Frontline*, it was clear the new president

had truly insulted them, making their vendetta against him that much worse.  
[\[107\]](#)

## **Big Fake *Times* Story**

Just a few weeks after Trump was sworn in, on February 14, 2017, Mark Mazzetti of the *New York Times* claimed that “Trump campaign aides had repeated contacts with Russian intelligence.”[\[108\]](#) Years later, the paper admitted the piece was privately trashed even by the FBI agents targeting Trump.[\[109\]](#) FBI counterintelligence section chief and later the Deputy Assistant Director for Counterintelligence Peter Strzok, who had opened the investigation and was later fired for his own proven animus toward its subject,[\[110\]](#) commented that the *Times* story was “misleading and inaccurate as written. We have not seen evidence of any individuals affiliated with the Trump team in contact with IOs [Russian intelligence officials].” He continued, “Again, we are unaware of ANY Trump advisers engaging in conversations with Russian intelligence officials,” adding, “There is no known affiliation, and little if any GOR [government of Russia] affiliation. FBI investigation has shown past contact between Carter Page and the SVR [Foreign Intelligence Service], but not during the Trump campaign”[\[111\]](#) [emphasis in original].

Strzok went on to detail how the FBI had queried the NSA and CIA for any incriminating information on Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, Carter Page or the also-accused incoming national security adviser, retired U.S. Army Lt. Gen. Mike Flynn, and had gotten nothing back.[\[112\]](#) Former FBI Director Comey also admitted about the *Times* story, under oath before

Congress, that “in the main, it was not true.”[\[113\]](#) It was later revealed that after Mueller was made special counsel in April 2017, two years before the investigation finally ended, Strzok had written that he was hesitant to join the team since he had already concluded “there’s no big there, there.”[\[114\]](#) When he went to London in early August 2016, just after launching the investigation, he told a British intelligence official, “there’s nothing to this, but we have to run it to ground.”[\[115\]](#)

Durham, the special counsel appointed to investigate the origins of the hoax, wrote much later, definitively, “As the record now reflects, at the time of the opening of Crossfire Hurricane, the FBI did not possess any intelligence showing that anyone associated with the Trump campaign was in contact with Russian intelligence officers at any point during the campaign.”[\[116\]](#)

## **The Steele Dossier**

The *Times* hit piece claiming extensive connections between the Trump campaign and Russian intelligence was followed by the leak of the Christopher Steele dossier, which alleged Trump’s full subordination to Russia going back five years. A former MI6 agent hired by the Clinton campaign to gather opposition research on Trump, Steele wrote that the nefarious plan, “endorsed by PUTIN,” was to “encourage splits and divisions in the western alliance.” He claimed a “former top Russian intelligence officer” told him Trump was being blackmailed over “perverted sexual acts which have been arranged/monitored by the FSB.” He also claimed to have a source close to Trump who had admitted to this “well-

developed conspiracy,” which was allegedly handled by Trump’s campaign manager Manafort, foreign policy adviser Page “and others.” The Russians were doing all this because of how much Putin “hated and feared” Clinton.  
[\[117\]](#)

This tale included a story of Trump being blackmailed by Russia’s FSB domestic intelligence agency after they filmed him watching Russian prostitutes urinate on a hotel bed where the Obamas had supposedly previously slept.[\[118\]](#) No matter how badly Democratic partisans wanted to believe the story,[\[119\]](#) it turns out it was completely made up “in jest . . . over beers,” by Clinton campaign operative John Dolan,[\[120\]](#) according to Steele’s source, Igor Danchenko.[\[121\]](#) FBI Director Comey, CIA Director Brennan, NSA Director Rogers, and Director of National Intelligence Clapper briefed Trump on the dossier on January 6, two weeks before the inauguration. Comey later claimed he was trying to warn the president-elect. “I wasn’t saying it was true, only that I wanted him to know both that it had been reported and that the reports were in many hands.” He was just trying to help Trump, he swore. “I said media like CNN had them and were looking for a news hook. I said it was important that we not give them the excuse to write that the FBI has the material.”[\[122\]](#)

Of course, the “hook” for CNN[\[123\]](#) was that Comey had warned Trump about the fake accusations.[\[124\]](#) He later admitted to Congress that he leaked his notes about the meeting in the hope it would lead to the appointment of a special counsel.[\[125\]](#)

Outgoing DNI Clapper first lied to Congress, then acknowledged that he had orchestrated the leak to CNN’s Jake Tapper for their pathbreaking

piece on the dossier on January 12, 2017, eight days before Trump's inauguration.[\[126\]](#) Perjury is a felony.[\[127\]](#) So this was just another one.[\[128\]](#) Clapper is currently a paid expert for CNN.[\[129\]](#)

“Major parts of the dossier have been confirmed!” all the media myna birds repeated.[\[130\]](#) “British ex-spy behind Trump dossier seen as a cool operator.”[\[131\]](#) The Russians have “kompromat” on the new president![\[132\]](#) But before Trump was even sworn in, we now know, FBI agents were refusing to stand by any of the claims in the dossier to their colleagues, even among the small, “hand-picked” team that Brennan had put together, leading to their decision to include it only in a separate, highly classified annex for President Obama, but excluding it from the publicly released “Intelligence Community Assessment.”[\[133\]](#)

As the FBI already knew, the only true facts in the dossier had already been in the public domain before Steele wrote it. From the very first day Steele brought his initial reports to the FBI, July 5, 2016, he admitted it was opposition research funded by a law firm, Perkins Coie, working for the Clinton campaign, and that Secretary Clinton herself was aware of his reporting. That agent had accepted the document with “disbelief,” knowing that it was “politically motivated,” he later told Durham's investigators, though the Crossfire team claimed it did not get these materials until the middle of September.[\[134\]](#)

FBI investigators had created a spreadsheet to methodically check the claims in the dossier. None held up. There was not one thing true in it that was scandalous or criminal, and not one thing scandalous or criminal that was true—at least that had anything to do with Russian spying or election



interference.[\[135\]](#) As was revealed years after the fact, this dossier had been dismissed from the very beginning by at least part of the CIA as nothing but “internet rumor.”[\[136\]](#) The *Wall Street Journal* explained, “The dossier took real events, such as the visit of a Trump adviser to Moscow, and expounded on them by describing meetings with high-level Kremlin officials for which no corroborating evidence surfaced.”[\[137\]](#) Steele also claimed Trump’s team was “transmitting this intelligence to the Russians” by way of their “Miami consulate,” which does not and has never existed.[\[138\]](#)

On July 30, 2016, the former associate deputy attorney general, Bruce Ohr—whose wife Nellie worked for Glenn Simpson’s Fusion GPS, the firm that hired Steele—had also admitted to FBI Deputy Director McCabe and agents Strzok and Lisa Page (Strzok’s mistress, no relation to Carter) that Steele told him he was “desperate that Donald Trump not get elected and was passionate about him not being president.”[\[139\]](#)

The false accusations that Steele and his sources did not invent, such as the lies about Trump campaign staffer George Papadopoulos, were not in his dossier, since those separate stories had not yet appeared in the news at the time he was putting his claims together.[\[140\]](#)

Durham later wrote that “the Crossfire Hurricane investigators did not and could not corroborate any of the substantive allegations contained in the Steele reporting.” He added, “Nor was Steele able to produce corroboration for any of the reported allegations, even after being offered \$1 million or more by the FBI for such corroboration.” He also wrote that when they interviewed Steele’s source Danchenko in January 2017, just before Trump was sworn in, he “also was unable to corroborate any of the substantive

allegations in the Reports. Rather, Danchenko characterized the information he provided to Steele as ‘rumor and speculation’ and the product of casual conversation.”[\[141\]](#) They lied about the origin of the dossier too, claiming other Republicans were behind it,[\[142\]](#) and bolstering the Clinton campaign’s false denials that they had sponsored the dirty trick in the first place.[\[143\]](#) Her campaign was later forced to pay a \$113,000 fine to the Federal Election Commission for the crime.[\[144\]](#)

There was a kernel of truth to that particular lie: Simpson’s political consulting firm, Fusion GPS, which the Clinton campaign had hired to write the dossier, had already been at work on opposition research against Trump on behalf of the neoconservative-controlled[\[145\]](#) *Washington Free Beacon*, financed by the powerful Republican billionaire kingmaker Paul Singer, before the Clinton campaign had hired them. And though he claimed they stopped looking at Trump right around the time the Clinton team began their opposition research,[\[146\]](#) the *Beacon*’s chairman Michael Goldfarb did admit under oath before Congress that their research had covered what he called “Russian nationals in Mr. Trump’s orbit, in his business dealings,” though not his alleged “ties” to Russia. Goldfarb also stated that Singer was in on the decision to hire Fusion GPS, and that they still had a contract to continue to investigate one-time Trump campaign chairman Manafort and his alleged “relationship with Russia.” They continued to use Simpson’s firm, Goldfarb told the House Intelligence Committee, until the Steele dossier was published in February 2017. Goldfarb did seem to credibly deny that the work his newspaper paid for ended up in the Steele dossier, which he dismissed as “bullshit” and “not

credible,” adding that it was the reason he ended their companies’ relationship.[\[147\]](#)

When it was finally revealed the Clinton campaign was behind the dossier,[\[148\]](#) even Maggie Haberman of the *Times* complained: “Folks involved in funding this lied about it, and with sanctimony, for a year.”[\[149\]](#)

This pretend intelligence report by a supposedly “highly credible” and trusted MI6 operative was really just bogus “opposition research” by someone trying to make the FBI and the American press believe Trump had a secret deal with the Russians. But the British Steele and his researcher Igor Danchenko, a Russian citizen, were the foreigners interfering in the American election.[\[150\]](#)

Nevertheless, according to the Durham investigation, the FBI counterintelligence division, “without any further verification or corroboration of the allegations contained therein,” used this shoddy piece of unverified opposition research as the “essential” basis to seek a FISA warrant against an American citizen, Trump adviser Carter Page, claiming he was acting as an unregistered agent of a foreign power. They lied for years that this was not the case,[\[151\]](#) even after Republican Rep. Devin Nunes released a memo[\[152\]](#) explaining it was so after reviewing the FISA warrant applications in a classified setting.[\[153\]](#) Nunes also noted much of the information the feds had withheld from the court, including about the origins of the document in the Clinton campaign, the money paid to Steele to produce it and the fact that the application cited a September 23, 2016, article by Michael Isikoff in Yahoo News[\[154\]](#) as confirming the Steele dossier when it was instead a classic “information loop”: they knew Steele

was the source for the story too.[\[155\]](#) Early drafts of the FISA application included that fact, but it was eventually deleted before the request was submitted to the court. They pretended instead to believe the source must have been from the Justice Department or Fusion GPS just so they could delete it. As Durham concluded, “It seems reasonable to surmise that the FBI’s assessment of the Yahoo News article radically changed in order to protect the FISA application.”[\[156\]](#) Then there was the small detail the FBI left out about how the bureau itself had fired Steele for leaking and lying about it back in October 2016. Instead, former officials, Democrats and the major media all called Nunes a liar.[\[157\]](#) In the end, he was completely vindicated by the inspector general,[\[158\]](#) as even the *Post* finally, reluctantly admitted.[\[159\]](#) Former Deputy Director McCabe also conceded to the House Intelligence Committee that without the Steele dossier, he thought their other supposed evidence “would not have been enough” to get the court to agree to the warrant.[\[160\]](#)

Special Counsel Durham later added Steele and Danchenko’s important admissions in their debriefings of October 2016 and January 2017 that the dossier was simply made up of “rumors and speculations,” and that “significant parts” of their statements were contradictory. “At no time . . . was the FISC informed of these inconsistencies.” Nor apparently were they informed that Fusion GPS had tried to launder the same lies into the intelligence stream by way of an FBI station in New England, which remains unspecified in the Durham report. It was seemingly an attempt to create an echo chamber and enhance the perception that the claims were coming from multiple independent sources.[\[161\]](#) The FBI continued to

keep Danchenko on their payroll as an informant for almost four more years, paying him at least \$200,000.[162]

Once the FBI had the FISA warrant for Page, however, that allowed them to surveil his communications and to expand the investigation immediately to include everyone implicated in the dossier.[163]

## **Kooks**

Though the government and establishment media constantly abuse the term “conspiracy theorist” to mean anyone who does not believe their own conspiracy theories on any given subject, there truly is such a thing as classic, circular logic-driven, conclusion-jumping narratives that people accept despite all evidence to the contrary—and the type of nut who believes in them. Recent examples from pop culture include the belief among some groups that nuclear weapons do not really exist,[164] that JFK Jr. is still alive[165] and that the Earth is actually flat.[166]

Russiagate was the same way. “It all fits together!” liberals, Democrats and the population of U.S. government employees, concluded.[167] At the core of their collusion theory was Christopher Steele’s dossier and its claim that Trump had been under the control of the Russians for years. Their purpose was supposedly to “sow disunity both within the U.S. itself, but more especially within the Transatlantic alliance which was viewed as inimical to Russian interests.”[168] Steele claimed that “a senior Russian official said the TRUMP operation should be seen in terms of PUTIN’s desire to return to Nineteenth Century ‘Great Power’ politics anchored upon countries’ interests rather than the ideals-based international order

established after World War Two.”[\[169\]](#) No wonder Putin had launched such a massive effort to install him in power, they thought.

The dossier even seemed to confirm that Russia had been responsible for the DNC hack and leak to WikiLeaks, a claim they had heard elsewhere before.[\[170\]](#)

Even better, Russiagate hoax victims figured that anyone who did not believe it must be the conspiracy theorist, since to deny Trump’s collusion with Russia would be equivalent to concluding that the FBI, CIA, Department of Justice, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, the leadership of both major parties and all the major TV news channels were some sort of Deep State working together to push a lie that the president was a traitor being blackmailed and controlled by the Kremlin—and that would be crazy.  
[\[171\]](#)

As journalist Daniel Lazare put it, Russiagate was more than a lie; it was imperial psychosis: “This country is so conformist. Its political system, its political classes have just collapsed. We are seeing a case of mass hysteria seizing the nation’s capital.”[\[172\]](#)

The Steele dossier, “the Magna Carta of #Russiagate,” in the words of the great journalist and debunker Matt Taibbi,[\[173\]](#) became the basis for more than two years of wild conjecture by media figures, stoked on by an endless parade of former federal police and intelligence officials telling them it was all true. “It provided the implied context for thousands of news stories to come,” Taibbi wrote, “yet no journalist was ever able to confirm its most salacious allegations: the five year cultivation plan, the blackmail, the bribe from Sechin, the Prague trip, the pee romp, etc.”

That did not matter. The narrative had already been established in the attempted frame-up. When that failed to prevent Trump's 2016 win, they immediately decided they would not be gracious losers, but instead accuse Trump and Russia of stealing the election from Clinton and insist he was an "illegitimate president" and usurper of her throne. Jonathan Allen and Amie Parnes elaborated in *Shattered: Inside Hillary Clinton's Doomed Campaign*, as close as you can get to an official account of the Clinton campaign of 2016. "She's not being particularly self-reflective," one source close to Clinton told them. Instead, she was determined to blame her loss on FBI Director Comey, who had reopened the investigation into her classified emails,[\[174\]](#) and of course, Russia. "She wants to make sure all these narratives get spun the right way," the source explained. "That strategy had been set within twenty-four hours of her concession speech." Campaign manager Robby Mook and chairman John Podesta "assembled her communications team at the Brooklyn headquarters to engineer the case that the election wasn't entirely on the up-and-up." Memorably, they wrote, "For a couple of hours, with Shake Shack containers littering the room, they went over the script they would pitch to the press and the public. Already, Russian hacking was the centerpiece of the argument." They added, "In Brooklyn, her team coalesced around the idea that Russian hacking was the major unreported story of the campaign, overshadowed by the contents of stolen e-mails and Hillary's own private-server imbroglio."[\[175\]](#)

Building on the bogus dossier, Jonathan Chait, a major and unrepentant liberal-interventionist supporter of Iraq War II,[\[176\]](#) even wrote a cover story for *New York* magazine speculating that Trump had been

compromised and owned by Russia since 1987—approximately 30 years. His evidence? Trump visited Russia in 1987.[\[177\]](#) Chris Hayes promptly and credulously interviewed Chait about it on MSNBC.[\[178\]](#) His colleague Rachel Maddow made a second career out of pushing the Steele dossier hoax and reduced herself to a discredited, raving loon in the process.[\[179\]](#) Once-distinguished[\[180\]](#) intelligence beat reporter Jane Mayer of *The New Yorker* was disgraced by her credulous hagiography on Steele.[\[181\]](#) As the *Washington Post*’s Erik Wemple said, *Politico*-turned-CNN reporter Natasha Bertrand “bootstrapped her entire career” off pushing the bogus claims in the Steele dossier.[\[182\]](#)

Partisan Democrats in Congress were at least as guilty. For example, Rep. Adam Schiff knowingly lied to the American people that he had access to secret intelligence that was “more than circumstantial”[\[183\]](#) proof that Trump was compromised and controlled by Russia. This proof was never revealed. Schiff even read portions of the Steele dossier into the congressional record.[\[184\]](#)

At its core, Russiagate was a collection of false claims which, when imagined together, gave the kooks something to believe in. Just like the case against Saddam Hussein in 2002–2003, it was pure trutherism, with scores or even hundreds of claims put out in support of the establishment consensus, none of them true.[\[185\]](#) From there developed an only-half joking pseudo-religion around the Prophet Robert Mueller,[\[186\]](#) the same guy who had run hundreds of frame-up jobs against innocent Muslims in the W. Bush years[\[187\]](#) and told Congress that he knew Iraq had illegal weapons of mass destruction.[\[188\]](#) They made candles with Mueller



depicted as a saint and action figures showing him as a hero, wrote at least half a dozen Christmas songs about him<sup>[189]</sup> and all the worst sort of upper-middle-class, liberal, middle-aged white-lady cringe you could imagine. It was just terrible.

## **Ohr Smears Millian**

And speaking of the Justice Department's Bruce Ohr and his wife Nellie, who was working for Glenn Simpson at Fusion GPS to collect opposition research for the Steele dossier: Apparently she was the first to name the innocent Belarusian-American businessman Sergei Millian, president of the Russian-American Chamber of Commerce, in an effort to connect Trump and the Kremlin. The FBI hid that fact from the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court while seeking warrants to spy on the Trump team.<sup>[190]</sup> The actual source, Igor Danchenko, then told the bureau that some of the information in the dossier, including the lie about the pee tape, came from him.<sup>[191]</sup> As journalist Paul Sperry noted, "Millian was called to [Steele and Danchenko's] attention by Nellie Ohr, who the prosecutor said 'implicated' Millian through her own reports." At the same time, her husband Bruce gave 12 different reports that cited Millian to the Crossfire Hurricane investigators. "Agents used her reports as a source of corroboration for the Steele reports they received in the summer and fall of 2016, even though it was circular reporting."<sup>[192]</sup> Millian was never accused by Mueller and was completely exonerated by Durham.<sup>[193]</sup>

## **Papadopoulos**

Trump campaign volunteer George Papadopoulos had supposedly admitted to then-Australian Ambassador to the UK Alexander Downer that a Russian spy had boasted to him that they had stolen “thousands of emails” from Clinton and were going to release them to damage her, months before the DNC email leak was revealed, Scott Shane claimed in the *Times*.[\[194\]](#) This lie massively reinforced the idea that Russia had, in fact, hacked and leaked the emails, a claim that remains unproven and which even its originators eventually admitted they could not demonstrate.[\[195\]](#)

It is strange, though. As another *Times* report revealed, this story was used as the basis for the entire investigation[\[196\]](#) before the FBI switched to the lies in the Steele dossier about another Trump aide, Carter Page, as the predicate.[\[197\]](#) They evidently doubted they could get a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) warrant to surveil the campaign based solely on the story of Papadopoulos and his connection to a mysterious Maltese diplomat and academic named Joseph Mifsud, who the FBI claimed was a “Russian agent.”[\[198\]](#)

The Department of Justice referral document by lead FBI Agent Peter Strzok makes no mention of Mifsud, pilfered emails or any specific claim about what the Russians might have. Strzok even wrote that “[i]t was unclear whether he or the Russians were referring to material acquired publicly [or] through other means.”[\[199\]](#)

Supposedly adding credibility to the story was the fact that in late July 2016, just as WikiLeaks was posting the emails, it was the Australian diplomat Downer who brought Papadopoulos to the FBI’s attention. Though federal agents claimed through the *Times* that Papadopoulos told

this diplomat the Russians had “dirt” in the form of “thousands” of Secretary Clinton’s emails, they both denied it.[\[200\]](#) For his part, the Aussie publicly denied that emails or Mifsud were brought up at all,[\[201\]](#) as the *Times* had claimed, supposedly citing “court documents” they had seen. It was shown years later that Downer had only told the FBI, as Durham reported, that “Papadopoulos made no mention [to Downer] of Clinton emails, dirt or any specific approach by the Russian government to the Trump campaign team with an offer or suggestion of providing assistance.” He said that “Downer’s recollection was that Papadopoulos simply stated ‘the Russians have information’ and that was all. . . . Downer also said that he ‘did not get the sense Papadopoulos was the middle-man to coordinate with the Russians.’”[\[202\]](#) Of course, as Durham also said, “Notably, the information [from Downer] does not include any mention of the hacking of the DNC, the Russians being in possession of emails, or the public release of any emails.”

On January 10, 2017, 10 days before Trump was even sworn in, Mifsud, the supposed Russian spy, met with the FBI in Washington and denied saying any such thing to Papadopoulos. The Justice Department never charged him with lying to them about it.[\[203\]](#) Nor did the Mueller report demonstrate that Mifsud was a Russian agent or asset.[\[204\]](#) The supposed crux of the *Times* story was: “Although Russian hackers had been mining data from the Democratic National Committee’s computers for months, that information was not yet public. Even the committee itself did not know.” Readers were led to believe, then, that Mifsud was a Russian spy who leaked to Trump’s agent Papadopoulos that the Russians were

going to release hacked DNC and Podesta emails on their behalf—how else could he have known?![[205](#)]

But Papadopoulos insists the only time he discussed emails with Mifsud was to speculate about Clinton’s private server being hacked—nothing about the DNC or WikiLeaks. The server was widely discussed in the media at the time due to a criminal investigation into why Clinton had kept it at home, whether it contained classified information from her time as secretary of state and the fact she had erased tens of thousands of emails before turning the drives over to investigators.[[206](#)] Papadopoulos also swears he never brought it up to Downer at all, though he told Congress and the special counsel’s office that he did blurt it out as a bit of gossip to the Greek foreign minister, for what it is worth.[[207](#)]

After WikiLeaks began posting the DNC emails, Downer and FBI officials pretended to believe what Papadopoulos had said back in April must have been in reference to the hacked emails released in July, indicating that he—a member of the Trump team—had special advanced knowledge of a Russian plot. Downer, rather than the Australian intelligence services, brought the information to Elizabeth Dibble, then-chargé d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in London and former principal deputy assistant secretary under Clinton in the first Obama term.[[208](#)] She then sent it to the FBI. Deputy Assistant Director of Counterintelligence Peter Strzok then immediately opened the “Crossfire Hurricane” investigation at the command of his boss, Deputy Director Andrew McCabe.

That this bit of non-specific gossip became the basis for a counterintelligence investigation of the then-presumed candidate would certainly seem to indicate they were simply going through the motions of a legal process. Papadopoulos was a lowest-level staffer on the Trump campaign, who had no previous relationship with Trump. The FBI must have known up front that there was no way Russian intelligence services would have thought for a minute that leaking these claims to him would be useful in any way. Even though there were no dots to connect, the FBI had a fake story they could run with.

Special Counsel Durham later complained that they opened their investigation without having even interviewed the source of the rumor. He said they did so without reviewing their own databases, asking other agencies for relevant information or using “any of the standard analytical tools typically employed by the FBI in evaluating raw intelligence.” Had they done any of these things, they would have found that none of their own, or any other Russia experts in the government, had ever heard of any such relationship between Trump and Russian intelligence, nor did their surveillance databases show any relevant links between the candidate or his campaign staff with the Russians.[\[209\]](#)

Durham’s report also related how Strzok traveled to London for a meeting with Downer to clarify the details of his story. On August 16, Strzok had a text conversation with someone from the FBI legal attaché office in London, in which the latter noted their evidence on Papadopoulos was “thin.” Strzok replied: “I know. It sucks.”[\[210\]](#)

Trump and his aides “have also insisted that Mr. Papadopoulos was a low-level figure. But spies frequently target peripheral players as a way to gain insight and leverage,” the *Times* reporters speculated.[\[211\]](#) If these alleged journalists had looked more deeply, they might have seen that it was more likely the FBI and MI6 who had set up the low-level Papadopoulos in the first place. As his own lawyer said, Mifsud worked for Western intelligence agencies,[\[212\]](#) not the Russians.[\[213\]](#) A German lawyer named Stephan Roh, who had employed Mifsud as a consultant, wrote that he has “only one master: the Western Political, Diplomatic, and Intelligence World, his only home, of which he is still deeply dependent.”[\[214\]](#) Mifsud has been photographed with then-British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson[\[215\]](#) and veteran diplomat Claire Smith, a top UK intelligence official. Indeed, Mifsud taught a course with Smith for Italian military and law-enforcement personnel[\[216\]](#) at the same Link Campus where he met Papadopoulos.[\[217\]](#)

Mifsud was also on a panel with former CIA officer Michael Hurley, former U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter and former commander of the International Counterterrorism Operations Group for MI6, Richard Barrett, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in May 2017—months after he had been identified by Papadopoulos to the FBI and long after they had publicly accused him of being a Russian agent. A reporter for the *Washington Times* “examined Mr. Mifsud’s extensive resume and frequent travels, revealing a skilled networker far more wedded to the West than the East.” He found pictures and news clips showing Mifsud palling around not with Russian intelligence, but “NATO military personnel, retired American and British

intelligence officers, French officials at the Elysee Palace and State Department diplomats on Capitol Hill.” The reporter noted that Rep. Devin Nunes had said Mifsud “is a former diplomat with the Malta government. He lived in Italy. He worked and taught FBI, trained FBI officials and worked with FBI officials.”[\[218\]](#)

Mifsud was working with a man named Nawaf Obaid from the Pentagon’s Office of Net Assessment, who also got Mifsud a contract to work with CNN’s Freedom Project at Link Campus in Rome in the first place.[\[219\]](#)

Either Mifsud was a Russian spy who infiltrated all of these organizations and gained immediate access to the former secretary of defense and then-British foreign minister, but nobody noticed or cared in the midst of a massive anti-Russia panic, or he never worked for the Russians at all and was instead helping U.S. and British agents to frame an American citizen. The former explanation is ridiculous. The latter makes more sense.

The Mueller report did not demonstrate that Mifsud was a Russian agent or that he had any ability to know what the Russians knew about anything.[\[220\]](#) Mifsud also set up a meeting between Papadopoulos and a Russian woman named Olga Polonskaya, whom Mifsud falsely represented as Vladimir Putin’s niece, and who he said could help arrange a meeting between Trump and the Russian president. Mifsud also connected Papadopoulos with Ivan Timofeev, who worked for the Russian Valdai Discussion Club, to try to set up a meeting between the campaign and the Russian government. After Timofeev offered to do so, the young

entrapment mark insisted only on an above-board, official meeting between the campaign and equivalent-level figures on the Russian side. Of course, it never happened; it was seemingly just bait, and Papadopoulos, at least in this instance, was too smart to take it.[\[221\]](#)

This would seem to discredit claims that there were any lines of “collusion” or “cooperation” between the campaign and the Russians if they would need to arrange a meeting through a lower-level staffer like Papadopoulos. Further, there is no indication the Mueller team ever believed obtaining the Clinton emails was Papadopoulos’s objective in trying to make these connections, or that he had any other illegitimate purpose besides maybe building his own resume. This was his job. He had succeeded in arranging a meeting between Trump and Egyptian dictator Fattah al-Sisi and was also attempting to set up meetings with Greek, British and Japanese officials.[\[222\]](#) The email issue only came up later.

Former federal prosecutor Andrew McCarthy concluded, “Downer’s report enabled the Obama administration to cover an investigative theory it was already pursuing with a report from a friendly foreign government, as if that report had triggered the Trump-Russia investigation.” Of course, “In order to pull that off, however, it was necessary to distort what Papadopoulos had told Downer.”[\[223\]](#)

Setting up a separate reason for the investigation makes sense, especially if the original surveillance that triggered it was illegal. American cops do it all the time, a practice called “parallel construction.”[\[224\]](#) As Special Counsel Durham reported, the FBI seemed to be unreasonably quick to launch a full-scale investigation into whether people associated



with the campaign were “witting of and/or coordinating activities with the Government of Russia” based on the Papadopoulos information without any further vetting or analysis.

Durham wrote in his report that the rules mandate a much more careful and measured approach to such investigations, and that the FBI agents clearly broke them by launching such a major investigation on such a thin, “unevaluated” pretext, when, if they had gone by the book, it would have never gotten past the preliminary stage.

And if they had been seeking the truth instead of a narrative, might they not have consulted Russia specialists in their own bureau? Durham finally asked this question as well. He found that if they had, they would have learned that Jonathan Moffa, then-Counterintelligence Analysis Section chief and a former head of the Russian Analysis Unit, had “advised investigators that he had heard nothing about Trump and Russia” before. Another unnamed analyst “who had perhaps the most in-depth knowledge of particularly sensitive Russian intelligence” also “disclosed that she never saw anything regarding any Trump election campaign conspiracy with the Russians,” including by anyone on his staff.

Further, Durham reported that former DNI Clapper, former CIA Director Brennan, former NSA Director Mike Rogers, former Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland and CIA Deputy Director David S. Cohen all told the FBI they had seen no evidence of collusion between Trump or his associates, other than Nuland’s receipt of a summary of the Steele dossier in July 2016. Cohen told him if the CIA had seen any such evidence, they would have sent it to the FBI in the form

of a criminal referral, and said that had not happened.[\[225\]](#) Of course, they either remained silent or lied that it was all true during the three-year hoax.

According to Papadopoulos,[\[226\]](#) after his colleagues at the London Centre of International Law Practice (LCLIP) introduced him to the mysterious professor Mifsud in Rome—at an event at a Western spy training school—Mifsud offered to help him arrange a meeting between Trump and Putin. The next week Papadopoulos’s boss at LCLIP, Nagi Idris, insisted he meet Mifsud and Putin’s supposed niece Olga Polonskaya for drinks.[\[227\]](#) She, or someone posing as the same character, then started writing emails stringing him along on promises to arrange contacts with Russian officials as a step toward a meeting between Trump and Putin, which never took place. Mifsud then proposed one more meeting on April 26, 2016, where Papadopoulos says Mifsud almost immediately told him Russia had “Hillary Clinton’s emails.” Papadopoulos insists the implication was about the 30,000 missing emails deleted from the former secretary of state’s private server. The emails, which have still never seen the light of day, were under investigation by the FBI, and were a huge media controversy at the time, making his inference perfectly reasonable.[\[228\]](#) Mifsud then disappeared for years, evidently so he could not be put in the awkward position of having to proclaim his innocence, which would ruin the lie he had helped to tell in the first place.

It is possible that Papadopoulos made up what Mifsud supposedly said about emails. He admitted he lied to the Trump campaign about meeting the Russian ambassador to the UK after Mifsud claimed he could help arrange a meeting. His stories about his London colleagues setting him up to meet

Mifsud for this nefarious purpose, and another about an American businessman handing him \$10,000 cash, do not seem to hold up either. The woman he accused of sending him to Rome in his book—as well as during his interview with journalist Michael Tracey—credibly denied it, and he did not name her at all in his congressional testimony, only his boss Idris.[\[229\]](#) The U.S. businessman showed the *Post* there was a simpler, more credible explanation for the money transfer.[\[230\]](#) Before disappearing for two years, Mifsud adamantly denied being a Russian agent or telling Papadopoulos anything about Russian “dirt” on Clinton, insisting: “This is nonsense. Friendship is friendship but Papadopoulos doesn’t tell the truth. The only thing I did was to facilitate contacts between official and unofficial sources to resolve a crisis.” This was his job, he said. “It is usual business everywhere. I put think tanks in contact, groups of experts with other groups of experts.” He noted that he was a member of the European Council on Foreign Relations, and added, “And you know which is the only foundation I am member of? The Clinton Foundation. Between you and me, my thinking is left-leaning.”

Regarding the emails, he said, “I don’t know. I strongly deny any discussion of mine about secrets concerning Hillary Clinton. I swear it on my daughter.” Further, he credibly denied being any kind of Kremlin agent. “I don’t know anyone belonging to the Russian government: the only Russian I know is Ivan Timofeev, director of the think tank Russian International Affairs Council. But this is meaningless.”

As for the pretty, young Ms. Polonskaya, Mifsud said that she was just a student, her identity as Putin’s niece was “totally an invention,” though he

did not say who invented that story about her. “[S]he had nothing to do with the Kremlin or with the secret service.”[\[231\]](#)

Whether it was Mifsud, Papadopoulos or Downer embellishing the story, the FBI knew there were no Russians, there were no emails and that neither of these two had anything to do with collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia to rig the 2016 election.

Papadopoulos theorizes that the Australian’s interest in him was also artificial. He says that when he arrived at the meeting, Amb. Downer was immediately aggressive, essentially interrogating him on his role in the Eastern Mediterranean energy business. They had one drink and that was it. He swore to Congress and insisted to Tracey that no discussion of Russia or any Clinton-related emails ever came up.[\[232\]](#)

Essentially, Papadopoulos’s story is that Mifsud tried to plant this information on him, but when Downer tried to get it out of him on the other side, he never said a word about it since Downer was such a jerk and the meeting was so short. This would make sense if one were to speculate that the feds set up Papadopoulos, and that Downer was told to try to get him to say something incriminating. Downer then apparently pretended he got a damning statement out of the Trump aide after the email hack-and-leak story broke, retconning events to fit the new facts.

Papadopoulos was then prosecuted for lying to the FBI when all he did was give the wrong date for the first time he met Mifsud, which made no difference in the story either way. He said that during his interrogation, FBI agents desperately tried to get him to say he had told anyone on the Trump

campaign about Mifsud's story, which he denied and still denies he ever did.

That is why Papadopoulos said he lied about the date. In a panic, he pretended the meetings must have occurred before he joined the campaign to avoid incriminating Trump or other members of the campaign, who were not involved in the Mifsud meeting and were never told about the supposed Clinton "dirt" in any case.[\[233\]](#) Special Counsel Mueller's investigation found that "[n]o documentary evidence, and nothing in the email accounts or other communications facilities reviewed by the Office, shows that Papadopoulos shared this information with the Campaign."[\[234\]](#)

This whole sordid episode was almost certainly about framing up a pretext to investigate the Trump campaign for conspiracy with the Kremlin. When they threatened him with 20 years in the penitentiary for deleting his Facebook account—what federal prosecutors called "obstruction of justice"—Papadopoulos pleaded guilty to the lesser charge and did his 12 days in prison instead.[\[235\]](#)

In early September 2016, an FBI informant named Stefan Halper invited Papadopoulos to London on a pretext—a well-paid gig to write a paper on Mediterranean natural gas that was never used. While there, Halper and his suspicious assistant, Azra Turk, who the *Times* and Durham report eventually confirmed was also an FBI informant,[\[236\]](#) tried to persuade Papadopoulos to talk about Russian hacking of Democratic Party emails. Papadopoulos told him it was not true.[\[237\]](#) The *Times* later found that Halper was acting as an FBI informant in doing so.[\[238\]](#) Though the Durham report does not name him, calling him "CHS-1" (confidential

human source), it does quote their secretly recorded conversations at length, including an exchange in which Papadopoulos insists three different times that the campaign would never even consider working with Russia because that would be “treason,” “compromise national security” and “set a very bad precedent.” Papadopoulos told Halper, “No one’s looking to obviously get into trouble like that and, you know, as far as I understand . . . no one’s collaborating, there’s been no collusion and it’s going to remain that way.”[\[239\]](#)

Special Counsel Durham later added that after Halper played his undercover audio and video of Papadopoulos for his friends in British intelligence, they mocked him and soon began to refuse to cooperate with the scam. One of the Brits told the FBI assistant legal attaché, “For [expletive] sake, man. You went through a lot of trouble to get him to say nothing.” According to the attaché, “the Brits finally had enough,” and after another request for assistance a UK intelligence officer “basically said there was no [expletive] way in hell they were going to do it.”[\[240\]](#)

But in Washington, according to Durham, “the FBI chose to discount the information and assessed it to mean the opposite of what was explicitly said.”[\[241\]](#) Government agents wrote that Papadopoulos must have “rehearsed” his “weird,” “rote,” “canned” responses, “notwithstanding,” Durham said, “the lack of any actual evidence to support such a conclusion.” Durham’s investigators found no such indication of deceit when they later listened to the same recordings. The FBI could have interviewed Papadopoulos to resolve the question but chose not to until

January 27, 2017, six months after opening the investigation based on rumors about him, and seven days after Trump was sworn in.

Again, as Durham emphasized, these candid statements by Papadopoulos exonerating the Trump campaign were secretly recorded more than a month before the FBI had submitted their first FISA warrant application and all of the bosses, including Director Comey, were in the loop.[\[242\]](#)

It is even worse. The Durham investigation revealed that the FBI recruited a second informant, a “longtime acquaintance” of Papadopoulos, who recorded 23 separate conversations with him. Durham wrote that between October 23, 2016, and May 6, 2017, that informant “challenged Papadopoulos with approximately 200 prompts or baited statements which elicited approximately 174 clearly exculpatory statements from Papadopoulos.” Papadopoulos told this second informant repeatedly that no one on the Trump campaign was involved in any scheme with Russia to pilfer the Democrats’ emails because to do so would be completely “illegal,” even “psychotic,” risking the virtual “suicide” of “50 years” in federal prison, and told Halper such activity would be “espionage” and “treason.” None of this information was included in the FBI’s FISA warrant applications against the Trump campaign, even though they had presumably sworn to tell “the whole truth” to the court. If a civilian lies to an FBI agent, he is charged with felonies as though it were sworn perjury. But they can lie right to the judges’ faces, and it is all in a day’s work.

There was never any indication that Papadopoulos intended the meetings between the campaign and the Russians to be clandestine or ill-

motivated. Even the *Times* did not lean too heavily on that part of the story.  
[\[243\]](#)

Halper also met with Trump campaign co-chair Sam Clovis, “offering to provide foreign-policy expertise to the Trump effort,” according to the *Post*. Interestingly, sources told the *Post* that Russia did not come up in those conversations.[\[244\]](#) Perhaps the problem was that Clovis was a bit too difficult to entrap. It was revealed by the Durham investigation that, in fact, Halper did bring up Russia, but got nowhere with Clovis, who immediately dismissed the topic with an assurance that there was no Russian interference in the election, much less some conspiracy between them. They lied by omission to the FISA court about this as well, never mentioning this exculpatory interaction with Clovis in their warrant applications.[\[245\]](#)

There was another prominent lie: that Halper, while on one hand was merely an informant, not a “spy” as the hyperbolic Trump insisted, was also a super deep-cover intelligence officer and naming him could compromise national security.[\[246\]](#) The truth is that Halper was just a washed-up government contractor who had been publicly identified doing dirty tricks for major players and writing overpriced “studies” for the Pentagon for decades.[\[247\]](#) In 1980, he worked for the CIA and Ronald Reagan to steal materials from President Jimmy Carter’s reelection campaign in an operation run by then-vice presidential candidate and former CIA Director George H.W. Bush.[\[248\]](#) Around Washington and London he was well-known as “the Walrus” due to his incredibly large frame. Outing Halper did not compromise national security; it just showed U.S. police and spy agencies were playing dirty.



It is revealing that throughout this entire time, though the official investigation began at the end of July, the FBI never came to major-party nominee, President-elect or President Trump to give him a protective counterintelligence “defensive briefing” to warn him that Papadopoulos, Page or anyone else on his team had been compromised by the Russians. Would that not be their duty? Instead, it was a contest to see if they could frame Trump along with his staff.[\[249\]](#) Durham later explained that as soon as they launched the Crossfire Hurricane investigation, they immediately opened sub-investigations into Papadopoulos, Page, Manafort and Flynn. He said that “[n]o defensive briefing was provided to Trump or anyone in the campaign concerning the information” provided by Alexander Downer, “either prior to or after these investigations were opened. Instead, the FBI began working on requests for the use of FISA authorities against Page and Papadopoulos.”[\[250\]](#)

Despite this entire framed-up narrative, the FBI quickly dropped Papadopoulos in favor of Carter Page as the predicate for their counterintelligence investigation, relying on claims in the Steele dossier to get a FISA warrant to continue to surveil Page and others on the Trump campaign in October 2016. Evidently the FBI still thought the dossier’s unconfirmed thirdhand claims were more credible for the FISA judges than the story they had concocted around poor Papadopoulos. When asked later why they investigated Page instead, then-FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe told Congress, “We thought Papadopoulos’ comment didn’t particularly indicate that he was the person that had—that was interacting with the Russians.”[\[251\]](#)

As journalist Aaron Maté noted, the feds only publicly debuted this version of the story at the end of 2017,[\[252\]](#) after it was revealed that the Clinton campaign’s law firm Perkins Coie had hired opposition research company Fusion GPS to write the Steele dossier.[\[253\]](#) This was fully a year and a half after the FBI had decided there was not one thing in the Papadopoulos story worth putting in their FISA warrant application. The FBI and the *Times* did not write that ironically; this whole investigation started from a funny story that the feds themselves say amounted to nothing on top of a phony dossier cooked up by the Clinton campaign. Instead, they tried to make it sound like Mifsud really was a Russian agent and Papadopoulos was colluding with him, claiming the latter was a “tantalizing target for a Russian influence operation.”[\[254\]](#) The entire mainstream media naturally bought it as another major data point in their conspiracy theory. The fact that a law firm hired by the Clinton campaign was behind the dossier was washed from the news cycle by the exciting new story about the origin of the investigation.

## **Framing Carter Page**

Based on the made-up nonsense in the Steele dossier, campaign adviser Carter Page was alleged to be a go-between handling Trump for Putin. In his dossier, Steele pushed the preposterous lie that Page had made a deal with Rosneft CEO Igor Sechin and Russian National Security Council official Igor Divyekin to collect brokerage fees worth approximately \$750 million[\[255\]](#) on the transfer of a 19 percent ownership stake in the giant Russian government-owned oil firm worth tens of billions of dollars, if only

he would seize control of American foreign policy and lift all Russian sanctions for them. That such nonsense was included in the dossier should have been all anyone needed to know to understand that the report had no credibility. As journalist Bob Woodward, of Watergate fame, said, to the annoyance of his colleagues at the *Washington Post*, it was a “garbage document.”[\[256\]](#) We later found out from the Durham investigation that the *Post*’s sources in Moscow immediately and categorically shot down the idea of Page’s access to, or proposed deal with Sechin as “[expletive]” and “impossible” on July 29, 2016, two days before Crossfire was officially launched.[\[257\]](#)

Similarly, undercover FBI informant Stefan Halper made repeated contacts with Page, who also adamantly denied any knowledge of nefarious Russian activities. At a meeting on August 20, 2016, notably one month before the Crossfire investigation supposedly received the Steele dossier reports from the New York office on September 19, Page also told Halper that he had never spoken to Manafort, and that he was “never from the beginning a Manafort fan,” severely undermining accusations in the Steele dossier that the two were working together to control Trump for Moscow. The FBI conveniently omitted these facts from their FISA warrant applications.[\[258\]](#)

Durham’s investigation also found that they did not even try to follow up with email or phone records to verify what Page had told their man Halper. Perhaps for some reason they did not want to be able to prove what they must have already known to be true. “Had they done so, investigators would have found that Page had previously sent Manafort one direct email

message and copied him on two other messages, none of which Manafort appears to have answered.” And they did not try to find out whether Steele, whom they had already fired for lying to them, was right about the guy he was falsely accusing: “[T]he FBI [did not] resolve the glaring conflict between Page’s unequivocal statement regarding Manafort and the critical assertion in the Steele reports that Page served as one of Manafort’s liaisons to the Russians.” Durham reported that “during all of his meetings with CHS-1 [Halper], Page never provided any information, evidence, or documentation indicating knowledge of any relationship between the Trump campaign and the Russian government.” This included when Halper repeatedly brought up questions regarding Papadopoulos in an attempt to get Page to confirm the rumors the former had supposedly heard from Mifsud. Page again clearly had nothing to add that indicated cooperation between the Trump campaign and Russia.[\[259\]](#)

Steven Schrage—a former White House official and deputy assistant secretary of state in the W. Bush years, former foreign policy adviser to Mitt Romney and chief of staff for Sen. Scott Brown of Massachusetts—who was completing his PhD under Halper at Cambridge, explained the critical role in the story of a group of “washed-up spies” he calls the “Cambridge Four.”[\[260\]](#) Halper, former MI6 Director Richard Dearlove, [\[261\]](#) Dearlove’s former agent Christopher Steele and associated academic and former MI5 agent Christopher Andrews, seemed to work together to set major parts of the plot in motion, one in which their targeting of Page was simply a matter of happenstance. Schrage had invited Page to represent the Trump campaign at a conference in Cambridge, where Halper at first paid

him no mind and even made rude remarks about him behind his back. But then, after Dearlove arrived and spoke with Halper—his “longtime collaborator,” according to Schrage—the American turned around and began to try to befriend Page instead. “Suddenly, [Halper] seemed desperately interested in isolating, cornering, and ingratiating himself to Page and promoting himself to the Trump campaign,” Schrage wrote. “Almost immediately after that, the sparks of international intelligence interest surrounding Trump-Russia connections caught fire. Seven days after the conference, Steele provided a new report for the Clinton Campaign. In it, for the first time, Steele made Page central to his Trump-Russia conspiracies.”[\[262\]](#) Steele’s main source, Danchenko, later told the FBI he got Page’s name from Halper.[\[263\]](#)

It turned out in the end, according to Justice Department Inspector General Michael Horowitz, Page was actually a “candid” and loyal CIA asset—an “operational contact”—who always debriefed the agency after meeting with any Russian government officials or powerful businessmen, and the CIA had told the FBI in writing that his agency contact had given a “positive assessment” of his “candor.” In short, Page was a patriot and no traitor at all. And the FBI knew it all along. On Page’s loyalty, Horowitz reported that the Crossfire Hurricane investigators had received a memo from the CIA detailing its relationship with Page on August 17, 2016. This included the fact that “Page had been approved as an operational contact for the other agency from 2008 to 2013,” and highlighted “information that Page had provided to the other agency concerning Page’s prior contacts with certain Russian intelligence officers.” The American people were led

to believe the opposite for years, that Page was guilty of treason on behalf of the Kremlin and a major proof of the president's conspiracy with America's deadliest enemy.[\[264\]](#) The IG also found that after the CIA informed the bureau, "We found no evidence that . . . the Crossfire Hurricane team requested additional information from the other agency prior to submission of the first FISA application in order to deconflict on issues that we believe were relevant to the FISA application." In other words, instead of double-checking with the CIA to make certain this obvious turncoat was not one, the FBI preferred to drop the issue altogether, which would be odd if the investigators believed Steele's lies were true.

Even worse, the FBI censored the CIA's vouching for Page from their FISA court search warrant application against him, alleging that he was an agent of the Kremlin in order to keep the investigation going.[\[265\]](#) An FBI lawyer named Kevin Clinesmith was eventually convicted for this crime,[\[266\]](#) but sentenced to only probation. FISA court presiding Judge Rosemary Collier wrote in an opinion that "[t]he FBI's handling of the Carter Page applications, as portrayed in the OIG report, was antithetical to [their] heightened duty of candor." She continued, "The frequency with which representations made by FBI personnel turned out to be unsupported or contradicted by information in their possession, and with which they withheld information detrimental to their case, calls into question whether information contained in other FBI applications is reliable."[\[267\]](#)

Comey confessed on television in front of thousands that he should not have used FISA against this American citizen based on a bunch of lies. Referring to IG Horowitz, Comey said, "He's right, I was wrong," blaming

his misplaced faith in the process, even though his subordinates' lies by omission about Page were at least indirectly ordered by him. This was what the boss wanted. Instead, his excuse was "real sloppiness" on the part of everyone but himself.[\[268\]](#)

Horowitz later revealed another criminal omission, finding that Steele's primary source, Igor Danchenko, in his interviews with the FBI, had disputed Steele's claims that he had said anything about WikiLeaks or the Trump campaign's contacts with the Kremlin. The FBI omitted that fact from their future FISA warrant applications since it showed their source was a liar. They also withheld from the court that they knew Steele was sharing his information with the Clinton campaign.[\[269\]](#)

Special Counsel Durham later showed that the FBI's "Page case agent" had reasons to doubt the probe before they ever took it to court. For one example, he cited a text message exchange between that agent and another FBI employee from September 27, 2016, in which they complained about a lack of dates, times and other details in Steele's reporting, and that it contained nothing confirmed which could not have come from open sources. The agent added, "What was strange was that [British Intelligence Services] don't seem to want to deal with the guy," to which his colleague replied, "If he has the sub-source network that he claims to have (and the reporting suggests), you would think they'd be interested in him."

Durham's investigators concluded that "not a single substantive allegation pulled from the Steele Reports and used in the initial Page FISA application had been corroborated at the time of the FISA submission—or indeed, to our knowledge, has ever been corroborated by the FBI."[\[270\]](#)

Of course, they had completely knocked it down shortly after. As Durham showed, once the agents started filing negative reports about the Steele dossier, the bosses demanded they stop investigating its claims.[\[271\]](#) And they continued to lie by omission to the FISC. According to Durham, the FBI and Justice Department include claims from the Steele dossier “in all four Page FISA applications, including in two applications after Steele’s primary sub-source (Igor Danchenko) had been identified, interviewed by the FBI, and was not able to provide corroboration for any of the allegations he provided to Steele.”[\[272\]](#)

As soon as his name was made public, Page wrote to FBI Director Comey, volunteering to be interviewed “in the interest of helping them put these outrageous allegations to rest,” and to address recent “completely false media reports.” He added, “[F]or the record, I have not met this year with any sanctioned official in Russia.” Page said he had “interacted with members of the U.S. intelligence community including the FBI and CIA for many decades.”

But the FBI did not interview Page for more than six months.[\[273\]](#) In his report, Durham quoted agents frustrated that “the top-echelon of the FBI, including Comey and McCabe,” was preventing them from doing their job. One week before submitting their first FISA application, two FBI investigators on the Crossfire Hurricane team wrote in text messages that “[i]t looks like Mgmt doesn’t want us to do an interview, right now.” The other responded, “[O]f course not, that would make too much sense.” In a separate conversation, the second agent relayed to a supervisor that the first had said the bosses had “no appetite to interview Page,” adding, “thats [sic]



stupid.” The supervisor agreed, “yeah- dude i don’t [sic] know why we are even here.”

On October 17, four days before the FBI submitted their warrant application to the FISC, Page again met with the undercover FBI informant Halper and denied meeting with Gazprom’s Sechin, much less making a \$100 million deal with him,[\[274\]](#) and denied having ever even heard of Russian National Security Council official Igor Divyekin, facts which agents omitted from their FISA warrant applications.

Durham also thought it was suspicious that the FBI did not take the obvious step of using non-obtrusive electronic methods to spy on Page. He even cited “FBI [Office of General Counsel] Unit Chief-1,” who Durham said “could not understand why investigators working on Crossfire Hurricane were not seeking authority to use pen registers and trap and trace devices” to track who he spoke to on the phone.[\[275\]](#)

Nor did they ever talk to the New York case agent on the older Page investigation, who later told the special counsel looking into Russiagate’s origins, as the Durham report puts it, “she and others were never overly concerned about Page being an intelligence officer for the Russians. At no time during the course of her investigation did NYFO Case Agent-1 consider pursuing a FISA [warrant] on Page.”[\[276\]](#) There is only one obvious explanation for this. They did not want the voice of reason spoken because otherwise it might have interfered with their ability to pretend not to know that Page was innocent, and they needed this pretext. By monitoring his communications, they would eventually debunk their friends’ fabrications in a way that would have ruined the lie they were

determined to pursue. As Durham pointed out, they could have even used Page as a willing informant inside the Trump campaign to help the feds reveal any traitors, and to better vet the accusations against them.

Before Trump was ever inaugurated, the FBI already knew for a fact that the entire basis of their pretended investigation was bogus: they had nothing on Papadopoulos, nothing on Page, and had verified that the Steele dossier was false.

Once Comey finally allowed agents to interview Page in March 2017—five months after they got their FISA warrant against him, with its sub-constitutional burden of proof below probable cause, and two months after Brennan’s fake “assessment” had been published and Trump inaugurated under this cloud of treason allegations—he showed up for five voluntary interviews and “fully cooperated with the FBI, even going so far as to bring his own Power Point presentation to one of the interviews.” He truthfully denied ever meeting with Sechin or Divyekin or speaking with Manafort, [\[277\]](#) just as he had told their informant Halper, information which they withheld from the FISC judges in their applications.

The FBI even lied to the court that Page would continue to have major influence in the Trump campaign, despite the fact that he had told Halper he was quitting and the campaign itself had already disavowed him. “This assertion was unsupported by actual evidence that such continued involvement in the campaign was occurring,” Durham noted.[\[278\]](#) And the FBI agents outright perjured themselves before the FISC, falsely claiming in their warrant application that in his recorded discussions with Halper, “Page did not provide any specific details to refute, dispel, or clarify the

media reporting [and] he made vague statements that minimized his activities.”

The leaders of the Crossfire investigation lied to their own men too. According to Durham, two agents brought in to write up the second FISA warrant application for Page complained that neither of them had ever been told he was a CIA asset. “When Special Agent-1 eventually learned this information, he stated that he ‘felt like a fool.’”

Regardless of their ignorance of Page’s status as a CIA informant, Durham goes on to say that both men thought Page was innocent, “a dry hole.” Comically and tragically, Durham wrote, “Nonetheless, Special Agent-1 ‘assumed’ that ‘somebody above them’ possessed important information—unknown to the investigators—that guided the Crossfire Hurricane decision-making.” That’s what Comey, McCabe, Strzok and the rest were leading the American people to believe as well. When one of these agents complained to his supervisor, Deputy Assistant Director Jennifer C. Boone, about the lack of evidence upon which to proceed, “he was largely ignored and directed to continue the FISA renewal process.” Another agent who signed all three FISA warrant renewal applications said that he and other investigators had “low confidence” that Page was a Russian agent—“very low” by the third time. But the agent insisted he was only going along since continuing to surveil Page would eventually prove the man’s innocence, forget probable cause, a “reasonable belief” or anything about playing into the larger narrative of the ongoing investigation into the president’s alleged “collusion” with Russia.[\[279\]](#)

The 2019 Mueller report eventually conceded that “the investigation did not establish that Page coordinated with the Russian government in its efforts to interfere with the 2016 presidential election.” Instead, they wrote that Russian Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich met Page at a December 9, 2015, dinner and said something about trying to help start a “dialogue” between “the United States and Russia,” and possibly future “cooperation” between the two countries. Of course, Page debriefed the CIA on his contacts with that Russian official as per his usual arrangement. This is from the Mueller report. If there was anything beyond the face-value talk of the two nations getting along a bit better, it would be in there. But that is it. The implications are not vast. They do not exist at all.[\[280\]](#)

Then-Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein later admitted under oath that he should never have sought the FISA warrant on Page, claiming ignorance. He also conceded that by at least the time he wrote a memo describing the scope of Mueller’s special counsel investigation in August 2017, he already knew there was nothing to the collusion allegation. “We investigate people who are not necessarily guilty, and so I didn’t have any presumption that these folks were guilty of anything,” he explained, pretending that he did not understand at the time that due to all the intelligence agencies’ and FBI’s leaks, the major media had it that the new U.S. president was presumed guilty. The fact that his own Justice Department—led by Republican George W. Bush’s FBI director, Mueller—was continuing to investigate him heavily implied that they knew something big already and were building a case against him.[\[281\]](#) As cable TV news anchors, and high-profile leaders of the liberal Twitter swarm

repeatedly put it over the course of the two-year special counsel investigation, every leak was a “bombshell.” It is “the beginning of the end of the Trump presidency,” he will surely be impeached and removed or forced to resign since “the walls are closing in” on his traitorous plot.[\[282\]](#)

This was just over six months into Trump’s presidency. They went on pretending to investigate, looking for his criminal conspiracy with the Kremlin, for 20 more months. They had no predicate for the investigation, so they just bore false witness against innocent people. Durham complained that even though “several” investigators believed Page was innocent, “Nevertheless, despite the surveillance’s lack of productivity, FBI management directed the Crossfire Hurricane investigators to renew the Page surveillance three times.”

IG Horowitz dismissed the idea that agents had any “political bias” in the investigation, but seemed to narrowly define that as a partisan bias toward one or the other major political party. With Trump, though, the question was not one of red-blue horseracing but of national security. FBI agent Strzok and Special Assistant Lisa Page referred to Trump as “loathsome,” “an idiot” and someone who should lose to Clinton “100,000,000–0.” Lisa Page had texted Strzok, “[Trump’s] not going to become president, right? Right?!” He replied, “No. No, he’s not. We’ll stop it.” Indeed, the day before the Australian information was received at FBI headquarters, Page sent a text message to Strzok stating, “Have we opened on him yet? [angry faced emoji].”[\[283\]](#)

The FBI was not mistaken. They were deliberately lying the whole time. Special Counsel Durham later concluded that before they ever

submitted their first FISA application against Carter Page, Steele had already admitted to them that he was working for Fusion GPS, which had also been hired by a law firm working for the Clinton campaign, and that the candidate herself was aware of his work. “[T]he fact that Steele’s information was being financed by the DNC and/or the Clinton campaign was not included in the affidavit’s source description of Steele [to the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISC)],” Durham deadpanned. He added that Page was not only an Agency “operational contact,” but had also been interviewed by the FBI four times between 2009 and 2015, including about a failed attempt by Russian intelligence officers to recruit him.[\[284\]](#)

That is how the U.S. government treats a loyal CIA asset. They deliberately smeared him as an anti-American traitor as an excuse to violate his constitutional rights, all as part of a plot to frame a major party presidential candidate for the highest crime of all, treason.

## **Mike Flynn**

In another major Pulitzer Prize-winning story smearing a so-called public servant,[\[285\]](#) then-National Security Advisor-designate Gen. Michael Flynn was accused of collusion over a phone call with the Russian ambassador to Washington, Sergey Kislyak. The conversation was spun as treason for Russia, but in reality, Flynn made no deals or promises. The FBI told the *Post* that Flynn had promised to lift sanctions on Russia upon taking office.[\[286\]](#) They made the same claims to the White House, and this was used to force him out of his job for supposedly lying about the interaction to Vice President Mike Pence.[\[287\]](#)

Steven Schrage later said that “48 hours before the leak was published, my former supervisor Halper eerily laid out what was about to happen to Flynn, something he had no independent reason to know.” He has the audio of Halper explaining: “I don’t think Flynn’s going to be around long. The way these things work,” he said, was that “opponents” of the general would be “looking for ways of exerting pressure. . . . That’s how it builds.” Once they went after him, Halper predicted Flynn would “blow up and get angry. He’s really fucked. I don’t [know] where he goes from there. But that is his reaction. That’s why he’s so unsuitable.”[\[288\]](#)

Just two days later, a week before the inauguration, David Ignatius, who Schrage says was close to Halper,[\[289\]](#) kicked off the scandal with his piece “Why did Obama dawdle on Russia’s hacking?” In it, Ignatius wrote that Flynn had talked to Kislyak on the phone several times on December 29, the same day President Obama expelled Russian diplomats from the U.S. over their supposed election interference. “What did Flynn say, and did it undercut the U.S. sanctions?” Ignatius suggestively wondered. Did it violate the Logan Act, which bans private people from interfering in U.S. foreign policy? The longtime national security state asset, carrying out this hit for the FBI and/or CIA still conceded, “If the Trump team’s contacts helped discourage the Russians from a counter-retaliation, maybe that’s a good thing. But we ought to know the facts.”[\[290\]](#)

Reporter Greg Miller followed up, claiming Flynn had been caught red-handed discussing sanctions policy with the Russian ambassador. Obama administration officials told Miller this was an “inappropriate and

potentially illegal signal to the Kremlin that it could expect a reprieve from sanctions” after Trump took office.[\[291\]](#)

When the call transcripts were finally released years later, it was shown that the two had not discussed lifting the sanctions at all.[\[292\]](#) Journalist Aaron Maté showed how Flynn’s words had been misconstrued, likely deliberately. Flynn had simply suggested that the Russians should not respond in a tit-for-tat manner after the Obama administration had expelled their diplomats, which would unnecessarily escalate matters shortly before the new administration was inaugurated. This was the designated national security adviser of the president-elect during his transition, and a former three-star general and director of the Defense Intelligence Agency. He had every right to speak to the Russian ambassador and crossed no lines in the conversation.[\[293\]](#)

But the FBI used this call to continue their probe into Flynn. Vice President Joe Biden suggested the general could be investigated for violating the Logan Act—a law that is nearly as old as the republic and has never been successfully prosecuted,[\[294\]](#) as Biden must have known. It was just another pretext to use the national security state against their political opponents.

When Maté pushed the *Post*’s editors on this point, instead of admitting their sources lied to them and that they had then pushed those lies on the American public, they laughably claimed diplomatic expulsions counted as “sanctions” in an entirely separate meaning of that term. When he showed how they had previously distinguished between the two actions, they did not answer.[\[295\]](#)



On January 4, 2017, still weeks before the inauguration, a Department of Justice memo recommended the “Crossfire Razor” probe into Flynn be closed since he was considered a “non-viable candidate” for continued investigation due to a lack of “derogatory information” against him. In other words, they knew perfectly well that there was nothing incriminating in the intercepts of Flynn’s calls with the Russian. But executives on “the 7th floor” and FBI agent Peter Strzok intervened to keep the investigation going,[\[296\]](#) sending texts to another agent insisting it remain open so they could set up an interview.[\[297\]](#) Strzok then texted his mistress Lisa Page to celebrate: “That’s amazing” the case was still open, she wrote. “Yeah, our utter incompetence actually helps us. 20% of the time, I’m guessing,” Strzok responded.[\[298\]](#) Three years later, the Department of Justice finally released emails showing that the purpose of the interview was to catch Flynn in a perjury trap.[\[299\]](#)

Agent Bill Priestap wrote on the 24th, just before the interview, “What is our goal? Truth/admission or to get him to lie, so we can prosecute him or get him fired?” They hid these documents from his lawyers for years, in violation of the law.[\[300\]](#) They very carefully gamed out how to fool Flynn into thinking he was having a normal conversation, as well as their decision to not show him the transcript as they would normally do in a similar situation.

As the *Post* admitted years later, Flynn had no reason to lie, since he had done nothing wrong, and told the agents that he assumed they had the audio of the call and could listen to it all for themselves.[\[301\]](#)

The discussion about the expulsions also completely negated the idea that the Russians were controlling, blackmailing, extorting or even influencing the Trump team. Otherwise, the call would have been from Kislyak to Flynn telling him what to do, rather than Flynn asking for Russian restraint. But it was not.

Then there was the story about Flynn asking Kislyak to have Russia veto or delay the Egyptian UN Security Council resolution condemning the expansion of Israeli Jewish-only colonies on the Palestinians' West Bank. But it was Trump's call to Egyptian dictator Fattah al-Sisi that got the vote postponed. Soon though, other nations reintroduced the resolution. Flynn apparently again asked Kislyak to try to delay the vote. The second time, the ambassador told him no. Russia voted for the resolution.[\[302\]](#)

ABC's Brian Ross, who was never held accountable for his false story claiming Iraq was behind the anthrax attacks of 2001,[\[303\]](#) was suspended for four weeks[\[304\]](#) after falsely reporting that Flynn was prepared to testify for the Mueller investigation that as a candidate, Trump had instructed Flynn to contact the Russians.[\[305\]](#) Presumably someone told him that.

Flynn is a retired general and former DIA director, and though he was good on Syria,[\[306\]](#) he co-authored a crazy book[\[307\]](#) with neocon nutball[\[308\]](#) Michael Ledeen[\[309\]](#) and is a war criminal for his role in the Afghan "surge" of 2009–2012.[\[310\]](#) But he was never part of anything resembling treason with Russia. Nor did he even lie. As former FBI Deputy Director Andrew McCabe admitted to Congress in secret, "the two [agents] who interviewed him didn't think he was lying."[\[311\]](#) Strzok had told the

bosses that Flynn “had a sure demeanor, and he was telling the truth or believed he was—even though he did not remember it all.”[\[312\]](#)

But after the interview, Strzok celebrated in text messages with Lisa Page, saying he succeeded in his mission since Flynn had misstated some minor detail of his conversation with Kislyak. Strzok described “the feeling, nervousness, excitement knowing we had just heard him denying it all.” Even then, the feds had to lie about Flynn’s alleged mistake. He said he did not remember whether he ever discussed the UN vote with the Russian ambassador. After the *Post* story, they fraudulently changed the FBI 302 form to say that he “stated he did not.”[\[313\]](#) Lisa Page told Strzok that she was making massive edits to the 302s, while trying to “save [agent Joe Pientka’s] voice” in them. The originals have never seen the light of day.

Mueller did not even attempt to charge a single person for acting as an agent of a foreign power without registering under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).[\[314\]](#) The closest Mueller’s team got to charging someone with a FARA violation was apparently Papadopoulos for an improper relationship with Israel for his work with neoconservative ideologue Douglas Feith[\[315\]](#) at the Hudson Institute.[\[316\]](#)

In December 2017, Flynn was coerced into pleading guilty to lying to the FBI[\[317\]](#) after they threatened to prosecute his son for alleged FARA violations, but promised not to if the father took a guilty plea.[\[318\]](#) They illegally kept the deal about the son secret so other defendants would not know about it in case they could get him to turn state’s witness.[\[319\]](#) Federal judge Emmet G. Sullivan denounced Flynn as a traitor who “sold [his] country out” at a plea deal hearing. Sullivan did not even have the first

clue about the case, claiming Flynn's alleged work on behalf of Turkey[\[320\]](#) took place during the Trump administration. He was later forced to apologize for it in court.[\[321\]](#) The media stars all whooped and hollered that now the "walls are closing in" on Trump. Soon Flynn would turn state's witness and reveal all he knew about their nefarious plot with the Kremlin.[\[322\]](#) Instead, after it was revealed that lead agent Strzok had wanted the investigation shut down before he was overruled by superiors, Flynn withdrew his guilty plea and the Justice Department moved to dismiss the charges. The U.S. attorney on the case even denounced the FBI's "frail and shifting justifications" for attempting to prosecute the general, but a full three and a half years after they had begun to frame him.[\[323\]](#) Despite the fact that the attorney general ordered the case dropped, the judge, Emmet Sullivan, refused to dismiss the charges for months.[\[324\]](#) After the 2020 election, Trump finally intervened and pardoned Flynn.[\[325\]](#) In the meantime, the feds nearly drove the general's son, Michael Flynn Jr., to suicide.[\[326\]](#)

## **Smearing Svetlana**

The hoaxers also launched a terrible smear of an innocent Russian-born scholar, Svetlana Lokhova, accusing her of acting as a honeypot spy who slept with Gen. Flynn,[\[327\]](#) which was entirely false.[\[328\]](#) Far from being a Russian spy, Lokhova was working on a book about a previously unknown group of Soviet agents in the United States in the 1930s.[\[329\]](#) But the Democrats and federal police think nothing of defaming an innocent

woman and new mother as a whore and a spy if it will help them on the margin in the news cycle for a day.[\[330\]](#)

The London Sunday *Times* got the ball rolling with their story by former MI5 officer Christopher Andrews—one of the “Cambridge Four,” along with Stefan Halper, Richard Dearlove, the former director of MI6, and Christopher Steele, identified by Halper’s PhD student, Steven Schrage. Andrews claimed Flynn was “especially struck” by an unnamed graduate student—Andrews’s own, it turns out—who, at a 2014 conference at Cambridge University hosted by Dearlove, had shown Flynn an “erotic postcard” Stalin had supposedly sent to a young lover. He also claimed that “Flynn invited the student to accompany him on his next official visit to Moscow to help with simultaneous translation,” and “continued an—unclassified—email correspondence with her on Russian history.”[\[331\]](#)

The *Wall Street Journal* then made a big deal out of the fact that Flynn did not report meeting her, even though they admitted that another DIA official said the contact was insignificant enough that he would not have reported it either.[\[332\]](#) The *Guardian*’s Luke Harding implied that she must be a Russian intelligence agent to have access to the files she was using for her research. They later appended a correction admitting there was nothing to it.[\[333\]](#) Sen. McCain’s aide David Kramer, a neoconservative from Bill Kristol’s old Project for a New American Century (PNAC) and George Soros’s Freedom House, told Congress that he had heard the rumor about Flynn’s affair with Lokhova from Steele.[\[334\]](#)

Lokhova disputed the story entirely.[\[335\]](#) “I’m not just accused of being a spy, but I’m also accused of sleeping with all these powerful men,”

she told the *Times*. “I’m trying to laugh it off, but it’s hugely upsetting.” She insisted, “I’m an author, not a practitioner of intelligence.” She accused none other than FBI informant Halper, a close associate of Dearlove and Andrews, of telling reporters that Flynn had left with her that night, and sued him for defamation.[\[336\]](#) He certainly told the FBI that. According to notes by agent Stephen Somma, Halper claimed Lokhova had “latched on” to the general and had “surprised everyone” when she got in Flynn’s cab and joined him on the train to London.[\[337\]](#) These were all lies.

Lokhova said that while she had exchanged a few emails with Flynn and his assistant about her research, Flynn had never referred to himself as “General Misha,” as Andrews had claimed. She also invited a reporter to look at pictures which showed she did not sit next to Flynn at the event as alleged by Andrews, nor was she invited to join him as a translator in Russia. Most especially, Lokhova insisted, she was not having an affair with him.[\[338\]](#) The fact that she kept suing until the courts enjoined her from any further attempts would tend to add credibility to her story.[\[339\]](#) Her cases were dismissed over statute of limitations problems and other technicalities, not any lack of truth or damages on Lokhova’s part.[\[340\]](#)

Flynn likewise told the FBI the whole thing was “ridiculous,” and that he had simply gone back to his hotel.[\[341\]](#)

## **It Was Brennan All Along**

Reportedly, the rumors of Trump’s “illicit” relationship with Russia began when British GCHQ passed information to the CIA at the end of 2015.[\[342\]](#) No one has ever gotten to the bottom of what alleged facts the original

investigation was based on.[\[343\]](#) But that was just a cover story for British involvement. They gave the same story to CNN.[\[344\]](#)

Former CIA Director Brennan also told PBS *Frontline* that they began looking at Russian interference, if not Trump's supposed subordination to Russia, in late 2015.[\[345\]](#)

Only in February 2024 was it finally revealed by reporters Matt Taibbi, Michael Shellenberger and Alex Gutentag that it was, in fact, Brennan who concocted the Russiagate hoax in the first place. He had asked the so-called “Five Eyes” intelligence agencies of the Anglophone countries to help him “bump” and “reverse target” 26 Trump advisers to entrap them in his invented crime long before the official Crossfire Hurricane FBI investigation was ever launched. This was the explanation for why Halper had set up Page and lied about Flynn, the MI6 agent Mifsud's rumormongering to Papadopoulos and the Australian Ambassador Downer's lies about the same—all to get the fake federal investigations started.[\[346\]](#) The reporters based their story on the same set of documents Rep. Nunes cited in his famous, vindicated memo.[\[347\]](#)

The Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act is a felony statute.[\[348\]](#) If the law applied to government employees, these men and women would all go to prison, where they belong.

## **Brennan's Source**

Brennan spent years as a paid expert guest on MSNBC telling the audience that he knew for a fact, based on secret evidence he had seen, that the entire Russiagate story was true. If he was not simply lying, perhaps Brennan was

referring to statements made by mid-ranking Russian Foreign Ministry official Oleg Smolenkov,[\[349\]](#) who CIA sources later said was their top spy high up in the Kremlin.[\[350\]](#) He had previously “confirmed” Putin’s role in ordering the election interference and his life was now supposedly in danger.[\[351\]](#)

But if Smolenkov really did tell his handlers that, he was selling them a bill of goods to order. As we have seen, the whole thing was dreamed up by the opposition in America; not one bit of the story held up on its own. This allegedly top-secret asset, who had access to Putin himself and “could even provide images of documents on the Russian leader’s desk,” as sources told CNN, had supposedly been “exfiltrated” out of the country with the greatest secrecy,[\[352\]](#) but was living under his own name in the suburbs of Washington, D.C.[\[353\]](#)

## **Perkins Coie and the Clinton Plan**

Fittingly, as we later learned from the Justice Department inspector general—as well as related prosecutions and finally the Durham report—on April 1, 2016, Hillary Clinton’s campaign hired the Perkins Coie law firm, which, in turn, brought on the computer security outfit CrowdStrike, the same company that pushed the DNC hacking hoax. They also used a group of contractors known as the “Georgia Tech Team” to push the Alfa Bank secret server story,[\[354\]](#) and to harvest Wi-Fi data near Trump Tower in New York in an attempt to link it to Russia.[\[355\]](#) We later learned the Georgia Tech experts were in on the phony DNC server hack attribution to the Russian GU as well.[\[356\]](#) As mentioned, Perkins Coie also hired Glenn



Simpson's firm Fusion GPS, which paid \$160,000[\[357\]](#) to retired British intelligence officer Christopher Steele, through his company Orbis Business Intelligence, to create the dossier used by the FBI to continue the investigation.[\[358\]](#)

A briefing CIA Director Brennan gave Obama in July 2016 is the clincher. He told the president that Russian intelligence was aware of a plan by the Clinton campaign to distract from the embarrassing email leaks by claiming Russia was behind it and that Trump and his campaign were in on the plot. Brennan told Obama on July 28, days before the official Crossfire Hurricane investigation was launched, that they had information about what the Russians had learned from spying on the Clinton campaign. "Cite alleged approved by Hillary Clinton on July 26 a proposal from one of her foreign policy advisers to vilify Donald Trump by stirring up a scandal claiming interference by the Russian security service."[\[359\]](#) That means that Obama knew the whole thing was a put-on by the Clinton campaign all summer long. And whether it was coordinated or not, it means that Brennan was aware Hillary had followed his lead in pushing the same narrative he had been building since the end of the previous year. Charlie Savage of the *Times* later printed anonymous claims that this must have been Russian disinformation,[\[360\]](#) but the CIA did not assess so at the time.[\[361\]](#) In fact, in September 2016, the CIA assistant director for counterintelligence even forwarded a criminal referral on Clinton to the Justice Department for an "exchange . . . discussing U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's approval of a plan concerning U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump

and Russian hackers hampering U.S. elections as a means of distracting the public from her use of a private email server.”[\[362\]](#)

Nothing was done with this referral. The director of America’s national police force, James Comey, later blatantly committed a serious felony on TV, perjuring himself by claiming under oath to Congress that the letter from the CIA’s counterintelligence division to him and his deputy about Clinton framing her opponent for treason “doesn’t ring any bells with me,” and in fact did not even “sound familiar.”[\[363\]](#)

The Durham report later confirmed that the allegation about what he called the “Clinton Plan intelligence” was briefed to Obama, Biden and Comey by Brennan at an Oval Office meeting on August 3. Durham said he confirmed that the most senior analysts on the Crossfire Hurricane team were notified about it on August 22.

Durham also wrote that the Clinton Plan intelligence continued to be included in reports for the highest levels of the intelligence community. In late September, a briefing prepared for Comey and Clapper included the information. He noted, “The Office did not identify any further actions that the CIA or FBI took in response to this intelligence product as it related to the Clinton Plan intelligence.” Especially, say, leak it to the *Washington Post*.

Durham said that it was crucial to understand the role the Clinton Plan intelligence played in the FBI agents’ decision-making during the Crossfire investigation since it was criminal for the campaign to funnel false information to the FBI, and, secondly, because it obviously raised questions about the origin and veracity of all of the information flooding into the FBI

supposedly showing a treasonous relationship between Trump and Russia in the summer of 2016. Durham said this ignored evidence was “arguably highly relevant and exculpatory,” because taken in context the rest of the Russiagate allegations, it might have become clear it was “part of a political effort to smear a political opponent and to use the resources of the federal government’s law enforcement and intelligence agencies in support of a political objective.”

Thirdly, Durham said, due to the fact the intelligence came secondhand from their spying on the Russians, they needed to know whether it was true. However, he found they had taken no action at all to verify the claims—even though they had evidently been deemed crucial for Brennan to pass on the information to President Obama, DNI Clapper and FBI Director Comey himself, and for the CIA’s legal department to have sent over a criminal referral on the matter to Comey and Strzok. Nor had investigators considered the implications of the Clinton Plan intelligence for the investigation into Trump and his team.

Durham also said this information was kept from the judges on the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court.

Durham’s final report went pretty hard against the FBI’s double standard in this case. They would skip any step, include any trumped-up accusation, exclude any contradictory evidence, and in the end, even lie to the FISC judges’ faces to justify their investigation into Trump, while, in their own words, “tippy-toeing” and being “super more careful” with Clinton since they presumed she would be the next president.[\[364\]](#) As examples, Durham cited the way the FBI went easy on Clinton when they

questioned her about her private email server, gave defensive briefings to the Clinton campaign when foreign nationals attempted to donate to it, and the way they were ordered to “cease and desist” from an investigation once a source succeeded in making an illegal donation to the Clinton Foundation. The agent told the informant thereafter “to stay away from all events relating to Clinton’s campaign.” These decisions essentially closed any investigation into the foundation.[\[365\]](#)

Clinton told Durham’s team that the story about the Clinton Plan to frame Trump was also “Russian disinformation.”[\[366\]](#) That seems unlikely, since that very week her campaign manager accused Russia of hacking the DNC for the purposes of helping Trump win the election.[\[367\]](#) Text messages between Clinton advisers show they were expecting the news about the FBI’s investigation of the DNC server hack, “which would be consistent with, and a means of furthering, the purported plan,” as Durham noted. Same for the full-court press by Fusion GPS at that time to push Steele dossier claims and other related lies.

Humorously, the Durham report describes either one hell of an act or some genuine shock on the part of the original supervisory special agent on the Crossfire case, Josh Campbell, when he was finally shown the CIA’s criminal referral to the FBI based on the Clinton Plan intelligence. Campbell “became visibly upset and emotional, left the interview room with his counsel, and subsequently returned to state emphatically that he had never been apprised of the Clinton Plan intelligence and had never seen the aforementioned Referral Memo.” When they told him it needed further

confirmation, he “responded firmly that regardless of whether its contents were true, he should have been informed of it.”[\[368\]](#)

FBI General Counsel James A. Baker (no relation to the former secretary of state) also told Durham that he was never informed of the Clinton Plan intelligence. He acknowledged the significance of the reporting and “explained that had he known of it during the Crossfire Hurricane investigation, he would have viewed [the accusations] in a different and much more skeptical light,” including the Steele information.  
[\[369\]](#)

## **Danchenko and Dolan (and Hill)**

It turns out the British-American Russia hand Fiona Hill, then working at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., was the one who introduced Christopher Steele and Democratic Party-connected[\[370\]](#) public relations executive Charles Dolan Jr.—a former Clinton-era State Department official[\[371\]](#) who had “long-standing ties to Hillary Clinton,” as the *Washington Post* finally admitted at the end of 2021[\[372\]](#)—to Brookings analyst Igor Danchenko, the primary source of the made-up claims Steele published in his dossier. That included allegations Dolan had passed on to Danchenko, which he and the media falsely blamed on New York businessman Sergei Millian.[\[373\]](#) Danchenko admitted to the FBI that what he told Steele was just “word of mouth and hearsay” and “conversation[s] that he had with friends over beers.” The pee-tape blackmail story? He had heard a friend say that “in jest.”[\[374\]](#) In fact, Durham later wrote that Dolan was likely the origin of that particular rumor, as well as other false

information relating to Paul Manafort in the Steele dossier. The FBI never questioned him for the Crossfire Hurricane investigation due to a “higher level decision” by FBI executives—even though agents were never “provided a specific rationale for the denial of the case opening.”[\[375\]](#) Durham later charged but failed to convict Danchenko for denying his relationship with Dolan and falsely naming Millian as a source.[\[376\]](#) It turns out that Dolan was a former paid consultant for the Russian Federation when he worked for the firm Ketchum Inc., and worked closely with Dmitry Peskov, Putin’s confidant and spokesman, as well as Sergey Kislyak, the Russian ambassador to the United States, who, as mentioned, was falsely accused of being Gen. Mike Flynn’s illicit connection to Russia. Dolan even claimed to have met former Russian President Dimitry Medvedev several times. Danchenko had lived in the U.S. for years. Dolan himself—again, a Democratic Party-connected PR man—was the closest thing to a “Kremlin insider” source who provided information to Steele. Of course, the public was not told this until four full years later.[\[377\]](#) Department of Justice IG Horowitz later complained that the Carter Page FISA warrant was also based on Danchenko’s lie that Millian was the source for many of the most important claims in the dossier.[\[378\]](#) The Durham investigation found that “despite the obvious infirmities in Danchenko’s narrative, the information allegedly provided by Millian remained in the Page FISA applications through the final renewal in June 2017.”[\[379\]](#)

In fact, if there was any collusion with Russia, it may have been from the other direction. Both Horowitz and Durham raised the possibility in

their reports that it was Danchenko who was acting as an agent of the Russian Federation and spreading disinformation during the 2016 election. He had been investigated as a potential spy in 2009–2011. According to Durham, the only reason the FBI closed that inquiry was that they mistakenly believed he had moved back to Russia. It also turns out that at the very beginning of the investigation, agents surmised the Russians already knew about Steele’s operation and had compromised it, feeding him misinformation, and that when those agents brought this to their superiors, they were ordered to stop writing reports about it.[\[380\]](#)

Worst-case scenario, this would mean the Clinton campaign was colluding with Russia to create disinformation about Trump colluding with Russia in order to influence the election. Without engaging in that speculation, it is worth pointing out that if the FBI had been honest about what they knew about Danchenko, they could never have justified taking information from the Steele dossier to the FISC or the American people. As Durham wrote, the FBI did not even close their previous counterintelligence investigation of Danchenko before hiring him as an informant, and did not tell the Justice Department lawyers drafting the Page FISA warrant requests about it. “As a result, the FISC was never advised of information that very well may have affected the FISC’s view of Steele’s primary sub-source’s (and Steele’s) reliability and trustworthiness.”

They were defrauding their own Justice Department lawyers, the FISC and the American people, all to frame the then-Republican Party nominee for president.[\[381\]](#)

**Alfa Bank**

Another major false accusation of the Russiagate scam was the story about a server belonging to Trump secretly communicating with Russian intelligence by way of the Alfa Bank's computers in Moscow—perhaps, we were meant to believe, the backchannel by which the Russians controlled their minions. But it was another hoax perpetrated by Perkins Coie. Their partner Michael Sussmann brought these lies straight to FBI General Counsel James Baker, and also to “another government agency” (CIA), [\[382\]](#) and falsely claimed he was not representing any other interest when he did so. That a jury later acquitted him for lying does not change the fact of his guilt.[\[383\]](#) FBI agents testified at Sussmann's trial that they debunked the claims within one day.[\[384\]](#) Campaign manager Robby Mook later admitted under oath that Clinton personally approved the plan to leak the story to the press.[\[385\]](#) The way that Hillary's Twitter account would immediately promote these stories was an obvious clue for doubters at the time that these stories were coming from the campaign itself.[\[386\]](#)

Though the FBI did not take the bait on that one, Slate's Franklin Foer did, and passed it on to his readers as a real story about the Republican nominee's treason.[\[387\]](#) Dexter Filkins of *The New Yorker* disgraced himself the same way.[\[388\]](#)

In the end, the observed web traffic supposedly connecting the campaign to Russian intelligence was really a Trump Hotels spam bot operated by a third-party vendor.[\[389\]](#) The FBI threw cold water on the story in the *Times* on October 31.[\[390\]](#) Someone at the bureau had made the strange decision to let actual computer specialists examine the claims instead of assigning the more biased agents from the Crossfire



investigation. Ironically, Mueller later reported that here in the real world, not only was there no connection, but Putin had complained to the head of Alfa Bank that he had no good contacts with President-elect Trump during the transition period in the winter of 2016.[\[391\]](#)

As former *Times* reporter Jeff Gerth wrote, “Hundreds of emails were exchanged between Fusion employees and reporters for such outlets as ABC, the *Wall Street Journal*, Yahoo, the *Washington Post*, Slate, Reuters, and the *Times* during the last months of the campaign” in an effort to push the Steele dossier and Alfa Bank story.[\[392\]](#) Sussmann was billing the Clinton campaign for it all too.[\[393\]](#) It was the “big lie” effect—and it worked. Emails subpoenaed by the Durham investigation also showed they knew they were lying. The job was to try to establish any hint of contact between these servers, close enough that it might fool some IT professionals. The Georgia Tech team, a group of supposed experts from Georgia Tech University led by government cyber contractor and Sussman associate Rodney Joffe was hired to find a technical reason for the FBI to begin an investigation. Later, Durham revealed that one of the Georgia Tech researchers wrote to another: “I[f] . . . [Joffe] can take the \*inference\* we gain through this team exercise then work to develop [it,] even an inference may be worthwhile” [asterisks in original]. The researcher added, “It’s just not the case that you can rest assured that Hillary’s opposition research and whatever professional gov[ernments] and investigative journalists are also digging will come up with the same things.” According to the Sussmann indictment, “on or about that same day,” Joffe clarified to the researchers that an inference would be just fine. “Being able to provide evidence of

\*anything\* that shows an attempt to behave badly in relation to this, the VIPs would be happy. They're looking for a true story that could be used as the basis for closer examination" [asterisks in original].[\[394\]](#) Later, one of the researchers wrote in a group email to the team that he was starting to have doubts about the job they had taken: "Let's for a moment think of the best case scenario, where we are able to show (somehow) that DNS communication exists between Trump and R[ussia]. How do we plan to defend against the criticism that this is not spoofed traffic we are observing?" He worried that "unless we get combine netflow and DNS traffic collected at critical points between suspect organizations, we cannot technically make any claims that would fly public scrutiny." The researcher concluded, "The only thing that drives us at this point is that we just do not like [Trump]. This will not fly in eyes of public scrutiny. Folks, I am afraid we have tunnel vision. Time to regroup?"[\[395\]](#)

Joffe also noted in an email that he knew the Alfa Bank connection was a "red herring" from a "legitimate valid company."[\[396\]](#) Still, they wrote up a propagandistic "white paper" supposedly proving the connection for Sussmann to give to the feds, and for Glenn Simpson and Fusion GPS to send out to the media.

Before sending his lawyer off to go lie to the FBI, Joffe asked his researchers if they were sure their lies would pass a cursory inspection—were they at least "plausible"? Researcher Manos Antonakakis responded that "[a] DNS expert would poke several holes to this hypothesis (primarily around visibility, about which very smartly you do not talk about). That

being said, do not think even the top security (non-DNS) researchers can refute your statements. Nice!”[\[397\]](#)

Sussmann’s hired researchers did not fool the FBI tech crews. However, the bosses of the counterintelligence division still insisted on opening up a full-scale investigation into these claims based out of Chicago. Though FBI leaders refused to tell investigators where they obtained the accusations, their second round of expert opinion, based on records from the American server companies and an internal investigation at Alfa Bank, finally killed the story inside the FBI.[\[398\]](#) But even their disavowal in the *Times* did little to dampen the enthusiasm of the rest of the major media, which repeated different takes on the story hundreds of times for the next two and a half years anyway.[\[399\]](#)

Durham later wrote that Joffe had been promised an important job in the new administration.[\[400\]](#)

## **Yota Phones**

The Yota phones story was an original part of the hoax, but the FBI had dismissed it so quickly it never became part of the public narrative. The story claimed a Russian brand smartphone, the Yota phone, had been shown to have been near Trump Tower, Trump’s Manhattan apartment and the White House, supposedly revealing covert contacts between the campaign and Russian intelligence services.

Like the Alfa Bank data, Sussmann took the Yota phone story to the CIA as well as the FBI, who both quickly debunked it, the CIA concluding that the data was not “technically plausible,” could not “withstand

scrutiny,” “contained gaps,” “conflicted with [itself]” and was “user created and not machine/tool generated.”[\[401\]](#) Sussmann also lied to the FBI that he was not working on behalf of any client when he did so, even though he again billed the Clinton campaign for every minute spent on the project. [\[402\]](#) Again, the FBI knew this was not true, and another hoax perpetrated by the Clinton campaign’s law firm, all along.

The same group pushed a false Russian metadata story as well. The Durham report says that the researchers hired by Perkins Coie continued to mine internet metadata searching for links between the new Trump administration and Russia until at least mid-2018.[\[403\]](#)

## **25th Amendment**

Trump fired Comey in May 2017. In retaliation, the leaders of the Department of Justice launched a counterintelligence investigation against Trump to find out if the Russians made him do it to obstruct the Department’s very above-board investigation into whether the campaign and the Kremlin fixed the election together, considered sending Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein into the White House wearing a wire to try to implicate the new president and a plan to invoke Section 4 of the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and get the cabinet to remove him from power under the theory that he was “unable to discharge” the duties of his office, due to being compromised by Russia.[\[404\]](#) Talk about commitment to a premise.[\[405\]](#) Once they were sure they would fall short if they tried it, they settled on a plan to have Mueller pretend to criminally investigate the fake treason plot for another two years. They then merged

their counterintelligence investigation into the president with that of the special counsel.[\[406\]](#) If they could not remove Donald Trump from power, FBI officials told CNN that he still needed to be “reined in.”[\[407\]](#)

## Dowd

Once the special counsel investigation was launched, Bob Woodward reported in his book *Fear*, Trump's lawyer John M. Dowd convinced the new president to turn over every scrap of paper from his campaign to the Mueller team to show good faith and ask for some in return. "I want to build a relationship where we engage [Mueller] and then there are no secrets. And that can be done." Then he and another D.C. lawyer, Ty Cobb, went to see Mueller. Dowd told Mueller, "The president has authorized me to tell you he will cooperate. His words to me were, 'Tell Bob I respect him. I'll cooperate.'" He went on, "What do you need? We'll get it to you. But let's get this investigation done." He said the president had nothing to hide and wanted to avoid a "protracted battle." Dowd added, "But we'd like you to reciprocate. And that is, engage." He explained, "The reason we're cooperating is to get this damn thing over with. We're not going to assert any privileges. This is over the objection of [White House legal counsel] Don McGahn, but the president wants to do it. He wants you to see everything, talk to everyone."

Mueller claimed to agree, saying, as Dowd paraphrased him, that "the length of these investigations often became the abuse." Dowd thought they had a deal. "You guys need something, call me. And we'll get it for you or we'll answer whatever question or help get witnesses." [\[408\]](#)

That was a fool's errand for sure. Mueller, Andrew Weissman and the other prosecutors were not trying to get to the bottom of anything, but to rein in the elected president using this pretended investigation against him.

[\[409\]](#) Proving his innocence was never going to slow them down in the slightest. And so it did not.

The leaks and lies kept coming. Amazingly, they kept it going for another two years, and told dozens of them, starting with the DNC and Podesta email hacks. As noted by former *Times* reporter Jeff Gerth, who wrote a devastating report on the media's role in the Russiagate hoax for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, "When those storylines were authoritatively undercut, the follow-ups were downplayed or ignored."[\[410\]](#)

## **Jeff Sessions**

Another fake Russiagate scandal revolved around Sen. Jeff Sessions, a policy adviser to the Trump campaign and the administration's first attorney general. Like Gen. Flynn, he was accused of supposedly scandalous contacts with the Russian ambassador, Sergey Kislyak.[\[411\]](#) In fact, they were purely perfunctory meetings, one of which took place in his office in front of his staff, at least two of whom were retired army colonels.[\[412\]](#) The other was nothing more than a handshake at a public speech at the National Interest Foundation. As unbelievable as it may seem, the *Post* won a Pulitzer Prize for pretending there was anything criminal or even interesting there.[\[413\]](#) Russian expat and interventionist hawk Julia Ioffe indulged in wild speculation in *The Atlantic*, going on for thousands of words "raising questions" about whether Sessions was secretly communicating with Russia and covering it up, possibly, she imagined, through the scholars at the Center for the National Interest.[\[414\]](#)

CNN breathlessly claimed the senator had omitted these not-important meetings in the background check he had completed to become Trump's short-lived attorney general.[\[415\]](#) The meetings were also invoked as reasons why the new chief of the Justice Department needed to recuse himself and appoint an independent counsel to investigate the case, which he did.[\[416\]](#) Seven months later, the *Times* finally admitted he was not required to disclose the meetings, since they were part of his duties as a senator on the Armed Services Committee rather than the Trump campaign, as he had been instructed by the FBI during his background check.[\[417\]](#) The Mueller report eventually dismissed the contacts as entirely innocent and inconsequential. In fact, at the meeting in his senate office, Sessions had taken the opportunity to lecture Kislyak on Russian intervention in Ukraine and Moldova. Kislyak invited Sessions to dinner. The senator declined.[\[418\]](#)

California Senator Kamala Harris grilled Sessions about his supposed Russia connections before the Senate.[\[419\]](#) According to NPR News, this helped to get her noticed by Democratic Party leadership as a “rising star”—a tough prosecutor-type personality who could take on Trump.[\[420\]](#)

## **Facebook and Twitter Ads**

Yevgeny Prigozhin was a friend and patron of Vladimir Putin who started out as a restaurateur, later ran the Wagner Group mercenary firm, dabbled in petty internet clickbait operations and ended up crossing Putin and meeting an untimely death in an airplane explosion in 2023.[\[421\]](#) Mueller charged 13 employees of Prigozhin's troll farms for interfering in the 2016 election



in the case of *USA v. Netyksho*.[\[422\]](#) The indictment claims the trolls bought Facebook ads that allegedly favored Trump, but nothing at all about hacking or releasing anyone's emails, and contained no proof of its allegations regardless. "The indictment alleges that the Russian conspirators want to promote discord in the United States and undermine public confidence in democracy," claimed Rod J. Rosenstein, the deputy attorney general. In fact, there was no demonstrated reason to believe the Russians had any such goal. Somehow, the *Times* editors dutifully printed that "Mr. Mueller identified 13 digital advertisements paid for by the Russian operation. All of them attacked Mrs. Clinton or promoted Mr. Trump."

Thirteen. Not 130, or 130,000,000. Thirteen.

As the newspaper of record conceded, "The indictment does not say that Russia changed the outcome of the election, a fact that Mr. Rosenstein noted repeatedly." Nor does the indictment "explicitly say the Russian government sponsored the effort," but they insisted, "American intelligence officials have publicly said that President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia directed and oversaw it," and that "the indictment notes that two of the Russian firms involved hold Russian government contracts." The Justice Department and their media accomplices were simply grandstanding. Indicting foreign actors is a way for prosecutors to "name and shame operatives" and make it "harder for them to work undetected in the future," as the *Times* put it.[\[423\]](#) No one thought they would have to bring a case. But in May 2018, lawyers for Concord Management and Consulting LLC, one of the companies accused in the indictment, showed up in court demanding to see the evidence against them.[\[424\]](#) After failing in their

attempt to limit the defendant's access to material which supposedly proved their guilt, the government, claiming Russia was trying to "weaponize the case" by defending themselves, dropped the charges instead.[\[425\]](#)

In January 2023, journalist Matt Taibbi revealed the extent of the government's pressure on Twitter to "come up with" evidence of widespread Russian interference in the 2016 election by way of their platform, which numerous internal reviews had already shown to simply be false.[\[426\]](#) The feds told the papers that the Internet Research Agency, a Russian troll farm owned by the previously mentioned St. Petersburg restaurateur and Wagner Group owner Yevgeny Prigozhin,[\[427\]](#) had succeeded in swaying the election by buying ads on Facebook and Twitter to "weaponize" the social media platforms against the American people and brainwash them into voting for Trump, representing "unprecedented foreign interference in American democracy."[\[428\]](#) The fact they created clickbait for other groups, such as "United Muslims of America" and the Black Lives Matter-themed "Don't Shoot Us" and "Black Matters U.S.," did not seem to interfere with the Russiagate theorists' beliefs. If it is not pro-Trump, then the media insisted it must be meant to "engender mistrust"[\[429\]](#) or "sow discord," as opposed to a way to make easy money.[\[430\]](#) The Mueller report conceded that in total, the IRA could be tied to fewer than 200,000 tweets in the 10 weeks leading up to the 2016 election, a relative hydrogen atom in an ocean of political hype.[\[431\]](#)

Democratic partisans were thrilled when Prigozhin boasted that it was true in 2022.[\[432\]](#) It still was not. As journalist Gareth Porter had already shown, *Times* reporters Scott Shane and Mark Mazzetti had either been

naïvely taken advantage of by liars and failed their readers by passing along these deceptions, or knowingly lied themselves when they claimed “126 million Americans [viewed these ads] on Facebook alone.” Alarmingly, this number was “not far short of the 137 million people who would vote in the 2016 presidential election.”

Porter refuted them. “[A] relatively paltry 80,000 posts from the private Russian company Internet Research Agency (IRA) were engulfed in literally trillions of posts on Facebook over a two-year period before and after the 2016 vote.” The *Times* “failed to tell their readers that Facebook account holders in the United States had been ‘served’ 33 trillion Facebook posts during that same period—413 million times more than the 80,000 posts from the Russian company.” Colin Stretch, Facebook’s general counsel, told the Senate that 126 million American may have seen an IRA post not during the election period, but in the two years from 2015 to 2017—including a year after the election. As Porter wrote, “To put the 33 trillion figure over two years in perspective, the 80,000 Russian-origin Facebook posts represented just .0000000024 of total Facebook content in that time.” He added, “The *Times*’ touting of the bogus 126 million out 137 million voters, while not reporting the 33 trillion figure, should vie in the annals of journalism as one of the most spectacularly misleading uses of statistics of all time.”[\[433\]](#)

Journalist Paul Sperry showed the IRA had only spent \$2,930 on Facebook ads before and after the election.[\[434\]](#)

Darren Linvill and Patrick Warren of Clemson University had published a report on 2.9 million tweets from those same 3,814 IRA

accounts over a two-year period.[\[435\]](#) As Porter put it, they “revealed that nearly a third of its Tweets had normal commercial content or were not in English.” A third of them were just reposts of local news feeds and “hashtag games” that had no relation to politics, with only one last third being focused on right- and also left-wing “populist themes.” They also showed there were more political tweets by these accounts in the year after the election than before, peaking in the summer of 2017.[\[436\]](#)

In January 2023, New York University released a study showing that Porter was correct. “[W]e find no evidence of a meaningful relationship between exposure to the Russian foreign influence campaign and changes in attitudes, polarization, or voting behavior.”[\[437\]](#)

Numerous outlets confirmed that many of the fake news sites created in 2016 were the work of clever young Macedonian kids who realized Trump voters would click on just about anything—Pope Endorses Trump![\[438\]](#) ISIS Endorses Clinton![\[439\]](#)—and made a ton of ad revenue doing so.[\[440\]](#) Again, even Philip Bump, an infamous Russiagate conspiracist from the *Post*, conceded the entire Facebook and Twitter campaign by the IRA had nothing to do with targeting voters. It was just clickbait, blown way out of proportion by his colleagues.[\[441\]](#)

There was an influence operation. It was carried out by America’s treacherous so-called intelligence agencies acting as secret police to frame the elected president for treason, using Shane and Mazzetti as sock puppets to accomplish their mission. Those supposedly top-tier reporters and devoted *Times* fans are the credulous marks, not America’s Facebook-reading aunties.

## Paul Manafort and Oleg Deripaska

In March 2016, when Trump hired Paul Manafort, a lobbyist for foreign states who had worked for the previous, Russian-leaning president of Ukraine, Viktor Yanukovich, to run his campaign, the Democrats saw an opportunity. In fact, back in 2013, Manafort was serving American interests in attempting to persuade Yanukovich and his Party of Regions to lean toward the U.S., EU and NATO, and away from Russia.[\[442\]](#) The important Democratic lawyer and power broker Greg Craig was even prosecuted after taking money from pro-Western Ukrainian oligarch and Clinton Foundation donor[\[443\]](#) Victor Pinchuk to have a friendly law firm write a report on Ukraine's economy that, the *Times* said, "Yanukovich hoped would convince Western governments that Ukraine should be allowed to join the European Union and partake of its financial benefits."[\[444\]](#) But the feds, their co-conspirators and media puppets had a narrative to run with: Manafort was secretly handling Trump for Putin, by way of one Konstantin Kilimnik.

This was never prosecuted because they had nothing but a story. Kilimnik was an informant for the U.S. State Department and worked for John McCain and the color-coded revolutionaries at the International Republican Institute (IRI), not for Vladimir Putin at the FSB.[\[445\]](#) Manafort asked Kilimnik to pass on Trump campaign polling data to Ukrainian oligarchs Serhiy Lyovochikin and Rinat Akhmetov, not Russian aluminum oligarch Oleg Deripaska,[\[446\]](#) as alleged by the hoaxers and their useful dupes.[\[447\]](#) This polling data was claimed to have been crucial to Russia's efforts to buy targeted Facebook ads to sway the election.[\[448\]](#)

Even though the public was told Manafort and Deripaska were Trump's links to Putin, secretly, behind the scenes, the feds had trusted Deripaska so much they had actually helped get him into the United States, [\[449\]](#) and tried to recruit him as an informant to find out if Manafort was controlling Trump for Putin. [\[450\]](#) Deripaska had worked with the U.S. government on a failed attempt to free Robert Levinson, a former FBI agent being held in Iran. While supposedly "close" to the Kremlin, he was not an agent of Russian security services. Even British spy Christopher Steele had said in an email to Justice Department official Bruce Ohr that he did not believe Deripaska was a "tool" of Putin. Deripaska told the FBI their theories about Manafort, Putin and Trump were "preposterous." When he offered to testify about it before Congress, they stopped talking to him. [\[451\]](#) Manafort had allegedly considered offering to brief Deripaska on the polling data as a way to burnish his credentials as someone close to the next U.S. president. But it never went any further than that. [\[452\]](#)

Deripaska sued the Treasury Department to lift the sanctions against him, declaring the accusations as "very absurd." He had loaned Manafort money but swore he had not dealt with him since 2011. His lawyers had sued to try to recover the money, but he strongly and credibly denied having any deal with the man over polling results or anything else. He just had a well-known Russian name they could drag through the mud. [\[453\]](#) *Time* reported that one of Deripaska's associates, Victor Boyarkin, had been pressuring Manafort for the money, but even if true, there is no reason to believe they made any deals regarding Trump or the campaign. [\[454\]](#)

Even Philip Bump, the *Washington Post* resident Russiagate paranoiac, was dismissive of the story, admitting in December 2017 that there was “still little evidence that Russia’s 2016 social media efforts did much of anything.” He later added, “That sophisticated, specific Russian 2016 voter targeting effort doesn’t seem to exist,” and that the information Manafort was alleged to have passed on was from before Trump was even nominated, making it “by election day . . . several months out of date.”[\[455\]](#)

One more for the nothing pile.

## **Ukraine’s Role (Framing Manafort)**

In January 2017, *Politico* ran an important piece describing the corrupt role that Ukraine’s Petro Poroshenko administration played in helping to push the Russiagate hoax.[\[456\]](#) Their reporters wrote that “Ukrainian government officials . . . disseminated documents implicating a top Trump aide in corruption and suggested they were investigating the matter, only to back away after the election.” They added, “And they helped Clinton’s allies research damaging information on Trump and his advisers.” *Politico* insisted the nonexistent Russian assistance for Trump must have surely been worse. Still, they described the efforts of Ukrainian-American Alexandra Chalupa, whom they called an “operative” for the Democratic National Committee, saying she “met with top officials in the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington” in an attempt to tie Trump and Manafort to Russia.

Andri Telizhenko, who worked as a political officer in the Ukrainian Embassy, said he had been ordered by his superiors to give anything they

had on Manafort to Chalupa. They confirmed that his boss “specifically called Telizhenko into a meeting with Chalupa to provide an update on an American media outlet’s ongoing investigation into Manafort.” They also found the Ukrainian government was behind the leak of Manafort’s doctored “little black book” ledger, which appeared to show that he received \$12.7 million in cash payments from Yanukovych’s Party of Regions.[\[457\]](#)

Ukrainian MP Serhiy Leshchenko, who published the ledger, said, “For me, it was important to show not only the corruption aspect, but that [Trump] is [a] pro-Russian candidate who can break the geopolitical balance in the world” and “change the pro-Ukrainian agenda in American foreign policy.” The *Financial Times* quoted Leshchenko saying the majority of Ukraine’s politicians were “on Hillary Clinton’s side.” They added that the prospect of Trump’s election “has spurred not just Mr Leshchenko but Kiev’s wider political leadership to do something they would never have attempted before: intervene, however indirectly, in a U.S. election.”

It worked. As the *Politico* reporters wrote, “The Ukrainian efforts had an impact in the race, helping to force Manafort’s resignation and advancing the narrative that Trump’s campaign was deeply connected to Ukraine’s foe to the east, Russia.” Leshchenko was not appeased. He and others in Kiev told the *Financial Times* that “they will continue their efforts to prevent a candidate—who recently suggested Russia might keep Crimea, which it annexed two years ago—from reaching the summit of American political power.” They were happy to boast then that “[i]f the Republican



candidate loses in November, some observers suggest Kiev's actions may have played at least a small role.”[\[458\]](#)

But the document had been tampered with. After the election, *Politico* said, “questions began mounting about the investigations into the ledgers—and the ledgers themselves. An official with the anti-corruption bureau told a Ukrainian newspaper, ‘Mr. Manafort does not have a role in this case.’” In fact, the Ukrainian government had warned the FBI it was unconfirmed and likely fake in the summer of 2016, months before the election. Konstantin Kilimnik also told the FBI it was almost certainly fake in August 2016. Manafort, he said, “could not have possibly taken large amounts of cash across three borders. It was always a different arrangement—payments were in wire transfers to his companies, which is not a violation.” He also told them, “I have some questions about this black cash stuff, because those published records do not make sense. The timeframe doesn’t match anything related to payments made to Manafort. . . . It does not match my records. All fees Manafort got were wires, not cash.”[\[459\]](#) Copies of his statement were given to the FBI and Special Counsel Mueller’s investigation.[\[460\]](#)

Manafort credibly denied any wrongdoing, noting that his work with Yanukovych was not at all on behalf of Russia, but the West, and he complained to *Politico* about being smeared in that way, “specifically cit[ing] his work on denuclearizing the country and on the European Union trade and political pact that Yanukovych spurned before fleeing to Russia.” He was more likely to have been working for American intelligence

agencies than Russian ones. “In no case was I ever involved in anything that would be contrary to U.S. interests,” Manafort said.[\[461\]](#)

In a 2022 interview Manafort made clear that he had been a Western partisan throughout his entire time in Ukraine going back to the W. Bush years and was a great admirer of Zelensky and the Ukrainian military and militiamen fighting Russian forces. He explained that he had always been opposed to Russia’s agenda to keep Ukraine out of Europe, and that under Yanukovych they were attempting to make the reforms necessary to take the next step toward joining the EU, including describing his specific role in working directly with them to do so. Manafort noted that Yanukovych went to Brussels first, instead of to Moscow, upon taking office, in what was rightly perceived as a major political statement of his intentions.[\[462\]](#)

He said Yanukovych’s support for turning West was a condition for coming to work for him and emphasized how important it was that a leader from the country’s east led Ukraine “into Europe.” He also said this was not a problem because the eastern Ukrainian oligarchs wanted to join Europe too. They were always the “bastard child” to the Russian elite, and since they held the gas, mining and industrial resources, they wanted to try their hand at trading with Europe instead. These were Yanukovych and the Party of Regions’ supporters.

Manafort added that in the aftermath of the 2004 Orange Revolution, President Viktor Yushchenko started playing the old game of nationalizing eastern industries and handing them over to his cronies. In doing so, he convinced the eastern oligarchs they would be better off in Europe, where the rules would prevent such blatant theft. This, Manafort said, was why he

had been hired by the Russian oligarch Deripaska, who had significant interests in eastern Ukraine, along with eastern Ukrainian oligarch Rinat Akhmetov, which led to his contract with Yanukovych and his party.

Slick Washington lobbyist though he may be, Manafort was unfairly smeared. He said Deripaska is closer to Putin now, but that he had been tarred for dealing with a guy who was close to Putin back when the Russian president was getting along with George W. Bush, and later when Obama was pursuing the “reset” after the disaster at Bucharest. It was only in 2013, when Russia “went to war with Ukraine,” as Manafort saw it, that Putin became the villain, and therefore retroactively so did he through association. This is consistent with the rest of Manafort’s opinions and claims throughout the interview. He sounded like Michael McFaul or Anne Applebaum, and was obviously sincere.[\[463\]](#)

This lie was a key to Russiagate. Democrats and other government employees by the tens of millions were of the belief that Manafort, Trump’s campaign manager, was his secret Russian spy handler who helped him steal an election. Classical conspiracy kooks that they were, they let this false claim become the basis to believe the rest too.

Fiona Hill said any claim that Ukraine, as she put it, “conducted a campaign against our country” in the 2016 election was simply a “fictional narrative that has been perpetrated and propagated by the Russian security services themselves.” But it was interesting that Hill did not accuse *Politico* reporters Kenneth P. Vogel and David Stern—now at the *New York Times*[\[464\]](#) and *Washington Post*,[\[465\]](#) respectively—of being Russian spies. Nor did she claim their sources were Russian disinformation artists,

like, say for example, her associates Danchenko and Dolan.[\[466\]](#) Nor did she deny any claim Vogel and Stern made about Alexandra Chalupa successfully working with the Ukrainian Embassy to get Manafort fired. “These fictions are harmful even if they are deployed for purely domestic political purposes,” Hill said. But for some reason she did not want to get to the bottom of them.[\[467\]](#)

The AP claimed to prove the Manafort ledger was, as they say, partially confirmed. But all they found were transactions he never denied. The claim was that he had accepted secret cash payments, but the outlet found wire transfers that were not secret at all. It did not mean anything.[\[468\]](#) It was just another lie. It turns out federal prosecutor Andrew Weissman had leaked the story to the AP, then cited their pretended reporting in court, instead of the actual ledger itself, in which case they would have been forced to explain why they were taking it seriously. They never attempted to use it against Manafort at his trial on fraud charges[\[469\]](#) because they knew it could not withstand real scrutiny.[\[470\]](#)

## **Cohen Prague**

Then there was the trip that Steele claimed Trump’s lawyer, Michael Cohen, took to Prague to pay for Romanian hacking attacks against the Democrats[\[471\]](#) and plot ways to divert attention from Page and Manafort’s also-completely imaginary treason. McClatchy’s Peter Stone and Greg Gordon claimed in repeated stories that it was true,[\[472\]](#) and still tried to insist they were not wrong even after Mueller debunked their stenography-for-liars, writing, “Mr. Cohen had never traveled to Prague and wasn’t

concerned about those allegations, which he believed were provably false.”[\[473\]](#) Cohen never took the trip. It was not true.[\[474\]](#) As the Daily Beast noted, “The Prague story is . . . critical for the reputations of reporters Peter Stone and Greg Gordon.” The claim was a complete hoax, as confirmed by Mueller himself.[\[475\]](#) Cohen’s passport showed he had never been to Prague in his life. There was no other evidence or testimony of any kind putting him there. Gordon and Stone were humiliated.[\[476\]](#)

## **Trump Tower Moscow**

Tom Hamburger of the *Post*, a close friend of Fusion GPS’s Glenn Simpson,[\[477\]](#) ran a lengthy piece about Trump’s supposedly suspicious wish to get along with Russia and possibly close a real estate deal there.[\[478\]](#) This tale evolved into a claim that Putin held approval for the construction of a Trump Tower in Moscow over the candidate’s head.[\[479\]](#) The *Post* ran a schizophrenic Pepe Silvia-style conspiracy diagram[\[480\]](#) with faded yellow lines for string making “connections” and “links” where they had no substance. They claimed this nonsense about a Trump Tower in Moscow was “the most direct interaction yet of a top Trump aide and a senior member of Putin’s government.”[\[481\]](#) In a way it was true, since there was no other significant interaction to speak of. But in another way it was false because, in fact, Trump’s lawyer Cohen and his associate Felix Sater, a known FBI informant,[\[482\]](#) never got past the Kremlin website’s standard message form. Sater never even received a reply. At one point, Cohen finally reached a woman at a public relations office. The call went nowhere. There was no follow-up and nothing else to it. Nothing.[\[483\]](#)

Neither of them had any connections in Russia. They were simply stuck, which is kind of disappointing. One might think at least one of these accusations had some meat on it, but no.

## **Trump Tower New York**

Then there was the big New York Trump Tower meeting with people who were not intelligence agents, that the public was told for years would be the key to locking up Manafort, the president's son Donald Trump Jr. and his son-in-law Jared Kushner for conspiracy and treason. It turned out the meeting was with a lawyer named Natalia Veselnitskaya, who had nothing on Clinton and was just trying to lobby against the Magnitsky Act, the anti-Russian sanctions law passed years before that had no connection to the Russiagate story.[\[484\]](#) The meeting was also attended by a lobbyist named Rinat Akhmetshin, who had been a counterintelligence officer in the Soviet army that had not existed since 1991. This was of course ultimately meaningless, but in the meantime, "U.S. officials" told the credulous media and its audience they thought he could have "ongoing ties to Russian intelligence."[\[485\]](#) They could imagine the rest.

Kushner texted two different aides to call him so he could leave early since it was nothing.[\[486\]](#) At the meeting, Veselnitskaya made claims not about hacked emails, but about Hillary Clinton and other Democrats making money in an undefined illegal scheme. She provided no evidence, then immediately turned to the Magnitsky Act. It was obviously unwise for anyone on Trump's team to be meeting with Russian nationals in this way. Trump's then-campaign manager Steven Bannon wanted no part in it at the

time.[\[487\]](#) However, even if one takes the least charitable interpretation of that story, it still would not amount to more than attempted opposition data collection, not collusion, cooperation or conspiracy, certainly not with Russian military intelligence. It was later shown that Veselnitskaya just happened to meet with Clinton agent and Fusion GPS head Glenn Simpson before and after the meeting with Manafort, Trump Jr. and Kushner, raising obvious questions about whether Simpson was using a client in one case to entrap a target in another.[\[488\]](#)

CNN also claimed Trump knew all about the meeting before it happened.[\[489\]](#) That was also a lie from an old Clinton associate named Lanny Davis, as he later admitted.[\[490\]](#)

## **GOP Platform**

Josh Rogin of the *Post* falsely claimed that Trump's people had "gutted" the Ukraine provision of the Republican Party platform. In fact, they strengthened the language about sanctions, only pulling the part about direct arms transfers, which Obama had also declined to do. This was done by J.D. Gordon, a campaign adviser, of his own accord based on an assumption about what Trump would want, and responding to objections to the harsh language from Maine State Senator and GOP convention delegate Eric Brakey,[\[491\]](#) rather than anyone acting as an agent of the Russian Federation, as Mueller later admitted.[\[492\]](#) The new language was actually tougher than the previous version, stating, "We will meet the return of Russian belligerence with the same resolve that led to the collapse of the Soviet Union," and that "[w]e will not accept any territorial change in

Eastern Europe imposed by force, in Ukraine or elsewhere, and will use all appropriate measures to bring to justice the practitioners of aggression and assassination.” It said they supported sanctions until full Ukrainian sovereignty was restored, and on the crucial point, “We also support providing appropriate assistance to the armed forces of Ukraine and greater coordination with NATO defense planning.” They did not take anything out of it, but merely softened the language of a proposed amendment from “lethal defensive weapons” to “appropriate assistance.”[\[493\]](#)

Jeffrey Goldberg of *The Atlantic*[\[494\]](#) quickly ran with Rogin’s fumble, in the wrong direction of course, assuring readers that Trump’s collusion with the Russians was certain.[\[495\]](#)

However, Mueller concluded that Rogin and Goldberg were wrong. “The investigation did not establish that one Campaign official’s efforts to dilute a portion of the Republican Party platform on providing assistance to Ukraine were undertaken at the behest of candidate Trump or Russia.”[\[496\]](#)

## **PropOrNot**

Then there was the bogus blacklist of journalists who criticized the consensus on these issues, falsely accusing them of being “witting or unwitting” agents of the Kremlin. Those claims were advanced by an anonymous website called “PropOrNot,”[\[497\]](#) as well as a *Post* hack named Craig Timberg. His article now begins with a massive editor’s note about how bad the reporting is and how they do not stand behind it.[\[498\]](#)

*Times* reporter Sheera Frenkel mocked Timberg for his lazy, false reporting, writing to him on Twitter that “fwiw [for what it’s worth], a lot of



reporters passed on this story.”[\[499\]](#) If Timberg had any dignity, he might have cared, but then he would not have written the false article smearing his betters in the first place. Journalist Alan MacLeod noted that the PropOrNot blacklist included virtually every antiwar alternative media source out there, “from MintPress to Truthout, Truthdig and The Black Agenda Report. Also included were pro-Trump websites like The Drudge Report, and libertarian ventures like Antiwar.com and The Ron Paul Institute.”

MacLeod also observed that the list “was immediately heralded in the corporate press, and was the basis for a wholesale algorithm shift at Google and other big tech platforms, a shift that saw traffic to alternative media sites crash overnight, never to recover.” Noting that the Atlantic Council runs on taxpayer funds—State and Defense each give them more than \$1 million per year[\[500\]](#)—he concluded, “Thus, the allegation of a huge (Russian) state-sponsored attempt to influence the media was itself an intelligence op by the U.S. national security state.”

Journalist Yves Smith used sophisticated tools to scan the PropOrNot website, discovering numerous links to the Atlantic Council and Michael Weiss’s InterpreterMag.[\[501\]](#) Weiss had made himself infamous spinning for al Qaeda terrorists during President Obama’s dirty war in Syria from 2011 to 2017.[\[502\]](#)

A small Trotskyite sect, the World Socialist Website, did an in-depth study of the algorithm change on Google’s near-monopoly search engine under what they called “Project Owl,”[\[503\]](#) which almost completely ruined the traffic of these alternative media websites. Having analyzed data from a company called SEMrush, they found that traffic to sites including

WSWS, AlterNet, Global Research, Media Matters, Consortium News, Common Dreams, WikiLeaks, Truth-Out, Counterpunch, the Intercept and Democracy Now! fell all at once between 19 and 67 percent.[\[504\]](#)

None of these sites are pro-Russian in their point of view. Media Matters,[\[505\]](#) Democracy Now!,[\[506\]](#) AlterNet[\[507\]](#) and the Intercept each toed the FBI-CIA line on Russiagate the whole time.[\[508\]](#) The rest are mostly run by leftists who oppose American foreign policy, but are the furthest thing from disseminators of Russian propaganda. Antiwar.com and the Ron Paul Institute for Peace and Prosperity are both well-known outlets run by libertarians in the mold of free-market economist and author Murray N. Rothbard[\[509\]](#) and former Republican Congressman Paul of Texas.[\[510\]](#) The feds and their corporate and think tank allies were simply taking advantage of the Russiagate hoax to not only censor Americans from the internet, but to set the precedent that it is necessary and allowable in the name of national security.

As the great journalist Gareth Porter explained, the “witting or unwitting” foreign asset plot was pushed hard by former CIA Director Brennan for the deliberate purpose of smearing not just Trump, but anyone who went outside the government’s approved narrative, especially independent journalists. It was the same thing the House Un-American Activities Committee did in 1956.[\[511\]](#)

## **Hamilton 68 and the #TwitterFiles**

Former FBI agent Clint Watts, terrorism researcher J.M. Berger and New Knowledge founder Jonathon Morgan ran the “Hamilton 68 Dashboard”

under the auspices of neoconservative Iraq War II ringleader Bill Kristol's Alliance for Securing Democracy. They fraudulently claimed Russian bots were behind the popularity of just about everything and everyone they did not like on the internet,[\[512\]](#) including the Twitter hashtag #ReleaseTheMemo, referring to the Devin Nunes memo showing the FBI had relied on the Steele dossier to get FISA surveillance powers over the innocent Carter Page.[\[513\]](#) They were lying. The accounts monitored by the frauds Watts and Berger were not Russian bots. They were just American Trump supporters or others with seemingly disapproved opinions, including one man identified as a Russian agent solely because he tweeted in the middle of the night, when he was just a nurse working the late shift.[\[514\]](#) Of the accounts on the list who were actually Russian, most were just the staff of RT, nothing covert about it. Like with the January 2017 intelligence report, they were there to pad the numbers. And despite all the Democrats' and media's claims that Nunes was a liar and an agent of the Trump White House, if not the Russians, the Justice Department inspector general's report later proved his memo 100 percent right.[\[515\]](#)

The "Twitter Files," released by the site's new owner, billionaire Elon Musk, to a select group of reporters in 2022, revealed that their former executives knew the Hamilton 68 project was a fraud all along but refused to tell the American public. Yoel Roth, then the head of trust and safety at Twitter, wrote in internal communications that "[t]hese accounts are neither strongly Russian nor strongly bots," and that all the information they had was "[h]ardly evidence of a massive influence campaign." On the contrary, "real people" were being "unilaterally labeled Russian stooges without

evidence or recourse.” Roth said, “I think we need to just call this out on the bullshit it is.” They did not do that. Instead, they acted as a sort of American Stasi, censoring citizens who they knew were not representing any foreign power, and who were in fact exercising their free speech on civic matters as they had every right to do.[\[516\]](#) MSNBC cited this complete fraud at least 279 times.[\[517\]](#) The rest of the media relied on them heavily as well.[\[518\]](#) For believers, it lent major support to their faith that this Russian conspiracy was under every bed.

The people behind Hamilton 68 also claimed Russian bots pushed divisive hashtags about gun control after the massacre at Parkland High School in 2018.[\[519\]](#) There was no truth to that. After the *Times* published an article about alleged Russian exploitation of that tragedy, which claimed Russian bots were trying to “widen the divide and make compromise even more difficult,”[\[520\]](#) the very anti-Trump website BuzzFeed remarked that this was, “not to mince words, total bullshit.”[\[521\]](#)

Even though Hamilton 68 co-founder Watts confessed to journalist Miriam Elder, “I’m not convinced on this bot thing,”[\[522\]](#) which he himself had taken the lead in pushing for years,[\[523\]](#) Twitter’s Roth never told the American people the truth.[\[524\]](#) Journalist Jacob Siegel showed that it was a former counterterrorism public relations specialist and National Security Council staffer named Emily Horne, then an executive at Twitter,[\[525\]](#) who convinced them to allow the hoax to proceed.[\[526\]](#) She later went back to work for the NSC in the Biden administration.[\[527\]](#)

Echoing Porter, Siegel compared the online witch hunt to the hysteria of the second Red Scare of the 1950s, led by Wisconsin Senator Joe

McCarthy, and noted that the main difference was the entire liberal media was leading the mob this time. Just as important: “When proof emerged earlier this year that Hamilton 68 was a high-level hoax perpetrated against the American people, it was met with a great wall of silence in the national press.” Siegel thought this signaled a major turn by American liberals against basic principles of truth and freedom, sacrificed for their fear of Trump and willingness to go to any length to preserve their own power.

[\[528\]](#)

## **The Ministry of Truth**

But it was much worse than just Hamilton 68. As digital rights expert Andrew Lowenthal wrote, the Twitter Files revealed not just a regime of unfair shadowbanning, but “an uncanny alliance of academics, journalists, intelligence operatives, military personnel, government bureaucrats, NGO workers and more,” a “censorship-industrial complex.” Instead of government, it was civil society organizations, major media and Silicon Valley checking and balancing each other while “we find them all working together, cartel-style.” The major “tech companies not only collaborate on content, they gather regularly for ‘private sector engagement’ with the FBI, DOD, DHS, House and Senate Intel Committees, and others.”[\[529\]](#)

Possibly in reaction to Twitter’s initial reluctance to implement all their censorship schemes, or to make sure they were there to implement their next one, the FBI infiltrated dozens of agents into the company, as investigative reporter Michael Shellenberger explained. “As of 2020, there were so many former FBI employees—Bu alumni—working at Twitter that

they had created their own private Slack channel and a crib sheet to onboard new FBI arrivals.”[\[530\]](#)

This massive new American censorship industry[\[531\]](#) was financed by the National Science Foundation and the Pentagon’s Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), and led by nonprofits like the Poynter Institute and supposed experts and “researchers” at universities like Stanford in northern California, the University of Michigan, the University of Washington,[\[532\]](#) Ohio State University and Clemson University.[\[533\]](#) At Stanford’s Cyber Policy Center, it was Obama’s former ambassador to Russia, Michael McFaul, who ran the operation.[\[534\]](#)

As journalist Aaron Maté showed, the Twitter Files revealed that when the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) sent the FBI a list of people they wanted kicked off social media, including journalists they did not like —“suspected by the SBU of spreading fear and disinformation,” including Maté himself—the FBI was happy to forward those demands on to Twitter headquarters. This time, at least, they did the right thing and denied the national police force’s request to censor this great Canadian-American journalist.[\[535\]](#)

Taibbi then developed the story further based on files released in a lawsuit by the state of Missouri[\[536\]](#) and a new report by the House Weaponization of Government Committee,[\[537\]](#) showing how the government of Ukraine was constantly sending requests to Silicon Valley companies, such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube, demanding the censorship of American citizens pushing so-called “anti-Ukraine narratives.” These included everyone from “a New York photographer, to

the manager of a moving company in South Carolina, to a musician in Minnesota, to a professor and an author of children's books, even an Instagram account belonging to the U.S. State Department.”[\[538\]](#)

He also pointed to an interview by journalist Lee Fang of Ilua Vitiuk, the head of the department of Cyber Information Security for the Ukrainian SBU. Vitiuk told Fang, “Once we have a trace or evidence of disinformation campaigns via Facebook or other resources that are from the U.S., we pass this information to the FBI, along with writing directly to Facebook.” They boasted about their role in getting Americans censored. “We asked FBI for support to help us with Meta, to help us with others, and sometimes we get good results with that. We say, ‘Okay, this was the person who was probably Russia’s influence.’” He said he knew he was bearing false witness against innocent people, but did not care. When his people asked him how to determine what is real and what is disinformation, he said he tells them, “Everything that is against our country, consider it a fake, even if it’s not.”[\[539\]](#)

That foreign intelligence agency’s wish is the FBI and Silicon Valley’s command. “It’s bad enough that the U.S. government is partnering with oligopolistic tech companies to engage in censorship of many thousands of accounts,” Taibbi wrote. “It’s absolute madness, however, for the FBI to hand this Promethean fire to foreign governments, and give officials from a government like Ukraine’s de facto authority to remove American voices.”[\[540\]](#)

While Taibbi testified to Congress about what he had learned, and his wife was home alone with their children, IRS agents came to his house,

leaving a note asking him to call them so they could help straighten out a misunderstanding, they said. Though regime loyalists on social media raced to insist this must have been an accident—the IRS was only trying to help him clear up an issue of identity theft![\[541\]](#)—it was revealed that the order to move against him was given on a Saturday, Christmas Eve, an unlikely time to start a new investigation to help a journalist publishing blockbusters about crimes committed by government employees, but in fact the same day Taibbi had released a new story detailing Twitter’s relationship with the FBI and CIA.[\[542\]](#)

Twitter honored “requests” to remove more than 20 million tweets labeled “misinformation” from their site.[\[543\]](#)

It was later shown that the government and associated groups had built much the same relationship with social media giant Facebook and its subsidiary Instagram as well. After he was threatened with jail for contempt of Congress, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg finally turned over a cache of emails showing that the Biden White House itself was intervening to get American citizens’ posts removed, even including memes warning against vaccine dangers. His surgeon general demanded the censorship of the “disinformation dozen,” including the then-most-watched cable TV news host, Tucker Carlson.[\[544\]](#)

In July 2023, federal judge Terry Doughty accused the administration of conducting “the most massive attack against free speech in United States history,” and finally slapped them with an injunction forbidding any more interference against Americans posting on social media. Biden appealed. After an appeals court upheld much of the lower court’s ruling, the



administration appealed it again, making it very likely the Supreme Court heard the case in March 2024, and it did not look good. The newest Supreme Court associate justice, Ketanji Brown Jackson, revealed that she had no understanding whatsoever of the American Bill of Rights or how it is supposed to work. She actually complained that “[m]y biggest concern is that your view has the First Amendment hamstringing the government in significant ways. Some might say that the government actually has a duty to take steps to protect the citizens of this country, and you seem to be suggesting that that duty cannot manifest itself in encouraging or even pressuring platforms to take down harmful information.” She added, “I’m really worried about that because you’ve got the First Amendment operating in an environment of threatening circumstances, from the government’s perspective.”

But that was the whole reason that “declaratory and restrictive clause” was added to the Constitution in the first place: to limit their power to protect the rights of the people.[\[545\]](#) The \$6 trillion U.S. domestic empire does not make “suggestions,” and they were not using their “bully pulpit” here. They sent legions of government agents to go work for these companies to receive and comply with countless “requests” to ruthlessly enforce the “censorship” of the American people, in the words of Meta CEO Zuckerberg, who only in the summer of 2024 admitted how the government fraudulently manipulated him into suppressing the Biden laptop story four years prior.[\[546\]](#) Jackson had to invent an insane hypothetical about government needing to pressure companies to downrank posts in case a new social media fad were to persuade teens to throw

themselves out of windows to their deaths.[\[547\]](#) Even in that case, they could buy ad space like anyone else. What was actually happening was that government agents were lying, and were censoring Americans who were telling the truth.

Journalist Alan MacLeod showed that before it was bought by Tesla and SpaceX CEO Musk, Twitter was overrun by federal cops and spies, particularly from the FBI, including agent Dawn Burton, a former Lockheed Martin executive, who was given the job of “senior director of strategy and operations for legal, public policy, trust and safety” at Twitter. “Karen Walsh went straight from 21 years at the bureau to become director of corporate resilience at the Silicon Valley giant,” MacLeod wrote. “Twitter’s deputy general counsel and vice president of legal, Jim Baker, also spent four years at the FBI between 2014 and 2018, where his resumé notes he rose to the role of senior strategic advisor.”[\[548\]](#)

Straight from his role in helping to frame the president for treason, Baker headed off to Twitter to censor American citizens who were not buying the bureau’s story. Mark Jaroszewski, Douglas Turner and at least six more former FBI agents and supervisors were joined at old Twitter by officers from the CIA and political hacks from the Atlantic Council.[\[549\]](#) The Council itself is famously funded by foreign governments,[\[550\]](#) including at least some important Ukrainian firms, such as the gas giant Burisma, owned by oligarch Mykola Zlochevsky,[\[551\]](#) as well as the Ukrainian World Congress.[\[552\]](#)

In February 2021, Twitter announced they were removing approximately 100 Russian-linked accounts accused of “undermining faith

in the NATO alliance and its stability.”[553] One wonders if they work as hard against critics of the CIS, or more seriously, whether they would apply that same criteria to NATO critics who were not determined to be working for the Russian government.

Facebook, Amazon, Google (including YouTube) and Apple are riddled with American spies and national security state apparatchiks[554]—they helped build it all in the first place.[555] Mostly this is justified in the name of protecting U.S. firms from foreign espionage,[556] but as we have seen, they consider American citizens telling the truth to be spreaders of foreign misinformation and censor them on that basis.

MacLeod also showed that Facebook had partnered with the Atlantic Council and had even hired former NATO spokesman Ben Nimmo to be its “head of intelligence.”[557] TikTok[558] and Reddit[559] both also hired some of these pseudo-spooks from the Atlantic Council.

An anonymous Twitter account, showing his or her work, demonstrated that Meta, Facebook’s parent corporation, had hired more than 160 former members of the U.S. intelligence community since 2018: 14 from the CIA, 26 from the FBI, 16 from the NSA, 29 from DHS, 32 from the State Department and 49 from the Department of Defense.[560] This included the agency’s Aaron Berman, who “built” Facebook’s Misinformation Policy Team.

Journalist Michael Shellenberger pointed out to Congress that “the bar for bringing in military-grade government monitoring and speech-countering techniques has moved from ‘countering terrorism’ to ‘countering extremism’ to countering simple misinformation.” The rules

had become so loose that the only excuse they needed to censor Americans was “simply the assertion that the opinion you expressed on social media is wrong.”[\[561\]](#)

When the federal judge in the Missouri case issued his injunction, he called the whole arrangement “Orwellian,” saying the plaintiffs’ case revealed that the government had “used its power to silence the opposition.”[\[562\]](#)

Journalist Jacob Siegel railed against the new order, condemning the State Department’s Global Engagement Center (GEC) and their “whole-of-society” approach to supposedly countering “disinformation,” as determined by them. Regular Americans had no idea what was happening. In the name of enforcing *lies*, the Washington regime censored people who told the truth in their “war against disinformation,” which was “the great moral crusade of its time.” This was how, Siegel wrote, “CIA officers at Langley came to share a cause with hip young journalists in Brooklyn, progressive nonprofits in D.C., George Soros-funded think tanks in Prague, racial equity consultants, private equity consultants, tech company staffers in Silicon Valley, Ivy League researchers, and failed British royals.”

And “Never Trump Republicans joined forces with the Democratic National Committee.”

It was really as easy as semantics. By simply conflating disagreement with statements and acts of foreign governments, “it justified turning weapons of war against Americans citizens. It turned the public arenas where social and political life take place into surveillance traps and targets for mass psychological operations,” all by unelected officials who had no

legitimate authority to do so and no accountability to the people. Just like the War Party's lies about Iraq justified a "wartime state of exception," so did their lies about Russiagate justify this war on the American people and their most important First Amendment protections.

Drawing a direct line from the military's failed attempt to pacify Afghanistan with their counterinsurgency doctrine (COIN) during the "surge" of 2009–2012[\[563\]](#) to the post-2016 censorship regime, Siegel wrote, "In the wake of the populist upheavals of 2016, leading figures in America's ruling party seized upon the feedback loop of surveillance and control refined through the war on terror as a method for maintaining power inside the United States."

To our rulers in Washington, the American people have no more rights than the Pashtun insurgency in the Helmand province—that is, none. "For the American ruling class, COIN replaced politics as the proper means of dealing with the natives."[\[564\]](#)

Perhaps it is only fitting that such an evil domestic censorship regime would be born to counteract the consequences of President Obama's treasonous support for al Qaeda terrorists in Syria—the rise of the ISIS "Caliphate" of 2013–2017[\[565\]](#)—and then be turned against the American people to protect an absolute hoax such as Russiagate, and to further the most potentially destructive policy imaginable: "cold" or even very hot conflict with the Russian Federation.

Center-left mainstream conspiracy kook Philip Bump from the *Post* says the Twitter Files have been debunked,[\[566\]](#) but his article about Hamilton 68 now has a giant correction at the bottom of the page admitting

that he had easily been defrauded by liars: “A previous version of this article incorrectly stated that the Twitter accounts tracked by the Hamilton 68 online dashboard were believed to be tied to Russian actors. The Hamilton 68 researchers said the accounts echoed Russian propaganda but did not reveal the identities of the Twitter accounts they monitored or who controlled them. The article has been corrected.”[\[567\]](#) They added similar corrections to seven more stories that cited Kristol, Berger and Watt’s lies. [\[568\]](#) They went from claiming Russians were manipulating Americans and the election to admitting they were censoring Americans for saying things a bunch of sheep-dipped feds posing as Twitter employees disagreed with.

## **Roy Moore**

The Hamilton 68 dashboard was created in part by New Knowledge, a company run by Democratic Party-tied activists and former Justice Department and CIA employees posing as “disinformation experts.” They framed Republican Roy Moore of Alabama for being promoted by the Russians, but were simply lying. There were no Russians. New Knowledge’s disgraced CEO, a former State Department employee named Jonathon Morgan,[\[569\]](#) and his team created sock puppet accounts on Twitter and Facebook in a fraud they called “Project Birmingham.”[\[570\]](#) “We orchestrated an elaborate ‘false flag’ operation that planted the idea that the Moore campaign was amplified on social media by a Russian botnet,” an internal New Knowledge report gloated.[\[571\]](#) Further, they claimed credit for driving Democratic turnout, depressing Republican turnout and directing people to write in other candidates instead.[\[572\]](#)

The media ran with it,[573] character assassinating a bad candidate[574] as a traitor to his country. He was defeated by only 1.5 percent of the vote.[575] Before this mini Russiagate hoax, he had been ahead by six to eight points.[576] *Times* reporter Scott Shane was later revealed to have known about the scam all along and remained silent.[577]

New Knowledge was the same group that told the U.S. Senate that Russian internet bots had “reached 126 million people” and had been endlessly cited by credulous supposed journalists like Timberg.[578] They later changed their name to Yonder, so keep an eye out for them to commit further acts of fraud under that name in the future.

Later a whistleblower named Betsy Dupuis, a former New Knowledge employee who worked on Hamilton 68, revealed that as many as 10 former NSA employees came to work for the company and got a contract from the Department of Defense to create a disinformation system similar to what they had done to Roy Moore, “to allow the government to manipulate the perception of their own elections.” She was fired for complaining about what they were doing, which violated their previous promises to her, and says Morgan simply told her, “If we don’t do it, someone else will.”[579]

## **Tulsi Gabbard**

Then New Knowledge turned right around and launched a smear campaign against Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard of Hawaii just a few weeks after she declared her presidential campaign in early 2019. Gabbard, a still-active-duty major in the National Guard, had deployed to the Middle East twice during Iraq War II, once to a medical unit at Balad Air Base just north of

Baghdad. Just a few short years later she was smeared as a traitor by already-proven liars. But Robert Windrem of NBC News claimed to believe it, and ran a big story declaring: “The Russian propaganda machine that tried to influence the 2016 U.S. election is now promoting the presidential aspirations of a controversial Hawaii Democrat who earlier this month declared her intention to run for president in 2020.” That actually just meant Russian news outlets RT and Sputnik had done stories about her and social media accounts we were supposed to believe were “affiliated with known and suspected propaganda operations” were mentioning her. Obviously Russian media found her interesting due to her refusal to support Obama’s dirty war for al Qaeda in Iraq and Syria, since she understood who the “moderate rebels” really were from the war before,[\[580\]](#) and called for prioritizing peace with the major nuclear powers.[\[581\]](#)

Instead of letting the American people decide their opinions based on her arguments, NBC leveled a desperate McCarthyite smear. Windrem even cited former FBI agent Clint Watts, the self-admitted fraud behind Hamilton 68[\[582\]](#) and co-author of the article “The Good and Bad of Ahrar al-Sham”—which carried the subheading: “An al Qaeda–Linked Group Worth Befriending”[\[583\]](#)—to call her a traitor for opposing his support for terrorism. Windrem also cited Renee DiResta from New Knowledge alleging they saw random “chatter” on the 8chan message board saying Gabbard was someone to “amplify.” NBC News and Robert Windrem went with the avowed al Qaeda supporter against the Iraq war veteran. So did the Democratic Party, the liberal media and the Twitter swarm. They did not care what a baseless smear it was. As Glenn Greenwald pointed out,[\[584\]](#)



the *Times* had already exposed New Knowledge's Roy Moore hoax in December 2017,[\[585\]](#) two months before Windrem let them use his name to publish more of their lies.

In October 2019, Hillary Clinton accused Gabbard, as well as perennial Green Party candidate Jill Stein, of being “groomed” by Russia to run as third-party candidates to help Trump win reelection. It was an obvious and shameful lie based on nothing.[\[586\]](#) Clinton was clearly taking revenge against Gabbard for endorsing Sen. Bernie Sanders in the 2016 primary race,[\[587\]](#) and against Stein for splitting the liberal vote in the general election.[\[588\]](#) She did not even have the courage to accuse Gabbard by name, while making the obvious implication, using the pronoun “she,” and when, as CNN noted, none of the other Democratic candidates had ever been said to be favored by Russia. Gabbard challenged Clinton to enter the race and fight like a woman, then tried to sue her over it.[\[589\]](#) When it came to Stein, Hillary falsely claimed that “[s]he’s totally a Russian asset,”[\[590\]](#) which is totally a damned lie. Stein went to a dinner in Moscow hosted by RT, where Putin briefly showed up. Mike Flynn was there too. It did not mean anything. But that is all they had on Stein—she sat at a table.[\[591\]](#) There were also false claims about supposedly all-powerful Russian “bots” that control all anti-Democratic Party thought patterns, as raised by Robert Windrem, who cited New Knowledge. Even then, these very important and influential tweets were still only alleged to be about her, not that she had anything to do with them.[\[592\]](#)

**DeRensis**

Windrem will never live down his shame and humiliation for also blatantly lying and smearing Libertarian Institute editor Hunter DeRensis as some kind of Russian agent promoting Gabbard's candidacy on the Russia Insider website.[\[593\]](#) The first problem with Windrem and NBC's knowing and willful libel was that DeRensis's article was actually written for the prestigious American foreign policy journal *The National Interest*.[\[594\]](#) Russia Insider simply poached and reprinted it, as they themselves noted at the bottom of the piece. Russia Insider also linked back to the original article, though they did not even spell the author's name correctly, facts which Windrem did not notice or wonder about.[\[595\]](#) Also, despite Russia Insider's rewritten headline, the article did not, in fact, promote Gabbard, but was an evenhanded assessment of her foreign policy stances. Moreover, Russia Insider is not a Russian publication. Its founder is an American who has lived in Russia and has pro-Russian partisan takes.[\[596\]](#) He has never been accused by authorities of being a Russian agent.[\[597\]](#) Regardless, DeRensis has never had any association with the man in his life. And finally, the only other evidence presented by Windrem was that a couple American hosts on the Russian-funded radio broadcaster Sputnik said they appreciated Gabbard's approach to Syria, which had no relation to Mr. DeRensis or his article. Robert Windrem is just a washed-up old has-been whose most important pieces in a lifetime of forgettable journalism were nothing but preposterous lies against an active-duty Army National Guard officer, war veteran, member of Congress, presidential candidate and patriot,[\[598\]](#) a sweet little old environmentalist lady[\[599\]](#)—and this author's associate and friend.[\[600\]](#)

## Treason Summit

When Trump met with Putin in Helsinki in July 2018, TV went crazy, calling it the “treason summit.” All the cable stars went through a complete breakdown because Trump said “I don’t see any reason why it would be” true that Russia had intervened in the election, which was a smart take since it was not true. Former CIA Director Brennan, who became a paid expert on MSNBC and repeatedly claimed to have seen secret proof of Trump’s guilt, said Trump’s dismissal of his lies was “nothing short of treasonous.” Brennan then claimed in an essay in the *Times* that “Mr. Trump’s claims of no collusion are, in a word, hogwash. The only questions that remain,” he said, “are whether the collusion that took place constituted criminally liable conspiracy, whether obstruction of justice occurred to cover up any collusion or conspiracy, and how many members of ‘Trump Incorporated’ attempted to defraud the government by laundering and concealing the movement of money into their pockets.”[\[601\]](#)

People with a partisan motive to believe took the former CIA director as the ultimate authoritative source, in place of ever-forthcoming proof. Coverage of the Helsinki meeting was beyond hysterical. Alex Lockie at Business Insider even claimed a soccer ball that Putin had given Trump must be rigged with a bug to pilfer the nation’s secrets.[\[602\]](#) Sen. Lindsey Graham warned Trump not to let it in the White House.[\[603\]](#) The chip was a standard Adidas radio frequency ID chip they put in all their soccer balls to interact with their smartphone app, not a microphone or other kind of spy device.[\[604\]](#)

## **Maria Butina**

The pretty, red-headed Russian gun rights activist, Maria Butina, whom the Justice Department and major media, led by the *Times*,[\[605\]](#) ruthlessly smeared as a so-called honeypot trading sex “for a position with a special interest organization,” was locked in solitary confinement and forced to plead guilty to failing to register as a foreign lobbyist.[\[606\]](#) If that were truly a crime, half the population of Washington, D.C., would be in prison. As investigative reporter James Bamford showed, Butina was completely innocent; her accusers liars.[\[607\]](#) She was not trying to influence American politics. She was seeking Americans’ help fighting against gun control in Russia. U.S. district court judge Tanya S. Chutkan denounced the feds’ lies, saying it took her five minutes to figure out the suggestive text messages on Butina’s phone were simply jokes.[\[608\]](#) Fools let themselves be convinced this was more proof of Russian collusion—Did someone say “sex”?![\[609\]](#)—but the special counsel had refused to prosecute this trumped-up case, leaving it to lesser government lawyers.[\[610\]](#) Even CNN seemed embarrassed for all the attention they had given the story, noting that “many of the sensational details surrounding her case have crumbled. Prosecutors have recanted some allegations and already dropped one charge against her as part of a plea deal.”[\[611\]](#) David Smith at the *Guardian* still called her a spy anyway.[\[612\]](#)

## **Havana Syndrome**

While not directly connected to the Trump-Russia “collusion” narrative, another major old wives’ tale of the Trump years and overall Russiagate scandal was the “Havana Syndrome,” in which U.S. government employees claimed the Russians and Cubans were shooting them with a mind-zapper ray gun, causing all sorts of terrible psychosomatic effects on the poor State Department and CIA victims.[\[613\]](#) Frank Wisner’s Mighty Wurlitzer[\[614\]](#) blasted the message out to the hordes of cable TV news heads. But it turned out the science-fiction blaster fire the diplomats thought they heard was just the mating call of the Indies short-tailed cricket.[\[615\]](#) Microwaves do not work like that.[\[616\]](#) The contagious mass hysteria inside the CIA and State Department on this issue was quite impressive,[\[617\]](#) even for the 21st century, though it was ultimately debunked by the CIA itself and its board of scientific advisers.[\[618\]](#) For TV anchors like MSNBC’s Nicolle Wallace, the former George W. Bush administration spokeswoman, the use of this imaginary Russian ray gun was absolutely terrifying, an “act of war” which signaled a new level of enemy aggression against the United States, and the utter depravity of President Trump, the supposed Russian agent.[\[619\]](#) But it was completely fake.[\[620\]](#)

Michael Weiss—the same kook from the Atlantic Council who spent years shilling for al Qaeda in Syria,[\[621\]](#) then anonymously and falsely accused good journalists of being Russian agents through the ridiculous PropOrNot website—put out a report in 2024 claiming the Havana Syndrome was real after all.[\[622\]](#) He did not explain how the Russians are able to keep track of so many American intelligence agents; perhaps they have a spy at the top of the FBI counterintelligence division again.[\[623\]](#)

While some supposed victims are Russia experts, “others have expertise in different fields, such as the Middle East or Latin America, but were assigned after the takeover of Crimea to sensitive U.S. government roles aimed at countermanning [sic] Russian aggression” after 2014. But how could the Russians know all of that? Their story is that Russia is shooting U.S. government employees with “a strong energy beam,” “nonlethal acoustic weapons,” or “radiofrequency-based directed energy devices.” In other words, they have no idea what they are talking about.

Weiss’s whole article is speculative garbage. The wife of a Justice Department employee in Tbilisi said a GU officer shown to her in a picture three years after the fact “looks like the man” she saw in the street after she got a headache one day. The magic ray gun he was not holding—and that they cannot describe—can do anything, apparently, including the ability to cause “chronic headaches, vertigo, tinnitus, insomnia, nausea, lasting psychophysiological impairment, and, in some cases, blindness or hearing loss.” And what made them think someone was using a ray gun on them? “Many victims have said they were . . . stricken with an intense pain or pressure in their skull . . . usually localized to one side of the head, as if they were caught in a beam of concentrated energy.”

We are supposed to believe the Indians and Chinese had no problem with the Russians zapping American officials on their soil. They also claimed a senior Trump official was blasted “right outside the Eisenhower Executive Building” in Washington just after the 2020 election. Maybe they were punishing a top-secret agent for not rigging the election well enough. The supposed Russian spy who looks like the guy seen by the wife of the

Department of Justice employee may have had his phone turned off—and so could have gone to Tbilisi if you use your imagination. Their big story goes on like that, but includes nothing more substantial than “could have easily boarded flights to and from Frankfurt using fictitious identities,” “[a]ssuming this is true,” “I don’t believe in coincidences” and so on.[\[624\]](#)

## **Mockingbird**

Besides the fake scandals investigated by the feds, there were too many embellished stories in the media along the same lines to even keep up with. There was a huge *Post* story about the Russian plot to hack Vermont’s power grid in the dead of winter,[\[625\]](#) thus “sparking a wave of fear,” as *Forbes* put it.[\[626\]](#) To their partial credit, three days later the *Post* admitted this was complete nonsense with no basis in factual reality.[\[627\]](#) What actually happened? Well, allegedly someone—no one knows who—sent an attempted phishing email to an employee’s private laptop, which had nothing to do with any other thing in the world, including the electric grid and the intelligence services of the Russian Federation.[\[628\]](#) But they still got their mini-Y2K computer panic out of it at the turn of 2017, just weeks before Trump was sworn in, which was very exciting and scary for people who signed up to take the ride.[\[629\]](#) Luckily no one froze.

The same day CNN broke the big news about Comey’s briefing to Trump on the dossier, numerous outlets claimed C-SPAN TV was hacked by the Russian news channel RT.[\[630\]](#) This was obviously just an error on C-SPAN’s part that was not the result of any outside interference, as they later conceded.[\[631\]](#) It sounds ridiculous, and it is. But for national

government employee types in Washington, D.C., stories like this accumulated in their minds like rumors of Iraqi chemical weapons. They were terrified.[\[632\]](#)

We cannot omit the Russians' alleged support for the Black Lives Matter movement to stir up those otherwise perfectly contented survivors of state violence[\[633\]](#)—and future big-money grifters[\[634\]](#)—in order to “sow division,” as they liked to claim when they had to make up a motive for supposed interference that would seem to benefit the Democrats.[\[635\]](#) The *Post* warned that the Russians were “encouraging distrust in black communities,” while the paper's authors and editors were encouraging other Americans to distrust black protesters for being Russian puppets.[\[636\]](#) Law professor William J. Aceves embellished the tale so far that he declared the Russians had “tried to start a race war in the United States.”[\[637\]](#)

Another widely hyped Russiagate story[\[638\]](#) was about a website called peacedata.net, which was accused of being a Russian propaganda front. They had recruited a few American writers and had posted articles of typical leftist antiwar fare, including pieces about intervention in Somalia and Yemen, but these had been viewed essentially by no one.[\[639\]](#) Before the story broke, no one in the antiwar movement had ever heard of it. The Facebook page promoting the site had fewer than 200 “likes.” As the Grayzone pointed out, there was no reason to believe this was a legitimate story at all. No evidence was ever cited. It could have just as easily been a false-flag dirty trick like what New Knowledge did to Roy Moore.[\[640\]](#)

Remember when Trump told the Russians that the Israelis had a spy inside ISIS? The *Post* ran that on the front page, burning the source to



falsely claim the president had shared sensitive intelligence with an enemy[641] when there was no reason to believe the secret would have been revealed by the Russians. It was America's allies Saudi Arabia[642] and Turkey[643] who supported ISIS. Russia was bombing them,[644] and being bombed by them right back.[645] The *Post* and assorted parrots made it seem as though Trump was collaborating with an enemy instead of sharing some laughs about a success against a common foe—a secret the Russians had no incentive to leak. Perhaps he should have followed better operational security, but he did not betray anyone, the *Post* did.

CNN claimed that Trump aide Anthony Scaramucci was involved in a corrupt Russian hedge fund under investigation by Congress and implied the strong possibility he also was helping to handle Trump for the Russian regime.[646] They were beaten down so badly on that one that reporter Thomas Frank, editor Eric Lichtblau and supervisor Lex Harris were all forced to resign from CNN.[647]

MSNBC's Rachel Maddow and the Democrats screamed and cried over accusations about Russia's hacking of all the state party voter rolls.[648] This was an obvious fraud[649] long before they admitted it.[650] One should always doubt when the reports originate with the Department of Homeland Security.[651] They just want some attention.[652]

Then there was the Russian GU's alleged intervention in Brexit[653]—the British vote to leave the European Union in 2016—and in French, German and EU parliamentary and other elections throughout Europe,[654] claims which were debunked by their own intelligence agencies.[655] George Soros's Open Society Foundation, however, did donate at least

\$200,000 to the “Yes” campaign in the Dutch consultative referendum on the Ukrainian EU association agreement that year.[\[656\]](#) When they lost, the *Times* claimed the Russians had somehow brainwashed the Dutch into their decision,[\[657\]](#) but there was nothing to it. The individuals involved in supposedly advocating pro-Russia positions were not shown to be agents of the Russian government or to have had any notable effect on the vote. In fact, the public had been against the initiative by two-to-one from the start.[\[658\]](#)

Then-British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson admitted in March 2017, “We have no evidence the Russians are actually involved in trying to undermine our democratic processes at the moment. We don’t actually have that evidence. But what we do have is plenty of evidence that the Russians are capable of doing that.”[\[659\]](#)

The often-wrong reporter Luke Harding claimed in *Newsweek* that Russia was blackmailing Trump over debts to Deutsche Bank.[\[660\]](#) There was no substance to these claims, as journalist David Enrich explained in the *Times*.[\[661\]](#)

Putin’s influence was said to explain Trump’s choice of Exxon CEO Rex Tillerson for his first secretary of state.[\[662\]](#) The *Post* found dangerous links, such as “Tillerson and [Igor] Sechin sign the first in a series of deals as part of a landmark ‘Strategic Cooperation Agreement’ that involved drilling in the Russian Arctic and the Black Sea. The agreements led to Tillerson having several direct interactions with then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.” Interactions! They found 10 points of contact—all of them acting in his official capacity as chief of Exxon or secretary of state, without

any particular negative connotation to any of them.[\[663\]](#) Imagine supposed journalists being so caught up in this fad that they believed the CEO of the most successful and influential multinational corporation in American and even world history—the Rockefeller family’s flagship Standard Oil of New Jersey—ExxonMobil,[\[664\]](#) and its leaders were agents of Vladimir Putin, rather than the closest private partners to the American empire in the world for more than 100 years.[\[665\]](#)

Tillerson was an establishment choice, named to bolster confidence in Trump’s new administration, much like Trump’s center-right Vice President Mike Pence and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, who was hard-edged, but well-known and respected in Washington. But to the Russiagate truthers, it was just another brick in the wall. They might have said the same thing if he hired Hillary Clinton herself by that point.

Later, when Trump fired Tillerson, they imagined that was on behalf of Russia as well.[\[666\]](#)

Twitter liberals are still very concerned that Republican Party strategist Jesse Benton was convicted of funneling money from a Russian national into the 2016 Trump campaign. The only problem with the red alert is that the amount donated was only \$25,000, no one from the Trump campaign knew anything about it and the Russian in question, Roman Vasilenko, is just some nobody, criminal pyramid schemer who wanted his picture taken with Trump.[\[667\]](#) The guy could have been from anywhere in the world. This story in no way bolstered the Clinton campaign’s, spies’ or national police’s lies about the GU plot to overthrow American democracy or even bolster Trump’s campaign.[\[668\]](#)

A Ukrainian-American[\[669\]](#) businessman, Yuri Vanetik, also liked to get his picture taken with Republicans and take part in their politics.[\[670\]](#) McClatchy Newspapers ran a four-part series about the guy full of terrible truths like he knew Paul Manafort and Rep. Dana Rohrabacher.[\[671\]](#)

They repeatedly called him a “Soviet émigré,” since he moved here as a young boy in 1976, 42 years prior, to make him sound like a Russian enemy rather than a Ukrainian friend. Reporters Kevin G. Hall, Ben Wieder, Greg Gordon and Peter Stone’s[\[672\]](#) editor apparently forced them to admit there was “no evidence that Vanetik is under investigation for election issues, or that he factors into the ongoing probes of possible collusion between Russia and Trump campaign officials.” (Angela Hart from the *Sacramento Bee* got in on the baseless attacks as well.)[\[673\]](#) But they still went on pretending to have found a scandal: Vanetik is the connection between Rep. Rohrabacher and . . . himself. Okay, the congressman stood accused of knowing Julian Assange, so . . . nothing, and there was no connection to Vanetik there anyway. He knew Rinat Akhmetshin, a lobbyist with “links to Russian intelligence”—in other words, Akhmetshin had been a counterintelligence officer in the Red Army that ceased to exist 30 years earlier—who was present for Trump Tower New York meeting, but did and delivered nothing there. But that did not have anything to do with Vanetik either.[\[674\]](#)

Well, Vanetik’s name may have been accidentally included as part of a GOP Public Action Committee (PAC) that got in some other trouble when a British journalist pretended to donate Chinese money to it, but he did not work with the PAC at all, and had nothing to do with that. Can you believe

the guy once embellished that he was valedictorian at Berkeley? And his father owed the IRS money—\$5,000—and took care of it three decades ago. And then the kicker: Vanetik was slightly overdue registering as a foreign lobbyist representing Ukrainian politician Serhiy Rybalka. And is Rybalka a Russian spy? No, he is a Western Ukrainian nationalist from the Radical Party and supporter of the post-Maidan regime. They claimed Vanetik had “run-ins with the law,” implying that he was a convicted, or even an accused criminal, when what they really meant was that he had been sued by a businessman over a deal that had fallen through a decade before—and that businessman had donated to Trump and was later suspected of influence peddling. It was just another red herring. The worst thing they actually accused him of was raising money for John McCain. [675] He also raised money for Jeb Bush and Marco Rubio and donated to Hillary Clinton. [676]

In a follow-up, in which they falsely identified their subject as a “Russian émigré,” McClatchy said Vanetik had registered to lobby for the Ukrainian Agrarian Party. And are they a front for the Kremlin? No, they are a center-right party backed by some of the same oligarchs who supported President Poroshenko. [677] He had an overdue credit card bill. And he registered his company in Wyoming, which is also something Russians do sometimes. “It is impossible to know what other purpose, if any, [the company] served,” because after all, companies could be “used for a wide array of nefarious purposes, including tax evasion and money laundering,” Hall ominously intoned, in place of any substantive accusation. [678]

In another follow-up, they again fudged Vanetik's identity from Ukrainian-American to "Soviet émigré," then outright falsely to "Russian émigré," obviously because that sounds more incriminating than pointing out the man's interests were aligned with Kiev, or at least certainly were not with Moscow, which he was not associated with in any way. It was a desperate, substanceless smear.[\[679\]](#)

As for his connection to Manafort? Vanetik later wrote in the *Journal*, "I met Mr. Manafort at a restaurant in New York and posted a thumbs-up photo with him on Instagram. That was our only contact." Here was Hall's big nut-graph on that point: "It's unclear whether Vanetik and Manafort have done business together; both have represented prominent Ukrainian clients." The entire series might have been summed up in one headline: California man with Russian-sounding name has met some Republicans. Vanetik hired a lawyer to threaten McClatchy to add corrections.[\[680\]](#) He should own it by the time they are done.[\[681\]](#)

All of these accusations—quite literally 533,000 news stories' worth, according to former *Times* reporter Jeff Gerth in his years-long examination of the scandal for the *Columbia Journalism Review*[\[682\]](#)—were eventually walked back or abandoned. Many of the intelligence officials involved in the hoax went straight into the media to help enforce its narratives.[\[683\]](#) In a couple of tweets, Taibbi listed just a few of the former spies and federal police who have gotten jobs as paid talking heads on cable TV news in this era, virtually all of whom championed the Russiagate hoax:

John Brennan, James Clapper, Chuck Rosenberg, Michael Hayden, Frank Figliuzzi, Fran Townsend, Stephen Hall,

Samantha Vinograd, Andrew McCabe, Josh Campbell, Asha Rangappa, Phil Mudd, James Gagliano, Jeremy Bash, Susan Hennessey, Ned Price, Rick Francona . . . Michael Morell, John McLaughlin, John Sipher, Thomas Bossert, Clint Watts, James Baker, Mike Baker, Daniel Hoffman, Susan Rice, Ben Rhodes, David Preiss, Evelyn Farkas, Tony Blinken, Mike Rogers, “Alex Finley,” Malcolm Nance.[\[684\]](#)

In another case, BuzzFeed breathlessly[\[685\]](#) reported that wire transfers revealed a disbursement of \$30,000 from Russia to its American Embassy “to finance election campaign of 2016.”[\[686\]](#) This was obviously a reference to the provision of ballots for Russian citizens in the United States to vote absentee in the upcoming Russian elections that September, as explained even by Russiagate promoter Philip Bump in the *Post*.[\[687\]](#) But it was a big headline for a day or two.

“[H]ave Democrats assumed too much in their zeal to bring Mr. Trump down? Have journalists connected too many dots that do not really add up?” the *Times*’s Peter Baker finally asked in March 2019, after it was all over.[\[688\]](#)

## **Jerking Your Chain**

Former FBI Director Mueller could have made it known from the very beginning of his appointment as special counsel in May 2017 that their investigation was not showing the president of the United States was guilty of treason or in league with the Kremlin to destroy our democracy. Again,

as Bob Woodward explained in his 2018 book, *Fear*, Trump told his lawyer to give Mueller’s team every scrap of paper from the 2016 campaign—no problem, not a thing to hide in the world.[\[689\]](#) Just as Woodward understood and the Department of Justice must have known, this meant that from the very beginning there was nothing there to find. They could have clarified that most important point in a reasonable amount of time after that.

In the summer of 2017, just six months into Trump’s first term, former DNI Clapper admitted to Congress—in secret—that “I never saw any direct empirical evidence that the Trump campaign or someone in it was plotting/conspiring with the Russians to meddle with the election.”[\[690\]](#) Obama-era officials like former Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates,[\[691\]](#) Secretary of State Susan Rice,[\[692\]](#) Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes[\[693\]](#) and UN Ambassador Samantha Power[\[694\]](#) all admitted the same in closed congressional intelligence committee hearings.

But for another two years, the public was subject to 1,000 leaked lies from the spies, congressmen[\[695\]](#) and federal cops trying to make us believe it was all true. When BuzzFeed somehow crossed the line by falsely claiming that Trump had instructed his lawyer to lie to Congress,[\[696\]](#) Mueller quickly put out a press release denying it was true.[\[697\]](#) But whether the sitting chief executive of the U.S. government and commander in chief of its military forces was guilty of High Treason, of past and current blackmailed subordination to and “collusion” with the most potentially lethal foreign power on the planet? Sorry, you will just have to wait and wonder and watch hysterical TV news ladies speculate wildly among themselves for a couple more years until we get back to you.



Meanwhile, Mueller knew the truth all along, as admitted in his final report. After Trump won the election, the Russians “appeared not to have preexisting contacts and struggled to connect with senior officials around the President-Elect.” When Trump’s son-in-law Jared Kushner needed to authenticate a congratulatory note from Putin, he had to contact Dimitri Simes from the Center for the National Interest to ask him the Russian ambassador’s name.[\[698\]](#)

## **Obstruction**

The president’s shameless political enemies took the Mueller report’s admission of a total lack of evidence and failure to demonstrate any plot between Trump and Russia and instead launched a public relations campaign to demand his impeachment on charges that he had obstructed justice, for which Mueller had explicitly refused to exonerate him. Notably, in the American system, accused criminals are supposed to be presumed innocent, and it is up to the state to prove charges beyond a reasonable doubt. “Failure to exonerate” is not a thing. Mueller was still acting not as any objective agent of the law, but as a criminal co-conspirator in a frame-up job, just like the hundreds of innocent American Muslims he entrapped on bogus terrorism charges to scare people into supporting W. Bush’s aggressive Middle East wars.[\[699\]](#) The case for obstruction was a smokescreen for a total lack of charges related to Russiagate. It is hardly worth mentioning, other than the problem of the brazen abuse of power by state agents against their own elected leader.

The fact is, as ham-handed as Trump was in the few meager half-steps he took—he did not fire the special counsel or anything close to it—there was no justice for him to obstruct. Mueller’s investigation amounted to nothing but a half-assed coup attempt against the president by the FBI, CIA, Department of Justice and their media partisans on behalf of Hillary Clinton, the Democrats and the new Cold War with Russia, which they were determined to prevent Trump from thwarting.

If he had been wise, Trump would have obstructed the investigation entirely by firing Mueller and the top 100 people at Justice, FBI and CIA—but then declassified everything the police and intelligence agencies had on him and sent copies by the truckload to his enemies in Congress and at the *Post*, the *Times* and NPR, as well as interested friends at Fox News, the *Journal*, the *Federalist*, the *Daily Caller* and so on. We know what the result would have been. They would have found nothing, because there was nothing to find. John Brennan, Hillary Clinton, James Comey and their agents made it all up.

Perhaps upon retaking the office, Trump will declassify the most important documents in this case, so that the public can finally see the full truth behind this fraud.

## **Even the Senate Republicans**

An often-repeated talking point of national security state partisans during this time was that even the Republican-controlled Senate Intelligence Committee report agreed the Russiagate story was all true.[\[700\]](#) So it did.[\[701\]](#) But there was no evidence in it or even an indication of anything new

to investigate. The report simply claimed the intelligence agencies said it was true and that was how they knew. It was no more confirmation than consensus among opinion-havers on daytime TV.

## 2020

And last but not least, let us not forget that in February 2020, in the heat of the primary election season, Shelby Pierson, the “election threats executive” for the director of national intelligence, lied to Congress, the press and the American people that the Russians were attempting to intervene in the electoral process on behalf of then-President Trump and Democratic Party challenger Bernie Sanders.[\[702\]](#) Fiona Hill popped up to tell CBS it sounded true to her.[\[703\]](#) They did not even attempt to prove it. That did not matter. It was a media hit.[\[704\]](#)

Just a few days later they walked back both stories. A “senior national security official” corrected CNN: “The intelligence doesn’t say that. A more reasonable interpretation of the intelligence is not that they have a preference, it’s a step short of that. It’s more that they understand the President is someone they can work with, he’s a dealmaker.”

It was just another empty story. The intelligence said Russia thought Trump was someone they could deal with, not someone they had a deal with, and not someone they were doing anything at all to help in the upcoming election. Like always, the accusation did not have to be true. The headline was the weapon. The retraction meant nothing.

As far as Sen. Sanders goes, even if his previous support for Russiagate conspiracism about Trump[\[705\]](#) did not mean he deserved to be

smeared with the same lies, it did apparently help prepare the senator to accept the propaganda line against himself, denouncing Russia for trying to help his own campaign and absurdly bolstering the alleged legitimacy of the story at his own expense.[\[706\]](#) For his part, President Trump said he had never been briefed on any Russian effort to help Sanders.[\[707\]](#)

## **Uranium One**

Much of the hoax was just a case of the Democrats accusing their enemies of that which they themselves are guilty. It was Bill and Hillary Clinton who were compromised by the Russians. They had bribed the former president with speaking fees and the former secretary of state with massive donations to her foundation in exchange for her State Department authorizing a Russian firm to buy American uranium mines, amounting to one-fifth of the U.S. supply.[\[708\]](#) The *Times* published a series on it in the spring of 2015.[\[709\]](#) They wrote that as a Russian firm bought the American company Uranium One, they donated three separate times to the Clinton Foundation, totaling \$2.35 million, payments they did not disclose to the government like in the deal the then-secretary had made with the Obama administration. On top of that, as soon as the Russian company announced their intention to buy Uranium One, a bank connected to the deal paid former President Clinton half a million dollars to give a speech in Moscow.[\[710\]](#)

It was entertaining to read the *Post* insist, even as they revealed the total to be much higher, “Individuals related to Uranium One and UrAsia . . . donated to the Clinton Foundation, totaling about \$145 million,

[but] these were donations made to the Clinton Foundation, not directly to the Clintons.”[\[711\]](#) Democratic spokespeople gloated that Republican congressmen had overstated witness claims of a clear quid pro quo,[\[712\]](#) but neither a secret deal nor direct influence by the secretary over the approval process is necessary for what they did to be wrong.

The Russians and associated business partners knew who to pay and the government officials on the approval board must have known that the secretary wanted the deal authorized. Though the very Obama administration-friendly *Times* reported it, the “fact-checkers” would have us believe no influence was bought with all that money. Former President Bill Clinton just likes to travel to Kazakhstan to finalize mining deals with his businessman friends solely due to his own charitable instincts, they say. He would never do such a thing if there were something in it for himself or his family, and certainly not because he was paid for one speech more than what the average American man makes in 10 years.[\[713\]](#) Nor would the nearly-merely \$150 million donated to the Clinton Foundation by companies associated with the deal have any effect on Mrs. Clinton or her underlings’ decisions at the State Department.[\[714\]](#) This is not some third-world dictatorship.

On the other hand, think of it this way: what if this was the one Russiagate story about Trump that was true? He traveled to Kazakhstan with the CEO of America’s most important uranium mining company to finalize its sale to the Russians, and then on to Moscow—where he gave a \$500,000 speech to a bank with direct ties to the Russian firm buying it—all while Secretary of State Melania Trump’s department handled the

license for the sale and her foundation cashed checks for more than \$140 million from both the company being sold and the one buying it.

It sounds pretty bad if you put it like that.

Special Counsel Durham later complained that the FBI had an entirely different and much softer approach to the Clintons than their opponent. In one case, when a foreigner donated to the Clinton Foundation, the FBI gave them a defensive briefing. In another, an informant made a donation “as a precursor” to a possible larger contribution on behalf of a foreign entity, but the bureau shut down the investigation rather than see how far it would go. Most importantly, when it came to the Clinton Foundation, “both senior FBI and Department officials placed restrictions on how those matters were to be handled such that essentially no investigative activities occurred for months leading up to the election.”[\[715\]](#)

There is every reason to suspect this was why Clinton’s team had deleted more than 30,000 emails from her private server. She claimed they were personal emails with Bill,[\[716\]](#) but he has stated he has only used email twice in his life.[\[717\]](#) More likely, they revealed corruption—direct and indirect influence peddling from the office of the secretary of state.

Their scam really worked, too. When the Trump team tried to cite the uranium scandal, the typical reaction was that he was the one guilty of crooked deals with Russians, and was trying to distract from it by pointing at her.[\[718\]](#)

## **Lying About Russia**

Of course, besides the political assassination of Trump, there was the built-in smear of the Russians concerning their intentions and actions against the United States. Congress passed, and Obama and Trump both signed and implemented, new sanctions and threats against Russia over the hoax, massively ratcheting up of tension in 2016–2019 and beyond.[\[719\]](#)

The *Times* later reported that due to their Russiagate hoax, Congress had voted to strip the president of his authority to lift what they called “Fried’s and Nuland’s sanctions.” They wrote, “In the words of one Russia hand, the congressional bill makes the United States-Russia confrontation ‘structural.’ ‘The president is like a captain holding a wheel that isn’t attached to anything.’”[\[720\]](#)

The Russian coup d’état against Hillary Clinton that never happened was routinely compared to, and apparently seriously considered by many to be, an act of war against the United States, a dastardly attack on American democracy itself. It was terrifying, like the 1980s miniseries *Amerika* (with a ‘k’) where the Soviets take over,[\[721\]](#) except made for center-left, neo-liberal, NPR News types. And it made the U.S. relationship with Russia that much worse.

## **Reining Him In**

“Reining in Trump”[\[722\]](#) worked in spades. He simply did not have the intelligence, the allies or the strength to stand up to the national security state’s onslaught. Desperate to prove he was not a traitor to the foreign policy establishment, Trump betrayed the American people and his promise to end the recent era of enmity and work things out with Russia.

The hawks had outflanked Trump from the very beginning. In March 2017, just weeks after he was sworn in, the White House announced he was backing off plans to work with Russia on the war against ISIS in Syria “and other national security matters,” the Associated Press reported. “[T]he reconsideration of a central tenet of his foreign policy underscores the growing political risks in forging closer relations with Russia, as long as the FBI investigates his campaign associates’ connections to Moscow and congressional committees step up their inquiries into Russia’s meddling in the 2016 election.” This was due in large part to the influence of Defense Secretary Gen. James Mattis and National Security Advisor Gen. H.R. McMaster, and the flack Trump had received over the fake scandal drummed up against Gen. Flynn. “It would be unpopular for a politician to make a deal,” Trump told reporters. “It would be much easier for me to be so tough—the tougher I am on Russia, the better.”[\[723\]](#)

He oversaw the addition of Montenegro to NATO in 2017[\[724\]](#) and Northern Macedonia in 2020[\[725\]](#)—and frankly, credibly denied any knowledge of doing so to TV host Tucker Carlson.[\[726\]](#) Trump sent more American troops and equipment to Poland[\[727\]](#) and the Baltics,[\[728\]](#) sponsored an attempted color-coded revolution in Belarus and, just like Obama, went ahead with arms sales to Ukraine’s Banderist-infested armed forces by the end of his first year in office. These included sniper rifles, [\[729\]](#) armed boats,[\[730\]](#) RPGs and Javelin anti-tank missiles.[\[731\]](#) He also authorized hundreds of millions of dollars in nonlethal equipment, such as Humvees, night vision goggles, radars and armor, along with training and joint military exercises. This only incentivized more violence after the



Minsk II peace deal had already been signed two years before he was sworn in.<sup>[732]</sup> Trump also imposed massive new sanctions on Russia in August 2017. As reporter John Hudson noted, this was likely intended to “enrage” the Russians and endanger the president’s plans to repair relations. He also noted that “[k]ey U.S. allies including Germany oppose the decision out of concern that it could trigger Russia to step up its military intervention in Ukraine in ways that spiral out of control.” The president was a pushover. Once he said he wanted peace, they told him that was what the weapons were for: not killing people, just deterring Russian escalation. Besides, if he did not go along with the plan, “Democrats would likely seize on the move as evidence of Trump’s friendliness with Russia.”<sup>[733]</sup>

By the end of 2017, Trump gave in and sent his first shipment of Javelin missiles to Ukraine. “The move is likely to become another sore point between Washington and Moscow, as President Donald Trump contends with ongoing questions about whether he’s too hesitant to confront the Kremlin,” the AP noted. They added, “Both the Obama administration and the Trump administration had expressed concerns in the past that injecting more weapons into the conflict was unlikely to resolve it, especially considering that Russia is well-equipped to respond to any Ukrainian escalation with an even stronger escalation of its own.” The outlet also said, “Sending lethal weapons to Ukraine also creates the troubling possibility that American arms could kill Russian soldiers, a situation that could thrust the two nuclear-armed nations closer to direct confrontation.”<sup>[734]</sup>

In the big *Times* piece on the CIA in Ukraine in the years between the coup and Russia's "full-scale invasion," they described how Trump allowed his staff to walk all over him.[\[735\]](#) "Mr. Trump had put Russia hawks in key positions, including Mike Pompeo as CIA director and John Bolton as [his second] national security adviser," the paper wrote. "They visited Kyiv to underline their full support for the secret partnership, which expanded to include more specialized training programs and the building of additional secret bases."[\[736\]](#)

The struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He was Big Brother.

This is the deadly legacy of the Russiagate hoax invented by the Democrats, the FBI and the CIA. Millions of Americans, caught up in these lies, came to believe their country had quite literally been conquered by the Russians in a way the Communists only ever could in the movies: through a successful coup they had installed a Manchurian Candidate, a compromised white-supremacist agent of the Kremlin in the Oval Office, with his finger on the big red button and everything. Narratives about politicians and statesmen fighting over regional power and influence gave way to cartoonish morality plays full of heroes and villains and black-and-white perceptions about Russia taken from appraisals of Nazi Germany back in the 1940s that do not apply to Russia today. It all helped to prevent President Trump from normalizing relations with Russia and possibly finding a way to end the war in the Donbas. You cannot negotiate with Evil, as Dick Cheney might say.

They were also able to avoid having to reckon with the fact that in one year the American people had rejected the leadership of both President George W. Bush's brother Jeb and President Bill Clinton's wife and President Barack Obama's first secretary of state Hillary and the previous generation of failed leadership their families represented to the American people after eight failed wars[\[737\]](#) and the worst financial disaster since the 1930s[\[738\]](#) in favor of a famous TV game show host and businessman[\[739\]](#) with no political experience or collection of major interest groups behind him. No, they told themselves, they had been doing a great job. Vladimir Putin had tricked the people into not liking them anymore.[\[740\]](#)

# The Skripals

## Assassination Times

On March 4, 2018, the Russian government allegedly tried to assassinate a former double agent named Sergei Skripal and his daughter Julia in Salisbury, England, with a “military grade nerve agent” known as “Novichok” that had been smeared on the father’s home’s front doorknob. [\[741\]](#) Found unconscious on a park bench, they were both rushed to the hospital. They both survived [\[742\]](#) after being put into induced comas. [\[743\]](#) A police officer and two other unrelated civilians were said to have also been sickened. Four months later, a woman named Dawn Sturgess died after spraying herself with what she thought was perfume from a discarded bottle in which British authorities said the poison was transported. Her boyfriend Charlie Rowley had found it in a charity bin and given it to her as a gift. Rowley was also sickened, but survived. [\[744\]](#)

## Porton Down

Citing the conclusion by the UK’s own chemical weapons laboratory, Porton Down, that the Skripals were poisoned by a substance “of a type developed by Russia,” British Prime Minister Theresa May quickly accused the Russian Federation and kicked 23 of their diplomats out of the country in response. [\[745\]](#) This was despite the fact that the two Russian suspects

later charged in the case, Alexander Petrov and Ruslan Boshirov, were not identified until months later, after the death of Sturgess.[\[746\]](#)

## **Screwy Story**

The motive was supposed to simply have been revenge for Skripal's treason. He had been convicted for giving the identities of Russian intelligence agents in Europe to MI6. But the former spy had been living in the open in England for almost a decade after having been traded in a prisoner swap.[\[747\]](#) Typically, spies who have been traded in prisoner exchanges are not targeted for assassination. That would ruin the potential for further exchanges.[\[748\]](#)

The rest of the story does not seem to make much sense either. The Novichok poisons, developed by Soviet scientists in the 1970s and '80s, are nerve agents said to be far more dangerous than sarin, VX or tabun.[\[749\]](#) It certainly seems strange that this substance, which is said to be among the deadliest known to man in the tiniest amounts, only affected the victims at least three hours[\[750\]](#) after their alleged exposure and after they hung around, fed some ducks and ate lunch, with a photo showing them in obvious good health and spirits. They then went to the pub and the park before finally becoming ill. The chemical weapon supposedly kicked in against both the father and daughter just as they sat down on a bench. The chemical agent did not kill the target, his daughter, or the many first responders who would have been exposed. A nurse, one of the first on the scene, and who treated the younger Skripal for nearly half an hour, told the BBC she had no symptoms at all.[\[751\]](#) However, the OPCW reported that

“the chemical substance found was of high purity, persistent and resistant to weather conditions.”[\[752\]](#) But they did not even get their samples until weeks later, on March 21.[\[753\]](#)

“Up to 500 people who visited the pub or the restaurant at the same time were told to wash their clothes and possessions” in case they had any deadly nerve agent on them, reported the BBC.[\[754\]](#) Rowley apparently did not call an ambulance for himself until five hours after he had called one for Sturgess.[\[755\]](#) He later insisted the package had been unopened, sealed in plastic, and so could not have been the origin of the poison in the Skripal case.[\[756\]](#)

## **Nick Bailey**

On the other hand, it apparently was something, since some of them were in fact sickened and hospitalized, including one of the cops, Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, though he did not feel sick for hours, and even then was sent home from the hospital after a quick check.[\[757\]](#) The OPCW confirmed the UK’s claims about which “toxic chemical” was in the victims’ blood samples, though they did not name it in their public report summary.[\[758\]](#)

While Skripal was reported to be close to a man named Pablo Miller—who worked for the notorious dossier fabricator and former MI6 spy Christopher Steele at his firm Orbis Business Intelligence—there was no indication he was involved in its sourcing or production, nor would that have been a motive for Russia to attempt to kill him, as the British *Telegraph* had speculated, especially since the dossier was a hoax anyway.

[\[759\]](#) Four days later, after Bailey had been identified in the media, authorities still had apparently not determined that Skripal had been exposed from the doorknob and were still speculating that his work for Orbis may have gotten him killed.[\[760\]](#)

But when the London *Times* ran claims that 40 people required treatment, a National Health Service (NHS) doctor wrote to correct them. While his language was not perfectly clear—he may or may not have been implying the two Skripals and the policeman were affected, though it seems most likely not—but he definitely said no one else was: “no patients have experienced symptoms of nerve agent poisoning in Salisbury and there have only been ever been three patients with significant poisoning.”[\[761\]](#)

## **Dorks**

The Brits charged the previously mentioned Petrov and Boshirov, claiming they were agents of the Russian military intelligence unit GU and saying they traced the men through close-circuit video, “near but not at, Mr. Skripal’s house,” according to the *New York Times*.[\[762\]](#) The men supposedly flew straight to England and back from Russia together, used the same team of two to surveil the location, drew attention to themselves with a loud party in their hotel room the night before the assassination,[\[763\]](#) and after having planted the poison, walked around town, readily identifiable by scores of surveillance cameras.[\[764\]](#)

The two eventually gave an interview to Russian government-sponsored news channel RT. The strange story they told of their attempted tourism in England may not have been convincing,[\[765\]](#) but the two may

very well have established how doubtful it was that they were highly trained military officers and assassins. They came across as a couple of nobodies who were legitimately terrified to have been falsely implicated in such a scheme.[\[766\]](#)

If it was a Russian GU operation, the attempt was certainly a terrible diplomatic and public relations move for seemingly very little return. British officials speculated to *Newsweek* that perhaps some rogue agents had done the deed since it made no sense for Putin to commit such an act, just as his country was preparing to host the FIFA World Cup soccer tournament.[\[767\]](#)

## **Easy Chemistry**

As far as the poison's origins, as conceded by the *Wall Street Journal*, the chemical structure of this class of weapon had been published in a book by a former Soviet scientist,[\[768\]](#) meaning that, assuming the accusations from British military experts were true, its origin as a poison originally invented by the Soviets back during the first Cold War in no way indicated the source of this current batch.

An AFP reporter deadpanned, “‘Only the Russians’ developed this class of nerve agents, said the chemist. ‘They kept it and are still keeping it in secrecy.’ The only other possibility, he said, would be that someone used the formulas in his book to make such a weapon.”[\[769\]](#) A French expert also told the *Journal* that the “chemical formula has been publicized and we know from publications from then-Czechoslovakia that they had worked on similar agents for defense in the 1980s,” adding, “I’m sure other countries



with developed programs would have as well.”[\[770\]](#) The Russian mob used one of these nerve agents to assassinate a banker named Ivan Kivelidi in 1995.[\[771\]](#)

David Collum, a professor of organic chemistry at Cornell University, said that “to an organic chemist, these compounds are pretty trivial to make. Any country in the world could make them. Any major chemistry department would have the facilities to make them.” He said he would be open to claims that they had traced the substance in a more particular way, but that was not the argument they were making.[\[772\]](#) Collum put the question on the final exam of his first-year graduate-level organic chemistry course, showing students the finished compound and asking them to show how to make it in three steps. All but one student got the answer right.[\[773\]](#) Collum also dismissed the evidence against the two Russians the UK eventually blamed for the attack, noting, “The residue detected in the assassins’ hotel room found two months later could not be detected the following day.[\[774\]](#) That’s not how chemistry works, folks.”

The *Times* found two experts, who, accepting the UK government’s claims about poison being left on Skripal’s doorknob, were impressed by the tradecraft since they said it would be difficult to effectively poison someone that way with that type of substance. The medium carrying the toxin would have to be sticky enough to adhere to the doorknob, but not so sticky that it would be noticeable or fail to cling to the intended victim. The way they described the scenario made it seem unlikely.[\[775\]](#)

## CCTV

Local Salisbury writer Rob Slane pointed out a contradiction in the government's account. It said it had determined Russian responsibility, in part, through prior intelligence showing the Russians had been practicing how to leave Novichok on door handles. But if that were true, "why was [Skripal's] door handle not identified as a possible place of poisoning until more than a week later, and only officially confirmed on 28th March?" This was later shown to have been based on nothing but circular reasoning: it must have been Russia and it must have been the doorknob in this case, so the Russians must have practiced putting poison on doorknobs before doing it for real.[\[776\]](#)

Slane also complained about the government's assertions about the CCTV footage. They claimed, "What the CCTV shows is the two suspects on the way to Christie Miller Road. On the way to the Skripals' home." He replied, "Oh no, it doesn't. The CCTV referred to (of the two men on the Wilton Road at 11:58 on Sunday 4th March) does not in fact show them in the vicinity of the Mr Skripal's house, and nor does it show them on the way to Christie Miller Road." Instead, he said, "What it actually shows is the two men around 500–600 yards from Mr Skripal's house, on a completely different road, and not looking at all as if they are interested in crossing the road to get to Christie Miller Road, either via Montgomery Gardens or Canadian Avenue." He was far from convinced. "For all I know, they may have gone to Christie Miller Road after being seen on the Shell garage CCTV. But this particular piece of footage of them in no way indicates this, and to suggest to the public that it does is simply misleading and disingenuous." He warned, "Indeed, if this is the best evidence The Met

has against the pair, it is worse than flimsy and would convince no jury with its wits intact.”[\[777\]](#)

## **Dodgy Dossier**

Though the UK government claimed in a letter to the North Atlantic Council that they somehow knew Russia had been producing and stockpiling chemical weapons going back to the 2000s,[\[778\]](#) they did not officially accuse Russia of violating the Chemical Weapons Convention. Journalist Gareth Porter pointed out that if the Brits really had reason to believe the Russians were in violation, they could have turned them in to the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) “and presented its evidence to the 41-member Executive Council, the governing body of the organization. . . . The British government could also demand a ‘challenge inspection’ at the facility.” According to the treaty, any member can demand a snap inspection. The Russians would have to comply or essentially admit guilt. But the UK did not try to press the issue.[\[779\]](#)

## **Haspel’s Lies**

To convince President Trump to push ahead with the government’s plan to expel scores of Russian diplomats in response, Deputy CIA Director Gina Haspel showed him pictures of dead ducks and sick children in the hospital.[\[780\]](#) The true story was that the Skripals had shared their bread with children to help them feed ducks before they went to lunch. One of the boys supposedly even ate some of the bread himself. The children and the ducks

were just fine,[\[781\]](#) which would seem to be a counter-indication of the British government's version of events. The deputy director of the CIA looked the president of the United States of America right in the eye and lied to manipulate him into doing what she wanted was all. The *Times* later retracted that part of the story, saying Haspel had instead “displayed pictures illustrating the consequences of nerve agent attacks, not images specific to the chemical attack in Britain.” So she just showed him pictures of random, unrelated dead ducks and hospitalized children then? Either way, the paper still had noted the seemingly important fact that none of the three boys or any of the fowl they fed had been harmed in the slightest by this deadly chemical weapon.

## **The Nurse**

Here is something strange. The nurse whose daughter first stumbled across the Skripals and tended to them just happened to be Alison McCourt, the chief nurse of the British Army, a colonel, which was not revealed until she nominated her daughter for an award over it a year later.[\[782\]](#) There is no obvious reason for this beyond coincidence. A doctor who was at the scene also asked the media not to identify her.[\[783\]](#)

## **Unsolved Mysteries**

The version of the story promulgated by the British government leaves much unexplained. The Russian state is ruthless enough to cross lines and murder a guy. And the idea that their agents could screw up a spy-versus-

spy mission like this seems within the realm of possibility, maybe even likely. But the alleged tradecraft here was bordering on the impossibly bad, starting with the fact that they allegedly brought enough of the poison to kill half of London, but failed to kill their target. Its inventor says that just one gram could kill 1,000 people.[\[784\]](#) But they supposedly brought at least two bottles full of the stuff to kill one guy. And there is no clear motive for the Russian government or anyone else to kill Skripal. While there has been speculation about his potential role in the creation of the Steele dossier through his connection[\[785\]](#) to a former MI6 agent named Pablo Miller—who worked for Steele’s company Orbis—it was never confirmed by any official review or important journalism on that story, and would not seem to provide an obvious motive for anyone else involved to try to murder the man regardless.

## **Expulsion**

According to the *Washington Post*, Trump’s aides also deceived him about the government’s response to the alleged assassination attempt, enraging him. They got permission from the president to expel an equal number of diplomats as allied countries like the UK, France and Germany. So his administration kicked 60 Russians out of the country, equivalent to the amount expelled from all European countries combined.

As analysts Kyle Anzalone and Will Porter wrote, ever since that time there has been an endless list of new sanctions against Russia. These are said to have been in response to “‘worldwide malign activity,’[\[786\]](#) to penalize alleged election-meddling,[\[787\]](#) for ‘destabilizing cyber

activities,' [\[788\]](#) retaliation for the UK spy poisoning, [\[789\]](#) more cyber activity, [\[790\]](#) more election-meddling [\[791\]](#)—the list keeps growing.” [\[792\]](#)

Trump allegedly complained that Russiagate was preventing him from dealing properly with Russian President Putin. “I’m not able to be president because of this witch hunt.” A former White House official and professor at Georgetown University named Angela Stent told the *Post*, “The United States essentially has three Russia policies: the president’s, the executive branch’s and Congress’s.” [\[793\]](#)

## Cold Front

### Navalny

America’s favorite Russian anti-corruption activist, Yale World Fellows Program graduate Alexei Navalny, [\[794\]](#) may or may not have been an actual recruited asset of Western intelligence. But the American government and media establishments were very open about their wish that he would rule the Kremlin one day. [\[795\]](#)

In another in a series of alleged unsuccessful poisonings by Putin’s intelligence services, Navalny fell ill in August 2020. Russian doctors insisted the man was simply in diabetic shock. [\[796\]](#) He did say that he had diabetes in 2019. [\[797\]](#) But German doctors claimed it was Russian Novichok poison. Navalny, along with Western governments and media, agreed it was an assassination attempt by the FSB: they had put the deadly nerve agent in his underwear. He later died of natural causes in prison in

2024.[798] Never missing a chance to preclude diplomacy with Russia, President Biden declared Putin responsible regardless.[799]

The *Wall Street Journal* called Navalny “Putin’s most effective opponent,”[800] but he never did have mass support. A 2021 poll had him at 2 percent, less than the washed-up old radical nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovsky.[801] Nor was Navalny a liberal democrat, but a right-wing nationalist who was kicked out of the Yabloko party for demonizing Muslim immigrants, comparing them to cockroaches and dental cavities, [802] and who temporarily allied with urban liberals in a failed attempt to gain power. He supported the annexation of Crimea until at least 2023,[803] and urged both sides to implement Minsk II to end the war in the Donbas, which was not the Western party line.[804] Fred Weir, a veteran Russia correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor*, has said that Navalny was a marginal figure inside Russia and that, while he surely had enemies, it would make no sense for Putin to risk making an international issue out of killing a man who is ultimately of little concern to him.[805]

Many discrepancies remain in the story. While the German military doctors claimed to have found proof of the presence of a poison from the Novichok “family,” claims said to be confirmed by French, Swedish and OPCW experts,[806] the alleged connection to the FSB is less certain.

Though the British and American government-backed propaganda outfit Bellingcat claimed to have tricked one of the plotters into admitting his role in the poisoning, the call took place months after the alleged incident.[807] While the call seems convincing in other ways, there is no evidence the voice on the phone is the person they claim it is. Even the

British government-backed Institute for Statecraft's Integrity Initiative, whose articles they run, said about the group in a leaked document: "Bellingcat was somewhat discredited, both by spreading disinformation itself, and by being willing to produce reports for anyone willing to pay."[\[808\]](#)

Other than the call, Bellingcat claims that cellphone metadata proves their case. But their argument is virtually self-refuting. The fact that the same agents who had allegedly trailed the man for years—more than 30 times—were also nearby when he got sick is "the strongest evidence to date that the Russian government was behind the assassination attempt," the *Times* said, when it could just as easily indicate nothing at all. They also admitted that the CIA and MI6 had raced to Germany to provide their side of the story just after Navalny arrived.[\[809\]](#)

The insightful German writer and foreign policy analyst at the Moon of Alabama website, Bernard, asked some pertinent questions about the story right away, including: why was Navalny allowed to leave the country? Why did the Russian labs report they found nothing? And why was no one else sickened by the supposedly deadly poison? He also pointed out that the statement by the German Charité hospital indicated they had seen evidence of the "potential effects of a cholinesterase inhibitor, not . . . a specific substance itself."[\[810\]](#)

If this story is real, then it has to raise questions as to just what a pathetic threat Russia has turned out to be. They used poison, supposedly, on Yushchenko, the Skripals, now Navalny and his wife, with the only effect of making themselves look like incompetent attempted murderers.



Perhaps they are. But when the Russians poisoned Ibn al-Khattab, the former chief of the bin Ladenites in Chechnya, all it took was a drop.[\[811\]](#)

Navalny was convicted for fraud and sentenced to 9 years of hard labor. Unfortunately, it was not for pushing the lie that Putin was controlling Donald Trump through his campaign manager Paul Manafort and his former associate Oleg Deripaska.[\[812\]](#)

Navalny died in prison in the Arctic Circle in February 2024. American politicians and media stars' outpourings of lament at his death seemed to reinforce the idea that they had really believed they could install him in power someday, and now their great chance had been lost. "Make no mistake: Putin is responsible for Navalny's death. What has happened to Navalny is even more proof of Putin's brutality. No one should be fooled," President Biden said.[\[813\]](#) For weeks, the Biden administration and media pretended to believe Putin had ordered him killed.[\[814\]](#) But Ukrainian intelligence said he died of a blood clot[\[815\]](#) and U.S. intelligence finally acknowledged they did not believe he was murdered.[\[816\]](#) Still, it is doubtful that his fraud conviction was anything but a political hit in the first place.[\[817\]](#) So if an innocent man died in prison, that is still really bad, if not murder like they claim.

## **The Gerasimov Doctrine**

In 2014, an intelligence contractor named Mark Galeotti invented a giant myth that the rest of the War Party loved, and still loves to believe very much,[\[818\]](#) that General Valery Gerasimov, Russia's military chief of staff, had coined a new doctrine of hybrid warfare to deploy against all of

Russia's weak and unsuspecting neighbors.[\[819\]](#) That is not what he said, [\[820\]](#) but the hawks still love to cite it, even though it was debunked as fake propaganda by the Army War College back in 2016. Roger N. McDermott wrote in *Parameters* that the purpose of the article was to identify Washington's color-coded revolutions as a threat to Russia and suggest ways to resist the strategy. "Western analyses soon transmogrified the article into supporting the theory that Gerasimov was discussing Russia's adoption of hybrid warfare as a new tool at the state's disposal."[\[821\]](#)

As the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) explained in 2017, the Russians have "a deeply entrenched sense of insecurity regarding a United States that Moscow believes is intent on undermining Russia at home and abroad." They added, "The Kremlin is convinced the United States is laying the groundwork for regime change in Russia, a conviction further reinforced by the events in Ukraine," and that they saw the "overthrow of former Ukrainian President Yanukovych [as] the latest move in a long-established pattern of U.S.-orchestrated regime change efforts, including the Kosovo campaign, Iraq, Libya, and the 2003–05 'color revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan."[\[822\]](#)

Galeotti later admitted that he, not Gerasimov, made up the Gerasimov Doctrine, and said he was sorry—not that self-described experts Molly McKew,[\[823\]](#) Martin Murphy[\[824\]](#) or any of the others[\[825\]](#) ever retracted their articles based on it.[\[826\]](#)

These things may seem unimportant standing alone, but taken together with all the other false claims about Russia, and the incredible lies, mostly by omission, about the U.S. and allied role in fomenting the second Cold

War, Americans, especially the professional political class, have become subsumed by the overall narrative of Russian perfidy and of course their own inverse innocence. But what was the guy even saying? That they need to figure out how to prevent the U.S. from overthrowing every government that is friendly to them and their interests—an absolute outrage.[\[827\]](#)

## **The Four-Day War**

At the beginning of April 2016, the Azeris attacked Armenian forces at Nagorno-Karabakh, after which they fought a short, four-day war. Nearly 200 soldiers were killed on each side before ceasefire was declared. The Azeris had seized a small amount of territory.[\[828\]](#) Secretary of State Kerry seemed to imply the U.S. would support further action by Baku when he called for “an ultimate resolution” to the problem that had already been solved with the status quo: de facto independence for Artsakh.[\[829\]](#) He may have given Aliyev the green light to launch the attack, which he seemingly ordered just before boarding the plane home.[\[830\]](#) As Justin Raimondo noted, the U.S. was firmly on the Azeri side of the issue by 1999. As in Ukraine, but not Yugoslavia, national sovereignty was paramount.[\[831\]](#)

## **Armenia’s Way Out**

In 2018, after a series of protests backed by Western-funded NGOs,[\[832\]](#) after his disputed reelection, the longtime prime minister, Serzh Sargsyan, resigned from power.[\[833\]](#) Opposition groups had aligned into the new pro-Western Way Out Alliance,[\[834\]](#) and then elected Nikol Pashinyan prime

minister. The Trump administration still increased military aid to Azerbaijan from \$3 million per year under Obama to \$100 million in 2018 in the name of containing Iran.[\[835\]](#)

## **The Second Nagorno-Karabakh War**

Azerbaijan went back to war in the fall of 2020, after the Armenian government declared their intention to officially annex Artsakh. Over 6,500 people were killed, and the Azeris again got the better of the Armenians and seized more territory surrounding the enclave. Following six weeks of fighting, the Russians finally brokered a ceasefire. The Western-supported Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan had traded Russia's previous protection for nothing. They even had to concede an easement across the Zangezur Corridor in Armenian territory between Azerbaijan and their Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic on Turkey's eastern border.[\[836\]](#) After Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022, Pashinyan declared his intent to distance himself from Russia and move toward the United States,[\[837\]](#) including holding joint military exercises,[\[838\]](#) for all the good it would do him.[\[839\]](#)

## **A New Security Architecture**

In 2017, Brookings Institution scholar Michael O'Hanlon, who had been instrumental in selling the second Iraq War to American liberal Democrats in the early W. Bush years,[\[840\]](#) nonetheless wrote a monograph calling for "a new security architecture" for Europe, published in 2017. Unfortunately, due to all the Russiagate hype, no one was listening. His plan called for a

halt to NATO expansion and an end to the sanctions regime in exchange for Russia removing its troops from Transnistria, Georgia and Ukraine and permanent neutrality for Finland, Sweden, Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cyprus and Serbia. This was to “reduce the risks of rivalry and war by focusing on what may be, in Putin’s mind, the fundamental cause of the problem: NATO expansion.” He blamed W. Bush for the situation, saying that by his half-invitation to Ukraine to join NATO at Bucharest in 2008, he had “inadvertently built a type of NATO-membership doomsday machine that raises the likelihood of conflict in Europe.” Proving he was still a member of the foreign policy establishment in good standing, O’Hanlon wrote, “Western leaders should pursue this path confidently and unapologetically, and not portray it as an admission of previous wrongdoing,” adding, “If Russia refuses to negotiate in good faith, or fails to live up to any deal it might initially support, little will be lost and options for a toughening of future policy against Russia will remain.” It was a reasonable proposal.[\[841\]](#)

## **A Missed Chance for Peace**

In September 2017, Vladimir Putin proposed a deal to bring in blue-helmet UN peacekeepers to stand on the border zone separating Kiev’s forces from the Donbas rebels. Though the Germans thought the proposal looked promising, the Americans and British rejected the deal. They claimed Putin’s plan was too limited, insisting that peacekeepers must be deployed to the entirety of the Donbas—including the international border that Kiev no longer controlled—or nothing.[\[842\]](#)

But James Sherr of the Royal Institute for International Affairs explained what they were really worried about: not lives, but leverage. He said the Russians knew the U.S. could not accept their proposal as first presented. “A radical question therefore arises: supposing his ultimate gambit is to meet the West’s terms? A full ceasefire comes into effect, UN peacekeepers deploy throughout the territory, and, to all intents and purposes, Russian troops and ‘volunteers’ depart.” He was worried this would be “the perfect trap” because it “would transform the target of pressure from Russia to Ukraine.” Up until then, he said, Kiev had resisted holding elections, despite the terms of Minsk II, under the theory that the Russians’ presence made a fair vote impossible. “Take away the occupation and the conflict, and you take away the argument. You also take away the argument for maintaining (non-Crimea related) sanctions and hand financial responsibility for the welfare of the territories to Kyiv.”[\[843\]](#) In other words, if they came to an agreement to stop the fighting and remove alleged Russian soldiers from the battlefield, that would ruin Kiev’s excuse to continue to ignore the Minsk peace deals.

Even though Trump had won the 2016 election on a platform of “getting along with Russia,” and the accusation that he was a compromised agent of the Russian Federation was as dumb a lie as the CIA ever told, Sherr enthused that his administration “has turned out to be a far tougher proposition than anticipated. However warm Trump’s personal feelings towards Russia, his national security team has shown itself to be orthodox in its grasp of U.S. interests and unyielding.” He singled out Kurt Volker—a W. Bush and Obama NSC official and former U.S. ambassador to NATO,

later named special envoy to Ukraine by Trump and his first Secretary of State Rex Tillerson—for praise on this account. The establishment magazine *Foreign Policy* also celebrated Volker’s appointment since they considered him someone who would not let the elected president get in the way of U.S. foreign policy when it came to Russia and Ukraine.[\[844\]](#)

Obviously Vladimir Putin is a tough character who had reason to keep the war in the east going until he got what was agreed to in the Minsk deals—and for all we know, if it had been easygoing, perhaps he would have demanded more. But the facts again are clear. The U.S. government under Donald Trump, just like under Barack Obama before him, did not want to see the implementation of the deal America’s French and German allies had struck.[\[845\]](#) It offered too much autonomy to the Donbas oblasts and gave them too much say over Ukraine’s foreign policy, a threat to future membership in the EU and NATO. As Sherr wrote, they would rather continue the low-level war in eastern Ukraine—the Russian “occupation,” as he described it—so they could keep their sanctions regime and the rest of the new Cold War going, than have third-party peacekeeping troops defuse the situation. So an obvious solution, one that both sides had proposed in different forms, went in the trash. The U.S. poured in more weapons and the war went on.

At the same time, the Ukrainian government under Poroshenko abandoned any pretense of ratcheting down tensions. As the NATO website details, “In June 2017, the Ukrainian parliament adopted legislation reinstating membership in NATO as a strategic foreign and security policy objective.”[\[846\]](#)

## **Nuclear Posture Review**

Trump's February 2018 Nuclear Posture Review, like his National Security Strategy, announced a return to "Great Power competition," and showed total continuity with Obama and the national security state's nuclear weapons policy. The document placed a focus on continuing his predecessor's massive overhaul of the entire inventory and industry, but said his last NPR was based on the "outdated" belief that the "prospects for military confrontation with Russia, or among Great Powers, had declined and would continue to decline dramatically," and that the world would continue to trend towards disarmament. They blamed Moscow's reaction to Bush and Obama's policies—the modernization of their weapons and seizure of Crimea—as necessitating a U.S. turn back to "Great Power competition."

They noted Russia was modernizing its nuclear triad of land-, sea- and air-based weapons delivery systems, including "at least two new intercontinental range systems, a hypersonic glide vehicle, and a new intercontinental, nuclear-armed, nuclear-powered, undersea autonomous torpedo." Due to the renewed threat, the administration said they needed a whole new class and fleet of nuclear submarines, a full replacement of land-based Minuteman ICBMs and the new B-21 Raider long-range stealth bomber, as well as an increase in the foreign deployment of "dual-capable aircraft" such as F-15 and F-35 fighters, which can also carry nuclear weapons.

The review also said that since the Russians were expanding their production of tactical-strength atom bombs, the U.S. needed to match them



as further deterrence against Russia's perceived new, more reckless posture with potentially more "usable" nuclear weapons. They said the Russians' development of a new arsenal of low-yield A-bombs revealed their belief that these would be more usable in war without necessarily escalating to major conflict and a changing doctrine based on that belief. The review added, "Correcting this mistaken Russian perception is a strategic imperative." To do so, the U.S. would have to create its own new generation of low-yield usable nukes—not to enable "nuclear war fighting," they said, but just to expand deterrence by matching Russia's moves.[\[847\]](#)

It also announced that the United States would not seek ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and even denounced the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which America and most of the other nuclear powers signed back in 1968, promising to abolish our nuclear weapons stockpile, but have always ignored anyway.

The report says that American use of nuclear weapons need not be limited to defense of the nation, or even its allies, but instead to "protect our vital interests," which can mean anything. And they implied a willingness to use U.S. nukes in response to their use by other nations, including against non-allied countries, anywhere in the world. This, they argued, is progress: "In no way does this approach lower the nuclear threshold. Rather, by convincing adversaries that even limited use of nuclear weapons will be more costly than they can tolerate, it in fact raises that threshold." It is good to know they have thought this all through very carefully.

## **Russia's New Arsenal**

The next month, Putin confirmed in his annual address to the Duma that the Russian military had indeed developed a new generation of nuclear weapons. This included reintroducing the new heavy MIRV (Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle) missile, the RS-28 Sarmat, which is designed to travel around the South Pole, approaching from a direction where the U.S. has no early warning or defense, and is armed, they claim, with enough warheads that just one missile could kill as many as 10 cities.[\[848\]](#) American experts confirmed the amount of independent warheads its ability to attack from the south “posed a challenge to ground and satellite-based radar and tracking systems.”[\[849\]](#) Land-based MIRV missiles like the Sarmat had been banned by Clinton and Yeltsin’s START II Treaty, but Russia quit that treaty in 2002 in protest after W. Bush tore up the ABM Treaty.[\[850\]](#) They successfully test launched one in April 2022.[\[851\]](#)

Putin also boasted of new “Petrel” nuclear-powered cruise missiles with essentially unlimited range for evading U.S. defenses; virtually undetectable “Poseidon” nuclear torpedoes for destroying American coastal cities and ports; new “Borei-class” nuclear submarines; and “Iskander” tactical ballistic missiles. He also announced “Avangard” and “Kinzhal” hypersonic delivery vehicles that travel at speeds above Mach 5, which completely skew the balance of Mutually Assured Destruction by reducing the time that policymakers have to decide whether to go to nuclear war from 15 or 30 minutes to perhaps less than five.[\[852\]](#)

In his speech Putin complained, “Nobody really wanted to talk to us about the core of the problem, and nobody wanted to listen to us. So listen

now.”[\[853\]](#)

FM Lavrov later told an interviewer they went to work on hypersonic missiles in direct response to the ABM systems going into Romania and Poland. “We needed weapons that were guaranteed to overpower missile defenses. Otherwise, a country that has missile defense systems and offensive weapons may be tempted to launch the first strike thinking that a response will be suppressed by its missile defense systems.”[\[854\]](#) A year later, Russia launched their Belgorod submarines, said to be capable of deploying its new nuclear torpedoes. In 2024, the intelligence agencies warned that Russia’s development of ICBMs and nuclear torpedoes would continue, as well as a broad range of tactical missile systems that would have nuclear or non-nuclear capabilities.[\[855\]](#) The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* warns that Russia still possesses approximately 4,477 warheads, with around 1,588 strategic warheads deployed, with another 977 H-bombs and 1,912 A-bombs in reserve, and that they are proceeding with their nuclear modernization program.[\[856\]](#)

The primacy project did not create a permanent state of dominance and security. Instead, we got endless new liabilities with nothing to show for it, and a new nuclear arms race, which it looks like America is losing.

## **The Kerch Strait Incident**

In November 2018, the Russians seized three Ukrainian ships and 23 crew members in the Kerch Strait—located east of Crimea, between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea—claiming they had breached the line into what Moscow considered to be its own waters. Trump’s UN Ambassador Nikki

Haley condemned Russia's "outrageous violation of sovereign Ukrainian territory." A consultant told CNBC he thought it would be good for Ukraine since it would squelch sentiment in Europe toward softening the sanctions. [\[857\]](#) Indeed, the Trump administration added more. [\[858\]](#)

## **Bin Ladenites Still Lurking**

In late 2019, the Ukrainian government worked with the CIA to arrest a Georgian-born ISIS commander named Cezar Tokhosashvili (a.k.a. Al Bara Shishani, Arabic for "Al Bara the Chechen") in a raid in Kiev where the man, previously thought dead, had been living for two years. [\[859\]](#)

"He appears to be one of many to have made Ukraine their home," reporter Oliver Carroll wrote in the *Independent*. The same was true about the terrorist who had recruited Tokhosashvili, Akhmed Chatayev (a.k.a. "Akhmed the One-armed"), who blew himself up rather than be captured in a raid in Tbilisi in 2017. Chatayev had previously been arrested on a Russian Interpol warrant in western Ukraine, where police said they found bomb instructions and pictures of dead bodies on his cellphone, but rumor has it that he bribed his way back to freedom in Georgia. The black market in fake passports was said to be thriving, and obviously a threat to Europe since Ukraine had achieved visa-free travel status with most of the European Union.

Vera Mironova, an expert on international terrorism, told the *Independent* she believed "hundreds" of former ISIS fighters were currently living in Ukraine, and they were certainly a threat. "This isn't a random selection. The slower guys stop as soon as they get to Turkey. After all, it is

a multiple-step operation to get to Ukraine. The ones who get there are the dangerous ones,” she said.[\[860\]](#)

## **Volodymyr Zelensky**

### **The Eastern Front**

Throughout Trump’s first term, the supposedly “low-level” fighting continued to rage in the Donbas, killing thousands. Despite his promises to implement Minsk II, President Poroshenko was trapped. He was dependent on numerous far-right militias to fight for him, yet they continued to threaten him from time to time, to remind him who was really boss.[\[861\]](#)

### **Ran on Peace**

Poroshenko, running on the anti-Russian chauvinist slogan “Language, Army, Faith,” was crushed in a landslide in 2019, just five years after taking power. He lost to political upstart Volodymyr Zelensky,[\[862\]](#) a man who ex-President George W. Bush—the former Winston Churchill of our time[\[863\]](#)—insisted in 2022 was the “Winston Churchill of our time.”[\[864\]](#) Perhaps Poroshenko was better off. The Nazis had just tried to murder him over a corruption scandal a few weeks prior.[\[865\]](#)

A Russian-speaker, Zelensky was elected with a decent amount of support in the eastern regions on a promise to implement the Minsk agreements and bring an end to the war. But he could not. Former state historian Volodymyr Viatrovykh declared before the second round of voting

that even if he won the majority, it did not matter because he “lost the active minority and will not be able to master it. And this minority is the engine of changes in society.”[\[866\]](#) Right Sector’s Dimitry Yarosh threatened to kill Zelensky one week after he took power, saying he was sure Zelensky would not sell them out. “No, he would lose his life. He will hang on some tree on *Khreshchatyk* [the main drag in Kiev] if he betrays Ukraine and those people who died in the revolution and the war.”[\[867\]](#)

Russia expert Richard Sakwa noted that Poroshenko had also been running as a peace candidate with close ties with Russia in the election of 2014. “Yet neither of them could go forward with cooling tensions” because of the threat from the radical right.[\[868\]](#)

Despite all the propaganda about how poorly the Nazis do in Ukraine’s party politics, a former political analyst at the U.S. Embassy in Kiev who is very sympathetic to the Maidan cause, Jonathan Brunson, warned on the eve of Zelensky’s election that “[t]hough national revolutionaries are unrepresentative of Ukraine’s population, they are overrepresented in government.[\[869\]](#) They comprise nearly 10 percent of the 423-member parliament: the speaker, around 20 directly elected members,[\[870\]](#) and perhaps 20 more on lists of parties unaffiliated with the far right.” He added that since many of them were appointees, they could not be voted out by the people. This included “a deputy interior minister, a state broadcasting deputy, several regional police chiefs, and various officials who select grants for patriotic education programs,[\[871\]](#) plan the de-occupation of Crimea and Donbas, and track guns among activists who attend rural *vyshkoly*[\[872\]](#) militia camps.”[\[873\]](#)

As Brunson pointed out, the powerful then-speaker of the parliament, Andriy Parubiy, was still a proud Nazi, merely “euphemizing” his ideology as national liberationism.[\[874\]](#) In his 2019 piece for War on the Rocks, Brunson begged Western political leaders and public relations men to drop the line about how these militants were merely “nationalists” and “activists,” and had probably stopped believing what they always said about themselves a few years back. While wrong in its own right, he warned that this defense only “feeds the Kremlin narrative” about Ukraine—and could lead to war. “Far-right parties like Svoboda, aided by mainstream parties harboring similar elements, advance legislation which feeds the Kremlin narrative that fascists are taking over Ukraine, just like Yanukovych warned they would.”[\[875\]](#) Ignoring the problem would not make it go away. Under Nazi rule, they passed language laws to “Ukrainianize” schools, government and media, while Poroshenko demonized the Russian Orthodox Church as spies[\[876\]](#) and official government historical policy whitewashed the Ukrainian role in the Holocaust.[\[877\]](#)

Brunson writes, “When I suggested to a far-right member of Ukraine’s secret police that social-nationalism might be a Kremlin plot to sully Ukraine’s reputation, he responded that right-wingers actually count on such skepticism.” The “secret police” member told him, “If the West won’t even believe us when we say it ourselves, then we can get away with anything. They won’t believe you either, man.”[\[878\]](#)

**No to Capitulation!**

In early 2019, Austrian diplomat Martin Sajdik proposed a plan to replace Minsk II, under which a UN-OSCE detachment of international bureaucrats and peacekeeping troops would move in to oversee elections and administer the reintegration of the Donbas into Ukraine.[\[879\]](#) Poroshenko shot it down.[\[880\]](#)

After the election, the new Zelensky administration did negotiate two prisoner exchanges, but achieved little else in resolving the war.[\[881\]](#) He officially signed on to the “Steinmeier Formula” in October 2019. Named after then-German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, it stipulated a chronological order to the implementation of the different aspects of the Minsk agreements along with some other details. The OSCE was to monitor new elections in the Donbas. If they judged them to be “free and fair,” then a new “self-governing status” would begin and Kiev would gain control of its eastern border.[\[882\]](#) But the Trump administration and the Ukrainian Nazis intervened to prevent Zelensky from making peace. In something that read like a replay of Ambassador Warren Zimmermann’s sabotage of the Lisbon deal for Bosnia in 1992,[\[883\]](#) when Zelensky said he was interested in pursuing the German proposal, William Taylor, chargé d’affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Ukraine, told him to forget it. According to the *Washington Post*, when Zelensky expressed interest Taylor ridiculed the plan: “No one knows what it is. Steinmeier doesn’t know what it is. . . . It’s a terrible idea.”[\[884\]](#)

*Foreign Policy* reported that “U.S. officials have pushed for the reinstatement of Ukrainian control of its international border, a sentiment that has not been publicly expressed by Germany or France.” In other



words, they were, along with the Ukrainian radical right in the street, encouraging Zelensky to move the goalposts to make compromise more difficult. “Both Obama and Trump administration officials have grown frustrated with the European Union’s unwillingness to take a tougher stance on Russia’s annexation of parts of Ukraine,” they explained.[\[885\]](#)

The new president signed on to the Steinmeier Formula, but even though polls showed a “vast majority” wanted to see an end to the war, he then introduced a caveat: unlike in the previous agreements, now Russian troops would have to withdraw and Ukrainian troops would have to regain control over the eastern border before the OSCE-monitored elections could be held.[\[886\]](#) But it was not Russian troops, but the rebel forces of the Donbas preventing that from happening, and he knew they were not going to stand down before they were granted at least the opportunity to vote on self-rule.[\[887\]](#) Even still, the radical right—the Azov Battalion, National Corps, Right Sector, Democratic Ax and Svoboda, among others—launched what they called the “No to Capitulation!” movement, a series of massive protests in the fall of 2019, leading up to Zelensky’s December meeting with Putin in Paris.[\[888\]](#) “Black-clad men holding up red flares like torches led the procession, some in white masks to conceal their identity,” the Associated Press reported. Waving red and black UPA flags alongside the yellow and blue,[\[889\]](#) they accused Zelensky of being a “servant of the Kremlin” and trying to “strike a deal with the devil.” “Glory to Ukraine!” they chanted. “No capitulation!”[\[890\]](#)

Former President Poroshenko and former Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko both denounced the deal, calling it “Putin’s formula” and the

“Putin-Steinmeier formula.”[\[891\]](#) After a rally in October, Euromaidan Press insisted that while there were many “neo-Nazis” in attendance, “the overwhelming majority were not.”[\[892\]](#)

In September 2022, a delegation of three Azov Nazis and two women, one the wife of an Azov commander and the other the leader of an “anti-feminist” group linked to Azov, were welcomed on a tour of the United States, as exposed by the journalist Moss Robeson. They were said to have met more than 50 congressmen. At an event in Chicago was “Borys Potapenko . . . an international coordinator of Stepan Bandera’s Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN-B) who is also among the leadership of the far-right ‘Capitulation Resistance Movement’ in Ukraine, which allied with Azov’s National Corps against Volodymyr Zelensky in 2019–22.”[\[893\]](#)

## **They Needed Help**

Russia scholar Stephen Cohen told journalist Aaron Maté in 2019 that Zelensky would have needed help facing down the Right Sector and friends. “Zelensky ran as a peace candidate,” Cohen told Maté. “He won an enormous mandate to make peace. So, that means he has to negotiate with Vladimir Putin.” However, noting the repeated Nazi threats to assassinate the president if he crossed them, Cohen said, “[H]e can’t go forward with full peace negotiations with Russia, with Putin, unless America has his back. Maybe that won’t be enough, but unless the White House encourages this diplomacy, Zelensky has no chance of negotiating an end to the war.”[\[894\]](#)

Poroshenko had also said he could not implement the Minsk II deal without U.S. support. He never got it. Instead, Right Sector and C14 set the terms. As Dimitry Yarosh explained in 2019, “The Minsk format—and I talk about this all the time—is an opportunity to play for time, arm the armed forces, switch to the best world standards in the system of national security and defense. This is an opportunity for maneuver. But no more.” He made it clear they would never allow the peace deal to be implemented. “And this must be understood. Poroshenko played at Minsk, and played well. Fact. He played for time.”[\[895\]](#)

Later, Poroshenko and all the other important European leaders confirmed this was the case. Just like they had accused Russia of doing.  
[\[896\]](#)

## **Biletsky Pulls Rank**

When Zelensky traveled to the east to try to get the Azov militiamen to withdraw from their positions inside the demilitarized “grey zone” between the warring factions, they told him to go to hell. “Listen . . . I’m the president of this country. I’m 41 years old. I’m not a loser. I came to you and told you: remove the weapons. . . . I wanted to see understanding in your eyes. But, instead, I saw a guy who’s decided that this is some loser standing in front of him,” the president pleaded. Andriy Biletsky, the head of the Azov Battalion, was defiant. He warned Zelensky not to try to remove the Nazis from the town of Zolote. “There will be thousands there instead of several dozen,” he threatened.[\[897\]](#) These are the same “national socialists” who told the *Guardian* that Ukraine needs “a strong dictator to

come to power who could shed plenty of blood but unite the nation in the process,” and threatened to overthrow and murder then-President Petro Poroshenko.[\[898\]](#) What was he supposed to do? Biletsky had threatened to overthrow Poroshenko from the floor of the Rada in 2017, and the president could do nothing about it.[\[899\]](#)

Singer Sofia Fedyna, an MP from Poroshenko’s party, threatened Zelensky with an “accidental” fragging: “Mr. President thinks he is immortal. A grenade may explode there, by chance. And it would be the nicest if this happened during Moscow’s shelling when someone comes to the front line wearing a white or blue shirt.”[\[900\]](#)

The British Center for Analysis of the Radical Right (CARR) warned in November 2019, not long after Zelensky was elected, that even though he clearly did wish to seek peace in the east, sign onto the Steinmeier formula and engage in prisoner exchanges, “this goal remains unattainable. Moreover, this is due to the tough position of the Ukrainian radical right.” To be clear, they said they were referring to “the militants of the National Corps Party, linked directly to the ‘Azov’ National Guard Corps of Ukraine (the former ‘Azov volunteer battalion’), and the neo-Nazi organization C-14.” They quoted Biletsky saying all compromise was null and void. “If the President and the Government do not fulfill their direct duty to protect every inch of the Ukrainian land, then we, the volunteer veterans, will do it again,” adding that if troops were withdrawn from the front, his Nazis would replace them, ruining any implementation of the Minsk II deal.[\[901\]](#)

Apparently, Zelensky’s philosophy is: “If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em.” In Paris in December 2019, he was completely intransigent, insisting

the Minsk deals be revised so the border question would be resolved before any plebiscite could be held, and that the “special status” of the Donbas be made temporary instead of permanent. Zelensky shook his head and laughed at Putin during their joint press conference when Putin insisted the deals be honored.[\[902\]](#)

## **Sivokho’s Plan**

Journalist Aaron Maté told the tragic story of Donbas native Sergei Sivokho, Zelensky’s former friend and comedy producer. The new president appointed Sivokho to the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine, where, with Zelensky’s support, in March 2020, he introduced a new “National Platform for Reconciliation and Unity.”

But it did not work out. National Corps Nazis attacked him at his presentation debuting the concept in Mariupol. “Rather than defend his friend, and their shared peace initiative,” Maté wrote, “Zelensky sided with the assailants. Two weeks later, Sivokho was fired from his government post.” Biletsky publicly gloated at their victory.[\[903\]](#) For what it was worth, Sivokho kept pushing reconciliation, dialogue and peace, at least until the worse war of 2022.[\[904\]](#)

Two years later, on December 1, 2021, Zelensky, a Jewish man, honored Right Sector commander Dmytro Kotsyubail with the “Hero of Ukraine” and “Order of the Golden Star” awards on the floor of the Ukrainian parliament.[\[905\]](#) Kotsyubail had previously told the *New York Times*, joking in a Nazi-sort of way, that he feeds his pet wolf “the bones of Russian-speaking children.”[\[906\]](#) Kotsyubail was killed fighting the

Russians in Bakhmut in 2023.[\[907\]](#) Zelensky later explained how some Ukrainians feel Stepan Bandera was a “hero.” “That’s normal. That’s cool,” Zelensky said, being careful not to upset his partisans. Bandera was fighting for “freedom of Ukraine” the president insisted.

## **Kolomoysky**

Zelensky, a TV sitcom star who ran on an anti-corruption platform and promised to negotiate peace in the east, was supported by billionaire oligarch Igor Kolomoysky,[\[908\]](#) former owner of PrivatBank, the popular TV channel 1+1 and, for a time, governor of the Dnipropetrovsk province, though they later had a falling-out. Kolomoysky was also seemingly shown to have been the secret former owner of the notorious Burisma gas company of Hunter Biden’s laptop and Ukrainegate fame.[\[909\]](#) He has been credibly accused of stealing \$5.5 billion from his own bank, which the government then nationalized under pressure from the IMF,[\[910\]](#) and of murder by rival Ukrainian oligarch Victor Pinchuk.[\[911\]](#) Zelensky’s show was featured on 1+1. His presidential run was almost certainly an act of revenge by Kolomoysky against Poroshenko for firing him from his governor position and nationalizing his bank.

Like Zelensky, Kolomoysky is a man whose Jewish heritage has not prevented him from financially supporting the Nazi Right Sector and Azov and Aidar Battalions, among others,[\[912\]](#) and directly so, not through taxes to the national government or even payments to their official armed forces.[\[913\]](#) Some credit his support for the Dnipro Battalion militias for stemming the advances of the Russian-backed rebels in the spring of 2014.

[\[914\]](#) Both militias have been credibly accused of war crimes, including “disappearances,” torture and blocking civilian food supplies, by Amnesty International[\[915\]](#) and Reuters news agency.[\[916\]](#) He even used his Dnipro Battalion to stage a violent raid on the government-owned oil company UkrTransNafta to keep his loyal man in charge of it.[\[917\]](#) Kolomoysky backed down to Poroshenko after Vice President Biden weighed in with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk on the latter’s behalf.[\[918\]](#)

Though he plays a great leader on TV, Zelensky is just another crook like the rest of them. In October 2021, just as his and Biden’s policy was pushing this crisis to a head, somebody leaked the Pandora Papers to the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), exposing “a coterie of bankers, lawyers, accountants, and registration agents who help hundreds of billions of dollars move undetected around the world every year.”[\[919\]](#) These included the leaders of America’s client regimes in Jordan, Ukraine and Azerbaijan, among others.[\[920\]](#) They showed that Zelensky and his aide Serhiy Shefir, set up offshore businesses to run his TV production company and invest in expensive properties in London. After ostensibly giving up his shares upon assuming the presidency, the ICIJ wrote that “an arrangement was soon made that would allow the offshore to keep paying dividends to a company that now belongs to his wife.”

The *New York Times* reported in 2019 that Kolomoysky, after his break with Zelensky and the international banking system—the IMF was leaning heavily on the government not to give him back his bank—announced that Ukraine should pivot back toward Russia. They quoted him: “They’re

stronger anyway. We have to improve our relations. People want peace, a good life, they don't want to be at war. And you"—America—"are forcing us to be at war, and not even giving us the money for it." In an interview, he told the *Times* that since the EU and NATO will not accept Ukraine, they would be better off making a deal with Russia. He complained that the West was not giving them enough aid or opening their markets to Ukrainian goods. "Instead, he said, the United States is simply using Ukraine to try to weaken its geopolitical rival. 'War against Russia,' he said, 'to the last Ukrainian.'"

The State Department immediately warned Zelensky that he had better make his break with Kolomoysky now, since he was increasing his influence in the government, "which could cause you to fail."[\[921\]](#) The president surely disappointed his former patron when he refused to return the bank the government had seized from him under Poroshenko at the insistence of the IMF, whose money he had stolen.[\[922\]](#) Kolomoysky had come up with a clever scam in which his PrivatBank would take the IMF money and loan it to his companies, which would then make large purchases from other overseas companies he also owned, paying upfront and never delivering any goods.[\[923\]](#)

After the courts ruled the nationalization illegal, Kolomoysky got ahead of himself, publicly boasting that he had won.[\[924\]](#) In February 2023, police raided Kolomoysky's home, accusing him of embezzling more than \$1 billion from Ukrnafta, Ukraine's biggest oil company, and its largest refiner, Ukrtatnafta, which Zelensky nationalized under martial law in November 2022.[\[925\]](#)



Also in 2022, Zelensky had his predecessor Poroshenko—President Obama’s guy—indicted for “high treason” on accusations that he had conspired to sell coal for the benefit of the pro-Russian rebels in the Donbas in the crucial years of 2014 and 2015.[\[926\]](#) The truth was either that Poroshenko had committed this treason in a Sith-like plot to support his enemies—eastern Ukrainians—in war,[\[927\]](#) or that Zelensky was now falsely accusing the previous president of not just corruption, but treason over some trumped-up lies.[\[928\]](#) Neither option speaks very well of the supposed “democracy” that American money and weapons are going to support. In December 2023, Poroshenko, again America’s favorite guy right up until the other guy beat him on a peace promise in the 2019 elections, was stopped at the border from leaving to meet with Viktor Orban of Hungary, supposedly on suspicion of a Russian plot to “exploit” the meeting as a “psychological operation” against Ukrainian interests. Well, it is martial law over there until Zelensky cancels it, Reuters helpfully reminded us.[\[929\]](#)

## **The More Things Change**

Still, Zelensky has continued Poroshenko’s foreign and domestic policy. As Ukraine’s minister of transportation, Volodymyr Omelayan, said in 2019, “Each new president of Ukraine begins his cadence with the conviction that he is the one who can conduct a constructive dialogue with Moscow, and that he has been given the role of peacemaker, who will do business and develop good relations.” But instead, “every president of Ukraine has ended

up becoming a de facto follower of Bandera and fighting the Russian Federation.”[\[930\]](#)

In 2019, an amendment to Ukraine’s constitution entered into force declaring it official policy to seek membership in the NATO alliance. The next year Zelensky’s government unveiled their new National Security Strategy, which provided for “the development of the distinctive partnership with NATO with the aim of membership in NATO.”[\[931\]](#)

## Ukraineagate

### End Run

If you can believe it, the House of Representatives of the United States of America actually impeached President Donald J. Trump for allegedly holding up part of a Ukrainian arms deal for a few days until he could generate some bad public relations for ex-Vice President Biden, already by then the Democratic Party’s frontrunner to challenge him in the election of 2020.

“Mr. Trump had done an end run around his own national security team,” the *New York Times* railed. They made it sound like that time Vice President Dick Cheney and his men proposed an end run around President George W. Bush to work with Israel to start a war with Iran in 2007.[\[932\]](#) That was an “end run” because the hesitant president was the end they were trying to get around.[\[933\]](#) But Trump’s “team,” meaning all his enemies he was too ignorant to fire from his own National Security Council, is supposed to work for him, the man who stood for election and won.

## Political Cover

The backstory to the impeachment began with the fact that within three months of the 2014 coup, Hunter Biden's company, Rosemont Seneca, got a \$1 million per year[\[934\]](#) contract with a major Ukrainian gas company, Burisma Holdings,[\[935\]](#) owned by Ukrainian oligarch Mykola Zlochevsky—though as previously mentioned, there are credible reports that at least for a time it was owned by Ihor Kolomoysky.[\[936\]](#) The then-vice president's son spent the money on crack cocaine while cheating on his wife with his dead brother's widow and prostitutes, ultimately siring an illegitimate child with a stripper. President Biden refused to acknowledge the girl was his granddaughter until July 2023, when she was four years old. He cruelly still refuses to meet her despite the sweet little girl's public begging for his affection. For years, Biden would deliberately lie and say he only had six grandchildren.[\[937\]](#) Just the facts.[\[938\]](#)

The younger Biden got this cushy spot, along with Secretary Kerry's former chief of staff David Leiter, Democratic Party donor and Hunter Biden's partner Devon Archer, former CIA head of counterterrorism in the lead-up to September 11 and Mitt Romney adviser Cofer Black, and former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski.[\[939\]](#) Zlochevsky had been minister of ecology and natural resources and deputy secretary for economic and social security on the National Security and Defense Council under Yanukovich, and was now looking for some protection from potential hostility by the new regime.[\[940\]](#) He had fled the capital during the Maidan coup, but left his assistant Vadym Pozharskyi in Kiev to focus on trying to build relations with the West. Evidently sensing the changing

winds, they hired Kwaśniewski in January 2014. In April, they hired Biden and Archer, in May the sitting secretary of state's former aide Leiter. They were in the middle of setting up another incredible deal where Zlochevsky would put up \$120 million in a new joint company with Rosemont, and would get 25 percent of the profits, and they would put up no money at all, trading on the Biden name alone, in the hopes of making oil deals around the world. It fell apart when Rosemont associate Jason Galanis was indicted for securities fraud in September 2015.[\[941\]](#) Soon after, Burisma hired Washington-based consulting firm Blue Star Strategies, which had been founded by Sally Painter—a Commerce Department adviser in the Bill Clinton years—and Karen Tramontano, Clinton's former deputy chief of staff.[\[942\]](#) The firm specialized in advising Eastern European countries on how to prepare for consideration by the NATO alliance.[\[943\]](#)

In 2019, the *New York Times* conceded the true reason the vice president's son had been hired: "Hunter Biden and his American business partners were part of a broad effort by Burisma to bring in well-connected Democrats during a period when the company was facing investigations backed not just by domestic Ukrainian forces but by officials in the Obama administration." They added, importantly, "Hunter Biden's work for Burisma prompted concerns among State Department officials at the time that the connection could complicate Vice President Biden's diplomacy in Ukraine, former officials said." The paper went on to say that Zlochevsky fled the country for good reason, the new regime had opened "multiple investigations into him and his businesses."

Then Poroshenko hired a new prosecutor general in February 2015, Viktor Shokin. As the *Times* reported, “he inherited several investigations into the company and Mr. Zlochevsky, including for suspicion of tax evasion and money laundering.” They added that “Shokin also opened an investigation into the granting of lucrative gas licenses to companies owned by Mr. Zlochevsky when he was the head of the Ukrainian Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources.”

Again, this is the *New York Times*, not the *New York Post*, saying Devon Archer and Hunter Biden’s “support allowed Burisma to create the perception that it was backed by powerful Americans at a time when Ukraine was especially dependent on aid and strategic backing from the United States and its allies, according to people who worked in Ukraine at the time.”[\[944\]](#)

## **Fired**

So Viktor Shokin, who was then accused by the U.S. of being corrupt,[\[945\]](#) was investigating Burisma when Vice President Biden intervened to have him fired. Biden told the Council on Foreign Relations: “I said, ‘We’re not going to give you the billion dollars.’ They said, ‘You have no authority, you’re not the President.’ I said, ‘Call him. . . You’re not getting a billion.’” He continued, “I look at him and say, ‘We’re leaving in six hours. If the prosecutor’s not fired, you’re not getting the money.’ Well, son of a bitch, he got fired. And they put in place someone who was solid at the time.”[\[946\]](#) Biden later told the same story to *The Atlantic*.[\[947\]](#)

He defended this by saying, “Look, my son did nothing wrong. I did nothing wrong. I carried out the policy of the United States government in rooting out corruption in Ukraine.”[\[948\]](#)

## **Audio Leaked**

But in May 2020, Andriy Derkach, a pro-Russian Ukrainian member of parliament, released edited, but otherwise apparently not doctored audio of a phone call between Biden and President Poroshenko, which Derkach said was recorded by Poroshenko himself, and which appears to show the Ukrainian president updating Biden on Shokin’s firing. He told Biden, “And despite of the fact that we didn’t have any corruption charges, we don’t have any information about him doing something wrong, I especially asked him . . . to resign in his position as a state person.” After saying Shokin did resign as requested, Biden answered, “Great.”

Discussing Shokin’s replacement, Yuriy Lutsenko, Biden told the Ukrainian, “[C]ongratulations on installing the new prosecutor general. It’s going to be critical for him to work quickly to repair the damage that Shokin did. And I’m a man of my word. And now that the new prosecutor general is in place, we’re ready to move forward to signing that new \$1 billion loan guarantee.”[\[949\]](#) They did not discuss the then-vice president’s son or Burisma, but Poroshenko’s insistence to Biden—on a call he was recording—that Shokin did not actually do anything to deserve his dismissal partially corroborates the claim at least.

Taibbi noted, “Biden did not push back at this declaration of Shokin’s innocence, which is damning in itself, given that Shokin’s corruption

continues to be the official explanation for what happened.” Though such an argument could have been edited, Biden never claimed that.

Taibbi explained that while some Trump partisans believed Shokin must have been on the side of law and order, and the Biden camp was assuring everyone that all those investigations were “dormant,” the more likely reality was that Shokin was shaking down Burisma for protection money. This would not have been out of the ordinary for Ukraine, plus, Taibbi highlighted a “2014 note from Burisma adviser Vadym Pozharskyi to Hunter and his cohort Devon Archer detailed how ‘representatives of new authorities’ were hitting up the firm for bribes.”[\[950\]](#)

## **Dormant**

Taibbi went on to explain how the common narrative that any investigation into Burisma was by that time “dormant” as the media endlessly repeated was baseless.[\[951\]](#) Whichever public relations firm coined that phrase in this case certainly earned whatever price they demanded. Major media editors were apparently having a hard time claiming these investigations were “closed,” but by calling them “dormant,” were able to insist they were somehow on indefinite hold anyway.[\[952\]](#) It was not true.

As noted above, Shokin had opened at least one new case against the company.[\[953\]](#)

The *Financial Times* ran a famous piece insisting the investigations under Shokin were “dormant” and quoted anonymous EU and State Department officials claiming they had already wanted to fire Shokin before Biden forced the issue. However, this article is suspect since it also quotes

Biden denying he had ever even heard of Burisma, which is an obvious lie. We now know Biden had dinner with the firm's owner and his right-hand man years before. Another anonymous official told the outlet, "The idea that Shokin was investigating Burisma, I learnt that theory for the first time from [Trump lawyer and adviser] Rudy Giuliani."[\[954\]](#) But we know the John Kerry State Department was concerned about Hunter Biden's role at the gas company and launched an official review on it at least.[\[955\]](#) And the *New York Times* editorial page warned in December 2015 that "Burisma's owner, Mykola Zlochevsky, has been under investigation in Britain and in Ukraine. It should be plain to Hunter Biden that any connection with a Ukrainian oligarch damages his father's efforts to help Ukraine. This is not a board he should be sitting on."[\[956\]](#) Bringing up Giuliani was obfuscation at best.

## **Fired for Corruption**

Christopher Miller of Radio Liberty also ran a big piece citing experts like Anders Åslund from the Atlantic Council—a member of the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID) group that helped wreck the Russian economy in the Bill Clinton years[\[957\]](#)—supposedly debunking the claim that Shokin was investigating Burisma and that he was fired for corruption rather than the lack of it. They literally printed this claim from an anonymous Ukrainian "activist": "Ironically, Joe Biden asked Shokin to leave because the prosecutor failed [to pursue] the Burisma investigation, not because Shokin was tough and active with this case."



Got that? Vice President Biden had the prosecutor general fired specifically for not investigating the company that had hired his son for a million dollars per year, according to an article printed by the U.S. Agency for Global Media. The article now includes an important update: “Correction: This article has been amended to include reference to reported donations by Burisma to the Atlantic Council.” Their conflict of interest with the American national government is just a given.[\[958\]](#)

## **Shokin’s Side**

This was all highly suspect. Shokin had seized property belonging to Zlochevsky, who was living in Dubai, just one month before Biden had him sacked. So every single media source who said Shokin was not investigating Burisma or Zlochevsky and therefore there was no possible motive for the elder Biden to have him fired other than his crusade against corruption, and even better, that Shokin was fired for refusing to investigate Burisma, were wrong.[\[959\]](#) The pro-Western Russian journalist[\[960\]](#) Yulia Latynina showed with documents that Shokin had opened a new case against Burisma, which traced corrupt money flowing through the company and on to Hunter’s firm Rosemont Seneca, before Biden moved to have him fired.[\[961\]](#)

The “solid guy” that had been appointed to replace Shokin did as he was told and closed down the investigation into Burisma,[\[962\]](#) though he reopened it in 2019.[\[963\]](#)

For his part, Shokin told ABC News, “Biden was acting not like a U.S. vice president, but as an individual, like the individual interested in having

me removed—having me gone so that I did not interfere in the Burisma investigation.”[\[964\]](#) He later released a video in which he denied accusations that he was somehow responsible for the UK releasing the money they had seized from Zlochevsky, supposedly an example of his guilt. The *Times* had previously conceded the truth: “The British prosecution later collapsed because of what American officials said was a lack of cooperation from the office of the Ukrainian prosecutor general who preceded Mr. Shokin”—Vitaly Yarema—not because of him.[\[965\]](#)

It turned out Burisma had paid a \$7 million bribe to Yarema to scuttle the British investigation. Journalist John Solomon wrote that a State Department official named George Kent had “demanded action” against Yarema for undercutting the British and Ukrainian criminal investigations of Burisma and Zlochevsky and the embassy was told he had been bribed millions to do so, as revealed in State Department documents.[\[966\]](#)

Shokin further stated that his and the court’s seizure of Zlochevsky’s property just weeks before his firing had been nearly complete: “his personal savings, his properties, his cars, etc. And in the course of our previous investigation, Zlochevsky’s [oil] wells and other properties were also seized. The depiction [of these investigations] as dormant has nothing to do with reality of the facts.” He further claimed that “we were about to reach the outcome of this case,” and continued, “I would like to point out that there was no criminal investigation against Hunter Biden. The case was against Burisma because of the violations it had committed.” It is apparently true, so it was fair of him to mention to show he did not have some unreasonable vendetta against the Biden family, only a legal one

against Zlochevsky, though he also claimed suspicion was beginning to fall on Archer and the younger Biden by the time he was fired.

Shokin also insisted he never had a problem with American or European officials previously, including Amb. Geoffrey Pyatt. He even showed an encouraging letter from Victoria Nuland dated June 2015. A readout of a call between Vice President Biden and President Poroshenko from November 2015 reveals no statements against Shokin of any kind. Biden promised them a \$1 billion loan guarantee, “contingent on continued Ukrainian progress to investigate and prosecute corruption.”[\[967\]](#) He got the call from his son, at dinner with Burisma’s owner and corporate secretary, on December 4.[\[968\]](#)

At least we now get to hear Shokin’s side of the story after almost a decade.[\[969\]](#)

It was not true that the Europeans were demanding Shokin’s firing for corruption, as told in the Democrats’ retconning of this history. The European Commission praised Shokin for his efforts fighting corruption in December 2015. In a report that was published nine days after Vice President Biden had demanded Shokin’s firing,[\[970\]](#) then-EU Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos announced, “I congratulate the Ukrainian leadership on the progress made towards completing the reform process which will bring important benefits to the citizens of Ukraine in the future,” adding, “The hard work towards achieving this significant goal has paid off. Now it is important to keep upholding all the standards.”[\[971\]](#) The Carnegie Endowment also praised Shokin’s efforts at fighting corruption.[\[972\]](#)

It is uncertain whether Hunter Biden broke any Ukrainian laws by sitting on the board of a company for money. But even any action he might have taken on their behalf would amount to little more than a red herring. [\[973\]](#) The corruption at issue here was the protection that hiring the son of the sitting American vice president provided to the company on various other matters they were under investigation for, whether they would have led directly to charges against his son or not.

Hunter Biden's abandoned laptop [\[974\]](#) even contained emails that Burisma executive Vladym Pozharskyi had written to him and Archer, as well as their other colleague Eric Schwerin, in which he said shutting down the criminal investigations was the entire reason they were hired and they needed to hurry the hell up about it. He said he was disappointed at the lack of detail and specific proposals of whom to target in their pressure campaign. He wrote that if that was just because they were being cautious he understood, just as long as they all understood "the true purpose of the BS [Blue Star] engagement," and agreed they should "proceed immediately." He wanted a specific list of "deliverables," including getting U.S. officials to make it known to "decision makers" in Kiev that they supported Burisma, including the "President of Ukraine, president Chief of Staff, Prosecutor General, etc." He also wanted them to arrange for U.S. officials to visit Ukraine to "conduct meetings with and bring positive signal/message and support on Nikolay [a.k.a. Mykola Zlochevsky]'s issue to the Ukrainian top officials above with the ultimate purpose to close down for any cases/pursuits against Nikolay in Ukraine." [\[975\]](#)

“Devon and I do feel comfortable with BS [Blue Star] and the ability of Sally & Karen to deliver. You should go ahead and sign. Looking forward to getting started on this,” Hunter Biden replied.

Schwerin then responded to Biden and Archer: “I would tell Vadym [Pozharskyi] that this is definitely done deliberately [to be] on the safe and cautious side and that Sally [Painter] and company [Blue Star Strategies] understand the scope and deliverables.”[\[976\]](#)

At the end of July 2023, Archer testified before Congress about the Biden family’s relationship with Zlochevsky and “corporate secretary” Pozharskyi. He explained, “I think they were getting pressure and they requested Hunter, you know, help them with some of that pressure . . . government pressure from Ukrainian Government investigations into Mykola, et cetera.”

When asked, “What did Hunter Biden do after he was given that request?” Archer replied, “Listen, I did not hear this phone call, but he—he called his dad.” Pressed about how he knew that, he answered, “[B]ecause I think Vadym told me.”

Though Archer did not hear the conversation, in his speech to the Rada five days later, Vice President Biden announced his new agenda against Shokin. “It’s not enough to set up a new anti-corruption bureau and establish a special prosecutor fighting corruption. The Office of the General Prosecutor desperately needs reform.”[\[977\]](#)

It was later revealed that the vice president used various pseudonyms, including Robert L. Peters, Robin Ware and JRB Ware. Biden aide John Flynn (no relation to the general) copied Hunter on 10 emails with the vice

president's daily schedule in the spring and early summer of 2016.[\[978\]](#) The National Archives later confirmed they had 5,138 emails and 25 "electronic files."[\[979\]](#) As this book goes to press, the Southeastern Legal Foundation's Freedom of Information Act lawsuit seeking those records remains pending.[\[980\]](#)

Archer also testified that Vice President Biden joined his son, himself, Burisma's Vadym Pozharskyi and others for dinner twice in 2014 and 2015, confirming the controversial email on Hunter Biden's laptop from the Ukrainian executive was about an event in the past rather than a proposed one,[\[981\]](#) as some Biden defenders had argued.[\[982\]](#)

The fact that the vile Rudolph Giuliani, Trump loyalist and henchman, was sent to try to track down this dirt to use it against the Democrats in the election of 2020[\[983\]](#) does not negate the truth of it.

## **Perfect Phone Call**

Trump's so-called impeachable or "perfect" call, depending on who you ask, went like this: after Zelensky thanked Trump for enforcing sanctions on Russia, Trump said:

I would like you to do us a favor though because our country has been through a lot and Ukraine knows a lot about it. I would like you to find out what happened with this whole situation with Ukraine, they say CrowdStrike. . . . I guess you have one of your wealthy people . . . The server, they say Ukraine has it. There are a lot of things that went on, the

whole situation. I think you're surrounding yourself with some of the same people. I would like to have the Attorney General call you or your people and I would like you to get to the bottom of it. As you said yesterday, that whole nonsense ended with a very poor performance by a man named Robert Mueller, an incompetent performance, but they say a lot of it started with Ukraine. Whatever you can do, it's very important that you do it if that's possible. . . .

I heard you had a prosecutor who was very good and he was shut down and that's really unfair. A lot of people are talking about that, the way they shut your very good prosecutor down and you had some very bad people involved. Mr. Giuliani is a highly respected man. He was the mayor of New York City, a great mayor, and I would like him to call you. I will ask him to call you along with the Attorney General. Rudy very much knows what's happening and he is a very capable guy. If you could speak to him that would be great. The former ambassador from the United States, the woman, was bad news, and the people she was dealing with in the Ukraine were bad news, so I just want to let you know that. The other thing, there's a lot of talk about Biden's son, that Biden stopped the prosecution and a lot of people want to find out about that so whatever you can do with the Attorney General would be great. Biden went around

bragging that he stopped the prosecution so if you can look into it. . . . It sounds horrible to me. . . .

I will have Mr. Giuliani give you a call and I am also going to have Attorney General Barr call and we will get to the bottom of it. I'm sure you will figure it out. I heard the prosecutor was treated very badly and he was a very fair prosecutor so good luck with everything.[\[984\]](#)

That was it. He just said please “look into it.” He never demanded a criminal investigation or threatened to hold up any arms deals, nor even implied it. The worst one could say is that the president mentioned it after Zelensky brought up Javelin missiles, but he also raised the issue after everything Zelensky said the rest of the call. There is no reason to believe it was a threat or implied trade.[\[985\]](#)

But Eric Ciaramella thought otherwise. A former CIA analyst placed on the National Security Council by former agency Director John Brennan, [\[986\]](#) Ciaramella had been forced out of the White House for supposedly “leaking against Trump” in mid-2017, according to a former NSC official. [\[987\]](#) Ciaramella had worked closely with then-Vice President Biden and also welcomed Alexandra Chalupa, the Ukrainian Embassy-backed Russiagate conspiracist who had attempted to link Trump to Russia in 2016, into the Obama White House for meetings, including lobbying for Ukraine aid in 2015.[\[988\]](#)

Back at the CIA, Ciaramella kicked off the impeachment effort against Trump with a whistleblower complaint in which he claimed to have heard



secondhand, through the “interagency,” that “the President of the United States is using the power of his office to solicit interference from a foreign country in the 2020 U.S. election.”[\[989\]](#)

Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Vindman, director for European affairs on the National Security Council, a Ukrainian-American with a massive conflict of interest, played a major role in this first impeachment of President Trump. He was the one who overheard Trump’s phone call and leaked it to the supposed whistleblower Ciaramella. The CIA analyst, in turn, wrote up a report with the cooperation of several officials and passed the information on to Congressman Adam Schiff.[\[990\]](#) Vindman openly declared that his motive was to prevent the elected president from changing his—Vindman’s—foreign policy regarding his home country. As he later wrote, “We’d long been confused by the president’s policy of accommodation and appeasement toward Russia. . . . This time the issue was the president’s inexplicable hostility toward a U.S. partner crucial to our Russia strategy: Ukraine.”[\[991\]](#)

The White House had put a temporary hold on \$400 million worth of aid to Ukraine. In Vindman’s judgment, “Not only was it a 180-degree turn from the stated policy the entire U.S. government supported, but it was also contrary to U.S. national-security interests in the region.” He went on and on about their fears that the president might make “an impulsive decision that could throw carefully crafted policy—official policy of the United States—into total disarray.”[\[992\]](#)

Who in the hell did this guy—President Trump—think he was anyway? “The official Ukraine policy was, in fact, a matter of broad

consensus in the diplomatic and military parts of the administration. What exactly, we wondered, was the president doing?”

Vindman and his colleagues had held a deputies committee meeting, chaired by the Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger. Vindman remained certain their “interagency” consensus far outranked the decisions of the elected president and chief executive of the government’s departments. Trump’s job was to obey the commands of this lieutenant colonel on the NSC: “I knew the president had clear and straightforward talking points—I’d written them. He was to congratulate Zelensky, show support for Ukraine’s reform and anti-corruption agenda, and urge caution regarding the Russians.” Instead, “[t]he president wasn’t using my talking points at all. . . . As the conversation progressed, my worst fears about the call kept being reconfirmed. Off on a tangent of his own, the president was aggravating a potentially explosive foreign-policy situation.”[\[993\]](#)

If the president wanted to change American foreign policy, well that was just too damn bad, declared the O-5 from the deputy’s committee meeting. Vindman says he immediately started planning for how he could get National Security Advisor Bolton or Secretary of State Pompeo to intervene with Trump.

Vindman also said, “It may seem surprising that my colleagues and I were busy thinking up ways to pursue a Ukraine policy out of sync with the direction that the president of the United States himself now seemed to be taking.” But, he rationalized, “[t]he policy of U.S. support for Ukraine had remained in place all along, with the unanimous consent of the secretary of state, all the Cabinet deputies, and bipartisan congressional leadership,

including Trump's most loyal followers." This was obviously meaningless nonsense. None of those people's authority outranked the president on this question, nor all of them combined either. Still, Vindman said, "people far senior to me" did not take Trump's orders seriously either. "Because Tim Morrison, my new boss at NSC, had also directed that we continue on course and not treat anything the president might say as a change in policy, there was really nothing else to do."

As far as rationalizing White House employees ratting on the president for what he said in a phone call, Vindman claimed that "the president's bringing up such an allegation against a political rival, or any American citizen at all, and demanding an investigation on a call with a foreign head of state was crossing the brightest of bright lines." Vindman failed to cite any law the president was breaking. The bright line he referred to was just his own opinion.

Vindman then quoted Trump on the phone call: "A lot of people want to find out about that," he told Zelensky. "So whatever you can do with the attorney general would be great. Biden went around bragging that he stopped the prosecution, so if you can look into it."

The arrogance of this lowly dual-citizen staffer is impressive. He simply embellished this statement into something it was not. He claimed the president had demanded Zelensky, "in essence, manufacture compromising material on an American citizen in exchange for that support . . . in a wholly improper effort to subvert U.S. foreign policy in order to game an election."[\[994\]](#)

“In essence,” in this context was a lie. Vindman was begging the question and assuming Biden’s innocence, then further imagining that Trump simply must agree with him about that and therefore was asking Zelensky to find what he knew what was not there. Again, Vindman invoked the authority of “U.S. foreign policy,” as determined by “the interagency” of a bunch of lowly staffers on the deputies’ committees of the NSC, as the true authority in Washington.

Vindman made himself very clear in his statement to Congress during the impeachment hearings. “I realized that if Ukraine pursued an investigation into the Bidens and Burisma, it would likely be interpreted as a partisan play which would undoubtedly result in Ukraine losing the bipartisan support it has thus far maintained,” he said. The president could not be allowed to determine policy. The “interagency” decided they would stop him.[\[995\]](#)

While it was unseemly for the president to go that far in asking a foreign nation to “look at” a relation of his presumed frontrunner challenger in the upcoming election, there was no extortion on the call whatsoever. Besides, the gas company Burisma’s hiring of Hunter Biden was corrupt on its face. His company Rosemont Seneca was paid more than \$1 million for no service rendered beyond political cover and obstruction of justice. And despite all the spin by the Democrats and permanent establishment about Shokin’s corruption, there was every reason to suspect that Biden had him fired to protect the company that had hired his son for exactly the purpose of gaining political cover against pending prosecutions.

Again, the arrangement had been investigated by Obama and John Kerry's State Department due to "concerns among . . . officials at the time that the connection could complicate Vice President Biden's diplomacy in Ukraine," officials told the *Times*.[\[996\]](#) Any nonpartisan observer might wonder why they did not refer the matter to the U.S. Justice Department as well as Ukrainian authorities. Secretary Kerry's stepson Christopher Heinz broke off his relationship with Hunter Biden and Devon Archer as soon as this caper began.[\[997\]](#) Vice President Biden's insistence on the firing of the prosecutor looking into the company would certainly raise the question in any fair person's mind whether important cases shut down with his firing might need to be reexamined.

## **Impeachment**

No witnesses at the impeachment hearings demonstrated the implementation of any quid pro quo either. The media said for weeks that Gordon Sondland, then-ambassador to the EU, could prove an impeachable-level extortion attempt by the president, as he had supposedly passed the threat on to the Ukrainians.[\[998\]](#) But under oath Sondland admitted, "I never heard from President Trump that aid was conditioned on an announcement" of investigations into Burisma. "Nobody told me directly that the aid was tied to anything." He was only "presuming. . . . This was speculation." The Ukrainian who supposedly received these threats from Sondland based on his speculation, Andriy Yermak, said he remembered no such conversation anyway.[\[999\]](#) Sondland said he called the president and asked him directly, "What do you want from Ukraine?" Trump would only

say, according to Sondland, “I want nothing. I want no quid pro quo. I want Zelensky to do the right thing.”[\[1000\]](#)

For his part, Zelensky said the Ukrainians did not notice any delay in the delivery of their weapons and he did not interpret Trump’s comments as an attempt to blackmail him.[\[1001\]](#) “I never talked to the president from the position of a quid pro quo,” Zelensky told *Time* magazine.[\[1002\]](#)

John Bolton, the neoconservative fellow-traveler[\[1003\]](#) and former W. Bush administration State Department official and UN ambassador whom Trump had made national security adviser, was also said to be the lynchpin in the case against Trump. He had referred to the whole thing as a sordid “drug deal” which he wanted no part of.[\[1004\]](#) Though he did not testify at the hearings, Bolton stated in his memoir that Trump “said he wasn’t in favor of sending [Ukraine] anything until all the Russia-investigation materials related to Clinton and Biden had been turned over.”[\[1005\]](#) This seems to be in reference to the Trump-Giuliani red herring theory that the DNC server from the Russiagate hoax had somehow been moved to Ukraine. Or possibly he was just confused because the owner of CrowdStrike, Dmitri Alperovitch, is a Russian-American. This was a strange obsession of the two,[\[1006\]](#) but has no connection to the Bidens, Shokin or the Burisma case at all. In the phone call with Zelensky, Trump seemed more interested in finding out about this story than the firing of Shokin.

But Congress thought not-quite holding up that arms deal was really bad, worse than Trump’s continuation of President Obama and Saudi Crown Prince Salman’s genocide[\[1007\]](#) in Yemen,[\[1008\]](#) worse than

doubling down on a lost war in Afghanistan for four years before finally making a deal to end it,[\[1009\]](#) and much worse than picking a fight with Russia, which is what Trump was actually doing.

In June 2020, Zlochevsky was charged with bribing prosecutors with \$6 million in cash to drop an embezzlement case against him. The *Washington Post* emphasized that the case predated Burisma's hiring of Hunter Biden so he was not accused in this crime. But of course that was the whole point.[\[1010\]](#)

## **Eric Ciaramella**

An important side issue to this topic was the outrageous online censorship of the name of the supposed “whistleblower”[\[1011\]](#) on this case, CIA analyst Eric Ciaramella.[\[1012\]](#) They never gave a good reason for why an intelligence analyst who divulged a confidential conversation involving the U.S. president should remain anonymous in the first place, especially if he really was heroically exposing a crime. There was certainly no law that banned it, nor could there be due to the First Amendment. But when journalist Paul Sperry revealed the identity of the leaker, what Sperry said was already “an open secret in Washington,”[\[1013\]](#) the continued censorship on social media of the man's identity was doubly illegitimate.[\[1014\]](#) What the hell is this? Russia?[\[1015\]](#)

## **Aftermath**

Obviously, the Russiagate and Ukrainegate hoaxes both served to sour relations between the United States and Russia that much more, not that their regime had done anything to deserve it.

## October Surprise

### Hunter Biden's Laptop

In a case related to the Russia- and Ukrainegate scandals, the CIA, FBI and media teamed up to claim that a laptop belonging to Hunter Biden, which he had left at a computer repair shop, was planted by the Russians as “disinformation” before the 2020 election.[\[1016\]](#) It became another huge media scandal: the implacable Russian dictator would stop at nothing to sabotage his servant Donald Trump’s opponent. Had America ever faced an enemy so determined to overthrow our constitutional system of democratic self-government since Rear Admiral Cockburn burned the White House in 1812?[\[1017\]](#) It was Russiagate all over again, in both senses: another completely fake hoax by the national security state; and one that virtually all of D.C. and TV bought and repeated to each other and the nation in fear.[\[1018\]](#)

The computer held dozens of pictures of the younger Biden smoking crack and cavorting with prostitutes, as well as more than 22,000 emails and text messages, including some which seemed to implicate the son in abusing his influence doing business with powerful foreign corporations,[\[1019\]](#) laundering money and committing tax fraud. It also showed that Joe Biden—identified as “the big guy”[\[1020\]](#) in his son’s correspondence and



by Hunter's business partner Tony Bobulinski—as well as Jim Biden, Joe's brother, was involved in and profiting from the son's business dealings.

[\[1021\]](#) While Hunter denied leaving his computer at the repair store, he was a crackhead at the time and federal prosecutors and FBI and IRS agents claimed to have financial statements, cellphone records and a paper receipt that proved it.[\[1022\]](#)

Perhaps most importantly, emails from the laptop showed that Hunter had introduced his father, then the vice president, to Burisma executive Vadym Pozharskyi. “Dear Hunter, thank you for inviting me to D.C. and giving an opportunity to meet your father and spent [sic] some time together. It's realty [sic] an honor and pleasure,” the Burisma executive wrote to the younger Biden.[\[1023\]](#) Again, Archer's testimony shows this was not a reference to a possible future date,[\[1024\]](#) as alleged *Washington Post* “fact checker” Glenn Kessler, had argued at the time.[\[1025\]](#) As one of the many, many updates and corrections to his “fact check” explain, Hunter himself admitted it was true in 2024.[\[1026\]](#) Kessler believed and repeated Joe Biden's lies was all.[\[1027\]](#)

The FBI knew the laptop was real and verified it was legitimate in November 2019—two months after the Trump-Zelensky phone call scandal began[\[1028\]](#) and 11 months before the laptop story broke in the press, according to the sworn testimony of Gary Shapley Jr., an IRS whistleblower.[\[1029\]](#) They took possession of it the next month.[\[1030\]](#) Later, the younger Biden's lawyers officially demanded a criminal investigation into the Republicans who had leaked its contents and federal prosecutors held it up in court and used its evidence against Hunter in his

drug and gun trial in 2024.[\[1031\]](#) And after surveilling Trump adviser Rudy Giuliani, they knew the shop owner, John Paul Mac Isaac, had given him a copy of the hard drive too.[\[1032\]](#) So, the Department of Justice literally had an ongoing criminal investigation of Hunter Biden that included as evidence his laptop which contained proof of Burisma executive's orders to Hunter to get U.S. officials to intervene for him, along with his agreement, and a direct connection between the former vice president and Burisma executives[\[1033\]](#) during President Trump's impeachment over Ukrainegate in early 2020. They kept those facts buried so deeply that when news broke of the laptop more than half a year later, they were able to pretend to believe it had been planted by spies from Vladimir Putin's Russia.

To prevent the Republicans from making the most of this compromising material on the younger Biden, the feds came up with an elaborate scheme to inoculate the press and social media companies against the idea of its legitimacy. They held an exercise at the Aspen Institute where they prepped all the most important leaders of the Silicon Valley tech companies to expect a massive Russian disinformation campaign—"the Burisma leak" in their scenario—right before the election. As Representative Jim Jordan later wrote in a memo to FBI Director Christopher Wray, we now know for certain that the agents who were warning social media companies to suppress the laptop story as "Russian disinformation" were aware they were lying. Compartmentalization was not an issue on this question. The FBI and Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency (CISA) held more than 30 meetings with Silicon Valley companies warning them of coming foreign intervention in the election, including the

danger of a “hack/leak” operation, and “all while in possession of Hunter Biden’s laptop.” They said then-Foreign Influence Task Force (FITF) Section Chief Bradley Benavides, as well as individuals assigned to its Russia Unit, knew the laptop was real, but when a Twitter employee asked them about it, “an analyst in the FBI’s Criminal Investigative Division embedded in FITF began to respond that the laptop was real, when an FBI lawyer interrupted to say that the bureau had ‘no further comment’ regarding the laptop’s provenance.” Soon after that, they decided they would refuse all further discussion of the issue,[\[1034\]](#) which let Clapper and Brennan’s lie stand.

Jordan wrote to Wray: “Put simply, after the FBI conditioned social media companies to believe that the laptop was the product of a hack-and-dump operation, the Bureau stopped its information sharing, allowing social media companies to conclude that the *New York Post* story was Russian disinformation.”

Once the *Post* ran the story,[\[1035\]](#) the plot kicked into gear. Fifty-one ex-intelligence officials—many of them involved in the Russiagate hoax, including former Acting Directors of the CIA Michael Morell and John McLaughlin, as well as former CIA Directors Michael Hayden and Leon Panetta, and former DNI Clapper—claimed the laptop had “the classic earmarks of a Russian information operation.” They even admitted they had no proof of this whatsoever: “We want to emphasize that we do not know if the emails, provided to the *New York Post* by President Trump’s personal attorney Rudy Giuliani, are genuine or not and that we do not have evidence of Russian involvement,” adding, “just that our experience makes

us deeply suspicious that the Russian government played a significant role in this case.”[\[1036\]](#) It was just another case of the unelected secret police interfering in an American presidential election.

For anyone careful enough to actually read the letter, it was obvious they were simply bluffing, and not even claiming to have secret information indicating it was true. But the disclaimers did not matter. Twitter and Facebook[\[1037\]](#) then both actively suppressed the story, with Twitter locking the account of the oldest newspaper in America and preventing anyone from sharing the link to the story, even in private direct messages.  
[\[1038\]](#)

And they did not only lie to the American public, but also briefed the same blatant falsehood to members of Congress as well. Senator Ron Johnson later wrote an angry letter demanding an investigation into this official government disinformation used against the legislature, saying, “If these recent whistleblower revelations are true, it would strongly suggest that the FBI’s August 6, 2020, briefing was indeed a targeted effort to intentionally undermine a Congressional investigation.” He continued, “The FBI being weaponized against two sitting chairmen of U.S. Senate committees with constitutional oversight responsibilities would be one of the greatest episodes of Executive Branch corruption in American history.”[\[1039\]](#)

Morell later admitted to Congress that it was a call from then-Biden campaign adviser Antony Blinken that “triggered” his move to write the letter lying that Russia must have been behind the laptop “to help Vice President Biden . . . because I wanted him to win the election.” He also

admitted that the spies coordinated with the Biden campaign on when and how to release their disinformation to the media and the public.[\[1040\]](#)

Polling data shows this censorship of the true story of Biden's son's corruption was likely the margin of his victory in the 2020 election.[\[1041\]](#) This is plainly criminal behavior by the national police force.

Meanwhile, the major media refused to even attempt to confirm that it was in fact legitimate. As CBS's Leslie Stahl insisted to Trump, "It can't be verified." When asked why not, she simply repeated, "Because it can't be verified."[\[1042\]](#)

Speaking for the whole industry, NPR News's managing editor Terence Samuels justified their total blackout of the true story with the arrogant official statement, "We don't want to waste our time on stories that are not really stories, and we don't want to waste listeners' and readers' time on stories that are just pure distractions."[\[1043\]](#) To be fair, Samuels and most of the other mainstream media players involved in suppressing the story are likely not deliberate liars. They are merely servants of the national security apparatus who believe whatever lies they are told by officials in power, and measure their virtue by their unanimity with their peers and willingness to crush the voices of those who know better. The liberals of NPR News were no less credulous when it came to regurgitating the government's lies during the days of George W. Bush's aggressive wars to remake Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s.[\[1044\]](#)

However, conservative news site the Daily Caller proved the laptop was genuine within days. All that was required was a willingness to attempt to track down those on the receiving end of the younger Biden's emails to

see if they matched.[\[1045\]](#) Eleven months later, Ben Schreckinger, a reporter from *Politico*, the same outlet that had run the outrageously fraudulent lie by the intelligence agents claiming Russia was behind the leak, also proved beyond any doubt that every single thing in that laptop was legitimate.[\[1046\]](#) The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* finally admitted it too—but not until March 2022, nearly a year and a half after the fact.[\[1047\]](#) So CBS's Stahl was wrong that it could not be verified. She and her producers and company executives clearly did not want to do their job and verify the story because they wanted to help the Democrats win the election. They knew the former vice president's son was a corrupt drug addict and were afraid that would hurt Biden's chance to win the presidency. Is there another explanation for Stahl's absurd lie?

A significant number of journalists attended the Aspen tabletop exercise, where the FBI prepped the tech companies to censor the laptop story. These included The Dispatch's Steven Hayes, notorious spreader of disinformation[\[1048\]](#) about Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein's relationship with al Qaeda,[\[1049\]](#) which helped start a war that killed more than a million people;[\[1050\]](#) David Sanger of the *New York Times*, most famous for falsely accusing Iran of running secret nuclear weapons program for the last 20 years;[\[1051\]](#) and *Rolling Stone*'s Noah Shachtman, best known for covering up for his friend, ABC News's James Gordon Meek, after he was indicted[\[1052\]](#) on child pornography charges and revealed to have boasted about his violent crimes against babies and toddlers.[\[1053\]](#) None of these journalists told the public what they knew about the FBI-CIA laptop fraud.  
[\[1054\]](#)

It was later revealed that Antony Blinken had his own personal reason to see the laptop suppressed. He knew it contained evidence that he had lied to Congress about his knowledge of Hunter Biden's role on the board of Burisma and its hiring of the Washington, D.C., lobbying firm Blue Star Strategies.[\[1055\]](#)

The laptop itself was also important, beyond just the story of its suppression, though less important for the story here, it did seem reveal a disturbing amount of co-mingling of finances between the father and the son that would be questionable at least considering Hunter's dealings and attempted dealings with powerful firms in foreign countries.[\[1056\]](#)

## **The Whitmer Kidnap Hoax**

Not only did the CIA, FBI, major media and tech companies all criminally collude to interfere in American democracy by suppressing the laptop, falsely making it look like a Russian plot, but the FBI also launched their own surprise at the beginning of October with their ridiculous lie that a group of Trump supporters had been caught conspiring to kidnap and murder the Democratic governor of Michigan, Gretchen Whitmer. This was a complete hoax. No fewer than 12 of the conspirators involved were FBI informants who set up the others.[\[1057\]](#) But the media storm was intense and surely cost the Republicans a few points on the margin. The Democrats certainly played up Trump's alleged responsibility for the plot as much as they could.[\[1058\]](#)

## **War Games**

## Extending Russia

In June 2019, the Pentagon-sponsored RAND Corporation think tank published a study called “Extending Russia: Competing from Advantageous Ground.”[\[1059\]](#) By “extending,” they meant overextending: provoking, needling, annoying, and finding ways to force Russia to expend time, energy and resources responding to American moves against their interests and otherwise “causing the regime to lose domestic and/or international prestige and influence.” Though it may be hard to prove the Trump and Biden administrations adopted this paper as policy, they obviously did. It is a circumstantial case, but like FDR’s implementation[\[1060\]](#) of the McCollum memo[\[1061\]](#) to provoke Japan into attacking American territory in World War II,[\[1062\]](#) it is a virtually certain one. They followed every bit of it.

The report includes entire sections recommending a full-scale sanctions regime, overthrowing Russia’s crucial ally Belarus, fueling tensions in the South Caucasus, “exploiting Armenian and Azeri tensions,” reducing Russian influence in Central Asia, and “challenging” Russian influence in Moldova’s breakaway province of Transnistria, in what they call a new “great game” in Eurasia, as well as promoting heightened tensions in Ukraine and Georgia.

In fact, the Trump administration reaffirmed the Bucharest Declaration. In Tbilisi, Georgia in August 2017, Vice President Mike Pence said, “President Trump and I stand by the 2008 NATO Bucharest statement which made it clear that Georgia will one day become a member of NATO,” adding, “We strongly support Georgia’s aspiration to become a member of



NATO and will continue to work closely with this Prime Minister and the government of Georgia broadly to advance the policies that will facilitate becoming a NATO member.”[\[1063\]](#)

The RAND report suggests that Trump or his successor could occupy the oil-rich eastern regions of Syria and restart Obama and Brennan’s program of backing Jabhat al-Nusra (a.k.a. Hayat Tahrir al Sham) terrorists in the northwestern Idlib Province so that “Russian costs might be driven up.”

They talk about freedom and democracy and the liberal, rules-based international order of laws and governance, but this is how the War Party really thinks and behaves: “Benefits: Increased U.S. support to the moderate Syrian opposition could perpetuate and intensify a civil war that had begun to wind down, thereby imposing attritional costs on both Russia and Iran.” The RAND authors added, “These costs might be increased if the United States increases its backing for anti-regime fighters. Washington might also resume U.S. assistance to the remaining opposition forces in the west, which the Donald Trump administration has reportedly discontinued.”

They were writing this in 2019, five years after Obama’s and allied support for the Syrian rebels helped to create the ISIS Caliphate in eastern Syria and western Iraq,[\[1064\]](#) and just two years after the U.S. and its allies had finished destroying it again.[\[1065\]](#)

Unlike all the pretend TV experts back then, at least the RAND wonks acknowledged that it would be “difficult to disentangle the moderates from the extremist al Qaeda-linked opposition elements,” and that Syria and Iran would also bomb them, so it would not necessarily drive up Russia’s costs,

while it would certainly hurt our European friends, “not to mention the Syrian people themselves.” Not only that, but “supporting the rebels could run counter to the most prominent objective of the Trump administration’s Middle East foreign policy—fighting radical Islamist terrorism.” It was a polite way of describing proposed treason on behalf of head-chopping lunatics. “As Trump argued, by defeating the Syrian government, the United States would also destroy an enemy of the radical Sunni Islamic terrorist groups.”

The whole report reads like that, absolutely heinous proposals followed by heavy disclaimers about why wise leaders should ignore their ideas. They say, “Most of these measures—whether in Europe or the Middle East—risk provoking Russian reaction that could impose large military costs on U.S. allies and large political costs on the United States itself.”

Along the same lines, the authors also proposed another attempt at regime change in Belarus, whom they called “Russia’s only real ally.” They said, “Successfully promoting regime change and altering the country’s orientation westward would be a real blow to Moscow.” It would hurt their attempts to create an Eastern European Economic Union, make any future action against the Baltics more difficult and would further isolate Kaliningrad. Even if it failed, “the existence of such a campaign would create apprehensions among Russian leaders who have tended to exaggerate the Western role on other color revolutions and even worry about the prospect of such a movement in their own country.” However, they noted, chances of success were low, warning that Russia could intervene militarily,

which “would extend Russia but generally be regarded as a setback for the United States.”

When it came to Ukraine, the RAND authors advised, “Increasing military advice and arms supplies to Ukraine is the most feasible of these options with the largest impact, but any such initiative would have to be calibrated very carefully to avoid a widely expanded conflict.”

Continuing on that provocative yet cautionary note, they wrote that expanded U.S. military aid to Ukraine would increase Russia’s costs “in blood and treasure” to continue operating in the Donbas. Larger numbers of casualties “could become quite controversial at home, as it did when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.”

They warned that if the U.S. did follow that advice and escalate, they could lead Russia to respond by “mounting a new offensive and seizing more Ukrainian territory,” adding that “[w]hile this might increase Russia’s costs, it would also represent a setback for the United States, as well as for Ukraine.” They reiterated, “Increasing U.S. military aid would certainly drive up the Russian costs, but doing so could also increase the loss of Ukrainian lives and territory or result in a disadvantageous peace settlement.” According to the RAND authors, Lieutenant General Ben Hodges, the former commanding general of U.S. Army Europe, “argued against giving Javelin anti-tank missiles to Ukraine for precisely this reason.”

The study also suggested the U.S. could “heighten” “Russian anxieties” and “paranoia” with “periodic bomber deployments to European and Asian bases,” and that “[m]ore-aggressive U.S. and allied patrolling

near Russian naval base areas [in the Black, Baltic and Arctic seas] could cause Russia to adopt expensive countermeasures.”

To get Moscow to take the bait and extend themselves on these various provocations would be difficult and require further careful study because “that can happen only if these strategies play to the fears of leaders or of the Russian people.” They elaborated, “The Russian government will not react to very real threats to its security if it does not perceive them, so strategies need to be tailored to the psychology of Russian leaders and of the Russian people rather than just to objective reality.”

You might think these people are insane. Keeping Moscow constantly in fear of real and phantom coup plots against them and their neighbors, the RAND authors argue, helps “stultify” the development of Russia’s pseudo-democratic political system, “marginaliz[ing] would-be reformers,” which is good, representing one of the “intangible costs” imposed on Russia by the color-coded revolutions.

But no. They know exactly what they are saying, for example acknowledging how “the nightmarish consequences of Russian bombing of Syrian civilians illustrates the significant moral and humanitarian considerations at play with these options and why this is a questionable strategic choice.”

Again, the study’s authors reiterated that they have no idea whether they are coming or going, and warned that following their advice could cause catastrophe: “Russia might escalate, possibly seizing more of Ukraine, supporting further advances of the Damascus regime, or actually occupying a wavering Belarus.” Since doing so would hurt Russia but

America and its allies as well, “any U.S. moves of the sort described in this chapter would need to be carefully calibrated and pursued within some larger policy framework.”

For all the eggheads’ disclaimers about the danger of doing what they suggest, it seems like the Trump and Biden administrations must have only gotten a summary with the warnings cut out. They implemented virtually every part of the program, however careful calibration seems to have had nothing to do with it.

For another example, the authors also advised the U.S. to attempt to obstruct the Russian-German Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which circumvented Ukraine. Even though Europe would still have to buy at least some Russian gas, “at minimum it would have to pass through other countries, such as Ukraine, which would earn transport fees.”

They go on to encourage the further expansion of pipeline networks westward from Azerbaijan, fracking and imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), presumably from the United States.

Authors of another RAND Corporation study from 2019 attempted to explain what the U.S. could do to deter Russia without inadvertently “provoking” the aggression they were trying to prevent. They identified Russia’s major “red lines” as being “NATO enlargement, disruption of the strategic balance, direct threat to eliminate or overthrow the Russian regime, and loss of influence in the near abroad.” They also noted the way these different questions affected each other. For example, NATO expansion “might allow the United States to deploy weapons in new areas that could threaten the strategic balance and the regime in Moscow, and it would also

de facto pull the new member away from Russia's sphere of influence." They said NATO's relationship with Russia had "faltered" due to "NATO intervention in and recognition of Kosovo," the invasion of Iraq, NATO expansion, Bush's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and deployment of missiles systems in Poland and the Czech Republic.

The RAND authors wrote, "Russia is particularly wary of further NATO enlargement, which it perceives as an encroachment on its sphere of influence," adding that "Russia seeks to maintain a buffer zone between its territory and that of NATO, and preserving its sphere of influence is important economically, politically, and culturally." They also wrote, "A broader NATO presence also revives Russia's traditional fear of encirclement by hostile powers that, from the Russian perspective, seek to contain and weaken Russia." Lastly, they added that the Russian establishment was terrified by the color-coded revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Belarus, and feared that it could happen in Moscow, as mentioned in their national security strategy document from 2015.[\[1066\]](#)

## **Interoperability**

The Trump administration increased training and equipment transfers to Ukraine soon after taking office and before the end of the year had one-upped Obama by sending weapons the last president was afraid to.

As journalist Zach Dorfman wrote, citing a former CIA official, "[I]n many ways the U.S.-Ukraine intelligence relationship 'is about as robust . . . as just about anybody else in Europe.'" The Ukrainians provided valuable signals intelligence to the U.S., and in "retaliation" for supposed Russian

intervention in the 2016 election, they started working together on “joint offensive cyber operations” against Russian government targets. This cooperation increased during the Trump years, he reported, because just like in all the wars, Trump devolved decision-making authority down to lower levels in the CIA and NSA from the NSC.[\[1067\]](#)

Approximately 300 U.S. soldiers worked for years to train the Ukrainian army at the Yavoriv Combat Training Center in western Ukraine. “Every 55 days we have a new battalion come in and we train them,” U.S. Army National Guard Capt. Kayla Christopher, spokesperson for the Joint Multinational Training Group-Ukraine, told Defense One. “And at the end of that 55-day period, we’ll do a field training exercise with that battalion.” They were said to have trained seven battalions between 2015 and 2017. Emphasizing the role of other neighboring militaries in the mission, the spokeswoman said, “Our overall goal is essentially to help the Ukrainian military become NATO-interoperable.”[\[1068\]](#)

In February 2019, lawmakers amended the Ukrainian constitution to make membership in the alliance a permanent objective.[\[1069\]](#)

## **The Perpetual Policy**

Trump was either a Russia hawk with the worst of them or he had no control over the Pentagon’s world empire and its policies on such matters. Trump had said he thought the U.S. should try to win over Russia to split them away from China, just as Nixon and Kissinger had split China away from the Soviet Union back in the 1970s, and that the United States should “get along with Russia.”[\[1070\]](#)

But Washington was sure acting like Trump had not just been elected on a peace-with-Russia platform. During Obama's lame-duck period in December 2016, Senators John McCain, Lindsey Graham and Amy Klobuchar went to Ukraine to announce America's continued support. "I believe you will win. I am convinced you will win. And we will do everything we can to provide you what you need to win," McCain told them. Graham added, "Your fight is our fight. 2017 will be the year of offense. All of us will go back to Washington and we will push the case against Russia. Enough of Russian aggression. It is time for them to pay a heavier price."[\[1071\]](#)

Just five months after Trump took office, NATO ran a major war game on the border between Poland and Lithuania.[\[1072\]](#)

In December 2017, his administration released their National Security Strategy. The document said that the War on Terrorism, while not over yet, would now have to take a back seat to great power competition with Russia and China. Invoking the crises the U.S. had previously created in the Bush and Obama years, Trump's top men wrote that "[w]ith its invasions of Georgia and Ukraine, Russia demonstrated its willingness to violate the sovereignty of states in the region. Russia continues to intimidate its neighbors with threatening behavior, such as nuclear posturing and the forward deployment of offensive capabilities."[\[1073\]](#)

The next month, the Pentagon released their National Defense Strategy. After building up the danger from Russia and China, they got to the heart of the matter in plain language: "Our network of alliances and partnerships remain the backbone of global security." Anyone who is not within



America's so-called security umbrella is a "rogue" or "revisionist" state—the enemy.[\[1074\]](#) It is not the international law, which the U.S. and its allies largely have written, including the UN Charter, which sets the terms for the "world order," but America and its allies pursuing their own naked ambition.

Under Trump, the U.S. Navy stepped up its presence in the Black and Baltic Seas and armed U.S. frigates in the Baltic with medium-range cruise missiles that reduce first-strike warning times, which makes the Russians' launch-on-warning defensive posture that much more precarious.

He also increased U.S. Air Force bomber missions right up to the line of Russian airspace in the Baltic, Black, Norwegian as well as the Okhotsk Seas in the Far East, testing their radar and anti-aircraft abilities, essentially dry runs for a nuclear first-strike.

Ralph Clem and Ray Finch reported in *War on the Rocks* that during Obama's second term and under Trump, there were approximately 2,900 reported incidents where NATO and Russian forces came into close proximity to each other, mostly at sea. Their military claimed more than 2,600 foreign surveillance missions near their frontiers just in 2019 and 2020. They said, "Show of force and freedom of navigation activities, especially by the United States and NATO, have pushed aircraft and naval operations into areas that hitherto had seen little, if any, probing by the opposing sides since the height of the Cold War." They cited, for example, greatly expanded B-1, B-2 and B-52 bomber training missions and naval deployments in the Arctic and Black Seas.[\[1075\]](#)

We saw the potential for disaster from these activities in the case of the HMS *Defender*. Just after Biden and Putin met in June 2021, the British sailed their frigate into Crimean territorial waters, provoking a series of Russian fly-bys and warning shots from a coast guard ship.[\[1076\]](#)

## **Paul Whelan**

In December 2018, a former marine named Paul Whelan was arrested for spying in Russia. Admitting to possessing a USB drive that allegedly contained classified data, he claimed to have been set up by an acquaintance. He was convicted in 2020 and given a 16-year sentence. Ambassador John Sullivan and Secretary of State Pompeo protested and denounced the Russian government over it.[\[1077\]](#) It seems possible that the charges were bogus. Would the CIA send an unprotected, Non-Official Cover (NOC) spy just to get a thumb drive that an agency employee with diplomatic cover probably could have obtained just as easily?

Whether or not he was guilty, the relatively small story had an exaggerated effect due to all the Russiagate hype in the media at the time. Ambassador John Sullivan complained that, “I came to Moscow with a charge from President Trump to improve the relationship between the United States and Russia, and I am working hard on doing exactly that.” However, he said, Whelan’s continued imprisonment “represents a significant obstacle in the U.S.-Russia bilateral relationship.”[\[1078\]](#) Whelan was released in a prisoner swap in August 2024.[\[1079\]](#)

## **A Vision of War**

In February 2019, Zelensky's adviser Alexey Arestovich gave an interview which was very revealing about their view of the coming inevitable war. As he described it, neutrality was not an option since both Russia and Poland, at minimum, have ongoing or at least major potential claims to territory in their border regions. And, he said, there was no way to prevent a Russian invasion other than joining NATO. "If we don't join NATO we are finished." But Arestovich also acknowledged that NATO membership would also likely get them attacked. It was better, he reasoned, to start the fight sooner over the threat of joining than to wait for the inevitable and lose the chance forever.

The problem, he said, was that the West was reluctant to bring Ukraine into the alliance due to "all these Yanukovyches," meaning the threat that the pro-Russia side could win an election, leaving an adversary nation inside the Atlantic alliance. But if they fought a war with Russia soon, Arestovich said, they could break the power of pro-Russian forces, prove their usefulness to NATO and end the possibility that they could ever be allies of Russia in the future.[\[1080\]](#) Once Zelensky wins the election, his adviser said, the first thing he should do is seek a Membership Action Plan to join NATO. After the interviewer asked if that would help to end the ongoing civil war in the east, Arestovich answered, "On the contrary, this will most likely prompt Russia to launch a major military offensive against Ukraine, because they'll have to degrade us, in terms of infrastructure, and to turn everything here into devastated territory so that NATO would be reluctant to accept us." When the interviewer asked which was the best choice, Arestovich answered, "Of course, a major war with Russia, and then

to join NATO after our victory over Russia.” He went on to predict with great accuracy what that invasion would look like, including Russia occupying the Donbas, reopening travel and fresh water to Crimea, strikes on infrastructure and so on.

But then, he said, once the wars are over and NATO begins to station troops and equipment there, then Russia will never try it again. He concluded, “The price of joining NATO is likely to be a larger war with Russia, or a sequence of such conflicts.” However, he added, “But in this conflict, we will be very actively supported by the West—with weapons, equipment, assistance, new sanctions against Russia, and quite possibly the introduction of a NATO contingent, a no-fly-zone, etc. We won’t lose, and that’s good.”[\[1081\]](#)

This all sounded much more like a plan than a prediction. His certainty about the move to NATO provoking war and the guarantees of Western assistance raises questions about just whose plan he was referring to.

## **Nord Stream 2**

### **Mercantilism**

The Trump administration also worked overtime to try to prevent the completion of the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, which lay under the Baltic Sea and bypassed Ukraine, a country that has been greatly dependent on Russian transit fees on gas piped to the rest of Europe through the old Soviet “Brotherhood pipeline,” to cover the costs of their own imports. Nord Stream 1 had gone online back in 2011.

[\[1082\]](#) They even went so far as to sanction the Swiss and German firms working on the project. On one hand, as Senator Rand Paul[\[1083\]](#) pointed out in a floor speech, this was about mercantilism: the power of American firms to lobby the U.S. government to intervene so they could sell natural gas to the Germans at a nice markup instead. It was no coincidence that his friend Senator Ted Cruz, Republican from Texas, had been leading the charge against Nord Stream 2 for years. “[T]he shade of mercantilism is dimming the light of experience. Opponents of the pipeline, not surprisingly, are largely from states that compete in the sale of natural gas.” But Paul wisely advised: “History demonstrates that trade and interconnectedness between nations is a barrier to war. Engaging in mutually beneficial commerce coupled with a potent military deterrence is the combination that best promises peace.”[\[1084\]](#)

But that is the War Party’s real point. Blocking the pipeline also seemed to be an effort to prevent the Germans from deepening their ties with Russia. As Lord Hastings Lionel Ismay, NATO’s first secretary-general, said, the purpose of the alliance was “to keep the [Russians] out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.”[\[1085\]](#)

## **Bastiat’s Warning**

Strengthening economic ties between Russia and Germany could lessen their supposed need for the latter’s dependence on the U.S. military and NATO alliance to protect them.

The reader may remember from history that the last two times Russia and Germany fought, it was the worst thing that ever happened. Forty

million people were killed on the eastern front in World War II. That is a conservative estimate.[\[1086\]](#)

No matter the cost in dollars, that pipeline of economic interdependence between these two major powers might have been the greatest invention in the history of peace, valuable beyond measure in money. As the 19th-century French free market economist Frédéric Bastiat said, “[W]hat would be the use of large standing armies and powerful navies if trade were free . . . But that is the concern of the politicians. And let us not confuse, by probing too deeply, their affairs with ours.”[\[1087\]](#)

But the American establishment saw it quite differently. As Trump’s former campaign manager and anti-Russian partisan Paul Manafort put it, Angela Merkel was “Putin’s patsy” for pursuing the Nord Stream 2 deal at the expense of the Ukrainians and for giving Russia such leverage over Germany.[\[1088\]](#) Inverting Bastiat, the War Party worried that too much economic interdependence might give Russia “leverage” against Germany, which could prevent them from doing things like supporting Ukraine.[\[1089\]](#)

## **‘Making Russia Richer’**

In November 2019, Congress passed and Trump implemented sanctions against the German and Swiss firms working on the project in a vain attempt to stop it. The president also ridiculed the Germans in a speech at the UN and elsewhere for supposedly allowing the Russians to obtain such leverage over them through dependence on their resources. He also pointed out the absurdity of Americans being forced to subsidize Germany’s defense from a country they were paying billions for energy. But instead of

telling them they were on their own since they apparently did not feel threatened, he demanded they halt progress on the pipeline.[\[1090\]](#)

## **Broken Treaties**

### **Intermediate Nuclear Forces**

Worst of all, Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Intermediate Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty and the Open Skies Treaty and promised to let New START expire had he been reelected in 2020.

The INF Treaty was Ronald Reagan's great achievement from 1987 that banned all American and Soviet land-based nuclear or nuclear-capable missiles of short and medium range—500 to 5,500 kilometers (300 to 3,400 miles).[\[1091\]](#) This meant the withdrawal of all American Pershing ballistic missiles and Tomahawk cruise missiles, as well as Soviet SS-4, -5, -12, -20, and -23 ballistic missiles of short, medium and intermediate ranges[\[1092\]](#)—removing approximately 2,700 from Europe.[\[1093\]](#)

But again, the Mark 41 missile launchers Bush and Obama installed in Romania and Poland, ostensibly meant to fire defensive missiles, also fit medium-range Tomahawk cruise missiles, which can be tipped with H-bombs.[\[1094\]](#) So the U.S. broke at least the spirit of the INF Treaty first.[\[1095\]](#) The State Department tried to dispute it, saying the software was not compatible,[\[1096\]](#) but MIT rocket scientist Theodore Postol refuted their claims, explaining that the smart canisters for several different types of missiles communicate with the launch system automatically when plugged in,[\[1097\]](#) analogous to a USB drive in your computer. He added, “An

upgraded Tomahawk with a nuclear warhead, if based at U.S. Aegis sites in Eastern Europe, could be used to implement a near-zero warning nuclear strike on multiple Russian targets.” Postol said, “This capability is what the Russian government fears. And rightly so, because the capability is far from theoretical. It is a capability the Aegis system was designed to accommodate.” He added that Washington would also “strenuously object if Russia were to deploy a similar kind of system within the area covered by the INF Treaty. It is therefore hard to see why Russia would not be concerned about such a U.S. system and its substantial offensive breakout capabilities.”[\[1098\]](#)

Back in 2004, U.S. Army Col. Douglas Macgregor recommended that the U.S. set up an inspection regime with the Russians in Romania so they could see with their own eyes that only limited numbers of anti-ballistic missiles were installed there and not take them as a threat. His advice was dismissed.[\[1099\]](#)

Nuclear weapons policy expert Joe Cirincione, widely regarded as America’s most articulate defender of Vladimir Putin’s point of view on this subject, explained:

I was on the advisory board in the State Department during the Obama years. I heard the Russian complaints, and they were brushed off by State Department officials as “ridiculous,” the same way Reagan thought it was ridiculous that [they believed] we would ever attack Russia. Obama officials said, “No, NATO is a defensive alliance.” Well, it doesn’t look defensive to Russia. And we don’t need these



weapons. They're serving no purpose. So what is the point of keeping those interceptors in Poland and Romania? It looks like you're preparing for an attack on Russia.[\[1100\]](#)

The same was true with the ships in the Baltic Sea, which also employed possible dual-use launchers, in those cases in fact armed with Tomahawks. Russia then developed some new missiles designated SSC-8 by the U.S., apparently also the land-based version of their seaborne medium-range cruise missiles.[\[1101\]](#) These were credibly alleged to also be in violation of the treaty—but were only intended for deployment near Russia's frontier with China.[\[1102\]](#) In 2013, Putin said, “Nearly all of our neighbors are developing these kinds of weapons systems,” and that Gorbachev's decision to enter the deal was “debatable at best.”[\[1103\]](#) That should have only been a reason for U.S. objections and demands and possibly new negotiations, or perhaps some other low-level response to attempt to achieve a positive outcome. Unfortunately, that is why the U.S. wanted out of the treaty too, so they could deploy medium-range missiles in the Pacific against China.[\[1104\]](#) So instead of trying to find a way to negotiate, this important Reagan-era treaty that had kept medium-range nuclear missiles out of Europe for 30 years was now dead. Of course, it was President W. Bush's decision to quit the ABM Treaty and install alleged defensive missile sites in Poland and Romania that had started it all.

Richard Burt was a former U.S. chief negotiator of the START Treaty. He told the press, “The overwhelming view of people, not only in the United States and Russia but around the world, will be that it was the

United States that killed this treaty.” He lamented that “[t]he handling of this decision is just simply god-awful.”[\[1105\]](#)

For what it is worth, the Russians denied they were in violation of the treaty and denounced Trump’s move. When Trump’s National Security Advisor John Bolton—the same man who had advised President W. Bush to tear up the ABM Treaty in 2002[\[1106\]](#) and led the effort to convince Trump to leave this one[\[1107\]](#)—came to Moscow to announce U.S. withdrawal, Putin said to him, “As far as I remember, the U.S. coat of arms features a bald eagle that holds 13 arrows in one talon and an olive branch in another, which is a symbol of a peace-loving policy.” But then he asked, “Looks like your eagle has already eaten all the olives; are the arrows all that is left?”

“I didn’t bring any more olives,” Bolton answered.[\[1108\]](#)

As soon as the treaty was dead, Putin suggested a moratorium on the deployment of short- and medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe.[\[1109\]](#) He later added proposals for verification and promised not to deploy missiles unless the West did first. The administration never even answered.[\[1110\]](#)

After Joe Biden was sworn in, Putin asked him to get back in the treaty. After all, Trump was supposed to be this crazy, wildcard nationalist, whereas Biden and the NPT were both solid cornerstones of American foreign policy consensus. But no. The military had wanted to kill Reagan’s treaty for years because, as they said, “weapons the U.S. could develop and deploy if freed from INF treaty constraints . . . would improve the ability of U.S. nuclear weapons to destroy military targets on Russian territory.”[\[1111\]](#)

A report by the Pentagon's Joint Staff and Strategic Command showed that in 2013 the military was already looking at which kind of missiles to develop if the treaty was killed. This was a year before the Obama administration had first publicly accused the Russians of violating the treaty.[\[1112\]](#)

Seizing on alleged Russian violations back in 2015, Obama's Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said "disregard for treaty limitations was a 'two-way street' opening the way for the U.S. to respond in kind."[\[1113\]](#) However, at the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Pavel Podvig made a strong case that while the Russians may have been in "technical violation" of the treaty, it was an arguable point since the language on tests from "fixed" launchers was vague enough to leave room for disagreement or different understandings. But the Americans exploited the discrepancy to scrap the treaty and escalate the nuclear arms race.[\[1114\]](#) As soon as the INF was dead, the Pentagon began testing a new mid-range nuclear missile.[\[1115\]](#) In the summer of 2023, the Marine Corps deployed a Tomahawk battery—using Mark 41 missile launchers—at Camp Pendleton, California, in preparation to move them to the Pacific.[\[1116\]](#)

As Brennan Deveraux from the U.S. Army War College wrote, this terrible policy by Trump was another major factor in Putin's decision-making before invading Ukraine in 2022. America's withdrawal from the treaty made it much more likely that they would deploy similar supposedly defensive missiles in Ukraine. He also recommended that the INF's reintroduction could have been the basis for new talks to avert war.[\[1117\]](#)

## **Open Skies**

The Open Skies Treaty, President Dwight Eisenhower's idea, was finally signed by President Bush Sr. in 1992. It allowed for unarmed overflights of the U.S. and Russia by each other's air forces for surveillance so that each side could reassure themselves the other was not mobilizing for war. Trump tore it up.[\[1118\]](#) After Biden's inauguration in 2021, Putin offered to revive both the INF[\[1119\]](#) and Open Skies[\[1120\]](#) treaties, but the new president refused.[\[1121\]](#)

## **Ukrainian Culture War**

### **Divisions Deepen**

During the "low-level" war period between 2015 and 2022, the Kiev government kept up what seemed like either an absolutely vain attempt to Ukrainize the ethnic Russian south and east with Galician culture or a fairly effective attempt to kick them out of their own country for refusing to give in. A 2016 law required local radio and TV stations to play at least 75 percent Ukrainian language songs and at least 50 percent Ukrainian language television to start as they transition to 100 percent Ukrainian.[\[1122\]](#)

When in 2019, the Polish and Israeli ambassadors complained about the mayor of the Ukrainian city of Ivano-Frankivsk's dedication of a monument honoring the OUN-UPA's Roman Shukhevych, a Nazi collaborator who murdered Jews and ethnic Poles in the war,[\[1123\]](#) the director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance denounced their concerns as "Russian propaganda." Average American internet users

are used to that, but the *Times of Israel* actually seemed a bit shocked at the accusation.[\[1124\]](#)

## **Orthodox Split**

What would a border war be without some religious strife thrown in? The Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate (UOC), which is “canonically linked” to the Russian Orthodox Church and is led by its Patriarch Kirill, began to be marginalized by President Poroshenko’s government in favor of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), led by Patriarch Filaret.[\[1125\]](#)

While there are about 3.6 million Greek Catholics in Ukraine, particularly in the west,[\[1126\]](#) and 40,000 Jews,[\[1127\]](#) the vast majority of the population is Eastern Orthodox. Even though two-thirds of Orthodox parishes in the country belonged to the UOC,[\[1128\]](#) on December 15, 2018, with the support of the Trump administration,[\[1129\]](#) the Orthodox Church of Ukraine split away from the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.[\[1130\]](#) A month later, the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople recognized it as an independent entity, revoking a letter from 1686 that had granted authority over the Ukrainian church to the patriarch of Moscow.[\[1131\]](#)

Then-President Petro Poroshenko had enormous influence over the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and was a strong advocate of the 2018 split.[\[1132\]](#) He called the church a “national security threat,”[\[1133\]](#) and denounced the UOC as “separated from the [Russian] state only on paper” and for supporting Russia’s “revanchist policies.”[\[1134\]](#) He signed a law

forcing the church to change its name to the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) after the split.[\[1135\]](#)

The UOC claimed persecution at the hands of the Ukrainian state, with dozens of its leaders fleeing to Russia,[\[1136\]](#) while the OCU claimed violence on the part of the Russian-backed rebels in the Donbas and Crimea.[\[1137\]](#)

In 2019, Patriarch Filaret himself quit the OCU, rebuking the decree that legitimized the new church and announced he was restoring the old OUC Kyiv Patriarchate (KP).[\[1138\]](#)

In December 2022, Zelensky essentially outlawed the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the new law is “making it impossible for religious organizations affiliated with centers of influence in the Russian Federation to operate in Ukraine.” Further, they reported, “The government has also decided to examine the UOC’s canonical connection to Moscow and the grounds for its control of the Kyiv-Pechersk Lavra [monastery in Kiev], and to apply sanctions to UOC priests linked to Russian intelligence services.”[\[1139\]](#)

## **Afghan Bounties Hoax**

### **Savage Takedown**

In the summer of 2020, *New York Times* reporter Charlie Savage wrote a trash article reporting an obviously fake rumor that the Russians were paying the Taliban bounties to kill U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The story

caused a huge outcry in Washington and on cable TV news. President Trump had refused to do anything about it![\[1140\]](#)

The truth is there was no truth to this at all. The Russians paid the Taliban for the same reason the U.S. spent the last years of the war flying as their “air force,” as the *Washington Post* admitted.[\[1141\]](#) They had won the war, and were a far better bet for fighting ISIS terrorists[\[1142\]](#) than the phony Afghan government the U.S. had created in Kabul, whose intelligence agencies had obviously made up the bounty lie—or beat it out of some poor guy[\[1143\]](#)—in a desperate attempt to get America to stay and support them in power.

Ultimately, the general in charge of the war,[\[1144\]](#) the chief of CENTCOM,[\[1145\]](#) the secretary of defense,[\[1146\]](#) chairman of the joint chiefs of staff,[\[1147\]](#) the Pentagon,[\[1148\]](#) the DIA,[\[1149\]](#) the National Security Agency[\[1150\]](#) and even other analysts at the CIA[\[1151\]](#) debunked the claims, as Savage himself was forced to admit.[\[1152\]](#) In the end, all he had were claims from unknown Afghan interrogators who had used unknown methods to obtain this “intelligence” from unknown captives.[\[1153\]](#) Savage’s co-author told MSNBC that “the funds were being sent from Russia regardless of whether the Taliban followed through with killing soldiers or not. There was no report back to the GU about casualties. The money continued to flow.”[\[1154\]](#) So then even if this money existed at all, it still had nothing to do with bounties for murdering U.S. troops.

“I think you have overlearned the lessons of the pre-Iraq War reporting failures—almost 20 years ago now—and see that dynamic as the norm rather than the aberration that it was,” Savage insisted.[\[1155\]](#)

But in a series of articles, the *Times* itself walked back the story nearly to the point of a complete retraction.[\[1156\]](#) In April 2021, President Joe Biden’s White House admitted the story was fake. Even the CIA had given the story only “low to moderate” confidence,[\[1157\]](#) leading the extremely partisan Daily Beast to acknowledge that those who called the story a hoax[\[1158\]](#) “might have been right” after all.[\[1159\]](#)

## **Withdrawal Postponed**

But the bounties hoax was enough to preemptively cancel any attempt Trump might have made to pull out the troops that summer, a possibility he had begun to float in the spring.[\[1160\]](#) All other things being equal, the best choice would have been to leave in the winter when fighting was necessarily at a low point, but leaving in the summer nine months ahead of schedule, and during a long-term ceasefire, would have almost certainly avoided the disaster that took place when Biden postponed the withdrawal to September 2021, trying to evacuate just as the Taliban was marching into the capital city.[\[1161\]](#) Though the story already had made withdrawal a political loser, to make sure, former Vice President Cheney’s daughter and former State Department official[\[1162\]](#) Republican Rep. Liz Cheney teamed up with Democrat Jason Crow to pass an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) to prevent any money from being appropriated for withdrawal from the war.[\[1163\]](#) It was completely unconstitutional grandstanding—as though the president can start any war he wants but lacks the power to remove troops from the battlefield—but it



turned withdrawal into a major controversy,[\[1164\]](#) helping to make an earlier end to the war impossible.[\[1165\]](#)

Regardless, it was another major smear against Russia as the determined, dastardly and implacable enemy of the United States, and all because of how willing Charlie Savage is to pass on obvious lies by the operations side of the CIA that their own analysts did not even believe.

## **Press Your Luck**

### **The Slipper Revolution**

The Trump administration—or at least the U.S. national security establishment during his presidency—tried to overthrow the government of Belarus again in the “Slipper Revolution” of 2020, the gimmick being that President Alexander Lukashenko was a cockroach who needed to be swatted with a slipper.[\[1166\]](#) Blogger and opposition activist Siarhei Tsikhanouski was arrested after announcing his intention to run for president, though his wife Svetlana was allowed to run in his place. On the Georgia 2003 model, U.S.-backed groups,[\[1167\]](#) after losing the August election,[\[1168\]](#) claimed the vote was rigged,[\[1169\]](#) refused to concede[\[1170\]](#) and staged massive and ultimately violent protests for two months.[\[1171\]](#) Hundreds of thousands of protesters turned out, but thousands were arrested and the movement ran out of energy.[\[1172\]](#)

Lukashenko had arrested other prospective candidates as well, so at least in that very real sense the election was unfair. As with several of the previous color-coded revolutions, the U.S.-backed side had sincere

complaints. The problem was that the U.S. and its allies were supporting them, intervening in a sovereign nation's affairs, jeopardizing Americans' security and making their chosen faction even less legitimate than the one they were trying to overthrow, if they were not already. The U.S. government's Radio Free Europe declared Tsikhanouski the victor, with exit polls giving her 80 percent of the vote and Lukashenko less than 6 percent. [\[1173\]](#) Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced the election and the incumbent, [\[1174\]](#) and declared U.S. support for the opposition. [\[1175\]](#) After the putsch failed, Tsikhanouski fled to Lithuania. [\[1176\]](#) Her husband was later sentenced to 18 years in prison on charges of "organizing mass unrest." [\[1177\]](#)

A few months later, National Endowment for Democracy head Carl Gershman gave a speech demanding that the Western nations denounce Lukashenko as illegitimate, add massive sanctions on Belarusian officials at all levels and kick them out of the SWIFT international payments network. He also insisted that the West continue and increase support for the opposition. [\[1178\]](#)

In 2021, the Russian prankster comedians Vladimir Kuznetsov and Alexey Stolyarov, who call themselves Vovan and Lexus, tricked Gershman into admitting that the U.S. backed opposition groups in Belarus and Russia. They also baited Nina Ognianova, leader of the NED's efforts in Belarus, into taking credit for the protests the year before. The *London Times* reported that even though they had been banned by the Russian government, Gershman told them, "We support many, many groups and we have a very, very active program throughout the country, and many of the

groups obviously have their partners in exile.” A senior NED official named Barbara Haig also said, “We have a very ample program in Russia [which] goes even down to the grassroots in provinces outside of Moscow. It is very deep and it is very broad.” Probably not very helpfully, Gershman also said he was “in touch with” Alexei Navalny’s chief aide, Leonid Volkov.

Ognianova boasted that the NED had helped to “inspire” protests in Belarus in 2020. “We believe that this long-term trust building with partners in Belarus has brought [about] the events in Belarus last summer. We don’t believe that this movement came out of nowhere. We have our modest but significant contribution to that.”[\[1179\]](#)

In this case, the attempted revolution not only failed, but backfired. Though Belarus had signed the Union State treaty with Russia in 1999, [\[1180\]](#) Lukashenko had delayed implementing most of it. But after his attempts to make nice with the United States, such as formally reestablishing diplomatic relations and buying nearly 1.5 million barrels of American oil, [\[1181\]](#) only led to an attempted putsch anyway, he then doubled down on his country’s relationship with Russia, signing new agreements on the implementation of the further integration of the two nations’ economies and security forces. [\[1182\]](#)

Geopolitical and military analyst Lyle Goldstein, then at the U.S. Naval War College, said he thought this U.S. intervention in 2020 is what finally forced a change in Russia’s Eastern European strategy toward outright intervention in Ukraine. “Unquestionably, Belarus casts some major shadows over all of this. I think for Putin and the Russian elite that was a . . . kind of existential moment where they considered whether Russia

might be toppled by external forces.” He said “that really unnerved them and made them think that that was time to draw these red lines, which I think they would say they had already drawn, but to color them in in a deeper shade of red.” Goldstein added that the attempted revolution had made the Russian foreign policy establishment that much more aggressive. “The idea [is] that if you don’t try to save your regime and your ideology and your national ethos, then you’ll just be swept up in one of these colored revolutions and you’re going down. So that explains part of it.”[\[1183\]](#)

In New York, Tsikhanouski told the Council on Foreign Relations, “We don’t have a lot of space inside the country. That’s why we are so [grateful for a large] amount of help from outside.” Asked by Thomas Graham, “And have you found support from many of these other democratic activists in Central, [and] Eastern Europe as well, for your movement?”

Tsikhanouskaya answered, that yes, though there were differences, their movement was of a kind with the other color-coded revolutions, also admitting, “We met with some ambassadors from those countries.”[\[1184\]](#)

The NED’s website indicates they spent over \$2.7 million on more than 40 active projects in Belarus just in 2021.[\[1185\]](#) NED’s senior Europe Program officer, Nina Ognianova, boasted on a private call which was later leaked that the organization had trained the groups leading the protests. Gershman added that since they were organizing online and out of the country, there was nothing Lukashenko could do to stop them.[\[1186\]](#)

One must keep in mind that democracy in other countries simply means loyalty to the U.S. government’s goals. As journalist Alan MacLeod noted, the CFR’s English counterpart, the Royal Institute for International

Affairs, showed in their opinion research—and against interest, since they have long supported regime change in Belarus[\[1187\]](#)—that in 2021 only 10 percent of Belarusians believed Tsikhanouskaya would make a good president.[\[1188\]](#) Perhaps this is because, as MacLeod noted, Tsikhanouskaya has asked for the West to do more to overthrow Lukashenko, saying “I think it’s high time for democratic countries to unite and show their teeth.” Gershman, the chief of the NED for decades, said the U.S. continues to work “very, very closely” with her.[\[1189\]](#) Avowed treason is not typically a great campaign point. But Gershman is the expert, after all.

Shortly after, the London Sunday *Times* claimed the U.S. was training a Belarusian terrorist group called Bypol in Poland, including hundreds of fighters and plotters, for the next time they try to overthrow the government in Minsk. One of the leaders of the plot “believes the protests were unsuccessful in 2020 because they were no match for the well-trained and well-armed security forces. Next time things will be different.” The *Times* explained that their members had already successfully sabotaged railways transporting troops to the front and blown up a Russian plane at an airport with drones. Echoing the failed planners from the Cuban Bay of Pigs disaster of 1961, a young Belarusian fighter told the paper, “Whether we are ready or not, there will be a moment when the Russian federation leaves. Then we’ll be ready to enter. I am sure that even people without any training will stand up and fight.”[\[1190\]](#)

Harvard’s Stephen M. Walt said in May 2022: “The more the United States is willing to violate the principles it claims are so important, the more

that other states are going to try to take actions to make it harder for the United States to do that.” He added, “Whether or not the United States ever ultimately intends to [come after Russia], they are going to have to hedge, because it’s a realist world where every country is ultimately responsible for trying to safeguard its own security.”[\[1191\]](#)

# Joe Biden

“So, Ukraine is a country in Europe. It exists next to another country called Russia. Russia is a bigger country. Russia is a powerful country. Russia decided to invade a smaller country called Ukraine. So, basically, that’s wrong, and goes against everything we stand for.”

—Kamala Harris

“Everybody is afraid to die, but we try to make them look at it from a different perspective.”

—Ukrainian military recruiter

“Russia will suffer a strategic defeat no matter what short-term tactical gains it may make in Ukraine.”

—Antony Blinken

“I don’t know about decades but at least years, for sure.”

—General Mark Milley

“The Russians are dying. It’s the best money we’ve ever spent.”

—Lindsey Graham

“There are no more ‘innocent,’ ‘neutral’ Russians anymore.”

—Michael McFaul

“He went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders.”

—Jens Stoltenberg

“Patriot missile for air defense batteries, made in Arizona. Artillery shells manufactured in 12 states across the country, in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Texas. And so much more. You know, just as in World War II, today patriotic American workers are building the arsenal of democracy and serving the cause of freedom.”

—Joe Biden



# War Horse

## New START

Joe Biden came to power seemingly determined to increase tensions with Moscow. Within his first two months in office, the new president vastly increased provocative naval missions in the Black Sea,[\[1\]](#) sent B-1 bombers to Norway,[\[2\]](#) had F-15s practice cruise missile launches over the Baltic Sea,[\[3\]](#) leveled blatant personal insults against Putin[\[4\]](#) and added new sanctions.[\[5\]](#)

In 2021, he kept U.S. warships deployed in the Black Sea for 182 days,[\[6\]](#) an increase of 125 percent over Trump's last year in office,[\[7\]](#) and expanded weapons transfers to Ukraine.[\[8\]](#) On the other hand, Biden did save New START, the last standing treaty limiting overall and deployed nuclear weapons,[\[9\]](#) extending it until 2026.[\[10\]](#) And he also finally gave up and lifted the sanctions on firms building the Nord Stream 2 pipeline,[\[11\]](#) at least until the worse war began.[\[12\]](#)

## Staying Relevant

Early in his presidency, Biden vowed to reinforce America's "sacred" commitment to NATO in Europe to roll back Russia.[\[13\]](#) It has to be something. After helping hand over Kosovo to a bunch of terrorists and gangsters,[\[14\]](#) losing a 20-year war in Afghanistan to the Taliban[\[15\]](#) and turning Libya into a warring den of militias,[\[16\]](#) slavers[\[17\]](#) and bin

Ladenite terrorists,[\[18\]](#) the bureaucrats at headquarters were getting nervous. Reminiscent of the conversation back in 1993 about the alliance's desperate need for a mission after the first Cold War, a *New York Times* headline from 2020 says it all. "NATO Needs to Adapt Quickly to Stay Relevant for 2030, Report Urges."[\[19\]](#) If the NATO alliance is not relevant, then why do we have it at all? How can its mission be "sacred" when they had to hold an emergency study group to decide what it even is? The answer they came up with? China. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization's new reason for being is China. "Out of area or out of business," as they say. Only now they got lucky and a new lease on life in Eastern Europe as well.

The *Times* updated the narrative in March 2022, quoting Obama's former Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes: "It feels like we're definitively in a new era. The post-9/11 war on terror period of American hubris, and decline, is now behind us." Rhodes added, "We've been trying to get to a new era for a long time. And now I think Putin's invasion has necessitated an American return to the moral high ground."[\[20\]](#) *Times* columnist and neoconservative hawk Bret Stephens[\[21\]](#) demanded Americans forget all their government's sins of foreign intervention of the recent past, at least from Vietnam up through the final withdrawal from Afghanistan in the summer of 2021, and to think instead of Yorktown and the Berlin Airlift as they poured a hundred billion dollars in weapons into a hot war with a nuclear superpower.[\[22\]](#)

David Ignatius wrote that at 2022's Munich Security Conference, "[d]espite the grim news from Ukraine, there was an almost-celebratory

tone among many of the Western leaders gathered. Many speakers boasted that the NATO alliance was back, after a soggy period described . . . as ‘Westlessness.’”[\[23\]](#) This is how the Bush and Obama governments had talked about the Afghanistan war as well. It was a “team-building exercise” for the Atlantic alliance.[\[24\]](#) In other words, these murderous policies exist in part because all the vested interests want to stay paid without having to get a real job. It is understandable but unacceptable.

## 2021

### **Reckless Joe**

One could probably write an entire book focusing just on the Biden and Zelensky administrations’ roles in fomenting the 2022– Russian-Ukrainian war in the former’s first year in office. Washington’s absolute failure to correctly “calibrate”—their term—military support for Ukraine in 2021 is a major part of the story. Even the RAND Corporation, in its “Extending Russia” study, gave stark warnings about the potential risks if their suggestions were acted upon.[\[25\]](#) One might guess Biden’s staff had only read a version of the memo with all the warnings redacted. Or perhaps they were not so opposed to having a war.

### **Knocking**

In the fall of 2020, President Zelensky issued Ukraine’s new National Security Strategy, which abandoned language indicating a willingness to

negotiate with Russia and adopted a much harsher stance. The document condemned Russian “aggression” eight times and laid out a strategy to convince NATO to offer them a Membership Action Plan.[\[26\]](#)

In February, Zelensky declared that he would build up Ukraine’s navy in the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov[\[27\]](#)—waters claimed by Russia since 2014, a dispute which had already come to a head during the Kerch Strait incident of 2018.[\[28\]](#)

In March, NATO launched its large-scale “Defender Europe” exercises, [\[29\]](#) which would last through June, including two dozen nations and joint land, sea and air force drills.[\[30\]](#) Zelensky announced his government’s official “Crimean Platform” soon after, which set out a “strategy of de-occupation and reintegration of the temporarily occupied territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol.”[\[31\]](#) Putin explicitly cited this in his declaration of war a year later.

The U.S. and UK both also increased surveillance flights over the Black Sea after America’s European Command elevated its watch condition from “possible crisis” to “potential imminent crisis”—its highest alert level—over Russian troop movements near the Ukrainian border.[\[32\]](#)

On April 15, Ukraine’s ambassador to Germany threatened to make nuclear weapons if the nation was denied entry into NATO.[\[33\]](#)

But Biden’s National Security Council held up two arms shipments to Ukraine, “arguing the move could be perceived as escalatory and only exacerbate tensions with Russia,” according to *Foreign Policy* magazine. In both cases they ultimately went ahead anyway.[\[34\]](#) Still, this seemed to

reveal some sort of debate inside the administration at the time about how hard to push their luck.

## **Medvedchuk**

Viktor Medvedchuk is an influential Ukrainian businessman, friend of Vladimir Putin and father of the Russian president's goddaughter, Daria. In October 2020, Medvedchuk's opposition political alliance won elections in six regions. In response, Zelensky banned three TV channels owned by Medvedchuk's associate Taras Kozak,[\[35\]](#) ZIK, NewsOne and 112 Ukraine. [\[36\]](#) In May 2021, his party was outlawed, and he was charged with treason and confined to house arrest. The investigation against him had been opened in 2019 when he had first proposed enhanced autonomy for the Donbas in an attempt to end the war.[\[37\]](#)

Journalist Simon Shuster explained that as soon as Biden was sworn in and Zelensky started cracking down on opposition media, "Ukraine announced that it had seized the assets of Medvedchuk's family. Among the most important, it said, was a pipeline that brings Russian oil to Europe, enriching Medvedchuk . . . and helping to bankroll Medvedchuk's political party." After Zelensky failed to secure Western Covid vaccines and rejected a deal brokered by Medvedchuk to procure supplies from Russia, the president's approval ratings plummeted and those of Medvedchuk's alliance started to grow. So Zelensky launched a "deoligarchization" crackdown, which in practice meant acting like Putin and freezing out the disloyal billionaires, but letting Western business take control instead.[\[38\]](#) The

Biden administration welcomed Zelensky's purge, calling it a legitimate move to "counter Russian malign influence."[\[39\]](#)

The Kremlin saw Medvedchuk's arrest as a major provocation.[\[40\]](#) In what seemed to be a direct reaction, Putin deployed thousands of paratroopers to the border for exercises[\[41\]](#) and began increasing military forces in Crimea and adjacent to the Donbas, the first in what became the major buildup for the invasion months later. U.S. officials threatened more sanctions and more weapons for Ukraine in response.[\[42\]](#)

## **An Anti-Russia**

Also in May, the U.S. and NATO held an extensive war exercise[\[43\]](#) as part of "Defender Europe," including live-fire rocket artillery drills in Russian neighbor Estonia.[\[44\]](#) And Putin complained in a statement to the UN Security Council that the U.S. was turning Ukraine into "an anti-Russia, a territory from which . . . we will never stop receiving news that requires special attention in regard to protecting the national security of the Russian Federation." He noted the purging of Ukrainian media and selective accusations of pro-Russian sentiment among the Ukrainian elite, saying this was meant to prevent peace in the east and normal relations with Russia.[\[45\]](#)

## **Biden Meets Putin**

On June 14, NATO "reconfirmed" its commitment to Ukraine in the Bucharest Declaration.[\[46\]](#) But Biden also said the Minsk II deal should be

implemented to end fighting in the Donbas and poured cold water on NATO membership for Ukraine due to corruption and the opinions of other allies.

[\[47\]](#) Two days later, Biden met Putin in Geneva. He told the media that Putin “is concerned about being, quote, ‘encircled.’ He still is concerned that we, in fact, are looking to take him down.”[\[48\]](#) It is enough to show that Biden knew better than to proceed with his belligerent policy before continuing on regardless.

Three days later, the Russians again warned that NATO membership for Ukraine was a “red line” for Russia[\[49\]](#) after the alliance again affirmed eventual membership for Ukraine and its sovereignty over Crimea.[\[50\]](#) Britain then agreed to increase Ukraine’s naval capability, including with new weapons, training, new bases and two minesweeping ships.[\[51\]](#)

## **Sea Breeze**

In July, 39 countries participated in the massive Sea Breeze exercises in the Black Sea, which included 30 warships and 40 aircraft from NATO states, as well as Ukraine,[\[52\]](#) and aimed to boost interoperability between the participants.[\[53\]](#) A British destroyer again breached Russia’s claimed territorial waters, prompting angry Russian warning shots.[\[54\]](#)

## **Putin’s Essay**

Putin also published an essay on the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations which made it clear that he considered Ukraine to still be within Russia’s sphere of influence, lamenting that the two nations were once part of the

same civilization, the Ancient Rus, whose center had been in Kiev. Putin's real point was to complain that Lenin and Stalin had put millions of ethnic Russians inside southern and eastern Ukraine 100 years ago, and Crimea 30 years later, when they were all answerable to Moscow, but after 1991 were left behind as a resented minority in a country that did not respect them. "It is no longer important what exactly the idea of the Bolshevik leaders who were chopping the country into pieces was. We can disagree about minor details, background and logics behind certain decisions. One fact is crystal clear: Russia was robbed, indeed," he wrote.[\[55\]](#) Commenting on Putin's essay, historian Richard Sakwa said that "his main point that the Soviet Union gave form to the modern Ukrainian state was correct, with land added from Russia and Ukraine's western neighbours." He added, however, that Putin had "suggested that Ukraine was not a real nation and that Ukrainians were not a real people, which was quite a different and plainly wrong proposition."[\[56\]](#)

Putin went on to detail the consequences of Ukraine's war against the rebels in Donetsk and Luhansk for the preceding seven years and said he was "more and more convinced . . . Kiev simply does not need Donbas." He noted that the locals would not accept the rule of the post-Maidan government on its current terms, and claimed the West would never allow the Minsk deals to be implemented, because to do so would "contradict the entire logic of [Kiev's] anti-Russia project. And it can only be sustained by the constant cultivation of the image of an internal and external enemy. And I would add—under the protection and control of the Western powers." He cited the rise of Ukrainian neo-Nazi groups, the presence of foreign



advisers embedded in their military establishment and moves to integrate their command and control systems with NATO.[\[57\]](#)

The War Party of course accentuates the most superficial interpretation of Putin's essay: He is just jealous, thinks less of Ukrainians and wants that land for his own glory and that of the new Russian empire.[\[58\]](#) But as always, this is just a coping mechanism for those on the Western side who bear responsibility for provoking this war. They dismiss and omit all of Putin's substantive complaints about U.S. and NATO policy—and for that matter, the simple timeline of events. He did not move in Crimea until the new coup regime threatened Russia's important naval base. And he did not invade and occupy the east for seven years as Washington and Kiev refused to implement the peace agreement they signed, made outlaws out of Ukraine's last prominent Russia supporters, intensified the culture war, escalated the fighting and announced broad new measures toward Ukraine's further integration into the NATO military alliance. After the 2014 coup, Obama had remained somewhat cautious. Though Trump escalated matters, there was goodwill there and it made sense for Putin to wait and see if he would be reelected and a diplomatic breakthrough made possible. But when Joe Biden came to power, determined to play the tough hero forcing the bully to back down, the bully instead decided to come out swinging.

Instead of seeing Putin's warnings as cause to find compromise, the Biden administration only doubled down. Anything else would be “appeasement,” like when British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain failed to prevent World War II.[\[59\]](#) So they continued down the path of

confrontation. In reaction to Putin's essay, Biden authorized another \$60 million in weapons for Ukraine on August 27.[\[60\]](#)

## **Had My Fingers Crossed**

It turns out, as Right Sector neo-Nazi Dimitry Yarosh said in 2019, that Poroshenko signed the Minsk deals just to “play for time” and never meant to implement them.[\[61\]](#)

Former German Chancellor Angela Merkel later told *Der Spiegel* that she also considered Minsk to have been a ruse all along to buy time and prevent Ukraine from being overrun.[\[62\]](#) She repeated this to *Die Zeit*, saying, “[T]he 2014 Minsk agreement was an attempt to give Ukraine time. She also used this time to get stronger. . . . The Ukraine of 2014–15 is not the Ukraine of today.” Merkel cited the battle for Debaltseve in February 2015, saying that “Putin could easily have overrun them at the time. And I very much doubt that the NATO countries could have done as much then as they do now to help Ukraine.”[\[63\]](#)

Former French President François Hollande confirmed it, saying, “Merkel is right on this point. The Minsk agreements stopped the Russian offensive for a while. What was very important was to know how the West would use this respite to prevent any further Russian attempts.” He said in the meantime the West had built up Ukraine's army, and that due to the relative peace, Europe had united to support the effort. “Thus, the time that Putin thought was an asset for him turned out to be, in fact, an opportunity for the Ukrainians.”[\[64\]](#) Hollande confirmed this in a prank call with a Russian YouTube host who was posing as Poroshenko, telling him,

“Everyone thought it was Putin who was playing for time. No, we were playing for time to strengthen Ukraine, to improve its military capabilities.” He added, “[T]hat’s why we should defend the Minsk agreements. . . . They have to be defended because during those seven years, Ukraine got the resources to strengthen itself.”[\[65\]](#)

The real Poroshenko also indicated the deals were never more than a delaying tactic, saying, “I think this was a great diplomatic achievement. Having the Minsk agreement, we kept Russia away . . . from a full-sized war.”[\[66\]](#) He later said the Minsk deals, “gave Ukraine eight years for building up the army, for building up [the] economy, for building up [a] global pro-Ukrainian, anti-Putin coalition.”[\[67\]](#)

Former Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin also said, “Ukraine’s sole objective in signing Minsk-2 was to rebuild the Ukrainian army and strengthen the international coalition against Russia. Read literally, the Minsk Accords are impossible to implement.” Andrei Yermak, President Zelensky’s chief of staff, said the same.[\[68\]](#) In January 2022, the secretary of Ukraine’s National Security and Defense Council, Oleksiy Danilov, said the Minsk agreement meant “the country’s destruction. When they were signed under the Russian gun barrel . . . it was already clear for all rational people that it’s impossible to implement those documents.”[\[69\]](#)

Zelensky also later said the deals were dead upon his arrival in office. When asked if he was under foreign pressure to give in on Crimea or “other territorial concessions,” he said that was why he refused to implement the agreements. He argued the only value in the deals was the official forum they set up for discussion, which was used to negotiate a prisoner exchange.

“But as far as Minsk as a whole is concerned, I told Emmanuel Macron and Angela Merkel: We can’t do it like that.”[\[70\]](#)

It seems reasonable to conclude this was Obama and Trump’s policy as well. It would certainly explain why Obama never attempted to pressure Kiev to implement the deal.[\[71\]](#) And again, the Trump administration accepted the one-sided revision of the agreement which said Kiev had to control the eastern border before any elections could be held, with Amb. Taylor deliberately intervening to prevent Zelensky from implementing the Steinmeier Formula and carrying out the deal as written.[\[72\]](#) However, it is doubtful the Germans and French were truly in on a ruse back then. They were worried about the consequences of the war and trying their best to stop it, hence their various sub-proposals for implementing Minsk II during the eight-year conflict.

But they were not in control. It was pressure from the Americans and the Ukrainian radical right in the Rada that led to the corruption of the Minsk deals in 2015, when they changed the order of implementation to require the Russians to give up control of the border before Kiev would negotiate or allow elections, closing that important off-ramp from a much worse war back when the getting was still good.[\[73\]](#)

## **The Reznikov Plan**

In August 2021, the Rada passed legislation authored by lawmaker Oleksiy Reznikov that codified Ukraine’s doctrine for the reoccupation and reconstruction of the Donbas.[\[74\]](#) As Zelensky’s old friend Sergei Sivokho complained, it treated eastern populations as “conquered people.”[\[75\]](#) The

bill made Ukrainian the only language allowed in official documents or proceedings, permanently barred all state enemies from government employment and ruled out any special status for the Donbas or Crimea. It also banned use of the Russian ruble, “restructured” pension payments to the regions’ elderly and suspended infrastructure spending through 2030. [\[76\]](#) This was the opposite of compromise, and was either meant as a deliberate provocation or they just could not help but openly declare their intent to ruthlessly oppress the people of the east if they regained control of the land, which served as a major new obstacle to peace nonetheless.

Three months later, Zelensky named Reznikov defense minister in preparation for the coming war.[\[77\]](#)

## **State and Defense Double Down**

On August 20, at a press conference with outgoing German Chancellor Merkel, Putin complained that they had agreed about the Minsk deals, and further, they had been ratified by the UNSC, making them international law. Yet, he noted often the “Ukrainian side says one thing, but inside the country it says something very different. In fact . . . top public officials are saying . . . they are not going to comply with the Minsk agreements.”[\[78\]](#)

On August 24, Zelensky held a large military parade in Kiev to mark the 30th anniversary of Ukraine’s declaration of independence from the USSR, which included representatives from the U.S., British and Polish militaries. After describing advances in Ukraine’s recent arms buildup in his speech, he announced that “[s]uch a country becomes a NATO partner with enhanced opportunities.”[\[79\]](#)

Days later, the Pentagon debuted the new U.S.-Ukraine Strategic Defense Framework “to advance the military capabilities and readiness of Ukraine to preserve the country’s territorial integrity, progress toward NATO interoperability, and promote regional security.” The plan described a new “closer partnership of defense intelligence communities in support of military planning and defensive operations.”[\[80\]](#)

Zelensky visited Washington soon after and asked to begin negotiations toward Ukraine’s admission to NATO.[\[81\]](#) The State Department issued a “Joint Statement on U.S.-Ukrainian Charter on Strategic Partnership,” announcing its “elevated status,” boasting that the U.S. had already given Ukraine \$2.5 billion in military aid[\[82\]](#) and promising \$60 million more.[\[83\]](#)

They absurdly claimed that “Ukraine’s success is central to the global struggle between democracy and autocracy.” But that is the same thing Biden said about Iraq War II: “I am certain the President’s right about how important it is to succeed. This is a seminal event in the Middle East. . . . Walking away from this is not an option, in terms of our security.”[\[84\]](#)

The administration also again officially rejected Russian claims to Crimea and repeated their announcement of the new, finalized Strategic Defense Framework, which emphasized that “the United States supports Ukraine’s right to decide its own future foreign policy course free from outside interference, including with respect to Ukraine’s aspirations to join NATO.” They added, “We intend to continue our robust training and exercise program in keeping with Ukraine’s status as a NATO Enhanced Opportunities Partner.”[\[85\]](#)

At the same time, Ukraine hosted the Rapid Trident exercise with a focus on building interoperability with NATO.[\[86\]](#) “In unity and with Rapid Trident, we have opened a new page of history . . . for peace, happiness and prosperity,” said Ukrainian Maj. Gen. Ihor Palagnyuk, chief of the training of the Land Forces Command. U.S. Army Col. Michael Hanson, the drill’s co-director, agreed: “Our main job at Rapid Trident is to provide the methods and the tools to help enable . . . both partnerships and interoperability amongst partner nations.”[\[87\]](#)

## **The Fall of Kabul**

It is not known what the Kremlin made of Biden’s completely botched withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021. Just as the author predicted beginning in 2008,[\[88\]](#) and in *Fool’s Errand* in 2017,[\[89\]](#) once U.S. forces withdrew, the Taliban walked right into the capital city of Kabul, facing virtually no resistance from the phony government and military the U.S. had built there at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives[\[90\]](#) and trillions of dollars[\[91\]](#) over the previous generation. Trump had negotiated a deal to withdraw by the first of May.[\[92\]](#) Who knows if Trump would have stuck with it if reelected, but Biden, by banking on the strength of the Afghan National Army and delaying the withdrawal for four months, set himself up[\[93\]](#) for a deadly and humiliating catastrophe of 13 servicemen and 170 local Afghans slaughtered[\[94\]](#) by ISIS-K in a deadly suicide attack at the gates of the Kabul airport,[\[95\]](#) and then 10 more in a drone raid against an innocent family in a mistaken attempt to stop another.[\[96\]](#)

It is plausible that Putin had factored the weakness Biden demonstrated into his assessment of whether it was a good time to go ahead with the invasion of Ukraine.[\[97\]](#)

## **Turkish Drones Join the Fight**

In September, Russia and Belarus held their Zapad 21 exercises, practicing how to repel a NATO intervention in Belarus.[\[98\]](#)

Meanwhile, the war continued on in the Donbas with approximately 93,000 ceasefire violations on both sides and 16 civilian deaths in 2021, according to the OSCE.[\[99\]](#) In early 2022, the UN reported that 81 percent of the 381 civilian casualties caused by the fighting from 2018 to 2021 occurred in separatist-held areas.[\[100\]](#)

At the end of October, the Ukrainian military deployed Turkish Bayraktar TB2 drones against the Donbas rebels[\[101\]](#) in violation of Minsk II. As the *Washington Post* said, “For Russia, it was another signal that Ukraine is boosting its arsenal to potentially change the military balance in the region—and why Moscow is demanding NATO end all defense cooperation with Ukraine and other former Soviet republics such as Georgia.”[\[102\]](#)

These were the same drones that were described as crucial to Azerbaijan’s victory over Armenia in the Nagorno-Karabakh war of 2020.[\[103\]](#) A representative of the self-styled Luhansk People’s Republic (LPR), Rodion Miroshnik, accused the Ukrainian government of violating the Minsk deals. The Germans also condemned the strikes, saying they were “very concerned” about them.[\[104\]](#) Richard Sakwa later said that with the



new drone strikes and a large new buildup of Ukrainian troops, “there was genuine alarm in Moscow that [Kiev] could do what Croatia did in Operation Storm, in attacking the Serbian enclaves way back in the mid-1990s.”[\[105\]](#)

Also in October, NATO expelled eight Russian diplomats from its Brussels headquarters based on the accusation they were spies. Russia suspended its mission to the alliance in response.[\[106\]](#)

The *Post* revealed Russia’s buildup on Ukraine’s borders and threat of invasion at the end of the month.[\[107\]](#) This began a major public relations campaign by the administration to loudly proclaim Putin’s intentions and warn him not to try it.

## **Rules of the Road**

On November 2, CIA Director William Burns went to Moscow to warn against an invasion.[\[108\]](#) *Newsweek*’s William Arkin later wrote that since Burns could not talk Putin out of war, they at least agreed upon some rules almost four months in advance. “In some ironic ways . . . the meeting was highly successful,” an intelligence official told Arkin, adding, “the two countries were able to accept tried and true rules of the road.” They established that the U.S. would not directly fight or attempt to overthrow Putin and the Russians would keep hostilities confined to Ukraine.[\[109\]](#)

Also in November, after the administration had already announced Russia’s threatening military buildup, they still went ahead and signed the “U.S.-Ukraine Charter on Strategic Partnership” they had announced back in September. It declared that based on the Bucharest Declaration of April

2008, Washington would support “Ukraine’s ability to defend itself against threats” and “counter armed aggression,” while reaffirming Kiev’s NATO aspirations. But they also made it clear they would pick the fight, not join it, threatening only sanctions until Ukraine’s borders were restored. That included Crimea, as specified later in the text, which again pledged America’s “unwavering commitment to Ukraine’s sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.” They added, “The United States remains committed to assisting Ukraine with ongoing defense and security reforms,” and vowed to continue to promote interoperability.[\[110\]](#) Biden promised \$200 million in weapons.[\[111\]](#) There would be no attempt at accommodation. That would be “appeasement.” America and NATO would instead dig in their heels, forget anything they might have done to provoke the crisis, and simply continue to “deter,” after that policy had seemingly already failed. Apparently the Kremlin looked at the situation in much the same way. Henri Guaino, a former Sarkozy adviser, wrote that it was this charter which finally “convinced Russia that it must attack or be attacked. It is the ineluctable process of 1914 in all its terrifying purity.”[\[112\]](#)

Later that month, U.S. bombers carried out exercises 12 and a half miles off Russia’s coast, which the latter characterized as rehearsal for a nuclear strike,[\[113\]](#) and added another warship to the Black Sea[\[114\]](#) just days after Putin warned that he considered the U.S. military presence a “serious challenge.”[\[115\]](#)

Samuel Charap of the RAND Corporation urged Biden to seek a diplomatic solution, beginning with pressure on Kiev to implement Minsk

II, which “Ukraine has shown little desire to do since the deal was brokered six years ago.” Though he said Russia’s threats were morally wrong, encouraging Kiev to make the first move could prevent a much worse war and loss of territory. “If Ukraine took visible steps on Minsk that it has thus far refused to take, that would put the onus on Moscow to deescalate and return to the negotiating table.” Charap argued that Biden’s policy of warning Moscow and arming Kiev would likely not be enough to stop the war but that real compromise might.[\[116\]](#) Just the fact this was coming from a top analyst at the famous Pentagon-sponsored think tank indicates it was certainly a debatable question, not the kind of marginal position safe for the administration to ignore. They did anyway.

In public meetings on November 18 and 30, Putin restated his “red lines” and warned that the U.S. and its allies were not taking them seriously. He invoked the possibility of U.S. or NATO missiles being stationed in Ukraine.[\[117\]](#) This did not seem to be a reference to any specific plan, only to what had happened with the anti-ballistic missile systems and dual-use launchers deployed in Romania and Poland. His point being that if the U.S. attempted the same in Ukraine, it would be too late for Russia to react without full-scale war between the powers.

## **Take This Exit**

On December 1, 2021, Putin reiterated his concerns at a ceremony for new ambassadors. He cited NATO’s incorporation of the Eastern bloc and the placement of bases near Russia’s borders, and proposed a new agreement which would forbid expansion or deployment of Western forces in the East.

Since he was dealing with Washington, Putin emphasized, “we need precise, legal guarantees, because our Western colleagues have failed to deliver on verbal commitments. Specifically, everyone is aware of assurances they gave verbally that NATO would not expand to the east.”[\[118\]](#)

The next day, Lavrov explained that added to their longstanding concerns about the missile launchers was the end of the INF Treaty and increased threat of the deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles in Eastern Europe. He also complained that American arms shipments had the negative effect of encouraging Ukraine to refuse to implement the Minsk deals. Lavrov cited the Georgia war of 2008 as proof of how destabilizing the Budapest Memorandum had been and how nonsensical the “Open-Door Policy” was for its insistence that no other nation’s positions be taken into account. They “are playing with fire,” Lavrov said. “I am convinced that they cannot be unaware of this.”[\[119\]](#)

On December 7, presidents Biden and Putin spoke on a video call. According to Shane Harris, from the *Post*, Putin again invoked NATO expansion as a “major factor” in his decision to build up forces at the border. Biden again said Ukraine was “unlikely” to join NATO soon, and that they could reach an agreement about the ABM launchers in Romania and Poland. As Harris said, “In theory, there was room to compromise.”[\[120\]](#)

But the War Party was determined to prevent it. On December 15, the secretary-general of NATO, Norwegian politician Jens Stoltenberg, met

with Zelensky and declared that NATO still stood by the Bucharest Declaration, though “without specifying a time frame.”[\[121\]](#)

## **No Deal**

### **Draft Treaties**

Soon after, on December 17, Putin issued his draft “Agreement on Measures to Ensure the Security of the Russian Federation and Member States of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.” The demands were tough, but ultimately they were at least a reasonable basis to begin real negotiations. Frankly, America should have implemented them long ago.

Putin’s terms included: A “reaffirmation” that the two powers are not adversaries; an agreement to improve communication “to prevent incidents” in the Baltic and Black Seas; a stipulation Russia and all NATO states as of May 1997 will not deploy military forces in any other European state beyond what had been stationed there by that date, other than in exceptional cases with the agreement of all parties; an agreement not to deploy land-based intermediate- nor short-range missiles near each other’s forces—essentially a return to the INF treaty that President Trump had torn up only two years before; a demand to end NATO expansion, including to Ukraine; an end to NATO military exercises in Eastern Europe; and finally, new “security zones” where the allies would respect new limits on their militaries’ presence.[\[122\]](#) There were actually two proposed treaties, one for NATO and one for the U.S. separately.[\[123\]](#) Putin was clearly throwing down the gauntlet, in a case of the most coercive diplomacy. But he was not

threatening the United States, only demanding that Washington cease threatening him.[\[124\]](#)

Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder advised, “Nobody wants to hear it in the West: No matter who is in power, there is a conviction in Russia that the West wants to spread further with NATO, in the post-Soviet space.” He added, “No one who is at the head of Russia will allow this. This danger analysis may be emotional, but it is real in Russia. The West must understand this and accept compromises accordingly; otherwise, peace will be difficult to achieve.”[\[125\]](#)

## **1997? Ancient History**

The media ridiculed Putin’s references to Bill Clinton’s promises made in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997, which stipulated there was to be no “additional permanent stationing of substantial combat forces” in new NATO member states.[\[126\]](#) Again, the Washington Post said in January 2022 that “Parts of the texts were so unrealistic that many Western lawmakers dismissed the Russian approach as unserious. Among other things,” they said, “Russia demanded the United States and its Western European military allies agree not to put weapons or forces in any of the former Warsaw Pact countries that are now members of NATO.”[\[127\]](#) Those had been then-Senator Biden’s promises too.[\[128\]](#) But the administration just obfuscated, claiming force deployments were “limited, proportionate, and in full compliance with commitments under the NATO-Russia Founding Act.”[\[129\]](#)

It goes without saying that Washington can simply alter any deal it makes, and that those who find their words meaningful are unserious people whose views are to be disregarded. For example: Bush Sr.'s 1989–1991 non-expansion agreements with the Soviets, ignored by Clinton, W. Bush, Obama and Trump;[\[130\]](#) Clinton's 1994 Agreed Framework deal with North Korea[\[131\]](#) and Founding Act deal with Russia,[\[132\]](#) both broken by Bush Jr.; W. Bush's 2003 normalization deal with Libya,[\[133\]](#) bombed to bits by Obama;[\[134\]](#) Obama's 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran,[\[135\]](#) canceled by Trump;[\[136\]](#) and for that matter, Nixon, Reagan and Bush Sr.'s 1972, 1987 and 1992 ABM,[\[137\]](#) INF and Open Skies treaties with the old USSR, later Russia, which W. Bush and Trump tore up as well.

## **Negotiable**

One Russia specialist, presumably from the NSC or State Department, told the *Post* the Russians wanted a “real dialogue” to “see whether Washington is willing to discuss any sort of commitment that constrains U.S. power, which for example could include placing limits on U.S. missile deployments in parts of Europe that could threaten Moscow,” as they put it. “The Russians are waiting to see what we’re going to offer, and they’re going to take it back and decide is this serious?” he said. “Is this something we can sell as a major victory for security, or is it just, from their point of view, another attempt to fob us off and not give us anything?”[\[138\]](#)

The *Times* reported that “the Russian proposal [was] immediately dismissed by NATO officials,” even though it might “represent an opening

position, with Russia willing to later compromise in talks. That the demands were put forth by the deputy foreign minister, Mr. Ryabkov, and not by his boss, Sergey V. Lavrov, or by Mr. Putin himself, left wiggle room, analysts said.”[\[139\]](#) In other words, very reasonable centrist foreign policy establishment types cited by the *Post* and *Times*, including administration officials, said at the time that Russia’s proposed treaty was not junk, but a decent starting point for real negotiations toward a major new security pact. But the Russians had no partner for peace.

## **Non-Negotiable**

Derek Chollet, counselor to Secretary Blinken, later admitted they had not been willing to negotiate Ukraine’s potential NATO membership, saying it was not on the table, and adding, “We talked about NATO in saying that NATO is a defensive alliance. NATO is not a threat to Russia,” essentially boasting about the administration’s obstinance and dishonesty.[\[140\]](#)

Blinken at least pretended to be just as blind. He said the “narrative” that “NATO is threatening Russia” is “false.” Simple as that. They are not mistaking our massive defensive buildup as an offensive one. No, they are simply lying when they pretend to be concerned. “That’s like the fox saying it had to attack the hen house because its occupants somehow pose a threat. We’ve seen this gaslighting before,” Blinken said.[\[141\]](#)

During this time, Zelensky was told Ukraine of course could not join NATO, but that he should never say so publicly. He explained, “I requested them personally to say directly that we are going to accept you into NATO in a year or two or five, just say it directly and clearly, or just say no.” He



added, “And the response was very clear, ‘You’re not going to be a NATO member, but publicly, the doors will remain open.’” He then quite fairly complained that “you cannot place us in this situation.”[\[142\]](#)

## **Peace Slips Away**

On December 30, 2021, Biden and Putin spoke by phone. They agreed to hold substantive talks on January 9 and 10. According to the Russian readout—the White House did not publish one—Biden told Putin that “Washington had no intention of deploying offensive strike weapons in Ukraine.”[\[143\]](#) However, at the talks in January, when Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman met with Ryabkov, they did not get any further than telling the Russians they were open to discussing side deals regarding the missiles at best.[\[144\]](#) Ryabkov again demanded a halt to any further NATO expansion and said it must cease activity in the countries that had joined in 1999 and later, like in the deal they thought they had made with President Clinton in 1997. The administration rejected those conditions entirely, instead offering “trust-building measures” regarding the stationing of troops and weapons in Eastern Europe. And the offer for these talks, based on a complete rejection of Russia’s terms, was only on the condition that Russia pulled its forces back from the border first.[\[145\]](#)

A White House source told the *Post* the meeting was “a chance to test whether the Russians were serious about the substance of the concerns . . . and if there was a way forward for any kind of diplomacy,” concluding, “I think it became pretty clear, pretty quickly that [the Russians] were

performing diplomacy, not actually undertaking diplomacy. They weren't even doing it with much seriousness.”[\[146\]](#)

Experienced American diplomat Chas Freeman disagreed. He said that while Putin's proposed treaty was obviously not acceptable to the Americans on its face, it was not their fallback position, but their opening bid, and a reasonable basis for real negotiations.[\[147\]](#) George Beebe, the former CIA chief of Russia analysis echoed that view, saying, “I think this was their opening position. I think it's designed to be a basis for negotiations. It will be a difficult negotiation . . . but not an impossible one. I think there's potential middle grounds on many of the issues that the Russians are talking about.”[\[148\]](#) But the Biden administration refused to treat it that way.

Washington would not sign a new bilateral agreement with Russia, nor consider “closing the door” on NATO membership for Ukraine, dismissing both as “nonstarters.”[\[149\]](#) In their written reply to the Russians, the administration simply reiterated their warnings not to invade and to demobilize their military buildup on Ukraine's borders. They would only agree to “refrain from deploying offensive ground-launched missile systems and permanent forces with a combat mission in the territory of Ukraine,” and offered to allow Russian inspections of the Mark 41 missile launchers in Eastern Europe, though they would not sign a treaty saying so. Humorously, they also insisted that Russia live up to its commitments in the NATO-Russia Founding Act of 1997—the same one where they promised never to station “substantial” Western forces in the new NATO states of Eastern Europe. And that was it.[\[150\]](#)

So Biden had no real intention of bringing Ukraine into NATO, but refused to take membership off the table as a supposed matter of principle, all the while making Ukraine nearly a de facto member of the alliance militarily—with all of the West’s focus on scaling up the interoperability of their forces—and yet forever without that elusive war guarantee.

This strange spectacle continued, where Biden would acknowledge Russia’s legitimate concerns about NATO expansion,[\[151\]](#) and the potential placement of offensive weapons in Ukraine, but then refuse to negotiate these positions in good faith.[\[152\]](#) It was clear a decision had been made to warn Russia not to invade, but not attempt to accommodate their concerns in any meaningful way. Biden told the press on January 19, 2022, that Putin had asked for guarantees that “Ukraine will never be part of NATO,” and that there would not be “strategic weapons stationed in Ukraine.” He then said, “Well, we could work out something on the second piece,” but on the first he refused. Then, like always, he said Ukraine was in fact not welcome anyway, “based on much more work they have to do in terms of democracy and a few other things going on there, and whether or not the major allies in the West would vote to bring Ukraine in right now.” The U.S. would not bring Ukraine into the alliance but would (send others to) die for the sacred principle that Russia cannot tell anyone they cannot join—only America, Germany and our other friends can. Biden could have mentioned the missile sites in Eastern Europe. In their counter-proposal, the U.S. had offered a side deal for Russian inspections.[\[153\]](#) But they knew such piecemeal agreements would not be enough.

As a questioner put it, Biden was offering “informal assurances” only, an interpretation he did not dispute. The idea that the U.S. would sit down and negotiate a new treaty with Russia was dead on arrival. Avowedly meaningless promises were all they were going to get. As Blinken said of the administration’s belated counter-offer, “There is no change. There will be no change” to Ukraine’s potential NATO membership status.[\[154\]](#) The U.S. and NATO had separately responded that the “open-door” was permanent, including for Ukraine, and that “allied deployments of troops and military equipment in Eastern Europe are non-negotiable.”[\[155\]](#)

Lavrov denounced the U.S. response to the proposed treaty: “There is no positive reaction in this document on the main issue. The main issue is our clear-cut position on the inadmissibility of NATO’s further eastward expansion and the deployment of strike armaments that may threaten the territory of the Russian Federation.”[\[156\]](#)

But as Biden’s National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan later admitted, “every NATO ally, including the United States, needs to look squarely at the fact that admission to Ukraine into NATO at this juncture means war with Russia. That is an inescapable fact.” Of course it is, and everyone in the White House knew it. But they could never negotiate a deal promising not to go that far.[\[157\]](#)

## **What Door?**

Steven Pifer, Bill Clinton’s ambassador to Ukraine from 1998 to 2000, said the Open-Door Policy “was a real mistake. It drove the Russians nuts. It created expectations in Ukraine and Georgia, which then were never met.

And so that just made that whole issue of enlargement a complicated one.” Since NATO requires unanimous agreement to add a new member, insistence on the policy “put Ukraine in an untenable position: an applicant for an alliance that wasn’t going to accept it, while irritating a potential opponent next door, without having any degree of NATO protection.”

Scholar Marie Elise Sarotte agreed. “The open-door policy is the one that maximizes friction with Russia, which has culminated in the crisis we have now. I . . . believe [Putin] is genuinely aggrieved at the way the post-Cold War order includes no stake for Russia.”[\[158\]](#) Zachary Paikin, a researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), said that in the past the West had nurtured Ukraine’s ambitions to join NATO without having any intentions of actually allowing it to do so. “This only served to irritate Moscow to no apparent end,” he told *Foreign Policy*.[\[159\]](#)

“Open-Door” is a policy position NATO adopted in 1999, not an iron law of the universe.[\[160\]](#) There is no door. It is just jargon the bureaucrats made up. They could change it tomorrow. Instead they pretend Ukraine—or any other country—has an unalienable right to join an alliance with the United States, and no other nation’s interests, views or potential reactions are allowed to be considered under any circumstances.[\[161\]](#)

## **Appeasement!**

In early 2022, Samuel Charap warned this framing of the situation had created a “vicious cycle”: the more the Russians protested, the more the administration figured that changing their mind would be seen as capitulating to Putin, which they could never do. Ukraine and Georgia had

become extras in the drama.[\[162\]](#) The realist thinker Stephen Walt wrote just before the war that it was understandable the West did not want to be seen as giving in to Putin's demands, but that it was clear they were going to have to negotiate on some key points if they wanted to avoid war.

“There's little reason to think Putin will be satisfied with minor concessions on missile defense radars or other weapons deployments,” he wrote. Russia had “local military superiority and cares more about the outcome” than the United States, so it only made sense that our side should give a little. “This isn't a question of right or wrong; it's a question of leverage.”[\[163\]](#)

## **Uprising in Kazakhstan**

The Biden administration has largely pursued the agendas laid out in the 2019 RAND study. Another apparent example of this would be an attempted putsch against President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev in Kazakhstan in January 2022, right at the height of tensions over Ukraine. Protests broke out in the town of Zhanaozen on January 2, one day after the government lifted caps on fuel prices.[\[164\]](#) For the next few days, while protesters filled the streets, armed teams attacked banks, airports, power plants, military bases, police stations[\[165\]](#) and government buildings[\[166\]](#) in what was evidently a highly coordinated attempt to topple the state.

In all, more than a dozen cops and other security forces were killed, along with “scores” of protesters and fighters, while more than 8,000 were arrested.[\[167\]](#)

The German analyst Bernard of the Moon of Alabama blog inferred that the U.S. and its allies had played a role in the short-lived uprising in

Kazakhstan, observing that the official demands of the attempted revolutionaries included the withdrawal from all alliances with Russia.<sup>[168]</sup> He also cited efforts by the National Endowment for Democracy to support anti-regime forces there<sup>[169]</sup> and the U.S. Embassy's promotion of anti-government protests on its website under the guise of warnings about possible unrest.<sup>[170]</sup> Protesters had been chanting "*Shal ket!*" ("Old man out!") in reference to Nursultan Nazarbayev, the previous president, who had become head of the Security Council and was still seen as the power behind the throne. This was reminiscent of previous Otpor-type sloganeering, and perhaps another indication of Western intervention.

Bernard also correctly predicted that the effort would backfire and "strengthen Russia."<sup>[171]</sup> In fact, Russian troops did intervene when Tokayev called them in under the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) alliance.<sup>[172]</sup> They quickly crushed the insurrection and took credit, with Putin declaring they had stopped another "color revolution" led by "terrorists, criminals, looters and other criminal elements," and announced that Russia would never again allow a color-coded revolution in a former Soviet state.<sup>[173]</sup>

"I think one lesson in recent history is that once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave," Secretary Blinken warned the Kazakhs.<sup>[174]</sup> Russian forces then withdrew<sup>[175]</sup>—with the Kazakh government more dependent on their power than before. Again, this was all in the first month of 2022, in the middle of the Russian buildup on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine.

Kazakhstan is a massive country, by far the largest of the Central Asian “stans,” which shares a long frontier with Russia and still contains millions of ethnic Russians with close ties across the border.[\[176\]](#) It is as important to Russia as Mexico is to the United States. That the U.S. would apparently dare attempt a regime change operation there is no less reckless than their efforts to overthrow Belarus or any of their other provocations in the run-up to the 2022– Ukraine war.

The RAND study authors had accepted as a natural fact that the U.S. could never dominate these nations for long. But they could cause Russia extra expense by agitating there, and ultimately risk to the U.S. was low, so why not proceed?

A year later, Blinken returned to Kazakhstan to tell them their problems were all due to the war in Ukraine and that the solution was to cut ties with Russia and allow more U.S. investment instead. Directly and favorably comparing America, Russia and China’s contest for domination of Central Asian mineral and energy resources to the Great Game of the old 19th century imperial powers, *Foreign Policy* reported: “The sweetener of Blinken’s trip was cash. Speaking ahead of the trip, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Donald Lu said the United States would provide \$41.5 million this year.” He promised \$50 million more.[\[177\]](#)

## **Miscalibration**

The administration poured hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of weapons into Ukraine in January 2022,[\[178\]](#) and launched a major public relations campaign depicting all the armaments they and their allies were



sending, sharing numerous photos of pallets full of weapons being unloaded and delivered.[\[179\]](#)

CIA officers later attempted to exonerate themselves for the provocation, credibly blaming the bosses and politicians for not listening to their warnings; the calibration was off. They were not deterring a war; they were instigating one. Reporter Zach Dorfman spoke with dissenting intelligence officers who said that at first Obama's military aid "was tightly circumscribed . . . calibrated to avoid aggravating Moscow." But "some former officials believe it put Kyiv in an impossible position, with the U.S. support setting Russia on edge while being insufficient to actually help Ukraine deter or fight an invasion." Jeffrey Edmonds, a Russia expert from Obama's NSC, explained that sending Javelin shoulder-fired anti-tank missiles was not enough to deter Russia nor help Kiev wrap up the fight in the Donbas. He said there was "cognitive dissonance" over the policy since people wanted to help Kiev but knew it was counterproductive. As he put it, "[W]hy would you want to give these [weapons] if it's just going to increase the chances that Russia does something?" Some at the CIA blamed Trump for being "more . . . aggressive on weapon transfers" than Obama, which they believed all along was a mistake, saying that with the increased aid came "the risk of a deadly Russian response."

One CIA official told Dorfman that "most U.S. intelligence community analysts" thought "Russia felt sufficiently provoked over Ukraine," and that a war could start at any time. They tried to warn policymakers that it was not only a particular Russian reaction to a specific weapons system that mattered, as much as the fact that "the Russians are taking all of this stuff in

the aggregate, and they're drawing this picture of this ever-increasing relationship between the U.S. and Ukraine." He said, "We had given all the warnings, all the caveats" to policymakers. "And it was pretty clear that U.S. foreign policy, regardless of administration, was just going to keep rolling forward. It's gutting, but it is what it is."

It is what it is.[\[180\]](#)

## **Blinken's Blinders**

Blinken met with Lavrov one last time on January 21. Perhaps the American diplomats simply could not believe they were the ones making 30 years of their predecessors' warnings come true. After again refusing to address Russia's concerns, Blinken claims he pulled Lavrov aside to ask him, "Sergei, tell me what it is you're really trying to do?" The *Post* paraphrased, "Was this all really about the security concerns Russia had raised again and again—about NATO's 'encroachment' toward Russia and a perceived military threat? Or was it about Putin's almost theological belief that Ukraine was and always had been an integral part of Mother Russia?" Lavrov, they say, just walked away.[\[181\]](#)

Amb. Matlock, who had helped Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush end the last Cold War, was scornful of Biden's belligerence. On the eve of war, he wrote that Putin's demands against NATO expansion and for Ukrainian neutrality were "eminently reasonable." He was not threatening NATO or any member of the alliance. "To try to detach Ukraine from Russian influence . . . was a fool's errand, and a dangerous one. Have we so soon forgotten the lesson of the Cuban Missile Crisis?"[\[182\]](#)

## **C'mon, Man**

On February 1, Putin spoke of Ukraine's stated policy to someday retake the Crimean Peninsula. He asked what would happen if Ukraine were a NATO member, with foreign troops and weapons stationed in the country, like in Romania and Poland, and Kiev then tried to take Crimea, which has been back under Russian sovereignty since 2014. "What are we supposed to do? Fight against the NATO bloc? Has anyone given at least some thought to this? Apparently not," he said.[\[183\]](#)

Putin then snapped at a French reporter, "Do you want France to go to war with Russia?" Again predicting that once in NATO, Ukraine would attempt to retake Crimea, he declared, "That's what will happen!"[\[184\]](#)

He stated the problem again 20 days later, on the eve of war, specifying that since Ukraine and the West refused to recognize Russian sovereignty over Crimea, that would mean that from Washington, Brussels and Kiev's point of view, in any fight with Russia over the peninsula, Ukraine would be the defender from aggression, and NATO's Article 5 would then be claimed to be in effect. That, he said, could represent a major step toward real war between NATO and the Russian Federation.[\[185\]](#)

## **Alliance with China**

A generation ago, establishment grand strategist Zbigniew Brzezinski warned that the greatest challenge to American dominance in Eurasia was the potential for a Russian-Chinese-Iranian alliance. He advised the government to carefully formulate its policy to prevent it.[\[186\]](#) But that is

just what the U.S. has created. Knowing the West would be certain to launch a massive economic war against Russia, Putin moved to shore up his strategic, economic and political depth in the East. Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping was happy to oblige him, no doubt in response to American provocations beginning with President Obama's "pivot to Asia" policy declared in 2011, which Trump and Biden continued.[\[187\]](#)

On February 4, at the opening of the Beijing Winter Olympics, Putin and Xi signed a joint statement declaring a "new era" of Russian-Chinese relations. This was short of an official military alliance, but they did agree to oppose "attempts by external forces to undermine security and stability in their common adjacent regions," and that they intended "to counter interference by outside forces in the internal affairs of sovereign countries under any pretext, oppose color revolutions, and . . . increase cooperation in the aforementioned areas." They accused the U.S. and its allies of "seriously undermin[ing] the international security order and global strategic stability," demanded an end to NATO expansion and urged Washington to "abandon its ideologized cold war approaches." The statement added, "The Chinese side is sympathetic to and supports the proposals put forward by the Russian Federation to create long-term legally binding security guarantees in Europe."[\[188\]](#)

This affirmation of Chinese support may have been the turning point in Putin's decision to go forward with the invasion later that month.

Once the war began, the Russian government also moved closer to Iran, with Putin visiting Ayatollah Khamenei in Tehran in July 2022 and ordering thousands of Shahed attack drones.[\[189\]](#) Despite centuries of

animosity, U.S. foreign policy has brought the two former empires together. Washington accuses Iran of also supplying Fath-360 ballistic missiles to Russia for use in the war.[\[190\]](#) The Atlantic Council, noting Putin's help pressuring Iran to sign Obama's nuclear deal of 2015, which Trump canceled in 2018,[\[191\]](#) said the U.S. can no longer expect Russia to work with the West to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons. That threat has been vastly overblown anyway,[\[192\]](#) but things could change, and Putin's incentives to cooperate with the allies on the question have been undermined, and possibly reversed, as the council report admitted.[\[193\]](#)

## **Macron's Last Shot**

French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz spent early 2022 attempting to get the major parties to acknowledge that the Minsk deals were the key to avoiding war.[\[194\]](#) Putin said he agreed. On February 11, the "Normandy Format"—Germany, France, Ukraine and Russia—held one last set of talks in Berlin to try to keep the peace. While giving him credit for it, the *Post* conceded that it was Zelensky's stubbornness which killed the talks, noting his refusal to negotiate with the Donbas rebels, as he was already obligated to do under Minsk II since February 2015, while leaving the reader to believe this must be a new demand.[\[195\]](#) They said Russia had "called on Ukraine to grant greater powers to the breakaway regions within Luhansk and Donetsk," and that those provinces "should have a say, if not veto, over the policies of a Ukrainian federal government—a notion Kyiv opposes as it could preclude Ukraine from becoming a member of NATO or the European Union." The

constitutional changes Ukraine had already agreed to regarding the status of the revolting regions were “deeply unpopular,” the *Post* continued, adding that “[d]irect talks with the separatists, whom many Ukrainian officials consider ‘terrorists,’ also are deeply controversial.”[\[196\]](#)

Macron was as intransigent as Zelensky, ridiculing Putin for his insistence that Kiev talk with the separatists, again, as though that had not been part of the previous Minsk agreements. If his were the West’s best efforts to try to stop the war, they fell far short for obvious reasons.[\[197\]](#)

## **WMD**

On February 19, at the Munich Security Conference, Zelensky brought up the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 and said that without Western “security guarantees for our country, Ukraine will have every right to believe that the Budapest Memorandum does not work, and all 1994 commitments will be called into question.”[\[198\]](#)

This was a barely veiled threat to leave the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and make or acquire nuclear weapons.[\[199\]](#) It is important to understand that no nuclear weapons state on the planet is going to hand over atom bombs or fissile material in any quantity to Ukraine. The U.S., Britain and France are party to the NPT, as are Russia and China, who are on the other side of this conflict anyway. And the nuclear weapons states that are not party to the treaty—Israel, Pakistan, India and North Korea—do not want that kind of trouble. So Ukraine would have to quit the NPT and embark on a crash project to acquire uranium on the black market and enrich it to weapons-grade, and/or produce enough plutonium to make at

least a few bombs, before Russia had the chance to do whatever it took to stop them, which the Ukrainians would not have the time to do. So why did Zelensky even say this? It served only to incite.

## **Do Not Give In to Provocations**

German Chancellor Scholz made his own last attempt at peace on February 19. He advised Zelensky to renounce his intent to join NATO and declare neutrality in exchange for new security guarantees from the U.S. and Russia.[\[200\]](#) Consider that one of America's closest allies was proposing that NATO and Ukraine should back down in the face of Russia's legitimate concerns and the rising danger of a terrible escalation of the war. It was reasonable.

Speaking of escalations, while the administration was accusing Russia of preparing some sort of massive false-flag attack on the Donbas rebels to justify the war, that seems to have served as de facto cover for a significant escalation by the Ukrainian military in Donetsk, according to the OSCE.[\[201\]](#) They counted 3,400 shell and mortar detonations between February 18 and 20, with about two-thirds to three-quarters on the rebel side of the demarcation line. This was compared to about 60 explosions per day earlier in the month.[\[202\]](#)

Perhaps this is what Macron was referring to when on February 20, he warned Putin, "Do not give in to provocations of any kind in the hours and days to come."[\[203\]](#)

Who knows for sure if this intense escalation at the height of these tensions was a deliberate plan by the U.S. and Ukraine to provoke the

Russians into finally crossing the line, but it seemed to be one of the final straws before Putin pulled the trigger. But they still had more fuel to add to the fire.

## **Kamala Harris Is Speaking**

At the Munich Security Conference on February 20, Vice President Harris seemed to forget about—or to have never heard of—Soviet totalitarianism, their crushing of the Hungarian revolt and the Prague Spring, the Balkan wars of the 1990s or the many al Qaeda and ISIS terrorist attacks in the region over the previous two decades when she said: “We’re talking about the potential for war in Europe. I mean, let’s really take a moment to understand the significance of what we’re talking about. It’s been over 70 years and through those 70 years . . . there has been peace and security. We are talking about the real possibility of war in Europe.”

Worse, she reiterated the administration’s position that “the founding principles of NATO is that each country must have the ability—unimpaired, unimpeded—to determine their own future, both in terms of their form of government and, in this case, whether they desire to be a member of NATO.” She added, “And isn’t that at the heart of the very issue we’re presented with in terms of Russia’s aggression, or stated aggression, toward Ukraine?”[\[204\]](#)

## **Declarations of War**

### **Blame Wilson**



Putin declared war twice. In his speech of February 21, when he announced his government's recognition of the independence of the Donbas region, he again complained in quite explicit terms about the Communists' previous decisions which had helped lead to the current crisis: Lenin had drawn the eastern border there to include more Russians inside Ukraine without thought for the future; Khrushchev had given away Crimea for a song, again not considering the long-term consequences; and Gorbachev had allowed independence not only for the Warsaw Pact states, but also for the former "republics," the Baltics (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia), as well as Belarus and Ukraine, leaving millions of ethnic Russians behind and allowing for security threats on their borders.

This was the situation Putin had inherited, and he said it was tolerable until the U.S. installed right-wing nationalists in power and started the war in the east. He described a state of emergency in which America and NATO were supporting Kiev's "aggressive actions," while the U.S. was preparing "for hostilities against our country" and "developing Ukrainian territory as a theatre of potential military operations" against Russia, citing the danger of Ukraine's admission to NATO and the eventual deployment of missiles and other American armaments there. "The information we have gives us good reason to believe that Ukraine's accession to NATO and the subsequent deployment of NATO facilities has already been decided and is only a matter of time." He added that "given this scenario, the level of military threats to Russia will increase dramatically, several times over. And I would like to emphasize . . . that the risk of a sudden strike on our country will multiply."[\[205\]](#)

## There's Options

Again, this does not justify what Putin did in response, or the worsening problems that are almost certain to result from his war. He still had plenty of options. As journalist Aaron Maté suggested, he could have again insisted on bringing in UN peacekeepers from a third nation with no direct interest in the fight.[\[206\]](#) He could also have threatened to obstruct all UN Security Council business with Russia's veto until the Western powers actually implemented the Minsk II agreement they had all signed onto. He could have turned off all natural gas supplies to Ukraine and Europe in the dead of winter to make his point too.

Antiwar activist David Swanson came up with a list of 30 nonviolent options Putin could have pursued instead of resorting to war. At least a few of them would certainly have been worth a try, including joining the International Criminal Court (ICC) and asking them to investigate the war in the Donbas, insisting on international supervision for new plebiscites in Crimea and the Donbas, repeatedly demanding the implementation of Minsk II, or “ask[ing] the Baltic states that have planned nonviolent responses to Russian invasion to help train Russians and other Europeans in the same.” The latter may sound naïve at first, but in fact it worked to rid all three Baltic states of the USSR in 1990 and they continue to have similar plans and training in place for their national defense.[\[207\]](#)

Swanson also said Putin could have sent in thousands of unarmed peacekeepers to occupy the Donbas with nonviolent resistance.[\[208\]](#) Again, perhaps this may seem foolish at first glance, putting unarmed people in danger, but it would have shifted the dynamics of the argument in his favor,

and look how many innocent people have been killed and had their property destroyed in the war since then. The damage is incalculable. Of course they could also have just sent lightly armed blue-helmets to stand around on the demarcation line in the typical fashion.

It also might have helped if Putin had not been so damned coy about the entire thing and, instead of repeatedly denying it, simply threatened that he sure as hell would invade, and in the most violent way, if the U.S. and its client state did not enter into serious negotiations immediately. Perhaps military necessity required diplomatic incompetence.

## **Putin's Case**

Still, many of the Russian president's worst accusations about the U.S.-led West were true. These include: the breaking of Bush Sr.'s NATO promises; CIA support for the bin Ladenites in Chechnya, Libya and Syria; the Kosovo War; Bush's withdrawal from the ABM Treaty and installation of dual-use launchers in Eastern Europe; the color-coded revolutions and 2014 coup in Ukraine; the failure of Kiev to implement Minsk II; the ongoing war in the east; all the foreign trainers and advisers in the country; and cooperation with the U.S. Navy that he said put the Russian Black Sea Fleet at risk. He also claimed Ukrainian forces had already effectively been integrated into NATO, with their military being given access to U.S. surveillance drones and planes.[\[209\]](#) Professors Mearsheimer and Walt have long characterized America's military relationship with Ukraine as "de facto" NATO membership. It is the arms, training and integration without the war guarantee, though always promising one will come someday.[\[210\]](#)

In his February 21 speech, Putin continued, complaining that the U.S. and EU were picking Ukrainian judges in the name of fighting corruption, which, he noted, still reigned supreme. He added, “[T]heir country has turned not even into political and economic protectorate, but has been reduced to a colony with a puppet regime.”[\[211\]](#) In his May 9 Victory Day speech, Putin cited the increased violence and the arrival of advisers and delivery of weapons by the West to claim he had “launched a preemptive attack against this aggression.”[\[212\]](#)

This all provided Putin a compelling narrative for his domestic audience that Ukrainian independence was a mistake because it just cannot be without the West taking it over. The Russian president purposely echoed the arguments of Bill Clinton for his intervention in the Serbian civil war, George W. Bush for launching Iraq War II and Barack Obama’s regime change war in Libya. He invoked an illusory nuclear weapons threat —“weapons of mass destruction”—from Ukraine and his determination to protect the people of the Donbas from so-called “genocide.” Escalating the conflict to such a massive degree was surely not reasonable. But his statement was rational if angry, more substance than bluster. He left the West’s argument that they represent the rule of law, as compared to him, purely laughable.

Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who pointedly ignored every word of caution against offering NATO membership to Ukraine when in power, publicly wondered if Putin was mentally ill. Why else could he possibly be acting that way?[\[213\]](#)

Is this crazy talk? “Many Ukrainian airfields are located close to our borders. NATO tactical aircraft stationed here, including carriers of high-precision weapons, will be able to hit our territory to the depth of the Volgograd-Kazan-Samara-Astrakhan line.” He continued, “The deployment of radar reconnaissance assets on the territory of Ukraine will allow NATO to tightly control the airspace of Russia right up to the Urals.”

He observed that after the U.S. ripped up the INF Treaty, the Pentagon was quite openly developing new mid-range, land-based nuclear ballistic missiles. If these were to be installed in Ukraine, “[t]he flying time of Tomahawk cruise missiles to Moscow will be less than 35 minutes; ballistic missiles from Kharkiv will take seven to eight minutes; and hypersonic assault weapons, four to five minutes.” He concluded, “It is like a knife to the throat.”[\[214\]](#)

Are these not specific and serious security concerns?

Even the Reuters news team finally started to tell the story clearly. The danger was that the Russians might invade “to prevent Ukraine from ever joining the NATO Western security alliance,” because “Putin fears that Ukraine’s growing ties with the West could turn it into a potential launchpad for NATO missiles targeting Russia.” They added, “The prospect of NATO admitting Ukraine as a member or stationing weapons there that could strike Russia is a ‘red line’ for Moscow.”[\[215\]](#)

So it has come to this—a massive, catastrophic war—over alliance membership which is not truly on offer, missiles the U.S. has no real intent to install and the failure of our client state to implement a peace deal signed with our country’s closest allies and approved by President Obama. His

former vice president, Biden, argued those were just pretexts for war.[\[216\]](#) Well, maybe the U.S. should have given in and called their bluff by offering these security guarantees—since they are supposedly their policies anyway. Biden could have just put it in writing.

Geoffrey Roberts, emeritus professor of history at University College Cork, wrote in his short study, “‘Now or never’: Putin’s Decision for War with Ukraine,” that it would be a mistake to take what the Russian president said at face value. As we have learned, politicians say lots of things when they want to start a war. At the same time, “what [politicians] say publicly invariably reflects a core of authentic belief. Their rhetoric both reflects and constructs their version of reality, however warped that may be.” Roberts noted the common disbelief among many in the West that Putin would really invade. “What these commentators missed was Putin’s apocalyptic vision of a future nuclear-armed Ukraine embedded in NATO and intent on provoking a Russian-Western war.” That understood, it was much easier to see why the decision was not a difficult one. “Putin concluded that it was ‘now or never’—invade Ukraine before NATO’s position in the country became too strong to risk war. And the hard fighting of the actual war with Ukraine can only have reinforced that calculation of Putin’s.”[\[217\]](#)

Samuel Charap thought compromise was preferable to open warfare. He wrote in January 2022 that the U.S. should openly declare that NATO’s door was now closed to Ukraine. After all, Washington had promised not to deploy nuclear weapons on the soil of new NATO members back in 1996, a pledge they had kept so far. So a “commitment to self-restraint” would clearly be consistent with previous NATO diplomatic history. Besides, he

wrote, “It concedes nothing to declare that Nato is not planning to do something it has no intention of doing anyway. If acknowledging this reality averts a conflict that might destroy Ukraine and destabilize Europe, that seems like a small price to pay.”[\[218\]](#)

MSNBC, which is very close to the Democratic Party,[\[219\]](#) surprisingly ran an important off-narrative piece on March 4, 2022. Zeeshan Aleem wrote that crueler than denying Ukraine’s sovereign right to join whatever alliance their government wanted would be “Ukrainians . . . paying with their lives for the United States’ reckless flirtation with Ukraine as a future NATO member without ever committing to its defense.” He said that everyone knew they would not be allowed to join the alliance due to corruption in economics and politics anytime in the indefinite future, “and because NATO has no interest in going to war with Russia over Ukraine’s Donbas region.” He described the moral hazard built into U.S. intervention: by bringing up the possibility of alliance membership they had “emboldened Ukraine to act tough and buck Russia—without any intention of directly defending Ukraine with its firepower if Moscow decided Ukraine had gone too far.” He quoted Thomas Graham, George W. Bush’s former Russia desk chief at the NSC, who said, “NATO is a defensive organization; I don’t think it had any plans on Russia. All that said . . . if you put yourself in the position of people in the Kremlin, you can see why they came to [the opposite] conclusion.”[\[220\]](#)

Russia had very real security concerns at stake, and the U.S. and its allies should have recognized that and treated them with the respect they deserve. Not more than that, but just what is right. And they should have

dealt honestly with Ukraine, letting them know the limits of U.S. protection up front. Instead, as Professor Mearsheimer warned in 2015, “The West is leading Ukraine down the primrose path, and the end result is Ukraine is going to get wrecked.”[\[221\]](#)

In his second declaration on the 24th, Putin sounded like a mirror image of the Washington foreign policy establishment. Instead of invoking Chamberlain at Munich, he invoked Molotov at Moscow[\[222\]](#) and the failure of Soviet appeasement of Hitler’s Germany. “The attempt to appease the aggressor ahead of the Great Patriotic War proved to be a mistake which came at a high cost for our people. In the first months after hostilities broke out, we lost vast territories of strategic importance, as well as millions of lives,” he said. “We will not make this mistake a second time. We have no right to do so.”[\[223\]](#)

## **New Lies for Old**

### **Missing the USSR**

The hawks love to take people out of context to suit their needs. One example is the famous quote of Vladimir Putin complaining that the fall of the Soviet Union was a “major geopolitical disaster” for Russia. What was his point? Now is the time to undo that failure by conquering Eastern Europe and reestablishing the Communist empire? No, of course not. The April 2005 speech in question was about Putin’s future agenda, focused on rooting out corruption. He said, “Above all, we should acknowledge that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a major geopolitical disaster of the



century. As for the Russian nation, it became a genuine drama.” He then went on to cite ethnic Russians left behind in the newly independent states, the collapse of the economy and domestic social order, the deal to end the First Chechen War and the rise of the oligarchs, all part of his narrative about how he had already saved the country from these problems. “Many thought or seemed to think at the time that our young democracy was not a continuation of Russian statehood, but its ultimate collapse, the prolonged agony of the Soviet system. But they were mistaken.”[\[224\]](#)

As Professor Gerard Toal wrote, “Putin’s rhetorical device was a conventional decline-and-renewal trope, describing the era of national decline and humiliation that set the stage for his heroic mission of restoring Russia’s strength.” But the Associated Press and BBC, he complained, only quoted part of the speech, and even gave it a different translation than the one released by the Kremlin.[\[225\]](#) The truncated quote has been invoked endlessly by liberal and conservative hawks, and the major media alike to make it sound as if he was arguing for a new expansionist foreign policy, when he was not talking about that at all.[\[226\]](#)

Another one is Putin’s statement “Whoever does not miss the Soviet Union has no heart.” Half the time they omit the rest: “Whoever wants it back has no brain.” Even the *Post* did not mind debunking that one.[\[227\]](#)

But overall, the Washington War Party loves this narrative because it absolves them of responsibility. Strobe Talbott, Bill Clinton’s adviser who thought NATO expansion was unnecessarily provocative but then championed the policy anyway, now claims that Putin means to recreate the old Russian Empire, “with himself the tsar.” Obama Defense Department

official and Azov movement apologist Evelyn Farkas[\[228\]](#) said he wants “nothing short of a revanchist imperialist remaking of the globe to take control of the entire former Soviet space.”[\[229\]](#)

President Biden apparently talked himself into really believing, as he constantly repeated, that Putin had sworn to reconquer all of Eastern Europe at his first opportunity.[\[230\]](#) But Russia’s entire GDP in 2021 was \$1.5 trillion. When you include the VA and the Energy Department’s care and feeding of the nuke stockpile, the U.S. spends more than that on its military alone.[\[231\]](#) Russia spends \$60 billion. We have more than a million-man army spread throughout the world. They have 420,000 men, and prior to the current war almost all of them stayed home, except small numbers of special operations types in the Donbas and some air power in Syria, where, again, the U.S. provoked Russian intervention through irresponsible policies in the first place.[\[232\]](#) The Russians have one old, broken-down diesel-powered aircraft carrier. America has 11 nuclear-powered carrier battle groups stationed across the world at all times—20 carriers overall—and more than three times as many military aircraft as Russia. As Lyle Goldstein, formerly of the Naval War College, has written, “[I]f Putin had been plotting the conquest of Eastern Europe over the last decade, it stands to reason that Russia would have been steadily increasing its defense budget.”[\[233\]](#)

But Congressman Adam Schiff of California insists we fight them over there so we don’t have to fight them here. He really said that—to justify sending arms to Ukraine during the impeachment of Donald Trump in early

2020,[\[234\]](#) helping pick a fight that Kiev cannot win when there never was any threat to us in the first place.

## **Alexander Dugin**

According to the CIA, it was Ukrainian spies who murdered Darya Dugina, daughter of one Alexander Dugin, in a botched assassination attempt on her father in August 2022.[\[235\]](#) Dugin, the former chief ideologist of Eduard Limonov's National Bolshevik Party, is a Russian mystic and philosopher of the political right, a "neo-Eurasianist" who urges a program of national greatness and a return of ethnic Russians left behind in the former Soviet republics to Russian national sovereignty.[\[236\]](#)

To distract from their own responsibility for Putin's reactions, the War Party often pretends that the Russian president is under the influence of Dugin as though he were Rasputin and Putin the hapless Tsarina. *Foreign Affairs* called Dugin "Putin's Brain." The *Post* and the *Times* also give Dugin credit for Putin's thinking and strategy.[\[237\]](#)

Beliefs can be powerful, but Vladimir Putin is essentially a hard-nosed technocrat, grounded in the political realities of his time, not a romantic, swept away by daydreams of lost glory. Besides, as Alex Hu noted, Dugin is simply "one courtier among thousands." He explained that the Kremlin supports an ecosystem of opinion-makers of every description that do not necessarily represent official decision-making, including radical dissenters, "to make itself look moderate in comparison."

He said that in the days when Putin was working with President W. Bush on the terror wars, Dugin's content was less promoted. In the

aftermath of the color-coded revolutions, he and other nationalists were given more exposure to suit Moscow's needs. "But," Hu concluded, "there is no evidence that Dugin ever came in contact with Putin. Indeed, Dugin has never claimed to have met Putin, nor has he spoken as though he has."[\[238\]](#)

Russia scholar George Barros agrees that Dugin is "granted far more credibility than deserved" in the U.S. media echo-chamber, calling his influence a "myth . . . grown grossly out of proportion."[\[239\]](#)

Dugin's book *Foundations of Geopolitics: The Geopolitical Future of Russia*, which the *Post* claims is the "blueprint" for Putin's foreign policy, is full of half-baked ramblings and hare-brained schemes, such as proposing that Russia and Japan should divide northern China between themselves but let China invade Southeast Asia as "compensation." Some have given Dugin credit for the brilliant idea of encouraging ethnic and racial strife in the U.S., which, as Hu pointed out, was ineffectual Soviet policy for decades and was nothing but a "single throwaway line" in a 20-page section of Dugin's book about "space in the West of Eurasia." He could have added that there is no reason to believe the Russians have done any such thing in the United States since the days of the USSR—ridiculous claims about Russian troll farms instigating black Americans' dissent against police brutality in 2016[\[240\]](#) notwithstanding because they were obviously ridiculous nonsense.[\[241\]](#) Hu says Dugin's other famous recommendations are also given with the "abstraction" of "an ideologist—not a strategist."[\[242\]](#)

The RAND Corporation also determined that, though he supported Putin's effort to create a new Eurasian Economic Union, Dugin's theories that Russia should rule all of Europe and seek to "splinter" and "partition" China "do not appear to be realistic concepts that have any significant buy-in from Russian officials." They added that "while Dugin is reported to have connections and ties with Russian officials . . . it does not appear that he is directly influential in Russian policymaking." Instead, they concluded Dugin was merely "an extremist provocateur with some limited and peripheral impact." They noted that he does not seem to participate in any major anti-Western political parties, and that he had been fired from his job at Moscow State University for publicly accusing Putin of not being tough enough against Ukraine.[\[243\]](#) As Jeffrey Sommers noted in 2017, "This would be a curious outcome if he were Putin's adviser."[\[244\]](#)

According to French historian Marlene Laruelle, Dugin has been publicly "very disappointed" by Putin since early 2005. She wrote, "According to him, Putin hesitates to adopt a definitively Eurasianist stance, and his entourage is dominated by Atlanticist and overly liberal figures."[\[245\]](#)

Why is the American think tank and media establishment so determined to push this scare story about "Putin's 'brain'"? It is fairly obvious. The subtitle to a March 2014 *Foreign Affairs* article explains it: "Alexander Dugin and the Philosophy Behind Putin's Invasion of Crimea." They were just making excuses for themselves. Surely it was not the U.S. government's fault this had happened. It was that Putin had adopted the thinking of a crazy nationalist ideologue.[\[246\]](#)

As historian Jane Burbank put it in the *New York Times*, Dugin's Eurasianism is "the grand theory driving Putin to war." Just as the national security establishment lied that al Qaeda attacked America due to the Muslim religion's psychopathic hatred of our country's virginal innocence, [\[247\]](#) the Russians, they claim, are now waging war in Ukraine out of a lust to create a new Eurasian empire. This narrative allows the professor to dismiss the idea that "NATO's eastward expansionism" or other "developments external to Russia" could have motivated the war.[\[248\]](#) It is a very convenient take if one is to avoid writing a 650-page book about America's role in it all.

But a year and a half later, the hawkish NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg admitted the war was launched in response to the West's encroachment, rather than some ideological ambition of Putin's to rebuild the old Evil Empire: "The background was that President Putin declared in the [winter] of 2021, and actually sent a draft treaty that they wanted NATO to sign, to promise no more NATO enlargement." He added, "That was what he sent us. And was a pre-condition for not invading Ukraine. Of course we didn't sign that." Stoltenberg then referred to Putin's insistence that the U.S. abide by their 1997 agreement not to station forces in the new NATO countries, which he characterized as "introducing some kind of B, or second class membership." He added, "We rejected that. So [Putin] went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders."[\[249\]](#) Despite the unbelievable quantity of lies told by American politicians and their media handmaidens about this question,[\[250\]](#) this was in fact the truth.

## **Buffer Zone, Left Behind**

It is deemed by the Russian national security establishment that they must have a neutral, if not compliant state in Ukraine, not only so they can retain their Crimean naval base and access to the Mediterranean, but also because it is their defensive buffer zone against invasion from the west. There are no significant natural boundaries protecting Moscow. It is essentially wide-open territory for an invading army to cross, so they want as much space between themselves and potential enemies as possible.[\[251\]](#) And it is in their interest to protect millions of ethnic Russians left behind as a “beached diaspora,” as author David D. Laitin called them, “because the borders of the Soviet Union receded, rather than being dispersed from their homeland.”[\[252\]](#) As Putin told film director Oliver Stone, while he was happy to see the Communist system replaced and the Warsaw Pact dissolved, “the most important thing is that after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, 25 million Russians—in the blink of an eye—found themselves abroad. In another country.”[\[253\]](#)

Again, this does not mean the Russians are on the side of the angels or that the angels are on their side. It means this war is about real, tangible politics. It is a dispute over a border and the threatening security posture of their Western counterparts. All this talk about grand Russian theories of global dominance is just public relations. In fact, they did not move simply in the name of absorbing that diaspora just for history’s sake, but in the name of protecting their lives. The status quo of Ukrainian independence had held for 24 years until the Obama-Biden administration forced the issue with the 2014 coup and then demanded and supported Kiev’s war against the people of the east.[\[254\]](#)

Nicolai N. Petro wrote in *The National Interest* about the conflict in Ukraine, describing the motives of the major players on different levels. First is the West's desire to maintain dominance in Ukraine, "the biggest prize," as the NED's Carl Gershman put it. He says it is also a contest between Russian and Ukrainian elites and regular people over national identity and power between the "Russophile east" and "Russophobe west." Petro added, "This conflict over who gets to define Ukrainian national identity and its future has been going on for at least 150 years and has erupted in serious military hostilities inside Ukraine three times," during the world wars and the 2014 coup and subsequent war. "Each time, violence erupted because external powers sought to tip the scales in their favor."[\[255\]](#)

The only risk to the United States itself is that our government would get us into a nuclear war over a country like Ukraine, where we have no national interests to speak of. The original *Red Dawn* invasion-occupation scenario makes for a hilarious and awesome movie,[\[256\]](#) but despite Rep. Schiff's threats that the Russians will soon be parachuting into Colorado's Front Range, it is just a movie.[\[257\]](#)

## **Told You So**

After initially hiding behind Secretary Albright and others in his administration, Bill Clinton insisted in April 2022: "As Carl Bildt, the former Swedish prime minister and foreign minister, tweeted in December 2021, 'It wasn't NATO seeking to go East, it was former Soviet satellites and republics wishing to go West.'" Well, so what? Of course, small



countries with powerful neighbors want the U.S. to protect them, but Americans were only willing to go along if there was no enemy to fight. Then, just as George Kennan predicted in 1998, Clinton insisted, “Now Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified invasion of Ukraine, far from casting the wisdom of NATO expansion into doubt, proves that this policy was necessary.”[\[258\]](#)

As Mearsheimer told the author in 2014, none of the major participants who crafted this policy could ever admit the consequences of their own actions, from Clinton—the “father” of NATO expansion—on down. All their incentives align to insist they stay the course, deep into the big muddy if they have to.[\[259\]](#)

The same was true for the Biden administration, which was made up of the very same people who accomplished the coup against the old regime in the Obama years: the president himself, Jake Sullivan and Victoria Nuland. Presumably then-Deputy National Security Advisor Antony Blinken was read in on the program as well.

Again, enough mainstream foreign policy establishment types who said so before are still around to remind us. For example, even the normally hawkish Thomas L. Friedman ran an I-told-you-so in the *Times*, quoting his 1998 Kennan interview, just before the invasion of 2022. He said it was “no mystery” why the former Soviet states would want American protection. “The mystery was why the U.S.—which throughout the Cold War dreamed that Russia might one day have a democratic revolution and a leader who, however haltingly, would try to make Russia into a democracy and join the

West—would choose to quickly push NATO into Russia’s face when it was weak.”[\[260\]](#)

Ever-reliant on World War II as the founding myth of the American empire, the War Party invokes Chamberlain at Munich, pretending the lesson is always to fight every country you have problems with because they are all Hitler’s Germany. Scholar Jack S. Levy reminds us that Munich has virtually always been used as a cheap excuse to fight nearly every American war since World War II: “by Harry Truman in Korea, Anthony Eden in the Suez, John Kennedy in the Cuban Missile Crisis, Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam, and George Bush in the Persian Gulf War.”[\[261\]](#) He wrote that back in 1994. We could add Madeleine Albright in Kosovo,[\[262\]](#) W. Bush in Iraq War II[\[263\]](#) and now Biden on Putin.[\[264\]](#) Bill Kristol had been reminded of Munich at least 61 times before the Trump era even began.[\[265\]](#)

Putin is much more like Paul von Hindenburg than Adolf Hitler. Maybe instead of kicking Weimar Russia while they are down after the end of Cold War I in such a Versailles Treaty fashion, the United States could have been better sports and helped to cultivate their republic to stave off darker forces waiting for their chance to exploit a crisis.

Instead, by misapplying the lessons of World War II and adopting a policy of intimidation, Washington caused the conflict they were ostensibly trying to avoid.

## **Rush’n Attack**

## Invasion

On Monday, February 21, the eighth anniversary of the 2014 coup against Yanukovych, Putin announced he was recognizing the “independence” of the two breakaway provinces of Donetsk and Luhansk[266] and three days later began marching in his so-called “peacekeepers.”[267] In his statement of February 24, Putin certainly made an argument broad enough to justify seizing the entire nation of Ukraine and integrating it into the Russian Federation, though it is doubtful he ever meant to cross the Dnieper River, which more or less bisects the nation, other than the southern region of Kherson which includes both banks.[268] It is not certain that he ever intended to absorb the eastern oblasts of Kharkiv, Poltava, Chernihiv, Sumy or Dnipropetrovsk.

Two major circumstances changed prevailing assumptions about how the war would go. First of all, Putin chose not to apply the Bushes’ “shock and awe”-style massive missile and air war before sending in his ground forces. This was apparently a public relations decision, meant to prove the invasion was a sort of soft annexation like what had happened in Crimea eight years before,[269] on the assumption that Russian forces would be just as welcome in eastern Ukraine.[270] It seems this was a strategic error. People were just as mad at being invaded as they were going to be anyway. While their intervention was more popular in the Donbas,[271] Anatol Lieven wrote a year later that though they still loved the Russian people, unlike in Crimea, “I found no sympathy whatsoever for Putin, the Russian government or the Russian armed forces among the Russians and Russian-speakers of Zaporizhzhia with whom I talked. The Kremlin’s claims that it

is protecting the Russian minority were dismissed with contempt.”[\[272\]](#) Paul Manafort, who, again, worked for the “pro-Russian” President Yanukovych and tried to get him to turn away from Russia and toward the West,[\[273\]](#) later explained that in his time in Ukraine he had done 150 polls and knew very well how determined the people of the south and east were to preserve their Russian culture, but he said Putin underestimated how much they valued their independence from Moscow.[\[274\]](#) Not that the Russians are facing an indigenous insurgency there—some surely welcomed them[\[275\]](#)—but nor were they cheered like the Yanks in Paris in 1944.[\[276\]](#)

So due to a badly conceived public relations ploy, as well as some outdated intelligence, instead of the Ukrainian military’s planes, tanks, trucks and heavy artillery being smashed to bits at the outset of the invasion, it was all still available for use at the front. The *Times* later quoted a Ukrainian air force pilot who just barely escaped an attack on his air base, only to reach perfect safety at a base nearby. He said he kept waiting for Russia to attack the second base—their radar operators must have seen where the Ukrainians had all gone—but instead they had hours to rest and prepare to head further west, out of enemy missile range.

Rather than being smashed, the Ukrainian military did far better than expected in the first few weeks of fighting and stymied the Russian invasion on several fronts simultaneously. Turns out those Javelin anti-tank missiles were pretty effective. And the Americans helped. According to the big 2024 *Times* story about the CIA’s secret war in the Donbas, “During the

invasion, the officers relayed critical intelligence, including where Russia was planning strikes and which weapons systems they would use.”[277]

It is clear too that Russian ground forces invaded from too many directions at the same time, preventing the quick destruction of Ukraine’s army and getting themselves bogged down in a long slog for control of the eastern regions.[278] Retired U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Daniel L. Davis assessed the weaknesses of the Russian invasion plan this way: “Having allocated less than 200,000 total troops to try and subjugate a sprawling country of 41 million, Putin’s generals divided up this comparatively small force into four axes of advance, dissipating their strength everywhere.” This was a major mistake, Davis wrote. “Had Moscow prioritized one area as the main effort and massed its forces there, it might have succeeded in overwhelming Zelensky’s troops and caused the Ukrainian Armed Forces (UAF) to collapse.” Instead, “the opposite happened: by dispersing its strength, the Russians allowed the Ukrainian troops to contain the advance everywhere and quickly brought all four drives to a halt.”[279]

It turned out the Ukrainians were more prepared for the war, and the Russians less so, than almost anyone had anticipated. With homefield advantage, defensive motive and morale, and a seemingly inexhaustible supply of American money, weapons, training and intelligence, as this book goes to press, the Ukrainian government has held out for more than two and a half years.

## **The Right to Resist**

Of course, natural and legal rights include resistance against aggressive war. However, it is the United States of America and its imposed clients in Kiev, not Russia, who quite literally attacked and invaded the Donbas back in 2014, and did more than their share to keep it in a state of low-level warfare for seven years after that, complicating the question of who is resisting whom. One can assume the worst of Putin's motives, that he was simply taking advantage of a crisis to get what he wanted, but the crisis was made by the U.S.A., especially under President Obama and Vice President Biden, back in 2014, and President Biden himself beginning in 2021. Certainly opinion in those regions is mixed, with some considering Russia invaders and others their protectors from a regime in Kiev that had made itself their enemies.[\[280\]](#)

In Zaporizhzhia and Kherson Oblasts, the Russians' case for the consent of the governed is certainly weaker, but again, it is the American-backed Kiev government which cut off the fresh water to Crimea,[\[281\]](#) and has vowed since 2014 to retake the peninsula by force. They have created a military necessity for Russia at the expense of the people of those regions, some great percentage of which—no one really knows—must oppose this new violent transfer of their sovereignty. This is not a justification, only an attempt to properly distribute blame for the situation.

## **Strategic Defeat**

### **The Afghan Model**

It is clear that the original American plan for the war assumed a rapid Russian victory over Kiev, then a long-term insurgency waged on the 1980s Afghanistan model,[\[282\]](#) with U.S.-trained “stay-behind” militias and saboteurs leading the fight against Russian occupiers, and the U.S. and its allies providing safe haven in Romania and Poland.[\[283\]](#)

It seems likely that the Biden administration really did want this war to happen, perhaps even attempted to deliberately provoke it. Their strategy was to warn Putin of economic consequences if he invaded,[\[284\]](#) while still refusing the kind of real negotiations that were necessary to avert the conflict. At the very least, the administration saw great advantage in the war if they could not prevent it.

There is precedent from recent history. In a now-infamous 1998 interview with the French magazine *Le Nouvel Observateur*, Zbigniew Brzezinski explained the true chronology of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, when he was national security adviser to President Jimmy Carter. The administration at the time had authorized aid to the mujahideen starting in July, rather than December 1979,[\[285\]](#) “And that very day, I wrote a note to the president in which I explained to him that in my opinion this aid was going to induce a Soviet military intervention. . . . We didn’t push the Russians to intervene, but we knowingly increased the probability that they would.” By then “a few stirred-up Muslims” in the Taliban had taken over Afghanistan[\[286\]](#) and the bin Ladenites had already attacked Americans at a hotel in Yemen in 1992,[\[287\]](#) killed six while trying to blow up the World Trade Center in 1993,[\[288\]](#) killed five Americans training the Saudi national guard in Riyadh in 1995[\[289\]](#) and

another 19 U.S. airmen in their barracks in Saudi Arabia in 1996.[\[290\]](#) But Brzezinski, the Polish aristocrat, had no regrets. “That secret operation was an excellent idea. It had the effect of drawing the Russians into the Afghan trap. . . . The day that the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter, essentially: ‘We now have the opportunity of giving to the USSR its Vietnam war.’”[\[291\]](#) He concluded, “Indeed, for almost 10 years, Moscow had to carry on a war that was unsustainable for the regime, a conflict that brought about the demoralization and finally the breakup of the Soviet empire.”[\[292\]](#)

As officials told the *Times* after the war began, Biden administration policy “seeks to help Ukraine lock Russia in a quagmire without inciting a broader conflict with a nuclear-armed adversary.”[\[293\]](#) Right around that time, there were numerous mentions by think tanks and major political and media figures of a coming American-backed stay-behind program, a reference to U.S. support for rightist militia forces in Western Europe meant to stymie a future Soviet occupation if they invaded during the first Cold War.[\[294\]](#)

The White House announced a package of Javelin anti-tank missiles and Stinger advanced shoulder-fired anti-aircraft missiles, officially Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS). A Defense Department official presciently noted that “[y]ou can’t take over a country with MANPADS, but you can defend an airport from an airborne assault.”[\[295\]](#)

Robert Kagan’s brother, Frederick, of the American Enterprise Institute and co-author of the failed counterinsurgency “surge” doctrine in Iraq War II[\[296\]](#) and Afghanistan,[\[297\]](#) wrote a study for his wife Kimberly Kagan’s



Institute for the Study of War in December 2021. He assumed that the Russian military would quickly smash the Ukrainians, but said, “It is unlikely that Russian forces will be able to prevent the transition of Ukrainian resistance into a low-level insurgency.” He went on to predict that “Ukrainians who wished to continue fighting Russia would withdraw, possibly establishing a government-in-exile and means for supporting continued resistance and potentially insurgency within Russian-occupied Ukraine,” and concluded, “NATO [can] take appropriate counter-measures.”[\[298\]](#)

David Ignatius wrote in the *Post* in December 2021, “The Biden administration is studying whether and how the United States could support an anti-Russian insurgency inside Ukraine if President Vladimir Putin invades that country.” He continued that they were providing weapons to the Ukrainian military, “and similar logistical support to insurgent groups if Russia topples the Ukrainian government and a guerrilla war begins.” He cited the policy of providing shoulder-fired surface-to-air missiles to the mujahideen in the 1980s Soviet-Afghan War, saying such weapons “had a devastating effect on Soviet forces during their 10-year war in Afghanistan.” Ignatius said a CIA-led task force was studying how the insurgencies fought against the Soviets in Afghanistan and Assad’s forces in Syria, as well against the U.S. in Iraq and their own Afghan failure as well. “It’s an ironic example of turning the tables, weighing whether and how to inflict harm similar to what U.S. forces have suffered in recent years.”

Anticipating a quick Russian rout of Ukraine’s conventional army, Ignatius continued that the current military and militia forces “would be

among the building blocks for an insurgency. U.S. planners have discussed weapons caches and other logistical tools that could support a potent ‘stay-behind network’ if Russia invades.”[\[299\]](#)

This effort included not only years of training by the U.S. military and the CIA Special Activities Division’s Ground Branch, or Ground Division, at the Yavoriv Training Center in western Ukraine, but also in the United States since 2015, according to reporter Zach Dorfman. Sources told him the training had been increased by the Trump administration, and even further by President Biden shortly after he took office in 2021. Dorfman also reported that CIA officers had been deployed to the front in the Donbas as advisers beginning in 2015. This was confirmed by the *Times* two years later.[\[300\]](#) “The United States is training an insurgency,” a former CIA official told Dorfman, adding that the program was teaching the Ukrainians how “to kill Russians.” In the event of an invasion, those graduates of the CIA programs “are going to be your militia, your insurgent leaders. We’ve been training these guys now for eight years. They’re really good fighters.” The officer continued, “That’s where the agency’s program could have a serious impact. . . . There’s going to be people who make their life miserable. [The CIA’s fighters] will organize the resistance. All that stuff that happened to us in Afghanistan, they can expect to see that in spades with these guys.”[\[301\]](#)

National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan also seemed to indicate a plan to bait Russia into war to bleed them dry in the Afghan style. He told CBS News, “Well, what the president has said is that we will continue to support Ukraine even after an invasion begins, and I’m not going to get into the

specific details of what that will look like, but it is one of the three fundamental elements of our response.”[\[302\]](#) He added to the AP, “If war breaks out, it will come at an enormous human cost to Ukraine, but we believe that based on our preparations and our response, it will come at a strategic cost to Russia as well.”[\[303\]](#)

On January 14, 2022, a month before Russian troops crossed the border, the *Times* ran a story called “U.S. Considers Backing an Insurgency in Ukraine.” In it, Helene Cooper wrote, “In Afghanistan, the United States showed itself to be dismal at fighting insurgencies. But when it comes to funding them, military experts say it is a different ballgame.”

She quoted the former supreme allied commander of NATO forces in Europe and Hillary Clinton adviser, retired Admiral James Stavridis, as threatening with no irony that America had learned all the right lessons from losing the Iraq and Afghan Wars: “Putin should realize that after fighting insurgencies ourselves for two decades, we know how to arm, train and energize them. The level of military support would make our efforts in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union look puny by comparison.”[\[304\]](#) Stavridis also wrote a piece for Bloomberg News, repeating the same recommendation for support for an insurgency on the 1980s Afghan model.[\[305\]](#) The Pentagon’s *Stars and Stripes* newspaper also referred to the military’s efforts as preparing stay-behind forces, directly comparing it not only to Afghanistan but to CIA support for the OUN-UPA during the first Cold War.[\[306\]](#) NBC reported in early February that the Ukrainian military also assumed it would be quickly smashed and reduced to fighting an insurgency, and was already preparing for it.[\[307\]](#)

Echoing the RAND corporation's "Extending Russia" plan, officials told the *Times* that the quantity and quality of weapons being sent to Ukraine had all been supposedly "calibrated not to provoke Mr. Putin." Perhaps arming an insurgency truly was Plan B after an invasion they really did mean to deter, and these Democrats are just very poor at "calibration." But they sure seem to be thinking ahead to how an invasion could hurt Russia, with the poor Ukrainians serving as merely an instrument against them. "[A]lready, particularly in the west, Ukrainians are joining territorial defense forces that train in guerrilla tactics." And this was all because "[t]he Biden administration and its NATO allies want to capitalize on any distaste the Russian body politic might have for troop casualties, U.S. and European officials said in interviews."

They revealed that the Biden administration had directly threatened the Russians with this plan. "[A] swift victory would be followed, General Milley told Gen. Valery Gerasimov, by a bloody insurgency, similar to the one that led the Soviet Union to leave Afghanistan in 1989, according to officials familiar with the discussion." Again presuming a relatively rapid Russian victory over Ukraine's army, citing American officials, the paper reiterated that "a long-term Ukrainian strategy . . . would be to mount a guerrilla insurgency supported by the West that could bog down the Russian military for years."[\[308\]](#)

Emily Harding, writing for the Center for Strategic and International Studies, urged U.S. support for the coming Ukrainian insurgency. "External support is a decisive factor in the success of an insurgency. The direct support of neighboring state military forces contributed to successful

insurgencies in Bosnia, Afghanistan in the 1980s, Tajikistan, Congo and elsewhere,” she advised, saying support could include “safe haven, financial support, materiel deliveries, intelligence support and training.” The West could train fighters and pour in weapons from bordering states, she said, noting NATO’s “decades of practice” in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.[\[309\]](#)

“It’s time to make Mother Russia bleed for her crimes,” former State Department official James Bruno wrote in late February. He said that to send the greatest amount of “body bags” home to Russia, Biden should send the CIA and special operations missions to “advise, assist, train, and equip the Ukrainian military and intelligence organs as a main focus of this effort.” He concluded, “Think of U.S. assistance to the mujahideen in Afghanistan in the 1980s as the model.”[\[310\]](#)

This was just four, five and six months after the United States finally withdrew its armed forces in absolute humiliating defeat at the hands of the Afghan Taliban,[\[311\]](#) after a merciless 20-year war[\[312\]](#) against the consequences of Presidents Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan’s covert Afghan operation.[\[313\]](#) According to the most conservative count, more than 45,000 Afghan civilians[\[314\]](#) and in excess of 2,400 Americans were killed over the last two decades fighting against former 1980s CIA allies, including mujahideen warlords Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jalaluddin Haqqani, along with the Taliban, which in many cases was also led by men who had also fought against the Soviets. This was all because the Taliban had provided a safe haven to al Qaeda terrorists—many of whom were also veterans of that war—who attacked the United States, killing thousands of

civilians.[315] Boris Johnson promised the United Kingdom would be right there with the U.S. for this one as well.[316]

So then who is the most likely Osama bin Laden character in this analogy, the radical who turns on us, Andriy Biletsky, Andriy Parubiy or Dimitry Yarosh? When Biletsky was put in charge of Ukrainian forces fighting in Bakhmut in May 2023,[317] the *Times* forgot he was a Nazi.  
[318]

Eliot Cohen, a co-founder of the Project for a New American Century with Paul Wolfowitz and a member of the Defense Policy Board under Richard Perle in the George W. Bush years,[319] had adopted the Afghan model too. However, he was not thinking of the 1980s, but of America's humiliation there in this century. He wrote, "As the United States discovered in Iraq and Afghanistan, no matter how large, technologically advanced, and proficient an army is, motivated insurgents can still inflict casualties in the tens of thousands." Apparently the memo had gone out. Cohen said, "Only one thing, in fact, can cause Russia to rethink and even abandon its program of conquest: coffins," and concluded, "That is why the United States and its Western partners must help nourish an insurgency that will cause the occupiers to bitterly regret, and then reverse, their attempt to crush Ukrainian independence." [320]

It turns out the neoconservatives did learn a lesson after they lost Iraq War II and Afghanistan: from now on, the U.S. should fight like those who defeated them.

Not to be outdone, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) spin-off, the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP),

invoked Obama's supposed failure to support the terrorist insurgency in Syria with enough money and arms to turn that country into a quagmire for Russian troops, and argued that now America has a second chance in Ukraine.[\[321\]](#) U.S. and allied backing for the terrorists in Syria did lead to the rise of the Islamic State Caliphate and Iraq War III (2014–2017), as well as enormous expense on the part of Russia and Iran to save their allied government in Damascus.[\[322\]](#) Even though Russia's intervention in late-2015 thwarted U.S. goals there, multiple American figures had gloated at the time that they loved to see Russia bogged down with expensive new commitments.[\[323\]](#) This was why the RAND Corporation suggested that increased support for the terrorists in 2019 could impose extra costs on Russia.[\[324\]](#)

After the war began, Sean McFate of the Atlantic Council wrote that it was “time to get sneaky.” The U.S., he said, should send Green Berets to Poland to train Ukrainian insurgent fighters and arm them with Stinger and Javelin missiles. He also urged the U.S. to “covertly engineer color revolutions” against Russia's allies, more support for their enemies inside and outside the country, cyberattacks, false-flag operations and political warfare.[\[325\]](#)

“The CIA's recent experience in supporting and fighting insurgencies in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria prepares it well for opposing Russia's modern, conventional forces,” former CIA officer Douglas London wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that February. He added, “U.S. and Ukrainian officials have long planned for this day. In all likelihood, a covert program to help organize the resistance to Russia already has communications

infrastructure, intelligence collection capabilities, and operational plans in place.”[\[326\]](#)

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl also boasted about the intended effect of prolonging the war. “I think with a high degree of certainty that Russia will emerge from Ukraine weaker than it went into the conflict. Militarily weaker, economically weaker, politically and geopolitically weaker, and more isolated,” he said in March 2022.[\[327\]](#)

Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton’s performance on MSNBC just after the war began gives further reason to suspect this outcome was welcome if not preferred:

Remember, the Russians invaded Afghanistan back in 1980. And although no country went in, they certainly had a lot of countries supplying arms and advice and even some advisers to those who were recruited to fight Russia. It didn’t end well for the Russians. And there were other unintended consequences, as we know, but the fact is that a very motivated, and then funded, and armed insurgency basically drove the Russians out of Afghanistan.

Obviously the similarities are not ones that we should bank on because the terrain, the development in urban areas is so different, but I think that is the model that people are now looking toward. And if there can be sufficient armaments that get in—and they should be able to get in along some of the borders between other nations and Ukraine—and



keep . . . their military and their citizen volunteer soldiers supplied, that can continue to stymie Russia.

Now, let's be clear that Russia has overwhelming military force. But of course they did in Afghanistan as well. They have also brought a lot of air power to Syria. It took years to finally defeat Syria in terms of the insurgencies, the democratic forces—as well as others—who battled the Russians, the Syrians and the Iranians.

After noting initial Russian setbacks in the invasion, Clinton continued, “We have to provide sufficient military armaments for the Ukrainian military and volunteers. And we have to keep tightening the screws.”

Readers really should watch the entire clip to see the way Clinton smirks at the cute little irony of al Qaeda's attacks against America and the entire 20-year terror war, which she directly supported as senator and secretary of state from 2001 to 2013 and rhetorically ever since. What are two million dead humans, \$10 trillion wasted, the 21st century and third millennium begun soaking in blood just a decade after the peaceful victory for the West in the Cold War and for the two decades since? Just a few small “unintended consequences,” not even worth mentioning by name. Regarding Syria, she nonsensically used the name of the country to mean the bin Ladenite terrorists backed by the United States and its allies, including during the latter two of her four years as secretary of state under President Obama—the “others” she alluded to—saying Syria had been “defeated” by its own national government. And still Clinton acknowledged

that after years of war, the U.S.-backed side lost anyway, at the cost of hundreds of thousands of lives on both sides,[\[328\]](#) not that it seemed to discourage her.

But perhaps the most compelling bit of information along these lines came from CBS News's Margaret Brennan, who wrote on March 1 that "[g]iven the durability of the Ukrainian resistance and its long history of pushing Russia back, the U.S. and Western powers do not believe that this will be a short war." She added, "The UK foreign secretary estimated it would be a 10-year war. Lawmakers at the Capitol were told Monday it is likely to last 10, 15 or 20 years—and that ultimately, Russia will lose." This indicates that the Pentagon and intelligence agencies had been planning for some time to "give them their own Vietnam" again in Ukraine as they are still giving us in the Middle East and beyond.[\[329\]](#)

In 2014, Washington started to warn that if Ukraine were to fall to Russia, then other countries would be next. They even called it the "domino theory," the same term used to describe the discredited notion that guided the decision to intervene in Vietnam to stop the Communists.[\[330\]](#) In the end it was America's war that spread Communism, in its most nightmarish form, to the poverty-stricken nation of Cambodia next door.[\[331\]](#) Perhaps they do not teach that at the good schools anymore.

Putin should have known better, and seemed to, but claimed to see no other option. On February 1, 2022, he told reporters that the American government was simply using Ukraine to hurt Russia, saying this could be done "by drawing us into some armed conflict, compelling its allies in Europe to impose tough sanctions . . . or by drawing Ukraine into NATO,

deploying attack weapons there and encouraging some Banderites to resolve the issues of Donbas or Crimea by force.” He concluded, “In this way, we could be drawn into an armed conflict regardless.”[\[332\]](#)

As historian Jeff Rogg wrote in the *Los Angeles Times*, declassified CIA documents show that when they backed OUN-UPA forces in Ukraine against the Soviets in the 1950s, the stated purpose of the operation was not to liberate Ukraine, but to “bleed” Russia. He quoted a CIA historian who wrote that since the Ukrainians had no chance at victory, the anti-Soviet program “demonstrated a cold ruthlessness” because “America was in effect encouraging Ukrainians to go to their deaths.” Rogg further warned, “The CIA needs to be honest with the Ukrainians—and itself—about the real intent. In the first U.S.-backed insurgency, according to top secret documents later declassified, American officials intended to use the Ukrainians as a proxy force to bleed the Soviet Union.” He continued, “This time, is the primary goal of the paramilitary program to help Ukrainians liberate their country or to weaken Russia over the course of a long insurgency that will undoubtedly cost as many Ukrainian lives as Russian lives, if not more?”[\[333\]](#)

Instead of negotiating an early end to the war, the U.S. foreign policy establishment preferred to see an endless conflict with Russia in Europe. All they talked about was supporting this new cross between the UPA and the mujahideen to “kill Russians.”

Biden also ordered an increase of troops and equipment in the Baltics, Romania and Poland, though not to levels truly indicating preparation for war, just enough to be the tripwire for one.[\[334\]](#)

## Hammer and Anvil

After Ukraine's initial success at repelling Russian forces, the administration launched a massive resupply effort.[\[335\]](#) In mid-April, they announced expanding intelligence-sharing and increasing military support by another \$800 million,[\[336\]](#) including heavier weapons such as anti-aircraft missiles, howitzers, drone boats, helicopters, tanks, armored personnel carriers, advanced radars and laser-guided rockets.[\[337\]](#) This brought the total since the start of the war up to more than \$2.6 billion in weapons. The Russians then responded that these shipments were "legitimate targets"[\[338\]](#) and warned the U.S. and its allies to stop sending arms, as they were "adding fuel" to the war and could have "unpredictable consequences."[\[339\]](#)

In late March 2022, British theoretician of American empire Niall Ferguson[\[340\]](#) wrote that anyone who was anyone in Washington knew the plan was to extend the war. He quoted a senior official brimming with hubris: "The only end game now is the end of [the] Putin regime. Until then, all the time Putin stays, [Russia] will be a pariah state that will never be welcomed back into the community of nations." He noted they were saying the same thing in London, and paraphrased the great consensus: "[T]he UK's No. 1 option is for the conflict to be extended and thereby bleed Putin." This, he said, was why they were not trying to negotiate, and why Biden was so quick to call Putin a war criminal.[\[341\]](#)

Bloomberg News reported in late March that France and Germany were still pushing for peace. President Macron and Chancellor Scholz were both still talking about negotiating a ceasefire, while the Poles and Baltic

states were pushing for escalation.[\[342\]](#) On April 5, the *Post* ran a story which explained that the Ukrainians were being used by the Americans and by other Eastern European states as a sacrificial pawn in their game, based on the assumed premise that Putin would just reinvade later no matter what. They said leaders of neighboring countries did not even want Zelensky to promise not to join the alliance. “That leads to an awkward reality: For some in NATO, it’s better for the Ukrainians to keep fighting, and dying, than to achieve a peace that comes too early or at too high a cost to Kyiv and the rest of Europe.” A “senior European diplomat” told them, “The problem is that if it ends now, there is a kind of time for Russia to regroup, and it will restart, under this or another pretext.”[\[343\]](#) Around the same time, Biden called for war crimes trials for Putin and his men,[\[344\]](#) while Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley told Congress he expected the war to last for years.[\[345\]](#)

Richard Haass, the former head of the State Department’s Policy Planning staff under W. Bush, president of the Council on Foreign Relations and Iraq war supporter,[\[346\]](#) said the establishment consensus was to keep the war going. “The elements of a strategy for a long-term, open-ended war are well known,” he wrote, adding that the Biden administration should give Ukraine weapons, ammunition, training and intelligence support, build up NATO forces and boycott Russian gas to put pressure on them as soon as possible.[\[347\]](#)

Turkish Foreign Minister Çavuşoğlu told CNN Türk, “There are countries within NATO who want the war to continue. They want Russia to become weaker.”[\[348\]](#)

As Secretary Blinken explained to NPR on March 16, 2022, “We will want to make sure . . . that anything that’s done is, in effect, irreversible, that this can’t happen again, that Russia won’t pick up and do exactly what it’s doing in a year or two years or three years.”[\[349\]](#) Soon after, Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin both made trips to Kiev, boasting that their goal was to continue to arm Ukraine to “weaken Russia.” Austin said that “we want to see Russia weakened to the degree that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine.”[\[350\]](#)

In the *Times*, reporter David Sanger explained the official shift in policy to one of deliberately prolonging the war. He said Austin’s statement “was acknowledging a transformation of the conflict, from a battle over control of Ukraine to one that pits Washington more directly against Moscow.” Sanger continued, “[B]y casting the American goal as a weakened Russian military, [the Biden team is] becoming more explicit about the future they see: years of continuous contest for power and influence with Moscow that in some ways resembles what President John F. Kennedy termed the ‘long twilight struggle’ of the Cold War.” He said that recent hawkish statements by Blinken also reflected a deliberate choice “to talk more openly and optimistically about the possibility of Ukrainian victory in the next few months.”[\[351\]](#)

After telling the *Times* that these statements were deliberately authorized by the White House, Biden then publicly chastised Austin and Blinken for them.[\[352\]](#) But then, a few weeks later, his men told the *Times* that it was still the policy, Biden just had to pretend to say that. “The president called Mr. Austin to remonstrate him for the comment, then

directed his staff to leak the fact that he had done so.” They then officially confirmed it again: “[O]fficials acknowledged that was indeed the long-term strategy, even if Mr. Biden did not want to publicly provoke Mr. Putin into escalation,” which he had obviously also authorized them to do.[\[353\]](#)

Author Tom Stevenson also wrote in the newspaper of record that the strategy had changed from helping Ukraine survive to a new “bleed Russia” plan: “Whereas once the primary Western objective was to defend against the invasion, it has become the permanent strategic attrition of Russia.” He said, “The outline of the new policy began to emerge on April 13, when the Pentagon called a convocation of the eight biggest American arms companies to prepare arms transfers on a grand scale,” and the resulting \$39.8 billion weapons package had marked a complete “abandonment of diplomatic efforts.” Stevenson concluded: “When I was in Ukraine during the first weeks of the war, even staunch Ukrainian nationalists expressed views far more pragmatic than those that are routine in America now.”[\[354\]](#)

Jake Sullivan said much the same in April: “At the end of the day, what we want to see is a free and independent Ukraine, a weakened and isolated Russia, and a stronger, more unified, more determined West. We believe that all three of those objectives are in sight.”[\[355\]](#)

British Armed Forces Minister James Heappey wrote in the *Telegraph* that “Putin must be made to fail. His failure must be complete.” Sounding like David Wurmser selling Iraq War II to weaken Iran,[\[356\]](#) he started daydreaming about all the wonderful after-effects of the war. Failure, he said, will result in “the Russian people [being] empowered to see how little he cares for them. In showing them that, Putin’s days as President will

surely be numbered and so too will those of the kleptocratic elite that surround him. He'll lose power and he won't get to choose his successor," and all for the low cost of a few hundred thousand ordinary lives.[\[357\]](#)

In late March 2022, the *Times* reported on the way the Biden administration was parsing the type and quantities of weapons being sent into Ukraine: they could have anti-tank missiles, but not planes; drones, but not "cyberwar" capabilities. They had ruled out putting U.S. or other NATO planes into Ukraine to enforce a no-fly zone as Ukraine was requesting, "a move American officials fear could risk turning a regional war into a global conflagration," but were still sending surface-to-air missiles that could also shoot down Russian jets. So they were again "calibrating" just the right amount of intervention to avoid a violent reaction. Emphasizing how dangerous this all was, the *Times* added, "As a matter of international law, the provision of weaponry and intelligence to the Ukrainian Army has made the United States a cobelligerent." Andrea Kendall-Taylor, a former CIA and National Intelligence Council official from the Center for a New American Security[\[358\]](#) told the *Times* the administration was "trying to figure out how do you get right up to the line without crossing over in a way that would risk direct confrontation with Russia."[\[359\]](#)

Sullivan told *The Atlantic* that July, "[I]t is our strategic objective to ensure that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is not a strategic success for Putin, but that it is a strategic failure for him. That means both that he be denied his objectives in Ukraine, and that Russia pay a longer-term price in terms of the elements of its national power."[\[360\]](#)

## **Confidence Is High**



Presidents Biden[\[361\]](#) and Zelensky[\[362\]](#) both at times admitted that they would have to concede Russian sovereignty over Crimea and the “independence” of the Donbas,[\[363\]](#) just as they both periodically acknowledged that Ukraine would eventually have to forswear NATO membership[\[364\]](#) and maintain neutrality between Russia and the West.

But the U.S. government and media launched a massive propaganda campaign on behalf of the war denying that reality, based on Ukraine’s pure victimhood combined with its certain ability to turn the tide and defeat Russia if only the West would lend a hand. They swore the war began with an “unprovoked attack” by Russia—they must have repeated it a hundred thousand times[\[365\]](#)—and that the policy was to help Ukraine take back “every square inch” of territory lost, “including Crimea.”[\[366\]](#) The talented video editor Matt Orfalea put together a nearly unbelievable montage of these ridiculous claims by government officials and their media handmaidens that Ukraine was winning and was sure to humiliate Russia and drive them out in disgrace.[\[367\]](#) “Russia has the second strongest army in Ukraine,” liberal Democrats who do not know the first thing about Ukraine, Russia, war or anything else all joked to each other with the confidence of consensus at a flat-Earth convention.[\[368\]](#)

CFR president Richard Haass[\[369\]](#) and Benjamin Wittes of the Brookings Institution[\[370\]](#) both publicly threatened regime change in Moscow in February 2022. Republicans and Democrats of all descriptions began demanding no-fly zones over Ukraine and escalated intervention against Russia there. The lesson of what can happen when the U.S. does so was completely lost on them.

Around the country, people bought in. They put up Ukrainian flags everywhere, like yellow ribbons during Iraq War I—at the local civic center,[\[371\]](#) at the car dealership,[\[372\]](#) in your neighbor’s yard.[\[373\]](#) Americans who had no idea where Ukraine was,[\[374\]](#) or assumed it was already part of Russia a few weeks before, were now on board for the current thing. It was a massive influence operation.

The pre-Musk center-left liberal Twitter swarm went wild. According to social networking analyst John Robb, they even got out ahead of the White House with their demonization of the Russians, truly helping to preclude the political possibility of productive talks before and just after the war began.[\[375\]](#)

Popular culture, mostly led by Western governments,[\[376\]](#) went nuts: Officials in New York poured out Russian vodka,[\[377\]](#) while the governor of Utah banned it from all state liquor stores by executive order.[\[378\]](#) Rep. Eric Swalwell said the U.S. should “kick every Russian student” out of American universities,[\[379\]](#) while the Canadian Hockey League banned Russian and Belarusian players from their import draft.[\[380\]](#) A private hospital in Munich banned Russian and Belarusian patients,[\[381\]](#) a Russian singer was fired from the New York Metropolitan Opera,[\[382\]](#) a Russian star tennis player was excluded from Wimbledon[\[383\]](#) and Russian teams were banned from international soccer.[\[384\]](#) Russian and Belarusian runners were prohibited from the Boston Marathon,[\[385\]](#) Dostoevsky was at least temporarily banned from a university in Italy,[\[386\]](#) the Welsh Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra banned Tchaikovsky’s 1812 Overture,[\[387\]](#) a Russian cellist who played with a Ukrainian pianist and denounced the

war, was still canceled in Switzerland,[\[388\]](#) the European Film Academy launched a global boycott of Russian films.[\[389\]](#) Social media giants Facebook and Instagram, meanwhile, lifted their bans against calls for violence against Russians,[\[390\]](#) while the former ended its prohibition on praise for the Azov Battalion.[\[391\]](#) Even Russian cats were banned from international competition.[\[392\]](#)

## **The Censorship-Industrial Complex**

After Elon Musk bought Twitter in 2022, he allowed journalist Matt Taibbi and a few others to dig through what have been titled the “Twitter Files.” Taibbi and his partners revealed a vast apparatus: the “Censorship-Industrial Complex”[\[393\]](#) or “Censorship Enterprise,” as one federal judge put it, which unsurprisingly had its origins in the war on terrorism. After the dirty war in Syria backfired to fuel the rise of the ISIS Caliphate, and the U.S. switched sides in the war again,[\[394\]](#) they set up the Global Engagement Center in the Department of Homeland Security with the goal of deradicalizing those they had radicalized. From there an entire “anti-disinformation” censorship-NGO complex has arisen, looking for easy work. Their next job was enforcing social media orthodoxy in the Russiagate hoax, before moving on to censoring any question about the origin of Covid-19. And then Ukraine. If people will not choose correct narratives on these crucial topics, they will simply have their reach squashed by the algorithm until there is no longer any point in logging on, or might be banned altogether.

As reporter Susan Schmidt and co-authors wrote, “What the Mueller investigation didn’t accomplish in ousting Trump from office, it did accomplish in birthing a vast new public-private bureaucracy devoted to stopping ‘mis-, dis-, and malinformation.’” They added, “The ‘Censorship-Industrial Complex’ is just the Military-Industrial Complex reborn for the ‘hybrid warfare’ age.”[\[395\]](#)

Another un-American agenda is the creation of blacklists to be used by major online advertising groups like Xander, lest their clients be accused of supporting “disinformation.” The Global Disinformation Index (GDI)—a British group with American affiliates—along with the Pentagon-backed alleged fact-checkers NewsGuard and others wage a supposedly private-sector economic war against independent media. The GDI’s advisory board includes former NATO spokesman Ben Nimmo—now the global lead for threat intelligence at Facebook’s parent company Meta—and Anne Applebaum, war hawk columnist at *The New Republic*, *The Atlantic* and the *Washington Post*, and wife of Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski. [\[396\]](#) They especially targeted independent conservative media such as the *Federalist* and the *American Conservative* magazine, which questioned dominant Russia and Russiagate narratives in the preceding years.[\[397\]](#)

With each crisis our government incites, We the People lose more of our freedom.[\[398\]](#)

## Google Threats

On April 13, 2022, Google AdSense warned their “partners”:

Dear Publisher,

Due to the war in Ukraine, we will pause monetization of content that exploits, dismisses, or condones the war. . . .

This pause includes, but is not limited to, claims that imply victims are responsible for their own tragedy or similar instances of victim blaming, such as claims that Ukraine is committing genocide or deliberately attacking its own citizens.

Sincerely,

The Google AdSense Team[\[399\]](#)

Their censorship guidelines are based on ridiculous mischaracterizations, dissenting opinions and nonsensical begged questions from the start. Is Google’s advertising department telling us the people of the Donbas are not Ukrainians? Or is it their claim that there has not been a war going on between the central government and the people of that region for most of the last decade? They do not say. If Russia allegedly kills a few hundred civilians in Bucha, [\[400\]](#) that can still be called “genocide,” but if the Kiev regime kills thousands in the Donbas, your webpage better not

characterize it that way or you will suffer lost revenue at the hands of the CIA-created[\[401\]](#) Western-world monopoly search engine's algorithms. Those who do not like it can just learn to code the banning of others.

## **Yellow Journalism**

### **Chemical Weapons**

Google would have their work cut out for them cracking down on “content that exploits” the war, if they were not only targeting dissenters. The government lied about this conflict from the start. For example, for some reason, on April 6, 2022, NBC's Ken Dilanian[\[402\]](#) wrote a story about U.S. intelligence agencies lying to the world, including the American people, about the war, beginning with warnings that the Russians were preparing to use chemical weapons against Ukrainian forces and civilians, a claim repeated by the president himself.[\[403\]](#) But three intelligence sources told him it was just a bluff. There was “no evidence” Russia had brought such munitions even “near” Ukraine. “Multiple U.S. officials acknowledged that the U.S. has used information as a weapon even when confidence in the accuracy of the information wasn't high,” continuing, “Sometimes it has used low-confidence intelligence for deterrent effect, as with chemical agents, and other times, as an official put it, the U.S. is just ‘trying to get inside Putin's head.’”[\[404\]](#)

In another example, Dilanian cited popular media rumors that Putin was isolated and misled by his advisers, which two of his sources said came from speculation rather than real intelligence. And their claim that Russia

had turned to China to ask for help was said to have been only “a warning to China not to do so.”[\[405\]](#)

## **Babi Yar**

They lied at the beginning of the war, when, on March 1, 2022, the Russians bombed a Kiev TV antenna, a symbolic strike probably meant to echo Bill Clinton’s strikes on Serbian TV in 1999.[\[406\]](#) The U.S. government and media claimed the Russians had instead bombed Babi Yar, [\[407\]](#) the site of a massive Nazi massacre of Jews during the Holocaust. [\[408\]](#) But that was a damned lie. Israeli journalist Ron Ben-Yishai went there and assured readers that “the closest hit to Babi Yar was in the Kyiv media and television tower complex, about 300 meters from the new monument, and about a kilometer from the old monument to the victims of the massacre in World War II.”[\[409\]](#) The *Post* also quoted the Israeli reporter saying it was not true, even as they pretended that bombing a separate target somewhat near the massacre site was the same thing.[\[410\]](#)

## **The Ghost of Kiev**

The War Party’s public relations machine went into overdrive immediately after Russia’s invasion. For example, it pushed the story of the great Ukrainian fighter ace, “The Ghost of Kiev,” who through his great patriotic valor had destroyed at least six Russian fighters in *Top Gun*-style dogfights in just a day, more than 40 in all.[\[411\]](#) Fox News insisted “the Ghost of Kyiv is real.”[\[412\]](#) Who is this legend we have no reason to believe exists,

asked *Newsweek*,[\[413\]](#) while Rep. Adam Kinzinger fell for it in an instant.  
[\[414\]](#) The claims were later debunked by the Ukrainian air force itself.[\[415\]](#)  
The public relations men had literally just recycled some old cutscene  
footage from a video game.[\[416\]](#)

## **Snake Island**

The Ukrainians came up with a fantastic story about how a few of their  
soldiers stationed at tiny Snake Island had bravely taken on the Russian  
navy, telling them, “Russian warship, go fuck yourself,” and fighting until  
the bitter end.[\[417\]](#) The men “died heroically,” President Zelensky said.  
[\[418\]](#) The story was a hoax. Never happened. They just surrendered.[\[419\]](#)  
But what great war propaganda. The papers and cable TV news loved it and  
repeated it to their credulous audiences.[\[420\]](#) Truth is the first casualty in  
war, as they say. But nobody believes in the word of the boy who cried wolf  
for very long.[\[421\]](#)

## **Hit Lists**

Just before the invasion, the *Washington Post* breathlessly reported on  
American intelligence claiming Russia had lists of people to hunt down and  
murder as soon as they invaded. A State Department official wrote to the  
UN that they should expect “Russian . . . abuses . . . including targeted  
killings, kidnappings/forced disappearances, unjust detentions, and the use  
of torture.” Targets were to include “Russian and Belarusian dissidents in  
exile in Ukraine, journalists and anti-corruption activists, and vulnerable



populations such as religious and ethnic minorities and LGBTQI+ persons.” They added, “Specifically, we have credible information that indicates Russian forces are creating lists of identified Ukrainians to be killed or sent to camps following a military occupation.”[\[422\]](#) This was nonsense. When asked about it, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov rightly mocked the reporter’s stupidity: “Do you realize that this is an absolute canard, a lie? It is absolute fiction. There is no such list. It’s a fake.”[\[423\]](#) In retrospect, that stuff about “LGBTQI+ persons” in danger was a little on the nose for the *Post* audience.

## **Mariupol Theater**

Amnesty International said the Russians bombed a theater in Mariupol on March 16, 2022, “killing at least a dozen people and likely many more.”[\[424\]](#) But the original claim was that 300 innocent people, mostly children, hiding in the basement had been slaughtered.[\[425\]](#) The AP then raised it to 600, but since they had no evidence of that, they simply assumed that Russia had removed all the bodies of those they “estimated” had died.[\[426\]](#) But Amnesty debunked the AP’s propaganda, concluding the true count was likely “much smaller than previously reported.”[\[427\]](#)

Journalist Max Blumenthal pointed out[\[428\]](#) that a Russian reporter had revealed what he said were plans by the Azov Battalion to blow up the theater just days before, and that at least a few people on scene had blamed Azov for the explosion.[\[429\]](#) They did have motive for such a provocation. On March 7, Azov commander Denys Prokopenko put out a message on YouTube begging for an American “no-fly zone” over Ukraine,[\[430\]](#) which

was a major talking point of the Ukrainian government and much of the media before the idea had been definitively shot down by American military officials.[\[431\]](#) One attempted debunking of Blumenthal's analysis said that since Ukraine was unlikely to get a no-fly zone, that is all you need to know to dismiss the claim.[\[432\]](#) But as Blumenthal showed, Azov fighters on scene were asking for one, while Zelensky was in Washington begging for a no-fly zone that same day, just hours before.[\[433\]](#) The theater attack was immediately seized upon by U.S. politicians demanding one as well.[\[434\]](#) If the Russians were responsible, then damn them, but there is ample reason to doubt the official narrative, beginning with the media being forced to revise their initial casualty numbers by many hundreds.

## **The Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Plant**

The Ukrainians tried numerous times to convince Americans that the Russians were bombing the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant,[\[435\]](#) when Moscow had already taken control of it at the beginning of the war and it was Kiev who was attacking. They had launched a massive, failed attempt to retake the plant in October 2022.[\[436\]](#) Its power function was shut down, although the facility still required some power to run safety and heat exchange systems.

In early April 2024, after the Russians accused Ukraine of attacking the facility with drones, the Ukrainians said it was a false flag meant to undermine support for their side.[\[437\]](#) Neither have a clear motive to damage it other than to accuse their enemies of doing so. The International

Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) did not attribute blame for the strikes but demanded they stop immediately.[\[438\]](#)

## **Viagra**

If a ridiculous lie is good enough to start one war, why not two? After falsely claiming Muammar Gaddafi was passing out Viagra to his troops to rape every woman and girl on their way to Benghazi as an excuse to start that war in the spring of 2011,[\[439\]](#) they used the same lie against Russia in the 2022– war. The UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten lied: “When women are held for days and raped, when you start to rape little boys and men, when you see a series of genital mutilations, when you hear women testify about Russian soldiers equipped with Viagra, it’s clearly a military strategy.”[\[440\]](#) Headline writers and TV news readers around the world repeated it to the masses.[\[441\]](#) Yet the investigation she referred to accused Russian forces of committing nine rapes and contained no mention of the drug at all.[\[442\]](#) Patten later admitted to Russian pranksters Vovan and Lexus that she was just repeating unconfirmed rumors, telling them when asked if she had any evidence, “No, no, no. . . . [I]t’s not my role to go and investigate. I sit in . . . an office in New York—and I have an advocacy mandate.” And then she conceded, “The investigation is going on by the Human Rights Monitoring Team and the International Commission of Inquiry. In their reports so far, there’s nothing about Viagra.”[\[443\]](#)

## **Crystallizing Public Opinion**

Just like with the wars in Afghanistan<sup>[444]</sup> and Iraq—and both wars’ failed “surges”—the attack on Libya and allied support for the bin Ladenites in Syria, the American people were fed a massive load of propaganda by the government and media to raise the tension and get them excited for the conflict. The bad guys were very bad. They needed to be stopped. Thank goodness the U.S.A. was here to play Superman and deliver the world from evil again. Just imagine, giving Viagra to soldiers to commit mass rapes on a national scale. Good men knew there was only one way to deal with scum like in the narrative they were told.

## **The Negotiations Were Short**

### **U.S., UK Prevent Peace**

Early indications that Russia and Ukraine could achieve a quick negotiated solution soon gave way to the reality that the Biden administration was instead determined to drag out the war to “weaken Russia.”

One day after Russian forces invaded Ukraine, State Department spokesman Ned Price was asked about the proposed terms to begin negotiations. Though an innocent third person might have assumed that achieving a ceasefire and early end to the fighting would be the highest priority, Price made it clear this was not the case with the American administration. “Those are not the conditions for real diplomacy,” he said.  
<sup>[445]</sup>

As Secretary Blinken confirmed in October 2022, the only time he had spoken to Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov since February 15, 2022, nine

days before the invasion, was over the release of the basketball player Brittney Griner, who had been convicted of bringing a THC vape pen into the country.[\[446\]](#) Otherwise, the policy was “Do not engage.”[\[447\]](#)

Two days after the war began, Zelensky said he wanted to negotiate. “We are not afraid to talk to Russia. We are not afraid to say everything about security guarantees for our state. We are not afraid to talk about neutral status. We are not in NATO now.” But he said the main question was “what security guarantees will we have? And what specific countries will give them? We need to talk about the end of this invasion. We need to talk about a ceasefire.”[\[448\]](#)

## **Belarus Talks**

The two sides met in Gomel, Belarus on February 28. Though they did not make a deal, they departed on positive terms and agreed to talk again on March 3.[\[449\]](#) Early attempts at negotiation by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Turkish President Recep Erdogan, though they showed some promise,[\[450\]](#) went nowhere without American interest or support. The *Financial Times* reported on March 16 that negotiators had “made significant progress” on a ceasefire deal, based on a Russian withdrawal in exchange for neutrality and limits on the size of Ukraine’s armed forces. They said Lavrov had also told them they were very close to a deal.[\[451\]](#)

## **Bennett**

Both sides trusted former Prime Minister Bennett, so at the same time their agents were meeting in Belarus, Putin and Zelensky were communicating through him, outlining the major points of the ceasefire. As Bennett later explained in an interview, Putin promised not to kill Zelensky and dropped his demand for the “disarmament of Ukraine.” In return, Zelensky vowed to drop his attempts to join NATO. Instead, they agreed on something they called the “Israeli model,” which would keep Ukraine outside of NATO, but well-armed enough to guarantee its own independence. “I had the impression at the time that both sides were very interested in a ceasefire,” Bennett said.[\[452\]](#) But the Americans decided to “crush Putin rather than to negotiate.” The former PM did not seem to disagree with the policy, but was just being honest about it. “I think there was a decision by the west (a legitimate one) that right now what’s needed is to keep hitting Putin and not to reach a ceasefire. . . . I’ll tell you what—I’m not sure they were mistaken.” He said he was merely “acting as an intermediary,” adding, “Everything I did was coordinated to the smallest detail not just with the U.S. but also Germany and France.”

When asked if the U.S. stopped the negotiations, Bennett replied, “Yes, basically they stopped it and at the time I thought they were making a mistake.” He continued, “[T]here’s a not-too-bad chance they could have reached [an agreement] if they didn’t stop it. Not for sure. But I’m not arguing that it was correct to try. In real time I thought it was correct to reach a ceasefire—now I don’t know.”[\[453\]](#)

Though Bennett later tried to walk back his claims, saying there was only a 50 percent chance of making a deal at the time, it is obvious he was

being honest the first time and trying to get out of trouble for it.[\[454\]](#)

## **Fiona Spills**

It was only later we found out that was exactly what had happened: both the Ukrainians and Russians had been prepared to make serious concessions to bring the war to an early end.[\[455\]](#) The diplomats had ironed out a few differences, and it was time for the presidents to meet to make the bigger decisions. Fiona Hill confirmed in *Foreign Affairs* in the fall of 2022 that they had been on the verge of a deal, citing former U.S. officials. “In April 2022, Russian and Ukrainian negotiators appeared to have tentatively agreed on the outlines of a negotiated interim settlement,” she explained. “Russia would withdraw to its position on February 23, when it controlled part of the Donbas region and all of Crimea, and in exchange, Ukraine would promise not to seek NATO membership and instead receive security guarantees from a number of countries.”[\[456\]](#)

## **Nay No Ned**

On March 21, State Department spokesman Price shot down a question about the peace talks, saying the president had “made it very clear that he is open to a diplomatic solution that does not compromise the core principles at the heart of the Kremlin’s war against Ukraine.” He elaborated, “[T]his is a war that is in many ways bigger than Russia, it’s bigger than Ukraine.” This was about the whole world order. “[T]here are principles that are at stake here that have universal applicability everywhere, [including] the

principle that each and every country has a sovereign right . . . to determine for itself with whom it will choose to associate in terms of its alliances.”

The reporter got his drift. “But does that mean that if under pressure of negotiation and war, that Zelensky gives up the previous desire to join NATO . . . that the U.S. wouldn’t go along with . . . a negotiated agreement?” Price refused to answer.[\[457\]](#)

At that time, Kiev was in a better position to negotiate than at any point after. And by the end of March, Zelensky was signaling that he was willing to make major concessions to achieve an early end to the war.[\[458\]](#) As Anchal Vohra wrote in *Foreign Policy*, “These include a commitment to Ukrainian neutrality with respect to military alliances, a rejection of any nuclear arsenal, and an acceptance of Russian control over Ukraine’s eastern regions.” She said, “He even indicated a readiness to change language policies that had disadvantaged Russian speakers. Zelensky’s announcements gave the face-to-face talks convening this week in Istanbul some hope of a ceasefire.”[\[459\]](#)

When White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki was asked what the U.S. was doing to encourage diplomacy, she responded only that “[t]he role that we feel we can play most effectively is by continuing to provide a broad range of security assistance, military assistance to them as well as economic and humanitarian assistance to strengthen their hand in these negotiations.”[\[460\]](#)

## **Turkey**



On March 29, the parties convened in Istanbul, where they issued the Istanbul Communiqué based on Ukraine's proposals. The key concession from the Ukrainian side was an offer of "permanent" neutrality, to refrain from developing nuclear weapons, recognize de facto Russian sovereignty over Crimea, punt on the question of the future of the Donbas and promise not to host any foreign forces on their soil. In exchange they would receive security guarantees from Western nations and Russia, including a promise to be allowed to join the EU.[\[461\]](#) These represented major concessions by Russia compared to its attempt to sack the Ukrainian capital and achieve regime change just weeks before.[\[462\]](#) For their part, "Russian negotiators said they would look into these proposals while Russia [would] 'drastically reduce' military activity near the cities of Chernihiv and Kyiv 'to increase mutual trust and create the necessary conditions for further negotiations.'" [\[463\]](#)

## **Alexey Arestovich**

Then-Zelensky adviser Alexey Arestovich, the same man who had seemed to predict the war and accept its inevitability three years before,[\[464\]](#) later said that the talks had been "completely successful." Having participated in the Istanbul negotiations, he explained that "it was the most profitable agreement we could have done. . . . We opened the champagne bottle. We had discussed demilitarization, denazification, issues concerning the Russian language, Russian church and much else." He continued, "And that month, it was the question of the amount of Ukrainian armed forces in peacetime, and President Zelensky said, 'I could decide this question

indirectly with Mr. Putin.” Arestovich added, “The Istanbul agreements were a protocol of intentions and was 90 percent prepared for directly meeting with Putin. That was to be the next step of negotiations.”[\[465\]](#)

## **Boris Johnson**

But then UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson came to town with an offer of weapons[\[466\]](#) and a message from the Biden administration: now was not the time to negotiate. They should instead increase the pressure on Putin. If Ukraine made a deal with Russia, they could not count on U.S. and UK support. So the talks were canceled. This tragic tale was told in extensive reporting by Ukrainska Pravda—a paper with a similar name but no ties to the Russian publication. In fact, it is owned by Dragon Capital,[\[467\]](#) in a fund managed by Soros Fund Management LLC,[\[468\]](#) and has a strong pro-Kiev slant. They said Johnson “appeared in the capital almost without warning” with two messages from Biden. The first was, “Putin should be pressured, not negotiated with,” and the second was that “even if Ukraine is ready to sign some agreements on guarantees with Putin, they are not.” Then they got right to the heart of the issue: “[T]he collective West . . . now felt that Putin was not really as powerful as they had previously imagined, and that here was a chance to ‘press him.’”[\[469\]](#)

As Michael von der Schulenburg, a former UN assistant secretary-general, later explained: “As late as 27 March 2022, Zelensky had shown the courage to defend the preliminary results of the Ukrainian-Russian peace negotiations in public in front of Russian journalists—despite the fact that NATO had by then already decided at its special summit on 24 March

2022 . . . to oppose these peace negotiations. In the end, Zelensky gave in to NATO pressures and opted for a continuation of the war.”[470]

Lavrov later said that after a workable proposal was on the table, in mid-April the Ukrainians simply broke off talks.[471] Putin complained that after Istanbul, “Kyiv representatives voiced quite a positive response to our proposals. These proposals concerned above all ensuring Russia’s security and interests. But a peaceful settlement obviously did not suit the West, which is why, after certain compromises were coordinated, Kyiv was actually ordered to wreck all these agreements.”[472] He was obviously being a major hypocrite in saying this, since he was surely playing his own role in the conflict. But he was not wrong.

## **Multiple Confirmations**

Zelensky adviser David Arakhamia, who had led Ukrainian delegations at Liaskavichy and Kamyanyuki in Belarus, conceded, “They really hoped almost to the last moment that they would force us to sign such an agreement so that we would take neutrality. It was the most important thing for them.” He continued, “They were prepared to end the war if we agreed to—as Finland once did—neutrality, and committed that we would not join NATO. In fact, this was the key point. Everything else was simply rhetoric and political ‘seasoning.’”[473] Though he backtracked a bit afterwards, Arakhamia also confirmed that “when we returned from Istanbul, Boris Johnson came to Kyiv and said that we would not sign anything with them at all, and let’s just fight.”[474]

The London *Times* ran a piece citing Johnson's later denials, but the article included confirmation from Downing Street<sup>[475]</sup> that he had "urged against any negotiations with Russia on terms that gave credence to the Kremlin's false narrative for the invasion, but stressed that this was a decision for the Ukrainian government." Yeah, sure it was. The paper paraphrased the ex-PM explaining that "during the discussions with Zelensky after the Istanbul talks, he had been concerned about the nature of any potential agreement."<sup>[476]</sup> Johnson told the *Wall Street Journal*, "I was a bit worried at that stage. I could not see for the life of me what the deal could be, and I thought that any deal with Putin was going to be pretty sordid." Johnson says he told Zelensky, "[A]s far as I am concerned, Putin must fail and Ukraine must be entitled to retain full sovereignty and independence. . . . It's the Ukrainians who are fighting and dying. But we would back Ukraine a thousand percent."<sup>[477]</sup>

He was doing a better job of confirming the story than denying it.

Ukraine's former deputy foreign minister, Oleksandr Chalyi, said that Putin's government seemed to be sincere about reaching a deal, eventually dropping demands for demilitarization and de-Nazification.<sup>[478]</sup> "We negotiated with [the] Russian delegation practically two months in March and April [for a] possible peaceful settlement."<sup>[479]</sup> He also said, "We were very close in mid-April 2022 to finalizing the war with a peace settlement. . . . [A] week after Putin started his aggression, he concluded he had made a huge mistake and tried to do everything possible to conclude an agreement with Ukraine."<sup>[480]</sup>

Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder explained that he had been asked by the Ukrainians to help negotiate. He said the Russians wanted five major points addressed before they would withdraw from the country: Kiev needed to renounce NATO membership, protect bilingualism in law, accept strong federalism for the Donbas, receive security guarantees from the UNSC and Germany, and recognize Russian sovereignty over Crimea.

However, Schröder said, “The only ones who could regulate war with Ukraine are the Americans. At the peace negotiations in Istanbul with [Ukrainian diplomat] Rustem Umerov in March 2022, the Ukrainians did not agree on peace because they were not allowed to,” adding, “They had to ask the Americans about everything.” He said Umerov had agreed that Ukraine no longer wanted NATO membership and would relegalize the use of Russian in official documents in the east. “But in the end nothing happened,” Schröder said. “My impression: nothing could happen, because everything else was decided in Washington. That was fatal.” Referring to the story that the talks had only failed because of the reported massacre at Bucha, outside of Kiev,[\[481\]](#) Schröder said he believed the Americans had scotched the talks before news of the killings had become known. He said he thought Putin had made a terrible error in launching the war, but also stressed the perceived threat posed by Ukraine’s integration into NATO. [\[482\]](#)

In April 2022, CNN Türk reported that Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu accused the U.S. of wanting to extend the war. “After the talks in Istanbul, we did not think that the war would take this long.”

However, he added, “following the NATO foreign ministers’ meeting, it was the impression that . . . there are those within the NATO member states that want the war to continue, let the war continue and Russia gets weaker. They don’t care much about the situation in Ukraine.”[\[483\]](#) The outlet also later carried an article by AK Party deputy chairman Numan Kurtulmus, which said the U.S. and its allies “are launching a process for the prolongation of this war. . . . Someone’s trying not to end the war. The United States considers prolongation of war as its benefit,” adding, “Putin-Zelenski were going to sign, but someone didn’t want to.”[\[484\]](#)

The *Journal* later described what they called “punishing” terms set out in the April 2022 draft deal, which were not so unreasonable. They said the document “appears loosely based on the 1990 treaty that created a united Germany, where Soviet Union troops quit East Germany on the condition that the country renounce nuclear weapons and cap the size of its army.” They agreed to a “permanently neutral state that doesn’t participate in military blocs,” though it would be allowed to join the European Union. The deal would also have prevented them from rebuilding their military with Western support and would leave Crimea under what the *Journal* called “de facto” control, which is at once laughable nonsense and at the same time possibly meant to obscure the fact that Ukraine may have been able to keep Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson if they had negotiated then. Zelensky himself said that the Russians wanted “neutrality and the nuclear-free status of our state. . . . This is the most important point. This was the first point of principle for the Russian Federation.”[\[485\]](#) “Ultimately,” the *Journal* wrote, no deal was reached because “the scale of

Russian war crimes in Ukraine became apparent, Ukraine's military fortunes improved and the West poured in weapons to bolster Kyiv" instead.[\[486\]](#)

In June 2024, the *New York Times* finally published a draft of the Istanbul Communiqué, which, again, had been written by the Ukrainians, showing they had offered to promise not to seek membership in the NATO alliance or allow foreign troops to be stationed there, and accept the occupation of the Donbas, though not Russian sovereignty over it. They showed that the Russians had backed down from their demand that Kiev recognize their sovereignty over Crimea, deciding to just leave it out of the treaty altogether. "We managed to find a very real compromise," Ukrainian negotiator Oleksandr Chalyi said. "We were very close in the middle of April, in the end of April, to finalize our war with some peaceful settlement." Apparently the Russians were even softening their position on leaving forces in the Donbas, an issue which, like Crimea, they had already agreed to settle later. The *Times* claimed that "a seven-point list targeted Ukraine's national identity, including a ban on naming places after Ukrainian independence fighters," as though they were talking about the American heroes George Washington and Nathanael Greene[\[487\]](#) rather than Adolf Hitler's vile henchmen Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych, [\[488\]](#) and as though the Russians were being insanely petty rather than eminently reasonable on that point. Did Gen. Eisenhower allow the Germans to keep Nazi street names and monuments in West Berlin?[\[489\]](#)

In September 2024, Nuland herself finally confirmed U.S.-UK intervention against the deal, telling an interviewer: "The Ukrainians began

asking for advice on where this thing was going, and it became clear to us . . . that Putin's main condition was buried in an annex to this document that they were working on. And it included limits on the precise kinds of weapons systems that Ukraine could have after the deal." She added, "I think that plenty of people, and perhaps Zelensky himself, were very suspicious that they were about to fall into a trap, and if Putin could have gotten that . . . completely neutered, demilitarized Ukraine for nothing, why wouldn't he take it?"[\[490\]](#)

So, in keeping with the Warren Zimmermann-William Taylor template, [\[491\]](#) U.S. officials derided the deal as "unilateral disarmament," while the Poles, fearing French and German pressure to sign, challenged other NATO members at a meeting, asking, "Which one of you would sign this?" After further talks, Ukrainian demands for security guarantees from other nations, including the U.S., and Russian insistence that they retain veto power over any such intervention should the two go back to war, the deal fell apart. [\[492\]](#)

## **No Real Talks Since**

And that was the last time for, as of now, more than two and a half years that the two leaders came close to an agreement.

Johnson and Biden both also publicly trashed the idea of peace talks, with the PM comparing Putin to a "crocodile." For his part, on March 24 and 26, in comments in Brussels and Warsaw, Biden put major emphasis on new arms transfers and preparations for a long war, playing down the prospect of negotiations and declaring the United States was not a party to



the ongoing talks. It was in these comments in Warsaw that Biden declared: “For God’s sake, this man cannot remain in power!” Though his staff later walked back the statement, this may have been designed to ratchet up tensions and help to sabotage the ongoing talks.[\[493\]](#)

Unfortunately, American leadership had never been less capable. President Biden was far past his prime. “The White House”—whoever that is—routinely walked back his reckless statements. In January 2022, Biden seemed to imply that the NATO alliance would not react if Russia simply made a “minor incursion” into areas the rebels already controlled, essentially inviting Russian forces in. Then the people who ostensibly work for him clarified he did not mean that. He did not mean anything by it at all. [\[494\]](#) Biden threatened that the U.S. would respond “in kind” to any Russian chemical attacks in Ukraine[\[495\]](#) and implied the elite 82nd Airborne division was being deployed there to fight.[\[496\]](#)

Biden also ranted about how the Russian president was a “murderous thug,” “dictator” and “war criminal.”[\[497\]](#) This obviously made it much more difficult, if not impossible, for the two of them to ever talk in a productive way again. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov responded to these comments, saying, “Personal insults like this narrow the window of opportunity for our bilateral relations under the current administration. It is necessary to be aware of this.”[\[498\]](#) Former Amb. Freeman noted that these statements could only deprive Putin of the incentive to compromise, “and probably guarantee a long war.”[\[499\]](#)

A few weeks later, Biden said he wanted to see Putin tried for war crimes[\[500\]](#) and declared him guilty of “genocide” in Ukraine.[\[501\]](#) Since

the U.S. had no ability to enforce these claims, such remarks also seemed to be designed to prevent real diplomacy from ending the war too soon. As scholar Ted Galen Carpenter pointed out after Biden's call for Putin's prosecution, the only way such a trial could happen would be if he lost the war and was overthrown. Thus, they were encouraging him to continue the war indefinitely.[\[502\]](#)

After a deep dive into the record, RAND's Samuel Charap and Johns Hopkins professor Sergey Radchenko found that the American and British reluctance to deal with Russia was part of what ruined the talks. Paradoxically, they said the West was wary about a deal that would require them to give security guarantees to Ukraine when their refusal to back off eventual NATO membership for Kiev was the primary issue of the war. Though Ukraine's demand for such guarantees may have been too much for them to ask, the Ukrainians knew that. Bennett had told Zelensky so.[\[503\]](#) They could have negotiated down from there.

Zelensky said, "It is clear that Ukraine is not a member of NATO; we understand this. . . . For years we heard about the apparently open door but have already also heard that we will not enter there, and these are truths and must be acknowledged."[\[504\]](#) But instead of making a deal on these reasonable grounds, Ukraine and its supposed allies decided to keep fighting. Charap and Radchenko say this was also due to the reaction to alleged atrocities at Bucha,[\[505\]](#) the perceived weakness of the Russian military, which made Zelensky think his forces had a chance to defeat them, as well as simply the bad judgment demonstrated by their attempt to forge a permanent overarching deal instead of an immediate ceasefire.[\[506\]](#)

This was the last chance for an early end to the war.

## **Poisoning Abramovich**

The MI6 cutouts at Bellingcat, led by Christo Grozev, the same guy who tried to make the case of Alexei Navalny's poisoning back in 2020,[\[507\]](#) claimed in March 2024 that Putin had poisoned his buddy Roman Abramovich, who was attempting to negotiate with Ukraine. "Western experts who looked into the incident said it was hard to determine whether the symptoms were caused by a chemical or biological agent or by some sort of electromagnetic-radiation attack," the *Journal* elaborated.[\[508\]](#) The BBC said the symptoms—"eye and skin inflammation and piercing pain in the eyes"—were "consistent with poisoning with chemical weapons." Well, it must have been Russian "Novichok," because nerve agents like sarin, VX and tabun are actually deadly.

When U.S. and Ukrainian government sources said the story was false and that Abramovich was just fine,[\[509\]](#) and he went right back to the talks,[\[510\]](#) the BBC rationalized that "it would hardly be surprising that the U.S. would want to dampen down suggestions that anyone—especially Russia—had used a chemical weapon in Ukraine, as this could push them into retaliatory action that they are extremely reluctant to take."[\[511\]](#) They just could not admit the story was a ridiculous hoax and that they had proved themselves unfit for their jobs by believing and repeating it.

## **Bucha**

In March 2022, there was a major battle for a town called Bucha, about 15 miles northwest of Kiev. After the Russians withdrew from the area in what they called a confidence-building measure during peace talks in Turkey, [\[512\]](#) a massive propaganda campaign was launched that claimed the Russians had slaughtered thousands of civilians in the town in what amounted to an act of “genocide,” comparable to the Srebrenica massacre of 1995.[\[513\]](#)

“We know of thousands of people killed and tortured, with severed limbs, raped women and murdered children,” Zelensky claimed.[\[514\]](#) Even at the time it was obvious this was an influence operation, spread through TV and social media. The story successfully changed the narrative of the war from any kind of power conflict between nation states—business—to a simple comic book story of villainous Russian “orcs”[\[515\]](#) devouring the innocent, virginal civilian population of Ukraine in a Holocaust-style war of extermination, thus necessitating a new strategy of resisting at any cost rather than negotiating with evil itself.[\[516\]](#)

The military expert and *Newsweek* reporter William Arkin, who is anti-Russian in his viewpoint, was still merciless in his denunciation of the propaganda about Bucha, though he did call it an atrocity and suspect most of the dead had been killed by the Russians.[\[517\]](#) He still said it was the furthest thing from a genocide and that his sources in the DIA felt the same way. Further, he said that the purpose of the propaganda campaign was to undermine the talks.[\[518\]](#) It was later revealed that the U.S. and UK had already succeeded in ruining the deal before the massacres at Bucha had been discovered,[\[519\]](#) however the talks continued, revealing that there had

still been a chance for peace remaining.[\[520\]](#) The atrocity, such as it was or was embellished to be, could have been cited as a reason to end the war just as easily as an excuse to expand it. But the deaths at Bucha became a major part of the propaganda justification to prolong the conflict in the name of weakening Russia over the long term instead.[\[521\]](#)

Of course, the Russians bear responsibility for what happened at Bucha, Irpin, Mariupol, Kharkiv and other Ukrainian cities where civilians have been killed by their soldiers, although there are reasons to believe there is more to the story of Bucha than what we have been told. For one thing, reports of the massacres did not start to come in for two days after the Russians had withdrawn,[\[522\]](#) and after Ukrainian forces had announced the beginning of their “clearing operation in Bucha from saboteurs and accomplices of Russia.”[\[523\]](#) Initial statements by the mayor[\[524\]](#) and *Ukrainska Pravda*[\[525\]](#) made no mention of any massacres. Three days later, on April 2, the same day that the London *Times* filed their first report of large-scale atrocities in Bucha, their counterparts at the *New York Times* reported only a half-dozen men apparently executed by Russians, and a body lying next to a package of Russian rations, indicating perhaps this person had been killed by Ukrainian irregular forces instead.[\[526\]](#) The *Times* later released an in-depth series indicating that 36 civilians had been shot and killed by Russian forces, not in any massacre or extermination campaign, but because they had ventured outside for various reasons and turned down the wrong street in an apparent free-fire zone.[\[527\]](#) In four cases, they identified 13 men who witnesses said had been taken captive and executed by Russian troops, including seven members of the armed

militia Territorial Defense.[\[528\]](#) PBS *Frontline* found another example where five Territorial Defense members were captured and executed.[\[529\]](#) These were irregular fighters, no longer civilians, murdered, but not massacred in large numbers. Though still, if proven, these would be clear war crimes.[\[530\]](#) A report by Amnesty International added another handful of examples of executions by Russian forces.[\[531\]](#)

According to the *Times*, approximately 400 people were killed “during” Russia’s occupation of the city, which the paper characterized as a “bloody campaign against civilians.”[\[532\]](#) In fact, many of those killed in Bucha died under artillery barrages from Ukrainian forces against Russian armored columns, sacrificed to protect Kiev.[\[533\]](#)

If we assume the 400 figure is correct, and that all of the dead were civilians deliberately killed by the invading force, that would clearly be criminal, but still nothing approaching an attempted genocide nor a good reason to call off negotiations. But it was not to be. As *Ukrainska Pravda* put it, “Zelenskyy relayed Johnson’s message” to Putin: “I’m sorry, we saw what happened in Bucha, the circumstances are changing.”[\[534\]](#)

“The essence of evil has come to our land—murderers, torturers, rapists and looters who call themselves an army,” Zelensky said in a public statement. “They have killed consciously, and with pleasure. . . . What has happened here is genocide. It is very hard to keep talking when you see what has happened here.”[\[535\]](#) Four hundred people killed is a tragedy, an atrocity, but it is not a genocide.

But officials had already revealed to the major papers that a strategic choice was made after the American military assessed that Ukraine had a

fighting chance at winning the war, or at least not losing it for many more months. That was time enough for the U.S. to pour a whole new quantity of equipment and weapons into the Ukrainian military and train them on how to use it, including rockets, drones, radars and advanced, longer-range artillery.[\[536\]](#) The accusations of atrocities at Bucha gave Ukraine a reason to continue, and also reinforced Western governments' willingness to back them with weapons, diplomatic support and economic sanctions against Russia.[\[537\]](#)

Putin later said that a deal, “the Treaty on the Permanent Neutrality and Security Guarantees for Ukraine,” had been reached and it had already been “initialed” for final approval from their capitals.[\[538\]](#) “After we pulled troops back from Kiev as we promised, the Kiev authorities, as their handlers usually do, threw it all away into the landfill of history.”[\[539\]](#)

In June 2022, Johnson again intervened to prevent French President Macron from attempting to negotiate peace,[\[540\]](#) and during a press conference with Zelensky in August he denounced the idea of holding talks altogether: “This is not the time to advance some flimsy plan for negotiation.”[\[541\]](#)

It is really too bad. As former diplomat Chas Freeman wrote, “Had the West not intervened to prevent Ukraine from ratifying the treaty others helped it agree with Russia at the outset of the war, Ukraine would now be intact and at peace.”[\[542\]](#)

## **The Azov Battalion's Big Chance**

## No Idle Threat

The war was avoidable. Then again, Ukraine's Nazis had made it clear they would not tolerate peace with the east. Svoboda, the National Corps, Democratic Ax and others regularly showed up to violently protest the slightest indication of negotiations with the Donbas rebels.[\[543\]](#) These are credible threats. In America, if a group of Nazis made a serious threat against the president, the Secret Service or FBI would just roll them right up. They would never get near him.[\[544\]](#) But in Ukraine, it is different. The *Times* reported that "the groups are a two-edged sword, threatening not just the Kremlin but also the Ukrainian government, which could be rocked and possibly overthrown by them if Mr. Zelensky agrees to a peace deal that in their minds gives too much to Moscow." The leader of Democratic Ax told the *Times*, "If anybody from the Ukrainian government tries to sign such a document, a million people will take to the streets and that government will cease being the government." Reporter Andrew Kramer pointed out that after the last two revolutions, "this is no idle threat."[\[545\]](#)

On the eve of war, the Nazis held a "Bandera reading" in Kiev, where Yevhen Karas of C14 explained what may seem like a strange situation to the casual observer: "We were now being given so much weaponry, not because . . . they want the best for us, but because we perform the tasks set by the West, because we are the only ones who are prepared to do them." He explained, "[W]e have fun killing and we have fun fighting. And they are like, 'Wow, let's see what's going to happen.'" He added, "And that is the reason for the new alliance: Turkey, Poland, Britain and Ukraine." Karas went on to promise that once Russia was out of the way, Ukraine's



armed forces would “immediately become a problem for all those who are now trying to give us problems.”[\[546\]](#)

In March 2022, Ukrainian Nazi Dmytro Korchynsky, the former leader of the Ukrainian National Assembly, told an interviewer that his opinion of Zelensky had changed. “I was angry at the Ukrainian people. How could they have elected president—one of the national symbols—a Jew? A Jew can serve as a head of a national bank, even as a prime minister.” But, he said, “the president is a national symbol, just like a flag, anthem, etcetera. It has to be national. It has to be Ukrainian. As it turned out, it is for the best that he is a Jew. Now try to accuse us of Nazism.”[\[547\]](#)

## **The Memory Hole**

The American mainstream media agreed. Once the war started, all that previous reporting about the Nazism of the Azov Regiment and related groups went right down the memory hole. As Lev Golinkin complained in *The Nation*, the British *Guardian*, which had run multiple articles about the dangers of the Regiment, by 2023 had completely rehabilitated them, claiming, the Nazis “are now leading the defense of Mariupol, insisting they have shed their previous dubious politics and rapidly becoming Ukrainian heroes.”[\[548\]](#) Golinkin also condemned *Forbes* for running a piece by David Axe which falsely claimed that Azov had been denazified and had ceased using the *Wolfsangel*,[\[549\]](#) when in fact, “The *Wolfsangel* is one of the first things you see on Azov’s website, just as it was on the day the *Forbes* story ran; in fact, it’s the profile photo for all Azov’s social media accounts.” He noted it was the same at the British BBC and the German

*Deutsche Welle*. “The problem with insisting that Azov’s neo-Nazism is just a Russian lie is the abundance of evidence to the contrary. Seven years’ worth of Western articles chronicling the group’s nature was too much to ignore.” He continued, “This left Azov’s whitewashers with the unenviable task of cobbling together a come-to-Jesus story in which Azov began as a neo-Nazi paramilitary group but somehow saw the error of its ways before 2022.” But that is not true. As Golinkin pointed out, the claim Azov renounced Nazism after being integrated into the National Guard was completely belied by scores of Western media articles in the time since then.[\[550\]](#) He went on to show the Nazi histories of Azov leaders the Western press later insisted were more moderate and how in fact they had not changed at all.[\[551\]](#)

As experienced Ukraine reporter Christopher Miller, formerly with Radio Liberty, explained, when the threat of war became clear in early 2022, it was the Azov Regiment and movement which took the lead training new volunteer fighters. Miller noted that their “weapons were displayed by burly men wearing military uniforms adorned with an array of Nazi symbols: the SS-favored Totenkopf, perhaps better known as death’s head; the sonnenrad, or black sun; the Wolfsangel; and many more. One patch with a masked skull read, ‘Born to kill for Ukraine.’” Their members told him their highest goals were to create a “nationalist socialist” state in Ukraine. “Glory to the nation! Death to enemies!” they chanted.[\[552\]](#)

On April 3, 2022, Fox News’s Bret Baier asked Zelensky about Azov and their role in the war, noting the regiment was “said to be a Nazi affiliated organization operating as a militia in your country, said to be

committing their own atrocities. What should Americans know about those units, about those reports?”

Zelensky did not deny it. Instead, he answered, “So Azov was one of those many battalions. They are what they are. They were defending our country. . . . I want to explain to you everything, all the components of those volunteer battalions later were incorporated into the military of Ukraine.” He reassured the audience: “Those Azov fighters are no longer a self-established group. They are now a component of the Ukrainian military,” then referred to the prosecution of Azov members for war crimes committed during 2014, neglecting to mention[\[553\]](#) that the convictions were all overturned and the fighters returned to their stations.[\[554\]](#)

It was not true that all the paramilitary forces had been integrated into the army and national guard. Right Sector’s Ukrainian Volunteer Corps,[\[555\]](#) Svoboda’s C14,[\[556\]](#) Carpathian Sich[\[557\]](#) and the Aidar Battalion[\[558\]](#) were still independent. And while the Azov Regiment had been pulled back from the front in mid-2015 for public relations reasons—Western governments were embarrassed by all their Nazi affiliations and slogans—they returned at the beginning of 2019.[\[559\]](#) Imagine if a U.S. president incorporated KKK and Aryan Nations groups into the army during a civil war and said that was why not to worry that they were dangerous anymore.

The *Post* now simply calls Azov “a nationalist outfit.”[\[560\]](#)

Some poor CNN headline writer got caught in a deadly grapple with his dissonance before, defeated, finally choking out, “A far-right battalion has a key role in Ukraine’s resistance. Its neo-Nazi history has been

exploited by Putin.” Reporters Tara John and Tim Lister insisted that “Moscow has given the regiment an outsized role in the conflict. . . . In the Russian disinformation playbook, the Azov movement is a tempting target—one where fact and disinformation can be elided.” They went on to admit that yes, it was founded by Nazis, trains child soldiers and is a major center for the global fascist movement. They also quoted the U.S. State Department’s complaints about their anti-Gypsy pogroms, and even cited the Ukrainian expert from CNN’s favorite propaganda front group, Bellingcat, warning that while there were limits to their electoral support, Azov and like-minded groups “have enjoyed near impunity for violence aimed at minorities, were unchecked in their efforts to build influence in military and security forces, and have been normalized by Ukraine’s senior leaders.” Still, CNN approvingly quoted Azov spokesmen and supposed experts denying that they were still Nazis, and the thrust of the story remained that this may have been a problem in the past, but not anymore. “[E]xperts say Russia’s fixation on a minor player like the Azov movement serves a purpose—allowing the Kremlin to frame the conflict as an ideological and even existential struggle. However remote from reality that may be.” Sometimes the Russians exaggerate the Nazi presence and the threat they pose. Were there enough of them to warrant invasion? Not in this author’s judgment. But CNN went much further, downplaying the danger altogether. It was obviously driven by a need to serve an agenda, though its authors deserve half-credit for disproving their own conclusion throughout the article.[\[561\]](#)

## **Stormtroopers**

On the eve of war, *USA Today* ran a piece about America's allies, noting Azov troops had filmed themselves dipping their bullets in pig fat for use against Muslim Chechen troops. The paper reported that the video "spotlights an uncomfortable truth for Ukraine's military: The front-line Azov Regiment was founded eight years ago by extremist right-wing militants, including avowed neo-Nazis." They added, "It has long served as an inspiration for U.S.-based right-wing extremists and white supremacists, some of whom traveled to Ukraine for training and combat experience." For balance, they also talked to Andreas Umland, an analyst at the Stockholm Center for Eastern European Studies, who spun for the Banderists: "Certainly, there are still white supremacists and far-right extremists present in Azov . . . but in recent years the military wing of the movement has moved away from open support of fascism." Besides, "If you're going to fight a war, who is going to fight it? For war, you need a certain type of people. The people who are willing to do that are the ultra-nationalists."[\[562\]](#)

Andriy Biletsky's men remain at war, taking part in the fighting for Bakhmut and Avdiivka in 2023 and 2024. Officially the 3rd Separate Infantry Division in the army and the 12th Special Forces Brigade Azov of the national guard, the men still call themselves the Azov Regiment. They had their own recruitment centers, and Azov leaders, such as Denys Prokopenko, who had been taken prisoner and traded back to Ukraine, had been put in back charge, in violation of promises made to the U.S. on the matter.[\[563\]](#) Prokopenko complained about what he called "the absurdity of the situation: Azov is welcomed at the highest level in the Western world,

but cannot receive weapons.”[\[564\]](#) They continued to wear Nazi tattoos and admitted their politics had not changed from the group’s early days.[\[565\]](#) In August 2023, Zelensky met with Biletsky and his men at the front, thanking them for defending the country.[\[566\]](#) “We are told Ukraine’s Nazis either do not exist, or are so marginal they do not deserve acknowledgement,” journalist Max Blumenthal noted, “So why is Zelensky unable to ignore them, repeatedly holding court with the most virulent faces of Banderite fascism during times of crisis?”[\[567\]](#)

Zelensky caused an uproar when he had an Azov member join him in a live video presentation to the parliament in Greece. Some there thought it inappropriate.[\[568\]](#)

In February 2023, the Ukrainian military actually put out a call to recruit 20,000 “stormtroopers” to fight in the east. The *Newsweek* story about it contains no irony or mention of either Reinhard Heydrich or Darth Vader. It simply reads like a recruitment flyer from the Ukrainian military: “These troops called stormtroopers by the Ukrainian National Guard will be given several federal perks should they make it through the liberation of Luhansk, Donetsk and Crimea from Russian occupiers.” They continued, “Volunteers who will become stormtroopers receive a number of social guarantees,” at American expense of course. “In particular, a stable and competitive salary, the opportunity to receive housing and treatment and rehabilitation in state medical institutions, study at departmental universities, retire with mixed experience, acquire [combat veteran] status . . . and other significant advantages,” National Guard of Ukraine (NSU) spokesman Ruslan Muzychuk said.[\[569\]](#)

In early June 2023, the *Times* ran an article which detailed how it is a real problem that so many Ukrainian soldiers cover their uniforms and helmets with symbols from Hitler's Third Reich—"imagery that the West has spent a half-century trying to eliminate"—not because Nazism is bad, but because it "threatens to reinforce Mr. Putin's propaganda and give fuel to his false claims that Ukraine must be 'de-Nazified.'" The article also noted that all the swastikas and whatnot put the U.S. government and media in an embarrassing position, public relations-wise, causing some "journalists [to] ask soldiers to remove the [Totenkopf] patch before taking photographs." Their reporter wrote that "[t]he iconography of these groups, including a skull-and-crossbones patch worn by concentration camp guards and a symbol known as the Black Sun, now appears with some regularity on the uniforms of soldiers fighting on the front line," adding that this included soldiers "who say the imagery symbolizes Ukrainian sovereignty and pride, not Nazism." They cited Bellingcat's Michael Colborne complaining that Ukrainian leaders were "not willing to acknowledge and understand how these symbols are viewed outside of Ukraine." Then they quoted a Ukrainian historian saying, as the *Times* put it, "the symbols had meanings that were unique to Ukraine and should be interpreted by how Ukrainians viewed them . . . independently of how it is used in other parts of Earth."[\[570\]](#)

But the Holocaust is Ukraine's history, not ours. At least 800,000 Jews were murdered by the German Nazis and their Ukrainian Quislings during the Second World War.[\[571\]](#) But these innocent little black suns and Totenkopfs are supposed to be far more meaningful to Americans than

Ukrainians, who, we are told, wear them in battle for patriotic reasons, certainly not as a deadly threat against their ethnic enemies, or to indicate their plans for the future of their country.[\[572\]](#)

When Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau traveled to Kiev in June 2023 to promise more aid, he was palling around with Andriy Melnyk, Ukraine's deputy foreign minister, who had just been kicked out of Germany for visiting Stepan Bandera's grave and denying that his forces had participated in the Holocaust.[\[573\]](#) The Poles were also understandably unhappy with his appointment to high office.[\[574\]](#)

## **Purple-Brown Alliance**

And in the category of 'things you could not possibly make up,' Golinkin wrote in the *Forward* that: "On June 29, [2023], Stanford University hosted a delegation from the Azov Brigade . . . The panel, during which Azov's neo-Nazi insignia was projected onto the wall, was attended by noted political scientist Francis Fukuyama, who posed for a photograph with the delegation." Golinkin said, "This event—and the disturbing lack of reaction from Jewish organizations—showcases the limits of America's commitment to combating white supremacy. Call it the Ukraine exception."[\[575\]](#)

Fukuyama is not just a "political scientist," he is one of the most important gentile leaders of the neoconservative movement. His article and later book, *The End of History and the Last Man*,[\[576\]](#) in which he argued liberal democracy is "the endpoint of mankind's ideological evolution," have been cited as justification for American global dominance for the last 30 years. And here he is palling around with the proud descendants of the



men who perpetrated the Holocaust in World War II, and telling the local paper they “are heroes that I’m proud to support.”[\[577\]](#)

Michael McFaul, who had been Obama’s ambassador to Russia, was there too. As journalist Moss Robeson observed, it did not seem to bother the professor to give a speech under a large projection of Azov’s *Wolfsangel*, even when the Stanford Center for International Security and Cooperation, which is a part of the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, where he teaches, had released a study about the dangerous Nazism of the Azov Battalion just a few weeks before.[\[578\]](#) McFaul, rehabilitating the Führer to smear the president, also said, “You know, there’s one difference between Hitler when he was coming in and Putin. Hitler didn’t kill ethnic Germans. He didn’t kill German-speaking people.”[\[579\]](#) McFaul was not “canceled” and forced to resign because his preposterous Holocaust revisionism was in the service of demonizing the Russians, and America’s liberals have their priorities.

Azov’s profile[\[580\]](#) was later quietly removed from the Stanford website,[\[581\]](#) which is funny because if one searches the term “Azov” on the site, it still returns hits for the Rise Above Movement (RAM), Misanthropic Division, C14, Right Sector, Atomwaffen Division, the Nordic Resistance Movement and Russian Imperial Movement—all of them Nazis, and all of them, according to Stanford, close with their associates in Ukraine’s Azov movement.[\[582\]](#)

Not to be outdone, shortly after, President Zelensky gave a hero’s welcome to five leaders of the Azov Regiment who had been captured by

Russia but then sent to Turkey in a prisoner swap under the condition they would be held there until the end of the war.[\[583\]](#)

In May 2024, the Germans expelled seven Ukrainian soldiers training there for wearing Nazi symbols. The military announced that from then on Ukrainian soldiers would be explicitly instructed not to wear their Nazi symbols when they went to Germany.[\[584\]](#)

Again, this is part of the military and national guard, and still a few independent militias, not the entirety of the military. But it is still far more than enough for the United States to have nothing to do with backing any of them, certainly not at war with their own countrymen or the Russian nuclear weapons superpower.

The U.S. officially lifted restrictions on arming the Azov fighters in June 2024.[\[585\]](#) But the Intercept showed they had at least been receiving training all along. Antony Blinken's State Department saw no problem since they changed the name from Battalion to Regiment to Brigade, even though the same men were still in charge.[\[586\]](#)

## **Blowback Coming**

In May 2022, in a case of bad timing for the Biden administration, the Department of Homeland Security warned that with the rush of new volunteers headed to Ukraine to join the fight, "Ukrainian nationalist groups including the Azov movement are actively recruiting racially or ethnically motivated violent extremist white supremacists (RMVE-WS) to join various neo-Nazi volunteer battalions in the war against Russia." They added, "RMVE-WS individuals in the United States and Europe announced

intentions to join the conflict and are organizing entry to Ukraine via the Polish border.” And they were already worried about the domestic blowback: “What kind of training are foreign fighters receiving in Ukraine that they could possibly proliferate in U.S. based militia and white nationalist groups?” the feds wondered.[\[587\]](#)

The *Times* also admitted the Azov movement was reaching out to neo-Nazis across the Western world to recruit fighters for the war—and they were responding. The danger, as the *Times* saw it, was not the empowerment of legions of new battle-hardened Hitler-lovers in the world. Instead, “[t]he apparent mobilization of far-right groups could be problematic for the Ukrainian government, playing into Mr. Putin’s depiction of Ukraine as a fascist country, and his false claim to be waging war against Nazis who control the government in Kyiv.”[\[588\]](#) Reuters reported that there were more than 100,000 men in these militias by the time of the Russian invasion of 2022[\[589\]](#)—militias that neo-Nazis from around Europe had rallied to join.[\[590\]](#) They did not have long to wait to receive Western equipment.

Also in August 2023, the *Forward* ran an extensive investigative piece on a group of American neo-Nazis training at a property near Springfield, Maine, and calling themselves the “blood tribe.”[\[591\]](#) Just joshing around on Twitter, the author asked rhetorically if they would be going to fight on the eastern front with Azov and C14. Their leader, Christopher Pohlhaus responded directly with “Yes, actually” with a smiley face emoji with cute little hearts around it.[\[592\]](#) As he had previously posted on Telegram, “There will likely not be another chance in my lifetime to fight alongside

other NS [National Socialist] men against a multi-ethnic invading empire to defend an almost all white nation.”[\[593\]](#) Pohlhaus has longstanding connections to Denis Kapustin of the anti-Putin, neo-Nazi, Russia Volunteer Corps (RVC), as well as Robert Rundo of the American RAM.[\[594\]](#)

## **Disposable Heroes**

### **It’s a Real Bargain**

Of course, most Ukrainian soldiers are not Nazis at all, just conscripts—slaves. So even though they are combatants and considered “fair game” in war, they are in a sense just a shade over the line from innocent civilians, with their lives put at risk in the most unfair and profane way by others. While President Biden vowed to never put U.S. troops in harm’s way in Ukraine—which he violated to a degree—several officials have said out loud they thought it would be perfectly great for Ukrainians to die in place of Americans in our eternal fight against Eurasia.

Republican Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell explained, “Continuing our support for Ukraine is . . . a direct investment in cold, hard, American interests. That’s why Republicans rejected the Biden Administration’s original request for Ukraine assistance as insufficient.”[\[595\]](#) In justification of his ignoring polls showing the American people were opposed to spending any more money on the war, [\[596\]](#) McConnell later added that “we haven’t lost a single American.” Then he just invoked subsidies for arms manufacturers, as though that was in the interest, not at the expense, of the public, and went on to criticize

Biden for not escalating the war fast enough. “The weapons get there later than they should, been a little too tentative in my view.”[\[597\]](#)

By the summer of 2022, Lindsey Graham was ecstatic: “Four months into this thing, I like the structural path we’re on here. As long as we help Ukraine with the weapons they need and economic support, they will fight to the last person.”[\[598\]](#)

Democrat Senator Richard Blumenthal agreed: “Long-range artillery is very, very important. But so is the hand-to-hand insurgency that we are hoping to see in eastern Ukraine, in the territory that’s already been occupied by the Russians.”[\[599\]](#) He later claimed that “Ukraine is at the tip of the spear, fighting our fight for independence and freedom.” Based on this utter nonsense, Blumenthal—who is most famous for repeatedly lying and pretending that he had fought in the Vietnam War after receiving five deferments and took “many other steps” to avoid the war that poor people in his same county were not afforded[\[600\]](#)—then plunged the depth of the cynicism and depravity of the American War Party, falsely boasting that “we’re getting our money’s worth on our Ukraine investment. For less than 3 percent of our nation’s military budget, we’ve enabled Ukraine to degrade Russia’s military strength by half.” He embellished further, “We’ve united NATO and caused the Chinese to rethink their invasion plans for Taiwan. We’ve helped restore faith and confidence in American leadership—moral and military. All without a single American service woman or man injured or lost, and without any diversion or misappropriation of American aid.”[\[601\]](#)

What he is really saying there is that while Russian soldiers' lives have value to "degrade," and American soldiers' lives have value to preserve, to Sen. Blumenthal, Ukrainian soldiers only have value as cannon fodder. If every last conscript bled out on the steppe, he clearly does not give a damn. He did not even refer to them at all.

It is not true that Russia's military has been degraded by half, as was well reported long before his lie.[\[602\]](#) The senator was simply blowing smoke on China-Taiwan. There is no evidence Beijing has changed its calculations and is now less likely to attack Taiwan. Assessments of America and NATO's moral high ground will have to wait until after Ukraine is done losing the war and the West abandons them like so many Afghan Hazaras.[\[603\]](#) And no misappropriation of American aid? Not even Zelensky would make such a laughable claim.[\[604\]](#)

Republican Senator Mitt Romney agreed with his Democratic counterpart, telling an audience that backing the Ukrainians at war was "the best national defense spending I think we've ever done. . . . We're losing no lives in Ukraine, and the Ukrainians are fighting heroically against Russia." He boasted, "We're diminishing and devastating the Russian military for a very small amount of money."

For a successful former financier,[\[605\]](#) when he talks about foreign policy, the senator sounds like a young kid interrupting an adult conversation: "The single most important thing we can do to strengthen ourselves relative to China is to see Russia defeated in Ukraine, because they're allies and Russia being weakened weakens their ally China." This is brilliant analysis. Unless of course the West fighting Russia in Ukraine

makes their turn toward the East that much deeper and more permanent, in which case this would be a great way to strengthen China by shoring up their access to desperately needed Russian natural resources. Romney added, “The best thing we can do for America is see people who have nuclear weapons pointed at us getting weaker.” People in Washington call this kind of thinking “calculus,” when it clearly falls short of basic arithmetic. What if in their weakness Russian leaders were to feel desperate enough to use those nuclear weapons against us all? Gamma ray-sickened survivors might then wonder if treating them with a decent respect might have been a wiser path instead.[\[606\]](#)

Timothy Ash of the British Royal Institute for International Affairs says it would be just fine to go on like this indefinitely. “[W]hen viewed from a bang-per-buck perspective, U.S. and Western support for Ukraine is an incredibly cost-effective investment.” Tens of billions of dollars may sound like a lot, but if you compare it to the overall military budget, then it seems like a bit less. Besides, he said, “this war provides a prime opportunity for the U.S. to erode and degrade Russia’s conventional defense capability, with no boots on the ground and little risk to U.S. lives.” He was also certain that “the new arms race that it has now triggered with the West will surely end up bankrupting the Russian economy; especially an economy subject to aggressive Western sanctions.”[\[607\]](#) Ash then told *Newsweek* that American expenses in the war were “peanuts” compared to the wondrous benefits of humiliating Russia, and could not help but to fantasize that the war would lead to bankruptcy and “regime change in Russia.”[\[608\]](#)

When Fox News asked likely Republican presidential candidates their position on the war in 2023, former Vice President Pence said, “We support those who fight our enemies on their shores, so we will not have to fight them ourselves.”[\[609\]](#) Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie agreed, reasoning to CNN: “We can spend this money now, and have Ukrainian soldiers fight our war, or we can spend a lot more money and American blood later to fight in Taiwan.”[\[610\]](#) Assuming that was true, perpetuating a war on Russia’s border for any such third-party reason of supposed statecraft is unforgivable diplomatic malpractice and deeply immoral. Besides, the United States is already deterred by China’s naval capability. Our navy and air force have no ability to defend that island and they know it perfectly well.[\[611\]](#)

The *Post*’s David Ignatius, speaking for the consensus of the American foreign policy establishment, wrote in July 2023 that “[f]or the United States and its NATO allies, these 18 months of war have been a strategic windfall, at relatively low cost (other than for the Ukrainians).” The way he calculated it, Russia had been hurt, Germany would no longer depend on Russian methane, NATO had added Sweden and Finland and the organization itself had been strengthened. The Ukrainians would just have to remain in the parentheses.[\[612\]](#)

Steven Moore, a former staffer for Oklahoma Senator Markwayne Mullin, runs the Ukraine Freedom Project and worked with his father George Gorton to help rig the presidential election for Boris Yeltsin in 1996.[\[613\]](#) “If you’re a fiscal conservative, you know this is a great use of taxpayer dollars. And not one single American soldier has had to die,”



Moore told the GOP caucus in August 2023.[\[614\]](#) Pence’s former national security adviser, General Keith Kellogg, told Congress in early 2024 that supporting this war “takes a strategic adversary off the table” without “using any U.S. troops.” That way, he says, we can focus on confronting China.[\[615\]](#)

They do not even bother to pretend to care about the people of Ukraine. The problem is that their military is running out of soldiers.[\[616\]](#) Hundreds of thousands have been killed or wounded. Many others have been fighting for more than two years and need to be relieved.[\[617\]](#)

## **Feeling a Draft**

In early 2024, Zelensky passed a plan to expand conscription by 500,000 soldiers, since voluntary recruitment had dried up and fighting-age males were hiding or bribing their way out of it. (Conscription is “forceful” when the Russians do it, the AP reminds us.) The average Ukrainian soldiers were in their 40s; many were in their 50s.[\[618\]](#) The draft age had been between 27 and 60, the law lowered the low end to 25 years old. All men between 18 and 60 are prohibited from leaving the country—like in the old Soviet Union—in case the government decided it needed them too.[\[619\]](#) However, more than 650,000 men have fled to elsewhere in Europe.[\[620\]](#) Thousands have risked the treacherous swim across “Death River,” the river Tisza, attempting to escape to Romania or Hungary.[\[621\]](#) Some drowned.[\[622\]](#) In early 2024, the Zelensky government announced it would deny all consular services to fighting-age nationals living abroad so they would have to come home to get updated passports, and risk getting drafted.[\[623\]](#) Poland and

Lithuania promised to help Kiev repatriate individuals attempting to escape military slavery in their countries.[\[624\]](#)

In 2024, former British naval intelligence officer Frank Ledwidge was witness to poor, young Ukrainian conscripts from the countryside who were so ignorant about the world that one asked why swimming pool water was blue.[\[625\]](#)

The *Times* reported that approximately 500 top-level Ukrainian athletes and coaches have been killed in the war.[\[626\]](#) They said in the summer of 2024 that Kiev was conscripting approximately 30,000 men per month, including many who were not fit for combat.[\[627\]](#)

Sen. Graham traveled to Ukraine to demand they keep fighting. While there, he denounced the Ukrainian law that says conscripts under the age of 27 do not have to deploy to the warzone, but only to supporting roles away from the front. Graham demanded they lower the age to at least 25: “I can’t believe it’s at 27. You’re in a fight for your life, so you should be serving—not at 25 or 27. . . . We need more people in the line. . . . No matter what we do, you should be fighting.”[\[628\]](#) The *Wall Street Journal* reported that one crucial reason Zelensky remained hesitant to deploy younger conscripts into battle was because they had not yet had a chance to have children and they fear future demographic collapse.[\[629\]](#) Sen. Graham was less concerned about that.

But what does it say about a government defending its country from foreign invasion that it would need to conscript anyone to join the cause, resorting even to kidnapping people off the street?[\[630\]](#) After numerous delays, Zelensky signed the new law in April 2024.[\[631\]](#) State forces

stepped up[\[632\]](#) their impressment gangs,[\[633\]](#) sending thousands more fleeing the country or attempting to go underground and stay a step ahead of their own funeral.[\[634\]](#) “I’m afraid I won’t get enough training and then I’ll be moved closer to the front and then I’ll die senselessly,” a 28-year-old from Lviv told the *Times*.[\[635\]](#)

In October 2024, a Zelensky aide said the Biden administration was pressuring Kiev to conscript and “mobilize” young men ages 18–25. “The partners’ argument is as follows: when the US was at war in Vietnam, they were taken there from the age of 19.” Joe Biden did not go to Vietnam. He got five draft deferments, pleading asthma, even though he was a lifeguard and played football.[\[636\]](#) Dodging the draft may have been the most honorable thing Biden ever did in his life.[\[637\]](#) This goes to show him to be the worst hypocrite, and on the worst issue: public enslavement into an artillery war.[\[638\]](#)

## **Vanya Got His Gun**

While things could change rapidly, this war could also drag on for a long time if no one breaks out the negotiating tables or thermo-nukes first. For a time, the battlefield seemed to represent the proverbial irresistible force versus unmovable object. Russia is a far larger, wealthier country, fighting for what its government sees as their most vital national interest, while the poorer, smaller Ukraine is fighting on its own territory and is backed by the wealthy Western alliance, which has provided over \$175 billion in military aid so far.[\[639\]](#)

It has been an absolutely brutal fight, resembling World War I-style trench warfare[640] in the oftentimes freezing mud,[641] with the likeliest causes of death being artillery shells,[642] tank rounds[643] and landmines. [644] Men on both sides are literally being blown to bits, and also in many cases bleeding out slowly with no access to life-saving medical techniques[645] that were often available to American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, for example.[646] Online footage, especially on the warbloggers' Telegram channels, brings the absolutely stomach-churning violence right to eyes of the whole world in near-real time. Up to 50,000 Ukrainian limbs had been amputated by the summer of 2023, based on estimates from hospitals and prosthetics firms.[647] The wounded were then left to pay for all their own medical care.[648] It was clear Ukrainian casualties were of no concern for the Biden team, as long as Russians were being killed too.[649]

In the most shameful way, the administration diffused responsibility away from themselves and onto Ukraine, all U.S. assistance notwithstanding. Officials admitted they recognized “neither Russia nor Ukraine is capable of winning the war outright,” but refused to urge Ukraine to negotiate. “They say they do not know what the end of the war looks like, or how it might end or when, insisting that is up to Kyiv.”[650]

## **Bakhmut**

The battle for the Donetsk city of Bakhmut, known to the Russians as Artyomovsk, began in August 2022. It saw some of the most brutal fighting of the entire war. Reports from Bakhmut before Russian mercenaries seized

it in May 2023 described high-level combat at a pitch virtually unseen in 20 years of America's wars in the Middle East—well, at least by Americans—and a catastrophe for both sides. Yevgeny Prigozhin, owner of the Russian mercenary firm the Wagner Group, said in late May that 20,000 of his men were killed in the battle for the town.[\[651\]](#)

The press also portrayed a Ukrainian military full of untrained conscripts being torn to shreds by Russian artillery.[\[652\]](#) The CBC reported: “Both sides call it a ‘meat grinder.’ . . . The fighting is ‘the most intense on the entire front line,’ said Ukrainian military analyst Oleh Zhdanov. ‘So many remain on the battlefield . . . either dead or wounded.’ . . . ‘They attack our positions in waves, but the wounded as a rule die where they lie, either from exposure as it is very cold or from blood loss.’”[\[653\]](#) The city was simply devastated. Well over half of it will have to be bulldozed and rebuilt.

In another report from March 2023, the *Post* confirmed the absolutely desperate conditions of Ukrainian soldiers at the front. A battalion commander told them, “The most valuable thing in war is combat experience. . . . [T]here are only a few soldiers with combat experience. Unfortunately, they are all already dead or wounded.” Instead, he had only new conscripts with no training, whose lives were being lost at extraordinary rates. One battalion was completely destroyed with 400 wounded and 100 killed. A lieutenant colonel told them, “I get 100 new soldiers, they don’t give me any time to prepare them. They say, ‘Take them into the battle.’ They just drop everything and run.” He said a soldier at the

front had told him he was afraid to shoot because of the loud report of the rifle and had never handled a grenade.

Asked by a congressman how much more support for Ukraine might be necessary to give, Biden's Deputy Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Kahl replied, "We don't know the course or trajectory of the conflict. It could end six months from now, it could end two years from now, three years from now."[\[654\]](#) The Biden administration regularly complained that the Ukrainian military had wasted lives trying to hold towns like Bakhmut and Avdiivka, which they were always destined to lose anyway.[\[655\]](#) Not that the Americans had any better ideas.

In February 2023, Troy Offenbecker, a former U.S. marine fighting with the foreign legion, told ABC News that life expectancy at the front in Bakhmut was just four hours.[\[656\]](#)

## **Dystopian Drones**

One of the worst things about this war is the advance in cheap weaponized drone technology. Soldiers fighting mud-trench warfare are also killing one another in large numbers with remote control planes and helicopters, sneaking up and dropping grenades on each other's heads,[\[657\]](#) as well as hitting armored vehicles with one-way attack drones. The Ukrainians can shoot down some of them, but only at inordinate, disproportionate cost.[\[658\]](#) Both sides are cranking up production, but it looks like Russia has the advantage in numbers, as well as in the ability to jam signals from the other side.[\[659\]](#) The future of war, especially of guerrilla insurgency, will never be the same.[\[660\]](#)

# War Crimes

## Murder

Both sides are credibly accused of committing war crimes in the current conflict. On balance, the Russians are the aggressors and have attacked towns and cities where innocents are certain to be killed, and so it stands to reason, all war propaganda aside, that they have been guilty of more and worse crimes, including the torture of prisoners in their custody.[\[661\]](#)

Russian troops have posted videos of themselves murdering unarmed prisoners,[\[662\]](#) and in March 2023 the UN accused both sides of torture and summary executions.[\[663\]](#) One Azov Regiment veteran held prisoner by the Russians and allegedly beaten, recalled that before his time in Russian prison, “I’d never imagined that human beings could scream like that.”[\[664\]](#)

Earlier in the war, Amnesty International complained about Ukrainian forces posting up near civilians.[\[665\]](#) The Ukraine lobby went wild, causing the group to issue an apology and some staffers to resign. Not that they had gotten anything wrong. They had just made the wrong people angry.[\[666\]](#)

In September 2022, the *Post* wrote about Ukrainian “hit squads” targeting alleged collaborators with the Russian occupation. They had assassinated or wounded at least 20 Russians and their supposed allies, including with car bombs. Reporter David Stern continued: “They have been gunned down, blown up, hanged and poisoned—an array of methods that reflects the determination of the Ukrainian hit squads and saboteurs often operating deep inside enemy-controlled territory.” Identifying the

Ukrainian SBU as running the campaign, and citing the Geneva Conventions, Stern wrote that it “raises legal and ethical questions about extrajudicial killings and potential war crimes, particularly when the targets are political actors or civilians.” Mykhailo Podolyak, a top adviser to the Ukrainian president, told the *Post* that the assassination campaign was backed by a “powerful partisan and active protest movement,” revealing that “Moscow is absolutely incapable of controlling” the areas they occupy. He boasted that Russian officials were supposedly too afraid to visit the warzone. “The risks and consequences are extreme—and they understand this very well.”[\[667\]](#)

The *Times*[\[668\]](#) and the *Journal*[\[669\]](#) also conceded that Ukrainian forces had repeatedly filmed themselves executing Russian prisoners. The *Kyiv Post* interviewed the boss of the SBU, Vasyl Malyuk, who bragged about assassinating “very many” Ukrainian citizens—“more than a dozen”—for “collaborating” with Russia.[\[670\]](#)

A unit led by American volunteers, the “Chosen Company,” repeatedly murdered surrendering Russian soldiers with impunity. A German whistleblower provided evidence to the *Times*, and an American veteran of the group also confirmed it.[\[671\]](#)

## **Mariupol**

Each side frequently exaggerated the other’s losses and atrocities while downplaying their own. There is no question that thousands of civilians have been killed in the war, some deliberately so. However, the U.S. and Ukrainian governments and media have made extraordinary claims of



Russian brutality. In April 2022, there were several reports of mass graves outside of Mariupol, where as many as 9,000 people were said to have been slaughtered and thrown in a giant pit. But Canadian journalist Eva Bartlett went to the site and found not a mass grave, but simply graves. Scores of them perhaps, but individual graves.[\[672\]](#) In the *Frontline* documentary on Mariupol, they claimed 20,000 had been killed.[\[673\]](#) Amnesty counted fewer than 7,000.[\[674\]](#) Both convincingly complained, however, about indiscriminate attacks on civilian targets in the city, evidently meant to drive the population out. The same thing happened when Russian troops withdrew from the area around Kharkiv in late 2022, leaving behind just over 400 bodies, where previous accusations had again been in the thousands.[\[675\]](#)

## **Kidnapping**

On March 17, 2023, the ICC indicted Putin for war crimes, but not for the invasion of February 2022. Perhaps clear-cut aggression was deemed too difficult to prove. Instead, the indictment was essentially a political stunt based on bogus claims. The prevailing theory in Western governments is that all war refugees who fled from Donetsk and Luhansk east into Russia at the time of the invasion were all kidnapped by the Russians, “taken against international law,” as CNN’s Anderson Cooper would have it. This is an “unlawful transfer of population,” in the words of the ICC. But of course, virtually all of them are ethnic Russians and Russian speakers and many have lived under siege by the Ukrainian government since 2014. There is no reason to assume they were taken against their will.

The ICC's indictment[676] was based on[677] claims made[678] by Nathaniel Raymond, from the U.S. State Department-funded[679] Yale University Humanitarian Research Lab. His report claimed "genocide" and "crimes against humanity" for the alleged forcible transfer of thousands of Ukrainian nationals and their children. He boldly labeled every facility hosting Donbas refugee children a "re-education camp," where more than 6,000 kids are being "held." He claimed the Russians had separated children from their families for extended periods of time, but never demonstrated this. Raymond made a major claim that the "[p]rimary purpose of the camps appears to be political re-education: At least 32 (78 percent) of the camps identified by Yale HRL appear engaged in systematic re-education efforts that expose children from Ukraine to Russia-centric academic, cultural, patriotic, and/or military education." He continued, "Multiple camps endorsed by the Russian Federation are advertised as 'integration programs,' with the apparent goal of indoctrinating children into the Russian government's vision of national culture, history, and society." His only basis for this is a single anonymous source whose identity had been "withheld due to protection concerns."

Raymond apparently knew he was exaggerating his assertions, even when they were taken as obvious truth, beyond question. Speaking with CNN, he refused to state his major claim as a fact. Instead, as in his now-famous study quoted above, he alleged only that he believed "[t]heir primary purpose appears to be political re-education." But Raymond then got brave and went for it: Putin, he said, represents the deadliest combination of dark forces in world history: Dee Snider and Joseph Stalin.

“And this is very important. Russia is running sort of what could be described as a Twisted Sister Cities Program, where communities from Russia are sponsoring communities in Ukraine on an individual town by town basis to bring those children into Russia for re-education purposes, including military training.” The interviewer asked if they were getting a “Russian-focused re-education.” Raymond replied yes, and that it was a violation of the 1998 Rome Statute, which says states may not “transfer one group of children to another group for purposes of erasing national identity or ethnicity.”[\[680\]](#)

All hype aside, inculcating the youth with nationalist propaganda sounds like something the Russian government might do. They officially claimed to have annexed Ukraine’s four easternmost provinces. That they might emphasize Russian nationality to these kids sounds plausible at least. But journalist Jeremy Loffredo showed that Raymond’s claims were vastly overblown. He visited one of Raymond’s alleged “re-education camps,” the “Donbas Express” in the Russian town of Pokrovskoye, and found a hotel full of children and teenagers receiving classical music lessons. They were at camp, not in a camp.

Raymond’s claims are obviously circular question-begging. Coercion is never demonstrated, only taken for granted. If Ukrainians are inside Russia, they must be under duress. If Ukrainian kids are separated from their parents, they simply must have been kidnapped by Putin. The report cited an article from the Russia’s RIA Novosti to melodramatically claim that “[c]hildren have been transported [to camps] by bus, train, commercial aircraft, and, in at least one case, by Russia’s Aerospace Forces,” as though

we should imagine Holocaust victims rounded up and crammed into boxcars or Stalin's exiles being worked to death in the Siberian Gulags. "Alleged orphans and other children from Ukraine's state institutions are sometimes temporarily housed at camps and so-called family centers as waypoints during transit." Raymond forgot to quote the little girl in the article describing her harrowing journey. "While we were driving from the airport, we were very impressed with the local landscapes. I like to walk in the fields, pick flowers. It is very interesting to see nature." The horror continued: "When we were driving, I saw small rivers flowing from the mountains. Very beautiful, the views are simply gorgeous."

When an American reporter stopped by, the kids were in the middle of violin lessons. A teacher at the school explained that the kids were there for 12 days and would then go back to their parents. Raymond's Yale report admits this major self-contradictory fact. "Many children taken to camps are sent with the consent of their parents for an agreed duration of days or weeks and returned to their parents as originally scheduled."

Here is the ICC's source describing Russia's "genocide": "Many of these parents are low-income and wanted to take advantage of a free trip for their child." He added, "Some hoped to protect their children from ongoing fighting, to send them somewhere with intact sanitation, or to ensure they had nutritious food of the sort unavailable where they live. Other parents simply wanted their child to be able to have a vacation."

Raymond also admitted in his report that there was "no documentation of child mistreatment." He claimed Ukrainian babies were being adopted by Russian families, but again cited only a single anonymous source and did

not attempt to show any Ukrainian parents whose babies had been kidnapped. In fact, Raymond and his team did not interview anyone at all or attempt to visit any of the sites in question for the study. Instead, he cited a story quoting only a deputy to the mayor of Kiev, but offered no explanation for how he would know the whereabouts of children from Donetsk.[\[681\]](#) Many of the claims about family separations have no citation at all, not even to anonymous sources.[\[682\]](#) The report's author admitted he hardly had documentation of any kind.[\[683\]](#)

And since they had no evidence or even reports of sexual violence perpetrated against Ukrainian refugees in Russia, Raymond and his team helpfully added that “[u]nderreporting is particularly common for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which victims may not report due to shame or fear of social censure.”[\[684\]](#) The absence of even unproven claims is not even unproven claims’ absence.[\[685\]](#)

Raymond did cite two news reports which included parents complaining that their children had been kept overtime at their summer camps in Crimea in 2022, but this seemed to be more of a problem of running such a massive government program in the middle of a war rather than a crime against humanity. The *Guardian* reported that “[m]ost parents and children who attended the camps said the conditions were good. Children were given the equivalent of hotel rooms to share, taken to see dolphins, to museums and to the beach.” They continued, “The Russian-appointed authorities in Crimea claim to have spent 1.2bn rubles (£16.4m) in 2022 on the camps, which were also attended by Russian children.”[\[686\]](#)

The Yale report also said, “It is important to note that some parents have expressed reluctance to report their missing child to Ukrainian authorities for fear of being shamed or accused of being collaborators.” They said that one camp had children whose parents had not consented to them being sent there. “The camp, which had over 200 children from Ukraine aged 14–17, publicly acknowledged that they were holding children whose parents forbade them from attending.” He says they “publicly acknowledged” it. Just check footnote 80 to find that “[s]ource CC0122 has been withheld due to protection concerns.” Oh well. We can trust that the anonymous source witnessed this official Russian admission about holding children against their parents’ will somewhere, surely, right?

Questioned by Loffredo, Raymond admitted the other facilities were also essentially benign, for some reason insisting on repeatedly using the phrase “teddy bear” to describe them, evidently to emphasize just what war crimes they were not. He also acknowledged that the U.S. National Intelligence Council put “a lot of pressure” on his group to document transfers of refugees out of the Donbas warzone into Russia. This was the basis for a war crimes indictment against the leader of a major power in the middle of a bloody stalemate, almost certainly serving to prolong the day-to-day crime of a brutal artillery war.[\[687\]](#) But Raymond got to appear on TV and get some attention. So it has all been worth it for him.

It is also worth noting that neither Russia nor the United States is a member of the ICC, nor should we be. It has always been a lawless court used by Western powers against much weaker, if guilty, leaders of third-world “rogue states.” Were American government employees to be taken

before it someday, they would be deprived of the Bill of Rights protections even they deserve. Holding American war criminals to account here in the U.S. is our job.[\[688\]](#)

## Co-Belligerents

### Time for Some Game Theory

“We are engaged in a conflict here. It’s a proxy war with Russia, whether we say so or not. That is effectively what’s going on,” former CIA Director and Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta told Bloomberg News in March 2022. The only solution: “Kill Russians.”[\[689\]](#) Western nations and our East Asian allies have all announced massive new rounds of sanctions against Russia. Biden has increased troop levels in the Baltics, though thankfully still not to real fighting strength.

“We are fighting a war against Russia,” German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock agreed in February 2023.[\[690\]](#)

Benjamin Schwarz and Christopher Layne wrote in *Harper’s Magazine* that the U.S. and its allies have armed Ukraine so extensively that “Washington and NATO are probably responsible for the preponderance of Russian casualties in Ukraine.”[\[691\]](#)

Stephen Biddle of the Council on Foreign Relations was one of the great champions of the massive, failed 2007–2008 “surge” of Iraq War II. [\[692\]](#) Forgetting that he was part of the faction that pushed for strikes on Iran over the hoax of their alleged supplying Shi’ite insurgents with roadside bombs in 2007,[\[693\]](#) Biddle argued in March 2022 that it should

not be a problem to pour weapons into Ukraine, since the U.S. did not attack Iran then. He also cited the USSR's hesitance to hit mujahideen hideouts in Pakistan in the 1980s and Hitler's reluctance to sink Lend-Lease shipping before actually declaring war on the United States—never mind the 1915 German attack on the RMS *Lusitania*, a British ship full of U.S. civilians and weapons, as well as 10 other merchant ships, before U.S. entry into World War I.[\[694\]](#) Do not worry, Biddle wrote, it is a safe bet because the other guy would have to make a risky one. If Moscow calls Washington's bluff it could lead to general nuclear war, but that is a risk that Biddle is willing to take for us all.[\[695\]](#)

## **De Facto Member**

In September 2022, President Zelensky said that his country was a de facto member of the NATO alliance.[\[696\]](#) Four months later, Ukraine's defense minister, Oleksii Reznikov, also said Ukraine was already a member in all but name, now that the “thinking approach” of the alliance had changed, and they decided that Russia would not react if they escalated support. “Ukraine as a country, and the armed forces of Ukraine, became [a] member of NATO. De facto, not de jure. Because we have weaponry, and the understanding of how to use it.”[\[697\]](#)

“There's not a clear and easy mathematical formula. . . . There has always been a balance between what is required to effectively defend, and what is going to be seen by Russia as the United States essentially underwriting the killing of huge numbers of Russians,” Jake Sullivan told the *Washington Post*.[\[698\]](#)



## Increasing Limits

All along there was a debate in the Biden administration about how much support to Ukraine was too much. Earlier in the war, the president had said that giving their military specific intelligence to use in the fight, could make us co-belligerents in the war.<sup>[699]</sup> Then he gave it to them.<sup>[700]</sup> He also ruled out Abrams tanks,<sup>[701]</sup> F-16s,<sup>[702]</sup> cluster bombs<sup>[703]</sup> and longer-range rocket artillery.<sup>[704]</sup> He then crossed those lines.<sup>[705]</sup> The *Post* described the exciting game officials were playing: since Putin had not lived up to his threats to retaliate against the West for their intervention, “[h]is bluffing has given U.S. and European leaders some confidence they can continue doing so without severe consequences—but to what extent remains one of the conflict’s most dangerous uncertainties.”<sup>[706]</sup>

The administration told the *Times* that they were very reluctant to send Abrams tanks to Ukraine, the announcement of which was necessary to convince the Germans to send their Leopard tanks due to their fear of a Russian response. The Defense Department opposed it, plausibly claiming they are too advanced and require too much maintenance for the Ukrainians to handle. However, since the administration believed “the threat that President Vladimir V. Putin would reach for a tactical nuclear weapon to eviscerate Ukrainian forces has diminished,” and desired to demonstrate unity against Russia, they decided to go ahead. The *Times* matter-of-factly called it “the latest in a series of gradual escalations that has inched the United States and its NATO allies closer to direct conflict with Russia.”<sup>[707]</sup> The absurdity is compounded by the fact that the German and American tanks are the furthest things from game-changers for the

Ukrainian side. They provide a marginal tactical advantage at best, and are as vulnerable to landmines as ever, and now drone attack as well.

They ended up withdrawing the remaining Abrams because they proved too susceptible to Russian drones, though not before a captured one was put on display in Moscow's Red Square. America's frontline battle tank proved obsolete in conflict with the Federation in the face of cheap, plastic drones.[\[708\]](#) Good to know.[\[709\]](#) Abrams tanks always were overly sophisticated pieces of equipment with turbine engines, as well as fuel filters that have to be cleaned several times per day and require constant maintenance. Americans would also be at a great disadvantage using them in a real war—other than against, say, the Iraqis[\[710\]](#)—since they were designed primarily for taking money from taxpayers, not fighting enemies.[\[711\]](#)

Biden later gave the green light for allies to send F-16 fighter-bombers. By summer 2024, the U.S. had whittled down the number of jets to 15–24, far fewer than the 300 Kiev had requested, and announced they only had six qualified pilots, one of whom crashed and died within the first couple of days.[\[712\]](#) The Pentagon warned that they would not change the nature of the battle in any major way. Their airfields have already proven to be tempting targets for the Russians.[\[713\]](#) They also faced issues of language barriers, spare parts and expert maintenance requirements. According to Bloomberg News, “the administration has been dragging its feet on introducing the aircraft—partly out of fear that it will provoke President Vladimir Putin.”[\[714\]](#)

In September 2024, the Biden administration said they were close to an agreement to supply Ukraine with Lockheed Martin brand Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSMs) with a range of 230 miles, which can be launched from Ukraine's new F-16s.[\[715\]](#) Officials told Reuters their only hesitation was “out of concern such strikes could prompt retaliation that draws NATO countries into the war or provokes a nuclear conflict.”[\[716\]](#)

## Entangling Alliances

### Suwałki

As Pat Buchanan had warned years before, by including the Baltics in NATO, the U.S. had left Kaliningrad, a small strip of land between Latvia and Poland on the Baltic Sea—sovereign Russian territory and home of their Baltic naval fleet—“behind NATO lines” from the eastern point of view, an obvious major potential flashpoint for war. This became an issue in Ukraine in 2022, when Lithuania, which owns the Suwałki corridor easement which allows Russian trains to resupply Kaliningrad, held up shipments in the name of new EU sanctions.[\[717\]](#) We are not particularly worried about Russian threats,” Laurynas Kasciunas, chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament's national security and defense committee told the *Times*. He added that “The Kremlin has very few options for how to retaliate.” Illustrating perhaps the most dangerous moral hazard in history, he explained that any Russian attack would be, “highly unlikely because Lithuania is a member of NATO. If this were not the case, they probably

would consider it.”[\[718\]](#) The crisis was only resolved when the Russians started making threats[\[719\]](#) and EU officials advised them to back down.  
[\[720\]](#)

## **The Pit**

According to the *Times*, the U.S. is really running the war from a tech center they call “the Pit” in Germany. They said that “officials rarely discuss its existence, in part because of security concerns, but mostly because the operation raises questions about how deeply involved the United States is in the day-to-day business of finding and killing Russian troops.” The CIA-founded company Palantir[\[721\]](#) got the contract to sift the data and help Ukrainian forces target the Russians. The military is debating how much decision-making to leave to the algorithms and how much to human judgment.[\[722\]](#) Meanwhile former Google CEO Eric Schmidt has embarked on a project called “White Stork”—no relation to the failed 2001 coup plot in Belarus[\[723\]](#)—to make artificial intelligence-driven attack drones for the Ukrainian military.[\[724\]](#)

## **SOCOM and CIA in Ukraine**

The CIA has had an extensive presence in Ukraine for over a decade, and played a major role in the 2022– war.[\[725\]](#) Special operations aircraft provide support while SOCOM ground forces share intelligence. Officials told the Intercept that they knew the danger they were putting us all in, saying they had to “walk a fine line in which one wrong step could spell

disaster: providing Ukraine with as much assistance as possible without becoming an active participant in the war and risking a direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia.” As reporters Ken Klippenstein and Sara Sirota noted, “The balance relies on the assumption that Russia will recognize and respect the United States’s compliance with its self-imposed rules.”[\[726\]](#)

The London *Times* reported in April and December 2022 that British special operations forces were training Ukrainian troops on Ukrainian soil and participating in missions there.[\[727\]](#) According to the Intercept, both CIA and Special Operations Command not only had personnel in Ukraine, but many more than before the war and on “far more extensive” covert operations missions.[\[728\]](#)

In February and March 2023, top secret military and intelligence files known as the “Discord leaks” were posted online by Jack Teixeira, a 21-year-old airman first class in the Massachusetts Air National Guard.[\[729\]](#) They showed, among other things, that approximately 100 special operators from France, America, Britain and Latvia were on the ground in Ukraine.[\[730\]](#) U.S. officials denied they were participating in combat, only protecting dignitaries and tracking weapons shipments.[\[731\]](#) But as the *Washington Post* noted, the documents revealed “how deeply the United States is involved in virtually every aspect of the war.” They added, “The leaked documents confirm in detail that the United States is using its vast array of espionage and surveillance tools—including cutting-edge satellites and signals intelligence—to keep Kyiv ahead of Moscow’s war plans and help them inflict Russian casualties.”[\[732\]](#)

A senior intelligence official told William Arkin in the summer of 2023, “It’s a tricky balancing act—the CIA being very active in the war while not contradicting the Biden administration’s central pledge, which is that there are no American boots on the ground.” He denied the U.S. was involved in a series of sabotage missions behind Russian lines, insisting that Zelensky was in violation of their “non-agreement” to refrain from attacking inside Russian territory in exchange for American arms and intelligence. But the official confirmed the massive CIA operation taking place in the country, seeming to run the war “as primary spy, as negotiator, as supplier of intelligence, as logistician [and] as wrangler of a network of sensitive NATO relations.” Since the U.S. and Ukraine are not officially allies, “much of what is normally in the realm of the U.S. military is being carried out by the Agency.” A military official assured Arkin: “Black special operators are restricted from conducting clandestine missions, [but] when they do, it is within a very narrow scope.” [\[733\]](#)

In mid-March 2022, the Russians launched cruise missiles at the Yavoriv base, where foreign fighters were gathering and training for the war, killing at least 35 people. [\[734\]](#) So far this type of strike has not been repeated, but it remains an important indication of how quickly this war could escalate to a major conflict between NATO and Russia if high-enough level foreign officers were killed.

Max Boot—the neoconservative who wrote “The Case for American Empire” in 2001, advocating our endless wars in the Middle East for Bill Kristol’s *Weekly Standard*, [\[735\]](#) supported every intervention and escalation in the region the entire time since [\[736\]](#) and loudly supported the Russiagate

hoax[737]—was on board for arming Ukraine. In March 2022, he wrote in the *Post* that a no-fly zone would be too hot, but providing insurgents with Stinger missiles would be just right for punishing the Russians without getting America into a war.[738] Boot would not allow the results of the wars he supported in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen to dissuade him from following his vision on Ukraine.

And Rep. Adam Smith told NBC News that the U.S. cannot share “real-time targeting” intelligence “because that steps over the line to . . . us participating in the war. So the Pentagon is really struggling and walking that very fine line.” Officials told them that “the concern about being considered a ‘co-belligerent’ is not the only impediment to getting battlefield intelligence in the hands of the Ukrainians in real time.”[739]

But a few months went by and the mission crept. The *Wall Street Journal* reported that the U.S. had been providing Kiev with location data on Russian troops and equipment under a “virtually unprecedented” intelligence-sharing program with a non-NATO country. A Defense Intelligence Agency source said they had to change 27 policies to allow such close coordination.

Ken Dilanian, an NBC reporter known to have his CIA sources check his work before publishing it,[740] reported the intelligence-sharing, including information that helped the Ukrainians shoot down a transport plane full of Russian special operations forces on their way to Hostomel Airport near Kiev in the early days of the war. Initially, Defense Department and CIA lawyers imposed limits on sharing targeting data, but as the war went on, and “under pressure from Congress, all of those impediments have

been removed,” Dilanian reported, adding that at the start of the war, the U.S. had given Ukraine “details of Russian troops’ deployment, attack routes and real-time targeting information.”[\[741\]](#) The Discord leak also revealed massive NATO air reconnaissance missions over Eastern Europe and the Black Sea, as well as more than 100 interceptor missions flown every day from bases in Poland.[\[742\]](#)

It is enough to show that they knew what they were doing and how dangerous it was from the beginning. In the time since, U.S. officials have boasted to the press about their massive military assistance, intelligence-sharing and training of Ukrainian forces, which have helped to kill Russian troops, including generals,[\[743\]](#) and sink the *Moskva*, flagship of their Black Sea Fleet.[\[744\]](#) Journalist Joshua Yaffa wrote that the U.S. assisted with M777 howitzers and real-time intelligence during the May 2022 attack on Russian infantry attempting to cross the Siverskyi Donets River, killing hundreds.[\[745\]](#)

In June 2022, the U.S. began sending High Mobility Rocket Artillery System (HIMARS), which is longer-range rocket artillery. In October, they sent another shipment,[\[746\]](#) and have continued supplying them since. Nearly a year after the system arrived, the *Post* reported that the Ukrainians “almost never” launch a HIMARS attack without having the coordinates confirmed by the Americans. “The issue is sensitive for the U.S. government, which has cast itself as a nonbelligerent friend to the government in Kyiv,” the *Post* said.[\[747\]](#)

In October 2023, the *Post* revealed a deeper level of cooperation between the CIA and SBU, making the latter sound like the Afghan



National Directorate of Security during that war[\[748\]](#)—totally under the control of the United States.[\[749\]](#)

## **Passionate Attachments**

France, Britain and Poland have been especially belligerent in this war. French President Macron had repeatedly threatened to send ground troops to join the fight. Meanwhile the former British prime minister and later defense minister David Cameron announced that he thought Ukraine had the “right” to use British weapons to hit targets inside Russia. In response, the Kremlin said they would have the right to bomb Britain in retaliation.

[\[750\]](#) The Russian Defense Ministry then held a new set of nuclear war exercises with its tactical missile forces.[\[751\]](#) Gen. Waldemar Skrzypczak, a former commander of Polish ground forces, sharply rebuked his allies, warning, “The entry of any NATO member into Ukraine will amount to a full-scale conflict and the outbreak of World War III.”[\[752\]](#)

The Discord leaks revealed that a British RC-135 signals intelligence aircraft with more than 30 men aboard was in a “near shoot-down” situation on September 29, 2022, leading to new rules meant to keep planes and drones farther from Crimea in the Black Sea. Arkin noted that the Russians had “reacted to” five U.S. and NATO reconnaissance sorties, which raised the question of risk for what seemed to be fewer than once-daily symbolic flights anyway.[\[753\]](#) Then-UK Defense Minister Ben Wallace later acknowledged the incident, but said it did not mark a “deliberate escalation” on Moscow’s part.[\[754\]](#) However, the Discord leaks later revealed that a Russian pilot had deliberately taken the shot.[\[755\]](#) A

malfunction prevented the missile from hitting its target, thus sparing mankind from the threat of a major escalation right then and there.

In March 2023, a Russian Su-27 fighter jet knocked an American MQ-9 Reaper drone out of the sky over the Black Sea by dumping fuel all over it and apparently nicking its propeller. Sen. Lindsey Graham and other hawks began demanding escalation in response, including shooting down Russian jets.[\[756\]](#) When Gen. Milley spoke about it cautiously at a press conference, the Republican leadership in Congress mocked the administration's weakness.[\[757\]](#)

## **Killing Generals**

In the summer of 2020, the American political establishment went completely crazy over *New York Times* reporter Charlie Savage's dishonorable lie to American soldiers' families that the Russians, paying bounties to the Taliban, had been responsible for the deaths of their sons in Afghanistan, a sin and betrayal that will remain attached to his name until the end of time.[\[758\]](#) But imagine if the Russians actually had been pouring in billions of dollars in sophisticated missiles and other weapons for years during that war, openly trained Taliban troops and provided them with intelligence to help kill U.S. soldiers by the tens of thousands, while bragging and boasting about it every chance they had. Every U.S. official and lawmaker would agree that it would be an act of war against our country.

Here our government is gloating, in Savage's same "paper of record," that the United States is providing direct intelligence support to the

Ukrainians, including to kill not only Russian troops, but generals in the field. How their survivors and nation back home feel about that is not our government's concern beyond the superficial presumption that their deaths will sow discontent against Putin, rather than rage against those who have actually killed their military leaders and heroes.

## **Boiling the Frog**

Administration officials told the *Times* in September 2022 that they “believe they have, so far, succeeded at ‘boiling the frog’—increasing their military, intelligence and economic assistance to Ukraine step by step, without provoking Moscow into large-scale retaliation.”[\[759\]](#) A Defense official said in October, “As we have gotten deeper into the conflict, we realized we could provide more weapons of greater sophistication and at greater scale without provoking a Russian military response against NATO.” He wondered, “Was it that we were always too cautious, and we could have been more aggressive all along? Or, had we provided these systems right away, would they have indeed been very escalatory? In that scenario, Russia was the frog, and we boiled the water slowly, and Russia got used to it.”[\[760\]](#)

Lt. Gen. Ben Hodges, a former commander of U.S. Army Europe who is now at the Center for European Policy Analysis, is a man who, according to RAND, opposed giving Ukraine Javelin missiles in the Trump years for fear it could provoke further Russian intervention and loss of Ukrainian territory.[\[761\]](#) He now constantly urges further escalation, reasoning that if they will not nuke us over a thing, we should do it. We will know when it

has been too much when the nukes start going off. “We have somehow convinced ourselves that if you ever end up in any situation with American versus Russian, it’s going to be World War III—the last scene of *Dr. Strangelove* with all the nuclear explosions. It’s not what’s going to happen. The last thing the Russians want is a conflict with NATO.” The reporter added, “[H]e said there has been no evidence so far that Moscow would approve a massive escalation, such as a nuclear strike, over the provision of a single weapons system, such as multiple rocket launchers.”[\[762\]](#) Asked about NATO intervention, Putin responded, “We are, indeed, responding rather restrainedly, but that’s for the time being. If the situation continues to develop in this way, the answer will be more serious.”[\[763\]](#)

In early 2024, a series of revelations—including a leaked conversation between top German air force officials,[\[764\]](#) as well as statements by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz[\[765\]](#) and Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski[\[766\]](#)—confirmed that at the very least, the U.S., Britain and France each have deniable special operations forces on the ground in Ukraine.

The Germans were heard discussing how to circumvent their own chancellor to provide Taurus cruise missiles and targeting information to Kiev to strike the Kerch Bridge, an operation they hoped to hand off to the British to disguise their involvement. In the conversation, they confirmed the presence of British and French troops helping Ukrainian forces operate their more advanced systems and alluded to American intelligence officers or contractors playing the same role. The Russians published it,[\[767\]](#) but the Germans confirmed the legitimacy of the audio and transcript.[\[768\]](#)

Slovakian Prime Minister Robert Fico warned in February 2024 that some NATO member states were considering sending conventional forces into the war.[\[769\]](#) Macron then said the option could not be ruled out.[\[770\]](#) Sikorski was open to the idea of introducing regular troops as well,[\[771\]](#) though Macron said this would only be for training, which is already being done in Poland and Germany anyway. The Germans rebuffed him, saying there was “no chance” of NATO ground deployments and that the French should just send more weapons instead.[\[772\]](#) In May, Macron announced he would indeed be sending regular army forces as trainers to Ukraine.[\[773\]](#) Other countries could decide whether we go to war.

When asked about this, President Putin coolly responded that it would be a mistake for Ukraine to welcome Polish troops, since they might want to stay and attempt to retake control of what they consider to be their historic territory in the country’s west, and hypocritically pointed out what a bad precedent it could set if everyone started questioning the post-World War II borders across Europe. He politely did not take the opportunity to threaten general war with NATO. And when prodded on the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons, he said Russian strategy had not changed, that they would only use them to protect their “existence, sovereignty and independence.” In other words, he would not use them to secure Russia’s newly expanded borders in the current war, though he did also note just how unnecessary that would be, leaving open the possibility that their conventional advantage was the main reason he did not need to consider it.[\[774\]](#)

## **War Games**

In early- to mid-September 2022, Ukraine made major gains around Kharkiv and Luhansk Oblasts. The next month, American and British intelligence officers said they helped the Ukrainians run numerous tabletop exercises in preparation for the attack. “We have algorithms and methodologies that are more sophisticated when it comes to things like mapping out logistics and calculating munitions rates,” a Defense Department official told *The New Yorker*. “The idea was not to tell them what to do but, rather, to give them different runs to test their plans.”

When the war games suggested the Ukrainians would have a hard time taking Kherson in the south since the Russians had moved reinforcements there from the Kharkiv region, they decided on a two-front attack, with a feint in the south and major push in the north, which succeeded.[\[775\]](#)

In reaction, Putin called up 300,000 reserves and announced the official annexation of not only Donetsk and Luhansk, but all of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson as well,[\[776\]](#) supposedly ratified by quickly held referendums in the four oblasts.[\[777\]](#) Though Russia did not control most of that territory, this amounted to throwing down the gauntlet and making a negotiated settlement much more difficult to achieve. Putin immediately declared that the Americans and Ukrainians would have to recognize Russia’s new expanded sovereignty for talks to even begin.[\[778\]](#) After saying he wished to negotiate, Putin added an impossible poison pill: “[T]he choice of the people in Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson will not be discussed.”[\[779\]](#) For his part, Zelensky responded with a decree outlawing negotiations with Russia as long as Putin remained president,[\[780\]](#) and demanded “accelerated ascension” to NATO.[\[781\]](#)

However, later in October 2022, Dan Rice, a contractor for the U.S. Military Academy at West Point[\[782\]](#) and special adviser to Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief Valerii Zaluzhnyi, told CNN that the Russians were “trying to get to the negotiating table, to try to go back to the 2014 lines. Ukraine won’t have it. Ukraine wants all of their land back to the ’91 lines.”[\[783\]](#) It is difficult to know if that was correct, but coming from someone working for the highest ranks of the Ukrainian military, the administration had an obligation to attempt to achieve peace if they could.

But the American reaction was to reiterate that Russia must withdraw from every last square inch of Ukraine, including Crimea, and that NATO will support them “with as much as it takes for as long as it takes,” until they achieve unconditional victory.[\[784\]](#)

Biden swore the U.S. would not fight for Ukraine, but still escalated the economic, diplomatic and covert war to a point that it could break out into a real conflict between NATO and Russia. Officials told the media that even though they thought Ukraine had the ability to retake the peninsula, it would raise the risk of nuclear war to an unacceptable degree.[\[785\]](#)

Half a year later, in March 2023, the *Times* and *Wall Street Journal* reported that the United States was holding large-scale war games in Wiesbaden, Germany, with the “highest level” American generals taking the Ukrainians through what they saw as the best available options for their planned spring offensive, including renewed assaults in the east or an attempt to sever the so-called “land bridge” between the Donbas and Crimea. For deniability’s sake, the *Times* said the final decisions were still

left up to the Ukrainians.[\[786\]](#) The U.S. also poured in weapons and trainers.[\[787\]](#)

Biden’s National Security Strategy from October 2022 stated that “[a]longside our allies and partners, America is helping to make Russia’s war on Ukraine a strategic failure.”[\[788\]](#) But the president surely recognized the risk. He had obviously assured himself he was keeping America on the safe side of full intervention, but that was far from certain. He explained that giving them “material that is fundamentally different than [what] is already going there would have a prospect of breaking up NATO and breaking up the European Union and the rest of the world.” This was typical Biden hyperbole. He just meant that the allies were opposed to doing so, not that they were threatening to break up the alliance over it. Still, it is nice when the error is on the side of less violence and instability.[\[789\]](#)

## **Seize the Moment**

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen urged Ukraine to negotiate in October 2022,[\[790\]](#) and not long after, the then-chairman, Mark Milley, publicly agreed, saying that after the Ukrainian victory at Kherson and Kharkiv, they should “seize the moment” and come to the table.[\[791\]](#) The Russian terms to stop the war had actually softened a bit from the beginning of the conflict—at least through July 2022.[\[792\]](#) After Russian forces took Mariupol and began negotiating with Kiev in March, they dropped the demands about denazification[\[793\]](#) and eventually traded many



Azov Battalion prisoners back to the Ukrainian side. How many of them have been killed in the war is unknown.

It was not until after the Ukrainian Kharkiv offensive in September 2022 that Putin announced his annexation of all four eastern provinces<sup>[794]</sup> and raised the ante on negotiations, saying they must begin with recognition of the new facts on the ground.<sup>[795]</sup>

In February 2023, Milley admitted, “I still maintain that for this year, it would be very, very difficult to militarily eject the Russian forces from every inch of Russian-occupied Ukraine.” Sullivan and Blinken insisted the Pentagon chiefs were just being defeatist and that U.S. support for the war must go on.<sup>[796]</sup> It was only a year and a half later that we learned that Putin had, in fact, offered a ceasefire based on the current lines at the time. Biden and Zelensky refused to talk to them.<sup>[797]</sup> European officials said that in November 2022, Sullivan had told Zelensky he needed to forget about retaking Crimea and begin considering his priorities for talks, but only to “gain leverage by showing openness to negotiations.”<sup>[798]</sup>

Meanwhile, on the ground, Ukrainian soldiers, mostly conscripts and prisoners,<sup>[799]</sup> were being sent to the front with deteriorating tactical and logistical support. The *Guardian* reported as early as June 2022 that Ukrainian casualty rates were as many as 1,000 per day, approximately one-fourth of them killed in action.<sup>[800]</sup> A senior aide to President Zelensky confirmed those numbers.<sup>[801]</sup>

# Economic War

## Crippling Sanctions

The U.S. is waging a massive economic war against Russia in response to the invasion. In March 2022, Biden declared that “[a]s a result of our unprecedented sanctions, the ruble was almost immediately reduced to rubble.” He predicted, “The Russian economy is on track to be cut in half. It was ranked the 11th biggest economy in the world before this invasion—and soon, it will not even rank among the top 20.”[\[802\]](#)

A *New York Times* headline explained it all: “With Sanctions, U.S. and Europe Aim to Punish Putin and Fuel Russian Unrest.” They wrote that the Biden administration’s goals were to “devastate the Russian economy as punishment for the world to witness, and create domestic pressure on President Vladimir V. Putin to halt his war in Ukraine.” Even though they had promised not to “inflict pain” on ordinary Russians, they had changed their mind. “The thinking among some U.S. and European officials is that Mr. Putin might stop the war if enough Russians protest in the streets and enough tycoons turn on him.”[\[803\]](#)

Somewhat paraphrasing Osama bin Laden’s 2002 “Letter to America,”[\[804\]](#) Secretary Blinken added that “the Russian people will suffer the consequences of their leaders’ choices.” The *Washington Post* reported that the U.S. and its allies were “planning for a far different world, in which they no longer try to coexist and cooperate with Russia, but actively seek to isolate and weaken it as a matter of long-term strategy.”

They said that “virtually every aspect” of America and Europe’s relationship with Russia was being changed to align with this new cold war posture, with the EU attempting to cut imports of Russian gas completely by 2030.[\[805\]](#)

Daleep Singh, deputy NSC director for international economics, said Russia’s “economy is in freefall” and will be “half of its size that it was before this invasion.”[\[806\]](#) French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire added that the West was “waging an all-out economic and financial war on Russia” to “cause the collapse of the Russian economy,” while Prime Minister Johnson’s spokesman added that the sanctions were “intended to bring down the Putin regime.”[\[807\]](#)

Former Secretary of State Albright also imagined that Putin would soon be overthrown. The new sanctions regime would “devastate not just his country’s economy but also his tight circle of corrupt cronies—who in turn could challenge his leadership,” she thought.[\[808\]](#)

Right after the invasion, Jake Sullivan came up with a scheme to seize \$300 billion in Russian assets. They called it the “economic equivalent of a nuclear weapon.” Many U.S. firms also left Russia.[\[809\]](#) It did not work. By the end of March 2022, the ruble had regained its value.[\[810\]](#) While the Russian economy and currency declined in 2022, it had recovered by early 2023.[\[811\]](#)

University of Texas at Austin economics professor Jamie Galbraith published a study in April 2023 examining popular claims about the devastating effects of America’s economic war. He found that the partial European embargo on Russian oil and gas was ineffective since “higher

prices compensated for smaller quantities.” The standard of living of the average Russian has not been greatly affected by the sanctions. It is, after all, a capitalist country with massive natural resources and plenty of highly educated engineers. And of Biden’s \$300 billion “economic nuclear bomb,” Galbraith wrote, “Those balances, frozen or otherwise, are just balances. They are reserves. Their loss would be reflected on balance sheets but not in current activity.” He added that the policy had “no effect on general economic activity in Russia, nor on the financial capacity of the Russian state.”[\[812\]](#)

As far as their stated goals of degrading the Russian military-industrial complex[\[813\]](#) and the government’s ability to fund it,[\[814\]](#) the administration has clearly failed.[\[815\]](#)

## **Sino-Russian Alliance**

It turns out that the Russians do not need Western Europe and the United States that badly after all. They just strengthened their relationship with the states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Eurasian Economic Union and went on ahead with their war.[\[816\]](#)

Biden seemed to have gone after China too hard as well, threatening sanctions over possible future weapons transfers to Russia.[\[817\]](#) They would be wise to keep playing both sides, but the administration’s accusatory stance pushed Chairman Xi Jinping to attempt to convince the Saudis to allow China to buy their oil with yuan, rather than U.S. dollars.  
[\[818\]](#)

Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen worried in April 2023: “There is a risk when we use financial sanctions that are linked to the role of the dollar that over time it could undermine the hegemony of the dollar. Of course, it does create a desire on the part of China, of Russia, of Iran to find an alternative.” Our government is incentivizing other nations to do everything they can to diversify their bonds to protect themselves from future financial war by the United States.[\[819\]](#)

It seems Biden may have underestimated Russia’s willingness to suffer the consequences over Ukraine. In June 2021, after a meeting with Putin in Geneva, Biden had confidently told the media: “I think that the last thing he wants now is a Cold War.” He began to ask a rhetorical question: “You got a multi-thousand-mile border with China. China is . . . seeking to be the most powerful economy in the world and the largest and the most powerful military.” He continued, “You’re in a situation where your economy is struggling, you need to move it in a more aggressive way, in terms of growing it. And you—I don’t think he’s looking for a Cold War with the United States.”

This analysis may have been too shallow. Biden evidently once learned that there is a potential for Sino-Russian conflict over resource-rich Siberia. He then apparently got it stuck in his head that this issue would somehow always be paramount in Russian considerations. Perhaps William Burns is to blame. He is an expert on that narrative.[\[820\]](#) Biden calculated wrong. Putin decided instead that if he was going to be kicked out of Europe, so be it. He would just turn East. At least in economic terms, Russia and China have not been this close in more than half a century.

China's trade with Russia increased to \$240 billion in 2023, compared to \$147 billion in the year before the war. Turkey, Malaysia and the UAE have also increased their trade with Russia.[\[821\]](#) It seems Obama,[\[822\]](#) Trump[\[823\]](#) and Biden's[\[824\]](#) support for UAE's[\[825\]](#) genocidal war against Yemen[\[826\]](#) from 2015 to 2022[\[827\]](#) bought them no loyalty from their client kingdom.

Despite their intentions, the Biden team succeeded mostly at scoring against themselves. They kicked Russia out of Europe, and gave them no choice but to deepen their economic relationship with nations across Asia, including India,[\[828\]](#) as well as their economic and political alliance with China, all to America and Europe's loss and their gain. American and European automobile makers that made a big show of pulling their companies out of Russia simply made room for China to fill the demand.[\[829\]](#)

Foreign policy analyst and fortune teller John Dolan (a.k.a. Gary Brecher) wrote back in 2014 that Moscow's opening of the East Siberia-Pacific Ocean (ESPO) pipeline to East Asia meant that "Russia no longer need[ed] Europe as a customer. . . . With the pipeline to China and East Asia running wide open, Russia wouldn't even feel a sentimental twinge if the EU somehow went insane and destroyed its own economy to 'punish' Russia."[\[830\]](#) In 2018, Russia and China completed construction of a second branch of their Mohe-Daqing oil pipeline, and in 2019 completed the Power of Siberia natural gas pipeline and announced plans to add the Russia-China Far East Gas Pipeline to their China-Russia Eastern Gas Pipeline.[\[831\]](#) Dolan was right. Within four months of the start of the 2022–

war, the *Times* was already lamenting a windfall year for Russian oil profits, saying they had made a record €93 billion in the first 100 days.[\[832\]](#)

## **Global South**

The people hit hardest were the poor in the Global South. Russia and Ukraine are both major exporters of wheat. But the great American benefactors of humanity quite literally decided they did not give a damn. The White House told the *Post* they were willing to “countenance even a global recession and mounting hunger” as a means to bankrupt Russia.[\[833\]](#)

In March 2022, after bragging that he had convinced the allies to adopt “the most significant . . . economic sanction regime ever, in order to cripple Putin’s economy,” Biden acknowledged that “[w]ith regard to food shortage, yes, we did talk about food shortages. And—and it’s going to be real. The price of these sanctions is not just imposed upon Russia, it’s imposed upon an awful lot of countries as well.” He said that would include “European countries and our country as well.” But Biden insisted that if he could get the other EU nations to maintain the sanctions “for the remainder of this entire year. That’s what will stop [Putin].”[\[834\]](#)

The politicians, government employees, media stars and assorted contractors living off this system somehow tell themselves that deliberately starving uninvolved third parties to this conflict is completely different than just machine-gunning them to death in a ditch in the style of the OUN-B. They are evidently quite confident that no one else in the world must notice their cynicism and cruelty either. There will be no blowback, no backdraft, no consequences for them, they are sure.

## Who's Zoomin' Who?

But instead of crashing, the ruble had a great year due to high fuel prices.

[835] The IMF says that the Russian economy only contracted by 2.2 percent in 2022, [836] far less than the “large” and “deep” 8.5 percent contraction the international banking institution had predicted the year before. [837] In 2023, Russia was the fastest growing economy in Europe by GDP. With an external debt of just over \$300 billion, and raw materials exports thriving, they were in no economic trouble at all. [838] Former diplomat Chas Freeman wrote that “[f]ar from isolating Russia or China, America’s coercive diplomacy has helped both Moscow and Beijing to enhance relationships in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that reduce U.S. influence in favor of their own.” [839]

*The Economist* conceded that the 2022 recession was slight and that inflation was low as the economy was growing. They added, “Russia’s economy has been re-engineered. Oil exports bypass sanctions and are shipped to the global south. . . . Sanctions, meanwhile, have been less effective than hoped.” More than 80 percent of the world was simply ignoring them. [840]

In response to their complete failure as Russia’s economy grew faster than America’s in 2023, the Biden administration announced a new round of sanctions. [841] The *Post* noted Biden’s utter inability to impose his will on the Russian Federation. “Two years after President Biden spoke of dealing the Russian economy ‘a crushing blow’ following the invasion of Ukraine, Russia this year is expected to grow faster than the United States, Germany, France or the United Kingdom.” [842]



The EU avoids their own sanctions by exporting tens of billions in finished goods to Central Asian nations first, “making up for about one-quarter of what sanctions cost the Russian economy,” the *Post* said.[\[843\]](#)

The Western “price cap” scheme to limit Russian oil sales also failed. After costing Russia more than €30 billion in 2022, they simply figured out how to work around the restrictions.[\[844\]](#) According to a late 2023 study, self-interest on the part of America’s allies required them to ignore Biden’s exhortations to sacrifice their populations in the name of his policy. “The G7 and the EU retain a stranglehold on Russia’s oil exports but have balked at using it. In October 2023, 48 percent of Russian oil shipments were carried on tankers owned or insured in G7 and EU countries.”[\[845\]](#)

India, America’s supposed strategic partner against China,[\[846\]](#) also found it to be in their interest to ignore the West’s priorities, instead seeking to increase trade with Russia. Thanks to them, “the Kremlin has never been richer,” according to CNN. It seems India spent \$37 billion on Russian oil in 2023—more than 13 times the amount from the year before the war—and reselling at least \$1 billion worth to the United States.[\[847\]](#) The perfidious British keep buying Russian oil too, from refiners in India.[\[848\]](#)

A Reuters piece from early 2024 had a point that much of Russia’s GDP growth could be attributed to increased military spending, essentially a net loss in real wealth for the economy, a bit of analysis they never seem to apply to American military spending. They may see some benefit now, but eventually the price will have to be paid in lost wealth and living standards.[\[849\]](#) The *Post* ridiculed Russia for wasting so much money on the war, calling their apparent GDP boost an illusion of “military

Keynesianism.”[\[850\]](#) However, when the administration invokes military spending as not only beneficial for the American economy, but even one of the main reasons to continue the war, the *Post* responds with enthusiastic support.[\[851\]](#)

The U.S. and its allies promised that sanctions against Russia’s business elite would cause them to turn on Putin. They have not done so.[\[852\]](#) In an otherwise fanciful article about how surely doomed Putin and the Russian system are, Carnegie Russia Eurasia Center fellow Tatiana Stanovaya admitted that since the beginning of the war, “the percentage of Russians who overtly admire Putin has grown from 8 to 19 percent, and 68 percent of Russians now say they want him to be reelected, a significant jump from 48 percent of Russians before the war.” She added, “The war has also increased support for all official institutions: the cabinet, regional governors, parliament, and even the ruling party, United Russia.”[\[853\]](#) Putin was easily reelected in 2024.[\[854\]](#)

And while American newspapers complained that the autocratic president had excluded real competition from the vote, no one posed a credible electoral threat anyway. The *Wall Street Journal* said that before he died, Alexey Navalny was the greatest threat to Putin, proving that no one is at all. Navalny had no popular support in the country.[\[855\]](#) His best showing was a failed run for mayor of Moscow years ago.[\[856\]](#) All the Western NGO money in the world could never change that.

In July 2024, the World Bank officially upgraded Russia from a “medium” to “high income” country, amusingly counting aggregate demand

based on their massive new military spending,[\[857\]](#) the true expense of which the people will pay later, at the very least in lost opportunity costs.

Ukraine's economy, on the other hand, has been devastated. Their GDP fell 30.4 percent in 2022, the worst since independence. Exports were down 35 percent compared to 2021.[\[858\]](#) They supposedly had 5 percent growth in 2023 from their 2022 low, but that included billions in aid.[\[859\]](#)

Soaring energy prices across Europe have spread misery. Firewood sold at a premium in Germany in the winter of 2022–2023 since people could no longer afford gas.[\[860\]](#) European governments spent €800 billion on energy subsidies for their populations in the winter of 2022–2023.[\[861\]](#) The next winter they had enough supplies of natural gas, but were still dependent on Russian gas piped across Ukraine.[\[862\]](#)

## **America's Order Wrecked**

Goldman Sachs warned in the spring of 2022 that the U.S. dollar was at risk of losing its place as the reserve currency of the world.[\[863\]](#)

The attempted economic war against Russia, to “maximize the pain,” backfired. Even neoconservative theoretician Francis Fukuyama admitted in “The End of History and the Last Man” that eventually people are going to shift back to Old World nationhood. Free markets and democracy, loosely defined, may still be the way of the future, but there is no reason that should be synonymous with a world government run out of Washington. Unipolar moments cannot last forever. The fact is that the rest of the planet is getting wealthier and more powerful relative to the United States, especially compared to the early post-World War II, or even post-Cold War era.[\[864\]](#)

As Walter Russell Mead wrote in the *Journal*, most countries in the world preferred China's approach to the war, not supporting it, but not supporting American efforts against it either. "South African President Cyril Ramaphosa blamed the war on NATO. Brazil's president, Jair Bolsonaro, refused to condemn Russia. India and Vietnam . . . are closer to China than the U.S. in their approach to the war." Threats of sanctions get some immediate results in forcing neutral states to go along with Western votes at the UN, but he warned that "the lack of non-Western enthusiasm for America's approach to Mr. Putin's war is a phenomenon that U.S. policy makers ignore at their peril." In their myopia, they were sowing the seeds of the destruction of the American-led system.[\[865\]](#) By overplaying their great power hand in the name of the supposedly selfless "rules-based international order," they have essentially put the final nail in the post-Cold War era of American unilateral global hegemony.

The American foreign policy and business elite's dream of overriding all the world's conflicts over ethnicity, religion, and nationality with their so-called "liberal, rules-based order"—under American political and military hegemony, dressed up in global institutions such as the UN, EU, WTO and the rest—is already failing. Secession is breaking out everywhere. The UK left the EU by popular demand,[\[866\]](#) Scotland wants to break away from the UK,[\[867\]](#) Catalonia wants independence from Spain,[\[868\]](#) eastern Ukraine wants to break away from the West and on it goes. It was up to the global hegemon to be so "benevolent," as Kristol and Kagan put it, that the world would accept their rule in their unipolar moment. Instead, all they got was decade after decade of wars, sanctions,

threats and economic crashes that destabilize the whole planet. For now, at least, Russia is rejecting the hypocritical, unipolar world rule of the United States and the West in favor of expanded relations with the nations of Asia.

[\[869\]](#)

At the beginning of the war, in a major indication that the U.S. would not countenance real peace negotiations, the Biden administration announced plans to keep the sanctions regime on Russia forever, even if successful talks ended the fighting.[\[870\]](#)

The Russians kept selling gas and oil to Europe.[\[871\]](#) And they have demanded the EU states pay them in rubles to do so, helping to prop up its value. It seems as though this is one place the Russian government sure was ready for the inevitable economic war, and it appears they have beaten the U.S. at this part of the game every step of the way.

And they keep selling oil to the United States too—\$700 million per day, according to Natalie Jaresko.[\[872\]](#) America's nuclear reactors continue to run off Russian uranium imports as well,[\[873\]](#) although Putin threatened to suspend sales in September 2024.[\[874\]](#)

## **The BRICS**

Attempts to force third nations to join in their sanctions against Russia have only pushed more of them away from the West and towards the Russians instead. BRICS is an acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. Originally proposed and pushed by the Russian president,[\[875\]](#) the project is an international financial and trading arrangement meant to unite Eurasia and the Global South into a separate economic and political order

outside of American dominance. Along with the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), BRICS is meant first and foremost to provide a hedge against American dollar hegemony, which helps to export our country's terrible, inflation-generated boom-bust cycle[\[876\]](#) throughout the rest of the world.[\[877\]](#) This also gives the U.S. government the ability to sanction other nations and even destroy their economies when they refuse to cooperate with American goals. While the rise of a multi-polar world is inevitable, the Russians, Chinese and others are racing to build their alternative systems as fast as possible as a consequence.[\[878\]](#)

When they had proposed a new global currency based on a “market basket” of other national currencies in 2009,[\[879\]](#) the effort mostly went nowhere, since all those governments have their own debt and debasement problems to deal with. But in July 2023, BRICS officially announced they would debut a new currency, backed by gold, to replace the U.S. dollar in their international transactions.[\[880\]](#) They had been diversifying out of the dollar anyway. For example, China and Brazil recently agreed to conduct all of their financial transactions in their own currencies and forgo use of the dollar.[\[881\]](#) Six more countries joined in 2023.[\[882\]](#) Their conference in 2024 was well-attended, showing that, if nothing else, the rest of the world is refusing to shun Russia as the Biden administration had wanted, even if there were no apparent major new deals to announce, just the standard things about how Russia and China are closer again than any time since the 1960s, and pushing for a so-called “fair world order.”[\[883\]](#)

## **Putin's Price Hike**

The administration blamed all the price inflation from Trump and Biden's massive spending bills on Putin and the war. What actually happened was that the U.S. government increased the amount of dollars in circulation by 30 percent.[\[884\]](#) Once the 2020 Covid restrictions were over and people went back to work, all that new currency caused severe price inflation across the board. At the same time, Biden was passing even more monetary expansion in direct payments to citizens as well as his massive defense and infrastructure appropriations and corresponding budget deficits. And so he decided he would just blame the inflation, like the war, on the other guy.

[\[885\]](#)

## **Feb '23: Failure**

The *Washington Post* admitted in February 2023 that the Biden administration's attempt to rally the world against Russia had failed. While other nations disapprove of Russia violating Ukraine's sovereignty, they also remember the last 20 years of aggressive U.S. wars in Serbia, Iraq and Libya, among others, and so dismiss claims that Western support for Ukraine is a matter of principle rather than great power advantage. They are staying out of the sanctions regime and hypocritical morality play. The White House had to go ahead without them, announcing a whole new round of sanctions targeting Russia's defense, energy and financial sectors.[\[886\]](#)

Russia's trade with India was up 400 percent. Their foreign minister is welcome all around the world, while the South African navy joined theirs and China's in exercises in the Indian Ocean. A majority of nations condemned the invasion, but two-thirds of the population of the planet lives

in countries which did not. Only 33 followed America's lead and issued trade sanctions.[\[887\]](#)

Pushing Russia out of Europe and towards Asia completes the process of turning the so-called "world island" away from American and allied control. Presuming one buys into any of these strategic doctrines for the sake of argument, the previous Trump-Kissinger wish to ally with Russia to separate them from China made much more sense. Now, instead of "taking out" Russia before pivoting to China, the Biden administration has made them closer partners than any time since the 1960s.[\[888\]](#)

India and other mid-rank powers are siding with them through membership in the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and by refusing to participate in America's economic war against Russia and China. It would seem the U.S. and its allies are the ones being isolated.

A year and a half into the war, it turned out Russia had spent far less than the United States and its allies. *The Economist* found they had only spent \$67 billion by that point, roughly 3 percent of their GDP, what they called "a puny amount" compared to their spending on previous wars.[\[889\]](#) One might point out that the West has spent much more,[\[890\]](#) and suffered much more in terms of opportunity costs, such as the higher price of energy in Europe, and is still subsidizing Russia's war on the other side.[\[891\]](#)

## CH4

President Biden did get Chancellor Scholz to agree that if Russia invaded, Germany would cancel the Nord Stream 2 pipeline on their end, and so they did.[\[892\]](#) Nord Stream is a series of four pipelines from Russia to Germany



across the Baltic Sea that were finally completed in September 2021.<sup>[893]</sup> A year later, in the middle of the war, someone blew up three of the pipelines. A massive chorus of government employees and media stars had ludicrously blamed this on the Russians,<sup>[894]</sup> who had everything to lose from the pipeline's destruction and who can, after all, simply turn it off from their end, as Putin had already done in the case of Nord Stream 1 (two of the four pipes) in retaliation for a new Western price cap on Russian gas only weeks before.<sup>[895]</sup>

Secretary Blinken did not attempt to hide his satisfaction at the pipelines' destruction. He said it would "once and for all remove [European] dependence on Russian energy and thus to take away from Vladimir Putin the weaponization of energy as a means of advancing his imperial designs," and "offers tremendous strategic opportunity for the years to come."<sup>[896]</sup>

According to investigative reporter Seymour Hersh, the U.S. Navy was behind it, on orders from President Biden.<sup>[897]</sup> Victoria Nuland, then deputy secretary of state for political affairs, and Biden himself had both already seemingly given their game away just before the invasion, with Nuland declaring, "If Russia invades Ukraine, one way or another, Nord Stream 2 will not move forward." On January 27, 2022, the State Department threatened with the exact same language.<sup>[898]</sup> And on February 7, Biden had declared at a press conference, "If Russia invades—that means tanks or troops crossing the border of Ukraine, again, then there will no longer be a Nord Stream 2. We will bring an end to it." When asked how, the president insisted, "I promise you we will be able to do it."<sup>[899]</sup>

According to Hersh, and consistent with the means, motive and opportunity, that is exactly what happened.

By December, the Russians began repairs and the *Post*[\[900\]](#) and *Times*[\[901\]](#) both admitted there was no reason whatsoever to believe they had blown up their own pipeline. But the experiment in getting every mainstream liberal media conspiracy theorist to repeat the lie to each other was another outstanding success.[\[902\]](#)

In February 2023, Fiona Hill claimed in a podcast to have heard tell around town that it was a private team of Ukrainians who had done the deed.[\[903\]](#) The *New York Times*,[\[904\]](#) *London Times*[\[905\]](#) and *Die Zeit*[\[906\]](#) soon followed up with articles claiming the same, citing sources but very few details. *Der Spiegel* then published photos of the sailboat supposedly used in the caper.[\[907\]](#) Hersh followed up soon after, alleging that “certain elements in the Central Intelligence Agency were asked to prepare a cover story in collaboration with German intelligence that would provide the American and German press with an alternative version for the destruction of Nord Stream 2.” Hersh’s U.S. intelligence source told him the yacht story was “a total fabrication by American intelligence that was passed along to the Germans, and aimed at discrediting your story.”[\[908\]](#)

In April 2023, both the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* said that the yacht story was a hoax. While completely ignoring Hersh’s reporting on the matter, the *Post* instead quoted anonymous officials reasoning that it must have been done with robots or submarines.[\[909\]](#) After raising, then casting doubts on, suspicions against Poland and Ukraine—why would either of those risk the support of the Germans now?—the *Post* underscored

what dishonest players the Western leaders are: “For all the intrigue around who bombed the pipeline, some Western officials are not so eager to find out. At gatherings of European and NATO policymakers, officials have settled into a rhythm, said one senior European diplomat: ‘Don’t talk about Nord Stream.’” Calling it “a corpse at a family gathering,” he said they did not want to “deal with the possibility that Ukraine or allies were involved. . . . It’s better not to know.”

The *Times*, also backed down on their previous pretended belief that the small sailboat could have been the center of the story. Their experts, like those who spoke to the *Post*, agreed that “[t]here are strategic reasons for not revealing who did it. As long as they don’t come out with anything substantial, then we are left in the dark on all this—as it should be,” said Jens Wenzel Kristoffersen, a Danish naval commander and military expert at the University of Copenhagen.[\[910\]](#)

Legendary intelligence beat journalist and author James Bamford later published another credible alternative to Hersh’s story. He reasoned, based on open sources, that Ukrainian and Polish intelligence must have done it, as they seemed to have the capability—including U.S. military-grade underwater drones.[\[911\]](#)

Then in June 2023, the *Post* said that the Discord leaks, which they had in their possession for months by that point, showed the U.S. had been made aware of an impending Ukrainian attack on the pipeline more than three months before the mostly successful sabotage, and that they had warned the Germans too.[\[912\]](#) The *Wall Street Journal* later said the CIA had warned the Ukrainians not to do it.[\[913\]](#) If true, this would reveal a new

level of official dishonesty by our government and media in pushing the cover story that the Russians had done it to themselves. Nobody pretends they did it anymore. The *Post* later said that Roman Chervinsky, a colonel in Ukraine's special operations forces, did it on orders from Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi.[\[914\]](#) The Swedish government investigated, but is keeping its results sealed.[\[915\]](#) In early 2024, they simply closed their probe into the pipeline bombing, arguing they did not have jurisdiction, and said it would be better left to the Germans to solve.[\[916\]](#) Russian demands that the UN Security Council launch an official investigation were refused by the U.S. and its allies.

But in August 2024, the Germans issued an arrest warrant and extradition request for a Ukrainian they said was involved in the attack, which the Poles ignored.[\[917\]](#) The *Journal* then claimed to confirm that yes, it was Ukrainians who did it, using that same sailboat, though the Zelensky government still denied it. The Germans claimed to have “obtained evidence including email, mobile and satellite phones communications, as well as fingerprints and DNA samples from the alleged sabotage team” to prove the case. The most convincing part was when a German official noted, “An attack of this scale is a sufficient reason to trigger the collective defense clause of NATO, but our critical infrastructure was blown up by a country that we support with massive weapons shipments and billions in cash.”[\[918\]](#)

Regardless of whether Biden or Zelensky's forces did it, it was an attack on our ally Germany as much as it was on Russia and their potential economic integration. But the American War Party sees ties between Russia

and Germany not as a potential guarantor of peace, but only as a tool of Putin's new empire to blackmail and intimidate Europe and to exclude American power from dominating the continent.

In the aftermath, Nuland gloated to Sen. Ted Cruz, "I think the administration is very gratified to know that Nord Stream 2 is now, as you like to say, a hunk of metal at the bottom of the sea." The end of the Nord Stream pipeline has been a boon to Texan, Norwegian and Polish energy firms. In 2022, U.S. companies increased exports to Europe by nearly 140 percent to nearly \$40 billion.[\[919\]](#) The Europeans noticed their American friends profiting at their expense too.[\[920\]](#)

Speaking of methane gas, Bret Stephens, the famous former editor of the *Jerusalem Post*,[\[921\]](#) unrepentant supporter of the W. Bush-era war in Iraq[\[922\]](#) and the Obama-era dirty war in Syria,[\[923\]](#) speculated in the *Times* that Putin was not interested in defending Russian interests at all, he was just lying and stealing Ukraine's natural gas resources, which all happen to be in the Donbas.[\[924\]](#) But the RAND Corporation pointed out that Ukraine had only 3 percent of the natural gas reserves that Russia already possessed,[\[925\]](#) virtually all of which remains undeveloped,[\[926\]](#) and that Ukraine's shale could not be easily developed without American technology, which U.S. companies were already banned from sharing with Russia.[\[927\]](#) In the end, they may well take it all. But Stephens was clueless about the causes of the war.

## **Terrorizing Europe**

## Russia in Germany

In April 2023, the *Washington Post* and U.S. government accused Russia of orchestrating a left-right alliance against German intervention in the war.

[\[928\]](#) It was just more Russiagate hoax-type nonsense. Documents provided to the *Post* by a European intelligence agency allegedly showed that Russian officials thought it would be nice if Germans opposed the war. That is all they had. “The documents do not contain any material that records communications between the Russian strategists and any allies in Germany,” they admitted. Still, they claimed interviews showed that “at least one person close” to popular antiwar parliamentarian Sahra Wagenknecht and members of the right-wing Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party “were in contact with Russian officials at the time the plans were being drawn up.” The Russians also supposedly wrote a manifesto for AfD. Too bad for those pushing the hoax that even the *Post* had to concede: “It is unclear from the documents if the manifesto ever reached anyone in the AfD.” They also worked on slogans that were to be spraypainted “on walls across Germany,” the *Post* warned. However, they conceded, “It is unclear whether any of this graffiti appeared.” In other words, they had no evidence of anything. It was just a smear of Wagenknecht, from Germany’s leftist Die Linke party, who credibly insisted she had no ties to Russia or AfD. Though the story included enough caveats to refute its own claims, [\[929\]](#) it was enough for a few headlines in the U.S. and Germany.[\[930\]](#)

## Spanish Letter Bombs

In November 2022, some random kook in Spain sent six letter bombs to various government offices, including the U.S. Embassy, slightly wounding an employee at the Ukrainian Embassy.[\[931\]](#) Washington claimed Russian military intelligence was behind it, with one official telling the *New York Times* that the “apparent aim of the action was to signal that Russia and its proxies could carry out terrorist strikes across Europe, including in the capitals of member states of NATO.” Former W. Bush-, Obama- and Trump-era official Fiona Hill told them that “[m]ost of these kinds of organizations are of course linked to Russian intelligence, either the GRU or the FSB,” calling them “front groups” for the Kremlin. Trump’s State Department counterterrorism coordinator Nathan Sales added, “This seems like a warning shot. It’s Russia sending a signal that it’s prepared to use terrorist proxies to attack in the West’s rear areas.”[\[932\]](#)

That was all false. The perpetrator was a lonely 74-year-old man, not a group of mythical GRU-backed white supremacists. The judge in the case said there was “no indication that the person under investigation belongs to or collaborates with any terrorist gang or organized group,” much less the Russian or any other foreign government.[\[933\]](#)

The government and media just dropped it. No one had to resign for lying to the *Times* that Putin’s regime had launched a new anti-European terrorism campaign, just as no one at the paper had to resign for printing those lies. Neither Hill nor Sales apologized for pushing such a controversial claim, for which they had no evidence, in the most important newspaper in the country.

## **Weaponized by Russia**

Bernard of the Moon of Alabama blog, a thoughtful observer of U.S. foreign policy, put together an exhaustive, and exhausting, list of 111 ordinary things that major media headlines have claimed Russia has “weaponized” against the West in recent years, including whales, giant squid, American racism, the Ebola virus, wheat, laughter, of course “the First Amendment,” and, really, “cuddly puppies.”[\[934\]](#)

Of course, in the current political climate any statement that contains anything better than the most simplistic, “other side”-bashing is spun as “pro-Russian,” while dissenters face endless accusation they are secretly controlled and paid by Russia. They are mostly just trying to intimidate people into silence. No major or minor political faction in America sides with Russia in this war or even has reason to care specifically about Russia at all. The argument is simply that our politicians provoked the war, should not have, and should withdraw from the conflict immediately, or at least seek an immediate ceasefire and peace talks instead of the horrible, failed and extremely dangerous policy of continuing the war to “bleed Russia.”

## **Ukrainian Democracy**

### **Two Wolves and a Sheep**

America’s motive in all this also surely cannot be about siding with the forces of democracy against autocracy, as Biden claims. America is close allies with Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Egypt, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, India and Vietnam.



Also, Ukraine is still one of the most corrupt countries in the world and is backsliding on democratic norms: barring opposition parties,[\[935\]](#) nationalizing industry,[\[936\]](#) banning the use of the Russian language,[\[937\]](#) arresting citizens with antiwar or pro-Russian opinions,[\[938\]](#) shutting down private media[\[939\]](#) and severely censoring its state news agencies.[\[940\]](#) Zelensky has continued the religious war begun by his predecessor, raiding Ukrainian Orthodox churches[\[941\]](#)—despite the fact that they have broken ties with Moscow and condemned the invasion unequivocally—and even putting Orthodox Metropolitan Pavlo under house arrest.[\[942\]](#) Professor Nicolai N. Petro has warned about the virtually certain cultural consequences of these choices, from violence against designated enemies now to the delegitimizing of the current regime in the future.[\[943\]](#) The government has also banned Russian-language books and media and implemented severe censorship of war reporting.[\[944\]](#) More than 600 people have been charged with treason by Zelensky’s government.[\[945\]](#)

Then there is all the torture, kidnappings and disappearances in the dirty war in the east over the last decade,[\[946\]](#) as well as Zelensky’s “anti-corruption” crackdowns[\[947\]](#)—including against his old benefactor Igor Kolomoysky, whom he had arrested,[\[948\]](#) and regional governors and top cabinet officials. Though reportedly insisted upon by the United States for public relations reasons,[\[949\]](#) these look in practice much more like ruthless consolidations of power.[\[950\]](#)

## **Elections Delayed**

In late June 2023, Zelensky was asked by the BBC whether there would be elections in 2024. He replied that “elections must take place in peacetime, when there is no war, according to the law.”[\[951\]](#) It was humorous to see all the fact-checkers race to confirm that, yes, he did say that, but you have to understand this democracy is under martial law by decree of the president and so is barred from holding elections.[\[952\]](#) In March 2024, Zelensky let the last deadline pass for naming a date for the next election and announced that all Ukrainian elections would be canceled pending the lifting of martial law. The Rada had previously voted to extend it, ruling out their own elections as well.[\[953\]](#) Kiev Mayor Vitali Klitschko, who had been instrumental in the overthrow of the government in 2014, denounced Zelensky as an autocrat. “At some point we will no longer be any different from Russia, where everything depends on the whim of one man.”[\[954\]](#)

## **Killing Kiryeyev**

Just after the war began, Ukrainian intelligence agents, suspecting banker Denys Kiryeyev of treason, shot him in the head at point-blank range and left his body in the street[\[955\]](#)—just like Eddie Adams’s iconic “Saigon Execution” photo, which did so much to undermine support for the Vietnam War.[\[956\]](#) But unlike the Vietcong spy who apparently had been credibly alleged to have murdered a cop and his entire family,[\[957\]](#) it turned out the victim in this case should have been considered a hero by Kiev. According to their military intelligence agency, information passed on through Kiryeyev was used to help defend the Hostomel airport near Kiev from Russian forces, thwarting their plan to take the capital city on the first day

of the invasion. Then, at the request of General Kyrylo Budanov, the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, he had joined those representing the government in talks with Russia in Minsk to try to arrange a ceasefire just four days later. But on his way to a second set of talks on March 3, he was arrested by the SBU and murdered. He was buried a hero next to Ukraine's first foreign minister.[\[958\]](#) Mistakes like this happen in third-world authoritarian police states that murder their citizens first and ask questions later.

### **‘Peacemaker’**

Myrotvorets, or “Peacemaker,” a website founded by a former Ukrainian legislator, features a blacklist of more than 100,000 enemies of the Ukrainian state and supposed collaborators with Russia, naming thousands of celebrities, reporters, writers and politicians, domestic and foreign. Those include Americans such as former CIA analyst Ray McGovern, journalists Max Blumenthal and his wife Anya Parampil, comedian and YouTube host Jimmy Dore, former Congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, Ron Paul's son Senator Rand Paul and Canadian journalist Aaron Maté. Their website quite literally lists Langley, Virginia, where the CIA is based, next to Warsaw, Poland at the top of the homepage.[\[959\]](#) The London *Times* reports that Ukrainian police rely on the list at internal checkpoints, “supplanting official databases.”

“Several murders have occurred within days of the victims appearing on Myrotvorets,” they reported. “Two pro-Russian figures, the publicist Oles Buzina and legislator Oleg Kalashnikov, were shot dead in Kiev in

April 2015 shortly after Myrotvorets published their personal information, including home addresses.” Yulia Gorbunova, a senior Ukraine researcher at Human Rights Watch, condemned the list for its “serious implications for press freedom.”[\[960\]](#) The NED-supported NGO Chesno, which participated in the Maidan coup of 2014, now has its own hitlist.[\[961\]](#)

In June 2024, U.S.-backed NGO Texty released a report that was not quite an enemies list, but was certainly a catalog of American dissenters against the current policy. It included the author, the Libertarian Institute and Antiwar.com, as well as colleagues Kyle Anzalone and Dave DeCamp, and other journalists and activists from across the political spectrum.[\[962\]](#)

## **Gonzalo Lira**

Chilean-American war commentator Gonzalo Lira, who was living in eastern Ukraine, was arrested for speech crimes in May 2023.[\[963\]](#) He was released after three months, claiming to have been tortured. After trying to make it to the border, he was rearrested and later died in prison like Alexey Navalny, in Lira’s case of untreated pneumonia. But no one on the Biden team said Zelensky murdered him. In fact, unlike Navalny, no one in the Biden administration had said a word to their Ukrainian clients about the rights of this American citizen in their custody for the crime of unappreciated commentary, despite weeks of pleas from his father before his death.[\[964\]](#) Vedant Patel, principal deputy spokesman for the State Department, made it clear that the U.S. government had a policy of official disinterest and indifference to Lira’s fate at the hands of their client,

obviously lying that he personally was not even aware of Lira's case at all.

[\[965\]](#)

## **Sectarian Split Worsened**

After the 2022 invasion began, things got much worse between the state and the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Anatol Lieven found that Kiev's St. Sophia Cathedral "contained a set of displays on Ukrainian history intended to show Ukraine as both the true heir of early medieval Rus and permanently and innately European," while at the same time, "Russians are portrayed as innately and permanently cruel Asiatic savages." However, as he noted, there were many ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in Ukraine, and not just in the east. In Zaporizhzhia he found that people were against the Russian state and its invasion, but "in private are not at all happy with portrayals of Russians as a whole as racially inferior savages, nor with Ukrainian state attempts to obliterate Russian language and culture." And as Lieven noted, this approach made future compromise much more difficult, particularly when that was supposed to entail the return of Kiev's control to the most ethnically Russian areas.[\[966\]](#)

The Rada went ahead and outlawed the Ukrainian Orthodox Church in the summer of 2024. Zelensky announced, "Today, I want to note the work of the Verkhovna Rada. A law on our spiritual independence has been adopted."[\[967\]](#)

## **Blatant Corruption**

In a classic case of “disaster capitalism,” BlackRock, the wealthiest asset management firm in the world, has already signed up to be the middleman when Americans taxpayers are forced to cover the cost of rebuilding Ukraine, worth \$349 billion, according to estimates from the World Bank and European Commission.<sup>[968]</sup> *Fortune* magazine called it a “trillion-dollar opportunity.”<sup>[969]</sup> The powerful Wall Street bank JPMorgan Chase was quick to get in on the action too.<sup>[970]</sup> “The profound human tragedy is unavoidably also a huge economic opportunity,” the *New York Times* said. The Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce advertises it as “the world’s largest construction site!”<sup>[971]</sup> The American people opposed getting involved in this conflict from the beginning<sup>[972]</sup> and were studiously ignored by our country’s top government employees. We must pay anyway.

In September 2023, President Biden hired Penny Pritzker—Ukrainian-American billionaire heiress of the Hyatt hotel fortune,<sup>[973]</sup> sister of the Illinois governor, longtime Barack Obama and Democratic Party supporter,<sup>[974]</sup> former secretary of commerce and bank bailout recipient<sup>[975]</sup>—as “U.S. special representative for Ukraine’s economic recovery.”<sup>[976]</sup> Engaged in this most obvious profiteering, they act like they are heroes rebuilding what they helped destroy. Bloomberg news reported, “The former commerce secretary . . . said she sees opportunities for sectors including agriculture, steel and energy. At a speech in Chicago on Wednesday, she touted the work of Cargill Inc. and Archer-Daniels-Midland Co. in helping Ukrainian farmers, and rising output from steel factories in recent months.”<sup>[977]</sup>

When Senators Lindsey Graham and Richard Blumenthal went to Ukraine in August 2024, the two thought it very important to mention in their official statement about the trip that “President Zelensky was excited about and was committed to obtaining a strategic agreement with the U.S. regarding the more than a trillion dollars-worth of rare earth minerals owned by Ukraine, and expressed a commitment to create a working group with the U.S. to make this happen.” They said this was important because “[e]xpanding economic cooperation with Ukraine makes America stronger and accelerates Ukraine’s economic recovery. Ukraine is blessed with significant lithium, titanium, and other rare earth minerals that are needed by the American economy.”[\[978\]](#) David Petraeus had once tried to sell the Afghan war in the same way[\[979\]](#)—though in Ukraine’s case, where mining and transportation are at least possible, such considerations may play a far greater role in the true motivations of the War Party, which has gone to great lengths to see the Donbas reclaimed, or at least set out such a policy back in 2014, and again in 2022.

Frank Ledwidge is a retired British naval intelligence officer and Bosnia and 2000s Afghan war veteran who spent months in Ukraine after the 2022– war began. He reported legendary corruption, such as generalships in the army for sale for \$50,000. Of course, anyone who made such an investment, he said, “had to get that money back.” Even as military units were forced to rent artillery pieces to each other, Ledwidge noted huge numbers of brand-new high-end SUVs on the streets of Kiev, obviously all paid for with embezzled foreign aid, while the guys out at the front were having to raise money to buy their own gear.[\[980\]](#) Zelensky was forced to

fire and reshuffle several of his top cabinet officials one year into the war, [\[981\]](#) including his defense minister.[\[982\]](#) Deputy Minister of Infrastructure Vasyl Lozynsky was released from his post and had been arrested after receiving a \$400,000 bribe. Deputy defense minister Viacheslav Shapovalov was overpaying contractors for food, and was forced out. Three other ministers, as well as seven other officials, including five regional chiefs of prosecutors' offices, were also ousted for corruption.[\[983\]](#)

A Pentagon inspector general report showed that of the \$23 billion in military equipment the U.S. had sent by October 2022, much of it was simply being stolen by criminals.[\[984\]](#) “[T]he DoD was unable to provide end-use monitoring (EUM) in accordance with DoD policy because of limited U.S. presence in Ukraine,” they said, adding that in June 2022, the SBU had broken up multiple organized crime groups who had stolen weapons, including a fake humanitarian agency that had stolen and sold body armor meant for the troops.[\[985\]](#)

The Pentagon Inspector General's office says it cannot account for at least \$1 billion worth of military aid.[\[986\]](#) After the last defense minister was fired over how bad his corruption looked, the new one said he identified \$250 million worth of graft in his first four months on the job.[\[987\]](#) In one case, officials stole \$40 million that U.S. tax victims were assured was going to buy artillery for the men at the front.[\[988\]](#)

In September 2023, Zelensky fired Defense Minister Reznikov over allegations of massive graft and corruption inside the Defense Ministry. The *New York Times* wrote, “Official corruption was a topic that had been mostly taboo throughout the first year of the war.”[\[989\]](#)



*Time*'s Simon Shuster, a reporter with long experience in the country, wrote that "[a]mid all the pressure to root out corruption, I assumed, perhaps naively, that officials in Ukraine would think twice before taking a bribe or pocketing state funds." But then, "when I made this point to a top presidential adviser in early October, he asked me to turn off my audio recorder so he could speak more freely. 'Simon, you're mistaken,' he says. 'People are stealing like there's no tomorrow.'" [\[990\]](#)

That was the American people's pottage they were talking about.

## **A Big Israel**

President Zelensky is on the record saying that post-war Ukraine will resemble a "big Israel" and will never be "liberal, like Europe." Even George Soros's Freedom House ranks Ukraine as only "partly free," [\[991\]](#) the same rank as the Philippines under Rodrigo Duterte and Tunisia under President Kaïs Saïed. [\[992\]](#) When it comes to democracy, they are ranked as a "transitional or hybrid regime." [\[993\]](#)

## **Bribing Your Congressman**

Ben Freeman, the director of the Foreign Influence Transparency Initiative at the Center for International Policy, reported that Ukraine spends more money lobbying American congressmen, senators, media and think tanks than any other nation in the world, leaving Israel and Saudi Arabia far behind (though they each have much greater long-term institutional power and mutual interests with the U.S. national security state). Their

representatives also contacted members of Congress 8,000 times in 2021, and made more than 2,000 calls to media outlets. The country we are supposed to be ready to sacrifice everything to defend just happens to be the same one that's been bribing our leaders more than any other country in recent years. Seems worth noting.[\[994\]](#) As Freeman explained, Washington think tanks pretend to be a bridge between academics and the national security professionals in responsible positions in government, when they are really just public relations content creators for weapons manufacturers and foreign governments. The American people do not have a say in their discussions.[\[995\]](#)

## **Imperial Hubris**

### **Breaking Up Russia**

On December 23, 2021, Putin complained to the press about Russia's relationship with the U.S.-led West. He cited history's greatest villain, U.S. President Woodrow Wilson,[\[996\]](#) who he said had threatened to break Russia into five separate states, and in a little-known misadventure attempted to invade the country and overthrow the Communists between 1918 and 1920.[\[997\]](#)

Putin continued, "In 1991 we divided ourselves into 15, but it seems even this was not enough for our partners. They believe that Russia is still too big, even after the Soviet Union collapsed, and we were left with just 146 million people. I believe this is the only way to explain their unrelenting pressure."[\[998\]](#)

Russia itself is still a vast nation, built like most others on a mixed history of conquest and assimilation. There are many regions still within Russia where some people, possibly even majorities, would like to be independent. That the West would further intervene to exploit these divisions to break up the country itself is naturally a major concern for Moscow. Whether they would really go that far is unclear, but *Foreign Policy* magazine's Anchal Vohra described a suicidal hubris in Washington perhaps unmatched in all history. She talked to experts and analysts who were certain that the "disintegration" of Russia was only a matter of time, "and that the West must not only prepare to manage any possible spillover of any ensuing civil wars but also to benefit from the fracture by luring resource-rich successor nations into its ambit." It was time to go for broke: "They argue that when the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991 the West was blindsided and failed to fully capitalize on the momentous opportunity."[\[999\]](#)

The experts had no new information, just long theoretical syllogisms about how all the other actors in Russia must also see the current situation as their opportunity to revolt if only the West would help them. And look, there have been protests and discontent here and there. Surely these people are all ready to commit to an American program of high treason to completely destroy their nation. Right? At least she also quoted the old ex-Yukos oligarch Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who warned against such dangerous fantasies.[\[1000\]](#)

The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe—also known as the U.S. Helsinki Commission, a U.S. government agency made up of

lawmakers and staff from the Defense, State and Commerce Departments—held a public symposium and openly declared that “decolonizing Russia” was America’s “moral and strategic objective.”[\[1001\]](#) Their introduction makes the agenda quite plain. It was now time to have a new look at “Russia’s interior empire, given Moscow’s dominion over many indigenous non-Russian nations, and the brutal extent to which the Kremlin has taken to suppress their national self-expression and self-determination.” They continued, “Serious and controversial discussions are now underway about reckoning with Russia’s fundamental imperialism and the need to ‘decolonize’ Russia for it to become a viable stakeholder in European security and stability.”[\[1002\]](#)

Panelists ranted about America’s “failure” to support independence for any and all ethnic or cultural groups inside the Russian Federation who might want U.S. help against Moscow. Just like in Putin’s talking points, [\[1003\]](#) the Americans openly declare their intent to smash the Russian Federation to pieces. Casey Michel, from the Human Rights Foundation, writing in the *Atlantic*, agreed, and mysteriously with the exact same slogan: “Decolonize Russia.” Washington’s only mistake in 1991, he insisted, was that they did not immediately give security guarantees to every single post-Soviet state and set to work breaking up what was left of the Russian Federation. Michel went on to argue that the U.S. should have given support to Karelia, Komi, Sakha, Bashkortostan, Chuvashia, Kalmykia, Udmurtia, Tatarstan “and many more” regions deep inside Russian territory that attempted to declare independence during the fall of the USSR. Michel was certain there was only one solution: “Until

Moscow's empire is toppled, though, the region—and the world—will not be safe.”[[1004](#)]

Not to be outdone, neoconservative think tanker Michael Rubin[[1005](#)] said America should declare that the “Gulf of Finland islands, the Karelian Isthmus and Ladoga Karelia” were once again Finnish. Kaliningrad too, he said, should be called Königsberg and go back to Prussia, which has not existed in more than 100 years. “The Soviet occupation of the Karafuto Prefecture (South Sakhalin) is likewise invalid. . . . Certainly, there should be no dispute over the Kuril Islands; they are legal Japanese territory.” Rubin continued, “Washington might go further, however. Between 1921 and 1944, Tannu Tuva existed as an independent country adjacent to Russia and Mongolia before Russia forcibly reincorporated it.” And, “While the United States never formally established diplomatic relations with Tuva, it might recognize it as an occupied nation or raise questions about whether Mongolia should be the rightful sovereign.” Why stop there? “Beyond Tuva, Russia . . . incorporates nearly two dozen other ethnic republics from the relatively tiny Republic of Adygea to the geographically huge Yakutia, to the already independent-minded republics of Chechnya, Dagestan, and increasingly Tatarstan.” Rubin said if Russia was going to annex parts of Ukraine, the U.S. should recognize a “greater or equal amount of territory” inside Russia as “illicitly occupied.”[[1006](#)] Neoconservatives are really just ethno-nationalists, however they may pretend to champion global liberalism.[[1007](#)]

On March 23, 2022, former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev, now deputy secretary of Russia's Security Council, gave a speech accusing the

United States of seeking to overthrow and break Russia into pieces. “It means Russia must be humiliated, limited, shattered, divided and destroyed,” he said, warning that the dissolution of the Russian Federation would leave multiple new nuclear weapons states run by “freaks, fanatics and radicals.” Not only does the U.S. government reveal their intent to see the Kremlin overthrown, if not the shattering of their country into smaller warring statelets armed with 6,000 loose nukes, but this is the point of view of the Russian government: deep fear, bordering on paranoia, about the most severe consequences if these threats were brought to fruition. Even as they make these threats, American government officials refuse to see from the eyes of their adversaries. To them, Russia’s war is all aggression and self-aggrandizement, and any stated fears and concerns are just thin rationalizations. This sort of narrow-minded thinking could easily get us all killed.

In late 2022, Zelensky considered a petition[\[1008\]](#) to officially rename Russia “Moscow” to accentuate the idea that Eastern Slavic society originated in Kiev and “diminish” Russia’s claim to be its main representative and protector. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova denounced the idea as “another . . . attempt to create ‘anti-Russia’ from Ukraine.”[\[1009\]](#)

Beginning in May 2022, Yahoo News started reprinting stories[\[1010\]](#) and editorials straight from Ukrainska Pravda, including one by Oleksiy Danilov, secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine (NSDC), calling for the complete destruction of the Russian Federation. “Only after the full cycle of first external and then internal decolonization is

completed, and a number of independent territorial entities are formed, Russia will cease to be a threat to humanity.” He went on to insist that Chechnya, Ichkeria, Tatarstan, the Tannu Tuva People’s Republic, the Ural Mountains, Siberia, the Far East and more should be stripped from Moscow as soon as possible. Do not worry about nuclear war. We will have to—somehow—“pull Russia’s nuclear teeth,” so that will not be a problem.

[\[1011\]](#)

The “Forum Free Nation of Post-Russia” organization is also pushing to completely dismantle the Russian Federation. Gunther Fehlinger—chairman of the Austrian NGO Montenegro Goes EUrope, Association for EU membership of Montenegro and the chair of Austrian Committee for NATO Enlargement for Kosovo, Ukraine and Bosnia-Herzegovina—publicly boasted, “Some say the West has no plan what to do with Russia once Putin falls in 2024 and so [Biden] is not giving enough weapons to Ukraine to save Putin—that is sooo wrong. Here is the plan. Dismantle Russia and integrate the 41 new states in [the Council of Europe] and OSCE asap.”[\[1012\]](#) Their website features a map of “Northern Eurasia 2023,” a.k.a. “Map of the Free States of Postrussia,”[\[1013\]](#) featuring the caption: “After the final dismantling of the Moscow Empire through the complete decolonization of the so-called ‘Russian Federation’ and the reconstruction of independent and free states of the post-Russian space.”[\[1014\]](#)

If the U.S. government had not created such a conflict of interest for us, we might cheer on this sentiment about secession from empires new and old, toward smaller and weaker governing units in the interest of freedom. This is the libertarian way.[\[1015\]](#) But America is the world empire and this

is an evil plot to destroy another nation for daring to remain independent from U.S. dictates. So we must not. Opposing our government is our business, opposing theirs is theirs.[\[1016\]](#)

There was at least some pushback against this talk. Former Defense Secretary Robert Gates told the *Post*, echoing the consensus of the Bush Sr. years, that “[t]he last thing we need is Russia fragmenting and the fate of all those nuclear weapons being uncertain. We need a coherent Russian state, and we need a strong government in Moscow.”[\[1017\]](#)

For his part, Putin knows good and well that the Americans and their allies talk this way and that at least some factions would very much like to see Russia broken up, and of course dominated by the West.[\[1018\]](#)

## **Killer MIC**

As referenced above, President Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower warned in his farewell speech that the people must beware of “the disastrous rise of misplaced power” in the hands of what he called the “military-industrial complex.”[\[1019\]](#) He was referring to the perverse economic and political incentives involved with maintaining a massive military force in the name of staving off the Soviet Union in the first Cold War.[\[1020\]](#) But we have never had that reckoning. When the USSR fell apart, America expanded its Middle Eastern footprint, culminating in the 20-year terror wars and pivots to Eastern Europe and East Asia. And the complex expanded theirs, into academia, think tanks, media and Silicon Valley.[\[1021\]](#)

Companies like Lockheed and Boeing not only contribute large amounts to the lawmakers supposedly regulating them,[\[1022\]](#) but also make



sure to spread out their manufacturing into small pieces across the country, for political, not economic efficiency. The purpose is to make as many congressmen as possible dependent on the good will of job holders in their districts: blackmail to keep their captive market in place.[\[1023\]](#)

It is not the case that the ideology of American empire springs from this sort of rent-seeking. Yankees are busybodies.[\[1024\]](#) Southerners like to fight.[\[1025\]](#) TV news anchors like attention.[\[1026\]](#) Think tankers like not having to do actual work for a living.[\[1027\]](#) Evangelicals think backing Israel will force Jesus to bring on the Apocalypse sooner.[\[1028\]](#) Liberals[\[1029\]](#)—and *Reason* magazine writers[\[1030\]](#)—like proving they are not anti-American leftists by patriotically backing any given war. They are all terrified of being seen as scared or weak or accused of caring more about alleged foreign enemies than their own country. And nearly every time, enough of them can be convinced that the U.S. government can and should export the universal values of liberty and democracy its leaders do not believe in to the rest of the world to prove just how righteous they are.[\[1031\]](#)

And then there is the money. All totaled up, including the VA and the nukes, it all costs \$1.7 trillion per year.[\[1032\]](#) Those receiving that money, inside and outside of government, have a massive conflict of interest to keep it all going.

In the case of Ukraine, they could not help but see the conflict as a great opportunity. And they could not help themselves but to boast about that publicly. As previously mentioned, after news of Russia's initial seizure of Crimea in March 2014, attendees at a breakfast meeting among not pro-

Russians, but professional American militarists, was “borderline euphoric” when they heard.[\[1033\]](#)

Throughout the 2022– war, other than helping to lay the groundwork, financial interests or actors were not the primary movers of Western policy. The interagency consensus never had a greater champion than President Biden. As a senator and vice president he always was interested in European issues, taking the lead in pushing intervention in almost every situation. He had maintained a deliberately adversarial relationship with Putin for at least a decade before becoming president. And one thing about Biden is, he carried utmost certainty about his every opinion, especially on issues where he considered himself an expert. In this case, he seemed to be certain that the appropriate metaphor for the situation is Putin as Hitler fighting to build a new order of tyranny and darkness, with himself in the role of FDR, bravely leading the forces of freedom and democracy. By his repeated false claims, it appears Biden truly believed that Putin had threatened to attack Poland and the Baltics next and that he was fighting not for the Donbas, but the entire free world.[\[1034\]](#) But that was going to be very expensive.

In September 2024, the U.S. and its allies held a meeting at NATO headquarters in Brussels where they discussed how all of their governments could work to ramp up arms and ammunition production, in what the *New York Times* said was a “sign that the United States and its allies believe that the fighting in Ukraine will last years.”[\[1035\]](#) They decided on the modest goal of a “10-year plan to rebuild the Ukrainian defense industry.” A senior NATO official told the press, “We will be looking at defense planning

requirements to get Ukraine fully interoperable with NATO. It's about shifting away from Soviet equipment . . . to NATO-compatible Western equipment.”[1036] And so the war was a gold rush for the merchants of death. Raytheon, Lockheed and General Dynamics all reported massive profits within the first year.[1037] And the outlook for the future was good.  
[1038]

Raytheon CEO Greg Hayes explained, “[W]e are seeing, I would say, opportunities for international sales. . . . [T]he tensions in Eastern Europe, the tensions in the South China Sea, all of those things are putting pressure on some of the defense spending over there. So I fully expect we’re going to see some benefit from it.”[1039] Separately, he said, “So I make no apology for that. I think again recognizing we are there to defend democracy and the fact is eventually we will see some benefit in the business over time.” He noted that everything Ukraine was getting was coming from old stocks, but, “Eventually we’ll have to replenish it.”[1040]

After a year of war, journalist Eli Clifton reported that the American arms industry was the stock market bet of 2022. “Shares in Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, Boeing, Northrop Grumman and General Dynamics appreciated in value 12.78 percent on average in the one-year span since the day before the Russian February 24 invasion.” He continued that “the top weapons stocks, on average, outperformed the S&P 500 by 17.82 percent, the NASDAQ composite index by 23.88 percent, and the Dow Jones Industrial Average by 12.71 percent.” Lockheed made so much money they started doing stock buybacks and writing dividend checks—direct welfare payments to the wealthiest people in society on the backs of taxpayers who

have to actually work for a living, and whose investments, if they have any, have suffered so war profiteers can have their money instead.[\[1041\]](#)

Members of the legislature sure noticed. At least 50 congressmen and senators invest in weapons stocks, worth at least \$10 million.[\[1042\]](#)

Clifton also teamed up with the great investigator Ben Freeman to expose how many of the Washington lobbying firms supporting Ukraine, supposedly for free, were virtually all also clients of major arms companies who have business with the Pentagon.[\[1043\]](#)

U.S. Air Force General James Hecker warned in July 2023: “[W]e’re giving a lot of munitions away to the Ukrainians—which I think is exactly what we need to do—but now we’re getting dangerously low,” adding, “We need to get industry on board to help us out so we can get this going.” He went on to explain that “[NATO is] dreadfully below where we need to be. And it’s probably not going to get better . . . in the short term, but we’ve got to make sure in the long term we have the industrial base that can increase what we have.”[\[1044\]](#) His fellow Air Force General Charles Q. Brown Jr., Biden’s then-nominee for chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told a congressional hearing in July 2023, “For all the services in this year’s budget submission, we asked for multi-year procurement.” He said this “was designed to help increase our stocks, but it also . . . help[s] provide predictability to the Defense Industrial Base, to their supply chains, and to their workforce.”[\[1045\]](#) Many firms got on board to use Ukraine as a testing ground for their new products, especially air and naval drones, networking software and electronic warfare devices.[\[1046\]](#)

Due to that iron triangle of defense firms, think tanks and the media, American TV viewers tend to get all their information and opinions from former government officials-turned military contractors and lobbyists.

[\[1047\]](#) Various experts with huge salaries on the line, like the Obama administration and Lockheed's Jeh Johnson; [\[1048\]](#) the Clinton and Obama administration and Beacon Global Strategies' Leon Panetta; [\[1049\]](#) retired admiral and the Carlyle Group's James Stavridis; [\[1050\]](#) retired general, Clinton official and Defense Solutions' Barry McCaffrey; [\[1051\]](#) retired general, Obama government and KKR's David Petraeus; [\[1052\]](#) the Clinton, Obama, WestExec Advisors and Booz Allen Hamilton's Michèle Flournoy; [\[1053\]](#) Obama and Beacon Global Strategies' Jeremy Bash [\[1054\]](#) and many others. All have made themselves ubiquitous moonlighting as experts on cable news, pushing the policy with virtually no acknowledgment of their own financial stake as one might think they would have to for credibility's sake.

Alexander Vindman, the Ukrainian-American self-appointed star of the Ukrainegate impeachment scandal, turns out to be as corrupt a grifter as anyone in Washington. Seeing so many others get rich off the destruction of his country may have filled Vindman with envy because he pitched an obvious scam to the Ukrainians, offering a contract for his and his brother Yevgeny's company, Trident Support, to provide "improved logistics" to men fighting where the Vindman brothers should have been themselves. He was only asking for \$12 million, barely enough to retire in these conditions, [\[1055\]](#) and boasted about it when called out, too, tweeting, "Thanks for the advert. I'm trying to get logistics in place to help Ukraine win the war and

secure America. Looking for philanthropic contributions to get it going. Reach out if you support the cause of democracy and U.S. National Security.”[\[1056\]](#) “This may become a viable business with government support,” the very safe Vindman boasted to *Politico*.[\[1057\]](#) Yevgeny “Eugene” Vindman ran and won for Congress in Virginia in 2024.[\[1058\]](#) He refused to answer questions from the New York Post about making hundreds of thousands of dollars from Trident after taking 14 taxpayer-funded trips to Ukraine. Alexander—the former mid-ranking army staff officer—bought a property in Florida for almost \$2 million.[\[1059\]](#)

## **Peace Proposals**

A December 2022 Századvég Foundation survey found that more than 70 percent of Europeans—including supermajorities in every country on the continent besides two of the Baltics, up to 80 percent in most cases—favored negotiations and a ceasefire. Even then, Latvia came in at 64 percent, and Estonia a solid 58 percent.[\[1060\]](#) But democracy would just have to wait, for democracy’s sake.

The Mexicans, Brazilians and others have proposed peace talks. Biden officials claimed they were interested in Brazil’s effort, but never followed up. Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador proposed “a commission for dialogue and peace.”[\[1061\]](#) He was ignored.

In late 2022, more than 500 Christian leaders signed a letter calling for a Christmas truce, inspired by the 1914 truce between British, French and German soldiers during the First World War.[\[1062\]](#) Russia said they would abide by it.[\[1063\]](#) Kiev rejected it.[\[1064\]](#) Neither side stopped fighting.

[\[1065\]](#) But it was an important reminder that the consensus on TV remains just that: a media creation. Out in the real world, real people are concerned about the state of their nations and their souls.

When the Chinese proposed a peace agreement on February 24, 2023[\[1066\]](#)—one year into the war—the Ukrainian government said they “saw merit” in the plan.[\[1067\]](#) Biden,[\[1068\]](#) Blinken[\[1069\]](#) and Stoltenberg, however, immediately dismissed it.[\[1070\]](#) A few weeks later, the day before Chairman Xi Jinping met Putin in Moscow, NSC spokesman John Kirby preemptively denounced any attempt at a truce. “[I]f coming out of this meeting, there’s some sort of call for a ceasefire, well, that’s just going to be unacceptable because all that’s going to do . . . is ratify Russia’s conquest to date.”[\[1071\]](#)

The administration was sticking with their narrative. Nothing short of total victory would be acceptable. The *Times* explained in early March 2023, “President Biden and his aides say their goal for now is to keep giving Ukraine military aid to repel Russia and take back Ukrainian territory, and that any peace talks, an idea that China and a few other nations are pushing, are a distraction.”[\[1072\]](#)

Blinken said, “A ceasefire now without a durable solution would allow President Putin to rest and refit his troops and then restart the war at a time more advantageous to Russia.” He insisted the U.S. would not be “fooled” by any Chinese attempt to gain a ceasefire upon any condition other than total Russian withdrawal back to 2013 lines.[\[1073\]](#)

In April 2023, the Ukrainians made clear that the Biden administration had won. They would not negotiate on terms that could leave Russia on any

Ukrainian territory, including Crimea, a deliberate poison pill to sabotage talks.[\[1074\]](#)

Of course, when the U.S. government continuously announced that the Cold War with China was their real goal, they only incentivized the other regime to build up its military, including nuclear forces, in response.[\[1075\]](#)

While covering Xi's trip to Moscow, the *Times* reported as fact that "China and Russia both oppose a global order dominated by the United States and its allies."[\[1076\]](#) As a narrative attempting to describe our modern world, that would make much more sense than the argument that the battle here is between the "rules-based order" and lawless authoritarianism. The Americans have made it clear, the "rules" they refer to are not found in the Geneva Conventions, UN Charter or rulings of its Security Council, but are instead the arbitrary decisions of the U.S. National Security Council and its president.

## **The 2023 Offensive**

### **The End of Fukuyama**

Francis Fukuyama—who is so certain of his own capability to understand the world that he once declared "the end of history" and demanded America invade Iraq to remake the Middle East,[\[1077\]](#) which he later blamed on his friends for making him think the wrong thing[\[1078\]](#)—insisted that "Ukraine will win" the war with Russia. Lamenting that anyone was foolish enough to think Kiev should have negotiated already, Fukuyama argued that "if Ukraine can regain military momentum before the end of 2022, it will be



much easier for leaders of Western democracies to argue that their people should tighten their belts over the coming winter.”[\[1079\]](#) Granted, he published that on September 8, 2022, just days before Ukraine had their best week in Luhansk and Kherson, but the prospect they could actually “regain military momentum” was never believable. “It is possible that the Russian position there will collapse catastrophically and that Moscow will lose a good part of its remaining army,” Fukuyama daydreamed. Ukraine’s situation has gotten worse ever since. Just like with the war in Iraq, the profound theorist of grand strategy had no idea what he was talking about.

Meanwhile, Fukuyama—who makes approximately \$300,000 per year plus benefits[\[1080\]](#) miseducating young students at Stanford University and associating with various neo-Nazis[\[1081\]](#)—has not rescinded his demand that Americans “tighten their belts,” even as prices at the grocery store are up by one-third or more in just five years due to monetary and price inflation,[\[1082\]](#) and 41 million Americans are already on federal food assistance.[\[1083\]](#)

## **Discord Leaks**

President Biden’s staff wrote an article in his name in May 2022 that said his administration’s goal was “a democratic, independent, sovereign and prosperous Ukraine with the means to deter and defend itself against further aggression.”[\[1084\]](#) As the mantra later had it, “for as long as it takes.”

Throughout late 2022, it was repeatedly reported that Ukraine was preparing for a massive winter offensive as soon as the ground was frozen solid, rendering mud on the steppe a non-issue.[\[1085\]](#) But it was a mild

winter and the ground never did freeze deeply enough to allow the operation to commence, so the offensive was then pushed into the spring, [\[1086\]](#) and eventually the summer of 2023, [\[1087\]](#) when the ground finally dried out after the spring rains. [\[1088\]](#)

But in the spring of 2023, the Discord leaks revealed that the administration had been lying about Ukraine's progress in the war. Like Vietnam [\[1089\]](#) and Afghanistan, [\[1090\]](#) they knew they could not win, so they just lied rather than stop. The Ukrainians were running out of ammunition, artillery shells, rockets and especially anti-aircraft missiles, [\[1091\]](#) while Russia had plenty of resources to continue for at least another year. [\[1092\]](#) The military and CIA privately believed Ukraine would not have the strength to launch an effective spring offensive, saying Kiev was sure to fall "well short" of their goals. [\[1093\]](#) Official intelligence assessments in the documents were "a marked departure from the Biden administration's public statements about the vitality of Ukraine's military," as the *Washington Post* very politely put it. [\[1094\]](#) The *Post* also characterized the leaker, Jack Teixeira, as "a conspiracy theorist who thought the government was hiding true information about the war and other security concerns from the public." Sure, he personally had proven that was an undeniable fact beyond any shadow of a doubt by publishing top secret government documents admitting the truth, but he was still a kook for thinking that. [\[1095\]](#)

In another story the *Post* seemed to blame Teixeira's leak for the failed offensive, since the files "provided a sharp contrast to Washington's

messaging about the war” and revealed their doubts about the operation.

[\[1096\]](#)

In March, the *New York Times* reported that the U.S. was again holding tabletop exercises with the Ukrainians in Germany, planning various options for the spring to later-summer offensive against Russian forces as reserve troops trained.[\[1097\]](#) But *Politico* reported that some in the Biden administration thought they would have to call the whole thing off, at least temporarily, after the offensive. “There has been discussion, per aides, of framing it to the Ukrainians as a ceasefire and not as permanent peace talks, leaving the door open for Ukraine to regain more of its territory at a future date.” Richard Haass told *Politico*, “If Ukraine can’t gain dramatically on the battlefield, the question inevitably arises as to whether it is time for a negotiated stop to the fighting.”

Of course, the Republicans, in this case in the form of former Trump special envoy for Ukraine Kurt Volker, could only attack Biden for not providing enough support. “If the counteroffensive does not go well, the administration has only itself to blame for withholding certain types of arms and aid at the time when it was most needed,” he told the paper.[\[1098\]](#)

## **Eurocrats**

In early 2023, Britain, France and Germany began pressuring Zelensky to talk with Russia due to “deepening private doubts” about a Ukrainian victory, according to the *Wall Street Journal*. “We keep repeating that Russia mustn’t win, but what does that mean? If the war goes on for long enough with this intensity, Ukraine’s losses will become unbearable,” a

senior French official said. “And no one believes they will be able to retrieve Crimea.”

The French said they wished to see one last Ukrainian offensive to improve their position before beginning negotiations. In exchange for Kiev’s willingness to compromise, the British, French and Germans offered to build Ukraine a massive new military, including a modern air force, though they would still deny NATO membership and its Article 5 protections.[\[1099\]](#)

## **It’s On!**

Soon after the battle of Bakhmut was lost in late May, Ukraine turned around and launched their big attack on Russian forces in the southeast to try to sever their “land bridge” between the southern Donbas and Crimean Peninsula. The first step would be to liberate the city of Melitopol in Zaporizhzhia. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan,[\[1100\]](#) the Senate’s Lindsey Graham,[\[1101\]](#) NATO’s Stoltenberg,[\[1102\]](#) the Iraq, Afghan and Libyan war defeats’ David Petraeus,[\[1103\]](#) Robert’s brother and Iraq and Afghan “surge” booster Fred Kagan,[\[1104\]](#) the whole crew at CNN[\[1105\]](#) and *Times* economist Paul Krugman—all of them said the assault would be a success.[\[1106\]](#)

But the great Afghan war whistleblower Lt. Col. Daniel L. Davis (ret.) [\[1107\]](#) knew better. He warned a month before they launched the offensive that they should not even try it. Their forces were too divided, and with no air support, while the Russians were dug in too deeply to be dislodged. “The military task facing the Ukraine Armed Forces is as daunting as can

be imagined. The most likely outcome of Ukraine's offensive will be an inconclusive stalemate," he wrote.[\[1108\]](#) Davis specifically warned about the Russians' deep fields of landmines.[\[1109\]](#) The *Journal* also showed massive Russian fortifications, ditches, trenches, dragon's teeth and mines before the fight began. Officials told them it would be fine.[\[1110\]](#)

To inaugurate the surge, Secretary Blinken gave a speech in new NATO member Finland on June 2, declaring diplomacy was off the table and that the only way forward now was to increase support. "Precisely because we have no illusions about Putin's aspirations, we believe the prerequisite for meaningful diplomacy and real peace is a stronger Ukraine."

He went on to denounce calls for ceasefire since, "[a]fter all, who doesn't want warring parties to lay down their arms? Who doesn't want the killing to stop?" Blinken then answered that he did not want that, because a ceasefire would "freeze current lines in place and enable Putin to consolidate control over the territory he's seized."[\[1111\]](#)

Of course that much was true, though as has been shown, the war started back in 2014 when Kiev attacked the Donbas, and the Ukrainians do not have the capability to remove Russian forces from the east, much less the Crimean Peninsula. At other times Blinken himself has acknowledged that fact.[\[1112\]](#) So Ukrainians are currently being killed for nothing in a war they have already lost. Perhaps they should have just implemented Minsk II when they had the chance.

Instead, Blinken insisted diplomacy could begin only after the Russians lost the war, withdrew from all formerly Ukrainian territory, paid

reparations, found themselves guilty of war crimes and sent themselves to prison. He ironically invoked Israel's colonization of Palestine, and put himself in Yassir Arafat's position before 1988,[\[1113\]](#) saying the U.S. rejects any "land for peace" deals and demanded the return all of historic eastern Ukraine (dating back to the Communist revolution anyway).[\[1114\]](#)

## **Failure**

Despite vast quantities of hopeful hype in Western media at the start of the summer 2023 offensive, Ukrainian forces, attacking across a more than 600-mile front,[\[1115\]](#) failed to break through the outer circles of Russian defensive lines, only retaking a handful of small villages[\[1116\]](#) far from any important cities under Russian control.[\[1117\]](#) When the Ukrainians attacked on June 7, the Russians were ready for them. They had months to lay fields of mines.[\[1118\]](#) The first armored column was torn to shreds.[\[1119\]](#) Then the second and the third.[\[1120\]](#) They could not break through Russian defenses.

The divisions spearheading the assault were simply destroyed. Lt. Col. Davis summarized the disaster. The Ukrainians leading the attack had the most NATO training and equipment, including German Leopard 2 tanks and U.S. Bradley Fighting Vehicles. Torn to shreds by Russian mines and artillery, "[t]hese two brigades suffered crushing defeats right from the beginning,[\[1121\]](#) failing to advance more than a few kilometers, losing a large number of their modern armored vehicles in the first four days." He added, "In the first two weeks, Ukraine overall lost a staggering 20 percent of the Western armor it had amassed for the offensive and over 30

percent[\[1122\]](#) of its striking force.”[\[1123\]](#) Officials told CNN on June 23 that due to Russia’s vast ground defenses in east Ukraine, the offensive was “not meeting expectations on any front.”[\[1124\]](#) It took Ukrainian forces 82 days to seize the small village of Robotyne, their Day 1 objective.[\[1125\]](#)

## **Minefields**

Enlisted-level soldiers talked to the *Kyiv Post* in July, telling them that the Russians knew they were coming. They were rapidly losing sappers over ground littered with a carpet of mines. They added that booby traps, artillery, tank shells and drones were tearing their guys up. “In one month, we have only advanced one kilometer and a half . . . We move forward by inches, but I don’t think it’s worth all the human resources and materiel that we have spent,” a medic told them. An infantryman added, “As soon as there is an attack, Russian artillery starts to work on us with everything it has. Every hundred meters of land we gain means four to five infantrymen who have left the ranks—this is the average loss.”[\[1126\]](#)

A source in the general staff told *The Economist* in mid-August 2023, “We simply don’t have the resources to do the frontal attacks that the West is imploring us to do.”[\[1127\]](#) Zelensky complained about the American pressure to commit more men to the already failed effort, saying he would have lost “thousands” more with nothing to show for it.[\[1128\]](#)

Interviews with civilians and support staff behind the lines, even in sanitized state organs such as the *Washington Post*, describe individual and general horrors Americans have not had to live with on our own shores in 160 years.[\[1129\]](#) “Even when Ukrainian forces manage to clear a minefield

and advance,” *Politico* reported, “Russia will use artillery and helicopters to drop more mines behind them, trying to trap units between minefields.”[\[1130\]](#)

As Davis told the author on July 11, 2023, “They don’t want to admit failure, but the consequence to not admitting failure is to continue to . . . reinforce negative outcomes and just sending their troops into slaughter. And that is unconscionable to me.” Further, he said that with Ukraine unprepared for the inevitable Russian counter-assault, Kiev, by staying in the war in the hopes of gaining an illusory position of power, is only risking the loss of Kharkiv and Odesa before having to give in and deal anyway.[\[1131\]](#) By early 2024, things were headed that way.[\[1132\]](#)

A dissenting intelligence official ranted to Seymour Hersh, “More people are going to die in this war, and what for? . . . The Ukrainian army has not gotten past the first of three Russian defense lines. Every mine the Ukrainians dig up is replenished at night by the Russians.” He added, “The reality is that the balance of power in the war is settled. Putin has what he wants: [The four eastern provinces]. Ukraine does not have them and cannot get them back.”[\[1133\]](#)

America’s least competent general since George McClellan, David Petraeus[\[1134\]](#) later told the *Post*, “I don’t think anyone . . . really realized or appreciated the depths of the minefields, that Russia did get the defensive piece of this very much right, the multiple lines of defenses and so forth.”[\[1135\]](#)

The Ukrainians knew it could not work, hoping only for divine intervention to make the difference. “If you have more resources, you more



actively attack,” a senior Ukrainian military official told the *Post*. “If you have fewer resources, you defend more. We’re going to defend. That’s why if you ask me personally, I don’t believe in a big counteroffensive for us.” He explained, “I’d like to believe in it, but I’m looking at the resources and asking, ‘With what?’ Maybe we’ll have some localized breakthroughs.” He tried to tell them, “We don’t have the people or weapons. And you know the ratio: When you’re on the offensive, you lose twice or three times as many people.” But international politics demanded they try it anyway.[\[1136\]](#)

Since the attempt to pierce Russian lines had already failed, with Ukrainian forces gaining no more than 5 of the 60 miles they had intended to take,[\[1137\]](#) despite insistence from the Americans that they proceed, [\[1138\]](#) soldiers were ordered to leave their armored vehicles—easy targets for Russian air power—to try to infiltrate behind enemy lines and clear trenches with boots and rifles instead.[\[1139\]](#)

The Biden administration was furious that the Ukrainian army had abandoned their already-proven useless maneuver and combined arms warfare they had been trained on all these months by U.S. troops in Germany and Poland. The *Times* said that senior American officials were “frustrated” that Ukrainian officers, “exasperated at the slow pace of the initial assault and fearing increased casualties among their ranks,” had scrapped U.S. doctrine and reverted to the old artillery war.[\[1140\]](#)

This was their attitude, even though as officials told the *Journal*, before the counteroffensive they “knew Kyiv didn’t have all the training or weapons—from shells to warplanes—that it needed to dislodge Russian forces.” That was because “Western military doctrine holds that to attack a

dug-in adversary, an attacking force should be at least three times the enemy's size and use a well-coordinated combination of air and land forces." The *Journal* said Washington "hoped Ukrainian courage and resourcefulness would carry the day. They haven't."[\[1141\]](#) John Nagl, a retired Army lieutenant colonel,[\[1142\]](#) explained that the U.S. would never send its ground forces after hardened defenses without control of the air. "It's impossible to overstate how important air superiority is for fighting a ground fight at a reasonable cost in casualties."[\[1143\]](#)

Gen. Zaluzhnyi said, "First I thought there was something wrong with our commanders, so I changed some of them. Then I thought maybe our soldiers are not fit for purpose, so I moved soldiers in some brigades." Then he dug up an old book from World War I and found himself in a similar situation. His men could not get an advantage because they did not have one. Both sides have men, tanks, trenches, mines and drones. Without some form of technical breakthrough, it is a war of attrition and "sooner or later we are going to find that we simply don't have enough people to fight."[\[1144\]](#)

The U.S. insisted the Ukrainians launch a massive offensive they knew was destined to fail, all essentially for a public relations stunt. They had to try to prove they still had some fight in them to get more weapons for next time, if there is one.[\[1145\]](#) The stated goal had been to sever the "land bridge" by marching across western Donetsk to the Azov coast. Even had that worked, they would have created a temporary salient, surrounded by the enemy, and eventually been overrun anyway.

Thomas Gibbons-Neff, a former marine and Iraq War II and Afghan war veteran writing for the *Times*, described the Ukrainian army's situation on the front lines of the war, waging brutal trench, artillery and drone battles. They were fighting hard as hell, but were up against a better-armed and better-manned force they could not dislodge.[\[1146\]](#)

In late July, the Ukrainian army launched another major offensive in Zaporizhzhia, which again barely pierced the Russians' outermost ring of defenses.[\[1147\]](#) By mid-August, intelligence officials concluded that the offensive would fail in its goal of reaching Melitopol.[\[1148\]](#)

With remarkable cynicism, officials reiterated to the *Times*[\[1149\]](#) and *Post* that everything would have worked out if only the Ukrainians had done what they had been told and sucked up higher casualty rates. As the *Post* put it, the American generals "anticipated such losses but envisioned Kyiv accepting the casualties as the cost of piercing through Russia's main defensive line." But the Ukrainians "chose to stem the losses on the battlefield and switch to a tactic of relying on smaller units to push forward across different areas of the front yielding only 'incremental gains.'" [\[1150\]](#)

After noting the Ukrainians had already lost more men than America had in Vietnam, and that "the wounded and dead are left on the battlefield, because medics are unable to reach them," the *Times* wrote, "American officials say they fear that Ukraine has become casualty averse, one reason it has been cautious about pressing ahead with the counteroffensive. Almost any big push against dug-in Russian defenders protected by minefields would result in huge numbers of losses."[\[1151\]](#)

In August, one State Department or White House official admitted, “We may have missed a window to push for earlier talks. Milley had a point.” Another asked, “If we acknowledge we’re not going to do this forever, then what are we going to do?”[\[1152\]](#) On the other hand, Dale Buckner, a former Army colonel and chief executive of Global Guardian, a Pentagon contractor, boasted to the *Times*, “At the end of the day, make no mistake: Even those generals who might be frustrated with Ukraine are at the same time looking at the Russian casualties reports and equipment losses and they’re smiling.”[\[1153\]](#)

But Ukrainian officials made it clear to CIA Director Burns at the end of June 2023 that they knew their best-case scenario would be to advance through Kherson to more easily threaten Russian forces in Crimea, and use that position of strength to begin negotiations. In other words, losing most of the Donbas to Russia was taken for granted by Zelensky’s government. According to the *Post*, they only hoped they could get Russia to acquiesce to any new security guarantees they seek from the West.[\[1154\]](#)

At the end of the campaign, Ukraine had only taken 143 square miles, while the Russians had taken 331, for a net Ukrainian loss of 188.[\[1155\]](#)

One worse-case scenario would be the permanent “frozen conflict” officials described to *Politico*, one they predict will “last many years—perhaps decades.” They compared it to Korea and the Indian-Pakistani standoff over Kashmir, at least until 2022 widely considered to be the two conflicts most likely to end in nuclear war. “The options discussed within the Biden administration for a long-term freeze include where to set potential lines that Ukraine and Russia would agree not to cross, but which

would not have to be official borders,” they wrote. “A frozen conflict—in which fighting pauses but neither side is declared the victor nor do they agree that the war is officially over—also could be a politically palatable long-term result for the United States and other countries backing Ukraine.”[\[1156\]](#)

The other choice was to keep the war going into the indefinite future, or the end of the world, whichever came first. Comparing the Ukrainians to the heroes of the American Revolution, David Ignatius wrote that the Washington consensus remained the same. Invoking future credibility as the excuse to continue the fighting, he said, “rather than look for a quick diplomatic exit ramp, most senior U.S. officials appear more convinced than ever of the need to stand fast with Kyiv. The United States, in their view, cannot be seen to abandon its ally.” Despite all the violence and trauma, “U.S. officials believe strategic patience remains the best weapon against Russian President Vladimir Putin, who still thinks he can outlast Ukraine and the West,” he wrote.[\[1157\]](#)

So far, all Ukraine has to show for their stalemate-at-best that Washington has gotten them into is the distinction of having most deployed landmines in the world, at least on the territory they have left.[\[1158\]](#)

## **You and Him Fight**

In the aftermath of the 2023 offensive, the *Post* told the story of what a disaster it had been. After the Americans refused to stop pushing the Ukrainians to simply throw away their troops into the minefields in ever-

increasing numbers, Gen. Zaluzhnyi declined to even take calls from Gen. Christopher Cavoli, head of the U.S. European Command, for weeks.

Know-it-all American officers, fresh from humiliating defeats at the hands of local insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan, had no idea what they were talking about. One Ukrainian soldier complained, “The presence of a huge number of drones, fortifications, minefields and so on were not taken into account” in Gen. Milley’s war games and training. “Ukrainian soldiers brought their own drones to help hone their skills, he said, but trainers initially rebuffed the request to integrate them because the training programs were predetermined,” the paper explained. But newly developed mini drones were “the biggest factor” on the battlefield, even if U.S. tabletop exercises had not anticipated that fact. The lumbering American army then blamed the Ukrainians’ “post-Soviet legacy military” for their failure on the battlefield.

Despite some significant successes against Russian naval forces,[\[1159\]](#) the political winds in Washington had shifted severely by the end of the failed offensive, in September 2023. This was before Hamas kicked off the latest war in Israel-Palestine just weeks later. Zelensky spoke at the UN, to mostly disinterested audiences. President Biden refused to hold a joint press conference with him, while House Speaker Kevin McCarthy denied him the opportunity to address Congress again. In November, Ukrainian troops were pulled from Zaporizhzhia altogether and sent to reinforce the fight for the Donetsk city of Avdiivka, which itself was lost by the beginning of 2024.[\[1160\]](#)

Meanwhile the Ukrainian high command was sending their newly reconstituted marine units on what the men called “a suicide mission” to try to cross the Dnieper River in Kherson. After two months, they had gotten nowhere, finding themselves unable to even dig in, simply being shelled to pieces instead. One marine said the waste of men was far worse than at Bakhmut. They even caught up with Yevhen Karas, the now deputy commander of the 14th Separate Regiment there (get it, 14?). At least he puts his boots where his mouth would indicate they belong.[\[1161\]](#)

Perhaps everything is going to turn out fine after all. President Biden declared with certainty in July 2023, just as tens of thousands of these men were being killed for one small village and a few square miles,[\[1162\]](#) that Russia had “already lost the war. Putin has a real problem. There is no possibility of him winning the war in Ukraine.”[\[1163\]](#)

## **Zaluzhnyi Fired**

Kiev’s own military leadership knew that was not true. At times they had acknowledged severe disadvantages on the battlefield and beyond.[\[1164\]](#) In early February 2024, in what was apparently the last straw for President Zelensky, Gen. Zaluzhnyi wrote an op-ed for CNN declaring that “[w]e must contend with a reduction in military support from key allies, grappling with their own political tensions.” He added, “Our partners’ stocks of missiles, air defense interceptors and ammunition for artillery is becoming exhausted,” and hinted at further mass conscription, “unpopular measures” to “improve manpower” in the short term due to Russia’s “significant

advantage” in that area. Hope lies in the drones; that was the only prayer he could muster for his side’s future.[\[1165\]](#)

Zelensky fired Zaluzhnyi and his entire top staff soon after,[\[1166\]](#) and his replacement, Oleksandr Syrsky—known to his men as “the butcher” for his carelessness with their lives, not success against the Russians[\[1167\]](#)—has not performed well either. Instead, Zaluzhnyi’s earlier conclusion that the war was at best a stalemate, and that “there will mostly likely be no deep and beautiful breakthrough,”[\[1168\]](#) has been vindicated.

The declassified version of the February 2024 “Annual Threat Assessment of the U.S. Intelligence Committee” from the office of the Director of National Intelligence admitted that “momentum is shifting” more and more in “Moscow’s favor.” Recruitment is up, helping them to increase their reserves, and they are “significantly ramping up production of a panoply of long-range strike weapons, artillery munitions and other capabilities.”[\[1169\]](#)

In other words, the 2023 offensive, despite immense Western support, did virtually nothing to tip the balance in Kiev’s favor, and Moscow remained in as strong a position as ever. The Biden administration has not achieved the “strategic defeat” of Russia at all. Hundreds of thousands of people have been killed. Hundreds of billions of dollars in confiscated wealth has been destroyed, just for President Biden and the empire’s blatantly idiotic and failed scheme.

## **Are You Threatening Me?**



In a remarkable interview about the failed summer offensive, Zelensky appeared to threaten terrorism against European states if they refused further aid to his military. While self-righteous liberals mocked Republicans for heightened rhetoric about “sleeper cells,”[\[1170\]](#) how else are we supposed to interpret this statement? “Curtailing aid to Ukraine . . . would create risks for the West in its own backyard. There is no way of predicting how the millions of Ukrainian refugees in European countries would react to their country being abandoned.” Come again? “Ukrainians have generally ‘behaved well’ and are ‘very grateful’ to those who sheltered them. They will not forget that generosity. But it would not be a ‘good story’ for Europe if it were to ‘drive these people into a corner.’”[\[1171\]](#)

Perhaps he was referring to the presence of Ukrainian neo-Nazi groups like the Azov movement’s Centuria—the renamed “National Militia”[\[1172\]](#)—spreading through Europe, including six cities in Germany.[\[1173\]](#)

In the same interview, Zelensky stipulated that in his view, “If you are not with Ukraine, you are with Russia. . . . And if partners do not help us, it means they will help Russia to win. That is it.”[\[1174\]](#)

## **Haass Backchannel**

In July 2023, NBC News reported that outgoing Council on Foreign Relations president Richard Haass (apparently having cooled off a bit since 2022) had worked with former NSC officials Charles Kupchan and Thomas Graham to open backchannel talks with prominent Russians, including Foreign Minister Lavrov.[\[1175\]](#) Haass and Kupchan had recently written a

piece for *Foreign Affairs* arguing that it was time to start looking for “a durable truce.”[\[1176\]](#)

The Biden administration denied authorizing the talks, reiterating the formula that kept the U.S. in Afghanistan for 20 years:[\[1177\]](#) “nothing about Ukraine without Ukraine.”[\[1178\]](#) Haass seemed to confirm the account, though he emphasized “these are conversations, not negotiations.”[\[1179\]](#)

A separate story in the *Moscow Times* confirmed the talks, saying they had been taking place at least twice per month and represented “an effort to lay the groundwork for negotiations to end the war in Ukraine.” After a year and a half of war, one of the officials told them Washington was willing to back down and address Russian security concerns because, after all, “the U.S. needs, and will continue to need, a strong enough Russia to create stability along its periphery. . . . We in the U.S. have to recognize that total victory in Europe could harm our interests in other areas of the world. . . . Russian power is not necessarily a bad thing.”[\[1180\]](#)

In the same article, one of the officials in charge of these groundbreaking discussions felt it would be perfectly appropriate to publicly muse that the U.S. might still try to overthrow Putin at their first opportunity anyway since he would not talk to them. He said the administration should “begin reaching out to the anti-war Russian elite and begin making progress with them.” If a compliant dissident could be found, “ousting Putin would not be impossible.”[\[1181\]](#)

In May 2024, after Sullivan started promoting the idea of a 2025 offensive,[\[1182\]](#) Haass warned against it, urging Biden and Zelensky to

accept that they simply could not remove Russia from the eastern regions or Crimea. “The math is unavoidable,” he wrote, while still demanding increased U.S. support and permission for Ukraine to use American weapons to strike economic (i.e., civilian) targets inside Russia, and also suggesting at least a temporary ceasefire along the Korean model.[\[1183\]](#)

## **Mutiny**

Speaking of mutual betrayals, in June 2023, the Wagner Group’s Yevgeny Prigozhin was put in a bind by Russia’s military leadership, his rivals Defense Minister Sergei K. Shoigu and the chief of the general staff of the Russian armed forces, Gen. Valery Gerasimov. When the army was able to stave off the Ukrainians’ early summer offensive without help from Wagner, the generals decided they had had enough of Prigozhin’s antics and demanded that his men either join the army or go home.[\[1184\]](#) Prigozhin then launched a short-lived mutiny, clearly hoping Putin would take his side and sack the generals. Despite the American War Party’s wild speculation about a Russian civil war and impending regime change against Putin, [\[1185\]](#) the whole thing was over in a matter of hours, as Prigozhin backed down after negotiations mediated by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko. His forces would either join the Russian army or go to Belarus.[\[1186\]](#)

Prigozhin’s plane later exploded and fell out of the sky in what was presumed to be a hit ordered by the Kremlin,[\[1187\]](#) though perhaps his complaints were taken to heart. In May 2024, Putin began a major purge of

the Defense Ministry leadership, moving Shoigu to the Security Council and firing nine top generals and replacing them with technocrats.[\[1188\]](#)

On the surface, this seemed to be an intra-Russian controversy with the Americans playing the role of naïve cheerleaders hoping for anyone, even a blood-soaked corporate oligarch leader of a mercenary force made up of violent felons sprung from prison to kill Ukrainians, to take the reins from Putin.[\[1189\]](#) However, soon after, CIA Director Burns declared in a speech in England that the Agency was hiring: “Disaffection with the war will continue to gnaw away at the Russian leadership. . . . That disaffection creates a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us at CIA—at our core a human intelligence service. We’re not letting it go to waste.”[\[1190\]](#)

Of course, Russian counterintelligence must assume that anyway and devote resources to the issue accordingly, but why be so blatant about potential covert intervention in their country now? It could raise the risk of war against the American people just as easily as helping accomplish the administration’s goals.

## **Attacking Russia**

### **Commander Farkas**

Evelyn N. Farkas, former Obama administration deputy secretary of defense for Russia, Ukraine and Eurasia, and current executive director of the McCain Institute, demanded early in the conflict that “[t]he U.S. must prepare for war against Russia over Ukraine.” Though she conceded the existence of Putin’s thermonuclear arsenal, Farkas insisted “the United

States must do more than issue ultimatums about sanctions and economic penalties. U.S. leaders should be marshalling an international coalition of the willing, readying military forces to deter Putin and, if necessary, prepare for war.”

According to her, it is the Americans’ unwillingness to fight Russia over their negative reactions to our Ukraine policy that threatens to plunge the world into the darkness of nuclear catastrophe. She predictably argued that Putin was attempting to expand Russia’s borders to encompass the entire old USSR and said the U.S. absolutely could not give in or it would “spell the beginning of the end of the international order.” She then extrapolated out her worst fears that were sure to come true over Kiev’s potential loss of sovereignty over Dnipropetrovsk: “the rules-based international order will collapse. The United Nations will go the way of the League of Nations. We will revert to spheres of global influence, unbridled military and economic competition, and ultimately, world war.”

In order to prevent this outcome, Farkas called on the alliance to “issue an ultimatum” that Russia must withdraw from South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Ukraine “by a certain date,” and “organize coalition forces willing to take action to enforce it.” She concluded, “The horrible possibility exists that Americans, with our European allies, must use our military to roll back Russians—even at the risk of direct combat.”[\[1191\]](#) She also told the *Times*, “I think the gloves should come off,”[\[1192\]](#) though later backed down a bit from Armageddon to a more reasonable ask of massive transfers of conventional weapons.[\[1193\]](#)

## **Drone Wars**

After multiple drone strikes inside Russia[\[1194\]](#) in December 2022, the London *Times* reported that the Pentagon had approved attacks on three Russian military bases, including the Engels airfield nearly 400 miles inside Russian territory. One need not be an alarmist to see how things like this could escalate to a major war very quickly. U.S. officials were brave and getting braver. A Defense Department source told them, “The calculus of war has changed as a result of the suffering and brutality the Ukrainians are being subjected to by the Russians.” They were no longer worried Russia might respond by hitting NATO nations or deploying nuclear weapons.

Invoking a preposterous denial and diffusion of responsibility, a Pentagon official told the *Times*, “We’re not saying to Kyiv, ‘Don’t strike the Russians [inside Russia or Crimea].’ We can’t tell them what to do. It’s up to them how they use their weapons.”

*The Economist* reported in August 2023 that Ukraine had vastly expanded its drone capability, achieving successful strikes deep inside Crimea and mainland Russia, even destroying a heavy bomber at its base, often aided by intelligence “from Western partners.”[\[1195\]](#) The infamous neoconservative apparatchik Eric Edelman[\[1196\]](#) said it was imperative that Americans forget their fears of an “escalatory spiral,” and continue supplying Ukraine with ever more lethal rockets and drones.[\[1197\]](#)

Officials told the *Post* they had “signaled displeasure at cross-border attacks” and “urged Ukraine not to use U.S.-provided weapons to attack Russia on its own soil, fearing an escalation.”[\[1198\]](#) Evidently, the Ukrainians mostly abided by these restrictions, instead manufacturing their

own drones for use against weapons storage depots and the like deep behind Russian lines.[\[1199\]](#)

The degree to which America has compromised on this question was not lost on Zelensky. He told the *Post*'s David Ignatius that if the U.S. did not come up with long-range missiles and artillery shells, he would be forced to hit more civilian targets in Russia. Ironically, he then rationalized why Biden was hesitant to do so: "I think he's cautious about nuclear attack from Russia."[\[1200\]](#)

## **Targeting Putin**

Kiev's forces attacked the Kremlin with a drone strike in May 2023, risking a whole other level of escalation.[\[1201\]](#) There was no strategic reason for it. It was an ineffectual stunt that was clearly meant as an insult to Putin and perhaps a morale boost for Ukrainians. That may suit Zelensky and the regime in Kiev, but it is not in the national interest of the United States.

In another amazing experiment in the false groupthink of the American mainstream media and Twitter swarm, virtually all acceptable opinion, led by Fred and Kimberly Kagan at the Institute for the Study of War,[\[1202\]](#) immediately agreed this must have been a Russian false-flag attack on their own president's office to justify an upcoming escalation,[\[1203\]](#) as though they needed a new excuse. This obvious lie was later dropped after the *Times* reported that U.S. intelligence had concluded the Ukrainians had done it, while clearing themselves of any involvement.[\[1204\]](#)

The *Times* said Kiev had launched the attack because the administration was now "shrugging off" strikes inside Russia. As long as

they did not provoke a nuclear response or an attack on another NATO country, such as Poland, the administration figured, what could be the harm?[[1205](#)]

## Sabotage

Even worse, Jack Murphy, a Special Forces veteran-turned-journalist who has done exceptional reporting on both the Syrian[[1206](#)] and Afghan wars, [[1207](#)] wrote in December 2022 that the CIA Special Activities Center was coordinating a NATO ally's covert sabotage program inside Russia.[[1208](#)] There have been many reports of train derailments,[[1209](#)] ammunitions storage facility explosions,[[1210](#)] mysterious fires,[[1211](#)] as well as a dirty assassination campaign revealed by the U.S. government's own Radio Liberty.[[1212](#)] The *Times* reported that "partisans killed the Russian-appointed deputy head of the occupied Luhansk region, Oleg Popov, in a car bombing," while "other agents operating in Moscow shot and killed a former Ukrainian lawmaker who defected to Russia, Illya Kyva."[[1213](#)]

A Ukrainian special forces unit known as the Shaman Battalion told the London *Times* they had been running sabotage missions inside Russia for more than a year and were now moving on to assassinating senior military officers. "Sometimes other groups may claim our kills," one sergeant said. "The kill teams that work best are six-man squads deployed by helicopter . . . a U.S. Black Hawk fitted with a pair of M-240 machineguns." The reporter recounted, "In December, explosions rocked the Engels-2 and Dyagilevo airbases, home to the Tupolev Tu-22 and Tu-95 strategic bombers used to strike Ukraine," continuing, "Engels-2 is in



Saratov, 450 miles east of Ukraine, and Dyagilevo is barely 150 miles from Moscow. Several Russian airbases in Crimea have also been targeted.”[\[1214\]](#)

## **Energy Infrastructure**

Kiev has repeatedly attacked energy infrastructure inside Russia. In practice this has had little effect beyond provoking similar strikes by Russian forces in response.[\[1215\]](#) The administration had Vice President Harris tell the Ukrainians to abandon the tactic, but they simply ignored her and doubled down.[\[1216\]](#) And so did the Russians.[\[1217\]](#) And so did the hawks. “It sounds to me that the Biden administration doesn’t want gas prices to go up in an election year,” Bill Kristol protégé[\[1218\]](#) Sen. Tom Cotton told Defense Secretary Austin at a hearing. It was just another way of admitting the American people and everyone else on Earth are subsidizing both Russia and Ukraine’s war effort through increased energy prices.[\[1219\]](#)

## **Shipping**

In August 2023, the Ukrainian government openly declared war on all Russian shipping in the Black Sea, including oil tankers,[\[1220\]](#) after Moscow left a deal[\[1221\]](#) that allowed Ukrainian grain exports.[\[1222\]](#) The Russians said this was retaliation for European sanctions that had made their own fertilizer and grain shipments impossible.[\[1223\]](#) Soon after, a massive fire broke out at a port facility in the Russian city of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. Though Russian state media made no mention of

sabotage, the possibility that it was an act of war by Ukraine was an obvious one.[\[1224\]](#)

This disruption in the global food supply chain may seem like a small side issue in this horrible conflict, but price fluctuations for simple grains can be absolutely deadly to desperately poor or war-weakened civilian populations.[\[1225\]](#) In Yemen—which is just coming out of a near-decade-long war and blockade by the U.S., UAE and Saudi Arabia, and where hundreds of thousands of people, mostly young children, have already been deprived to death[\[1226\]](#)—the disruption in Ukrainian grain hit hard.[\[1227\]](#)

Perhaps the most shameful statement on this issue was uttered by UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield who claimed on April 14, 2022, that it was not the U.S.A., UK, Saudi Arabia, UAE and their al Qaeda allies that had plunged the poor nation of Yemen into famine after years of aggressive war.[\[1228\]](#) All that has gone away now. It is Putin’s fault, she claimed. “This is just another grim example of the ripple effect Russia’s unprovoked, unjust, unconscionable war is having on the world’s most vulnerable.” But then she gave away the game to anyone paying attention. “Tragically,” Greenfield said, “the World Food Program has already had to reduce rations for some of the 8 million Yemenis who are food insecure.”[\[1229\]](#) Millions were already starving from America’s war.[\[1230\]](#) Russia’s war in Ukraine and the West’s sanctions regime were making the famine worse.

## **Putin to Butler**

Nearly a year into the war, Sen. Lindsey Graham said that the only way it could end would be if someone would go ahead and assassinate Putin.

“Anything short of that, the war is going to continue.” The moral case against Russia regaining control of the Donbas was all that mattered. “So we’re in it to win it,” Graham said. “And the only way you’re going to win it is to break the Russian military, and have somebody in Russia take Putin out to give the Russian people a new lease on life.”[\[1231\]](#)

Nicholas Kristof, one of the resident liberal humanitarian war hawks at the *Times*, admitted there were “legitimate concerns that if Putin is backed into a corner, he could lash out at NATO territory or use tactical nuclear weapons.” However, he assured us, “most analysts think it is unlikely.”[\[1232\]](#) That is probably right. But how much more likely is it now compared to before? And what would Putin’s successor do if he were to be assassinated as Graham has demanded?

## **Kerch Bridge, Reaction**

On October 8, 2022, the Ukrainians detonated a truck bomb on the Kerch Bridge linking Crimea with mainland Russia.[\[1233\]](#) This led to massive missile strikes on civilian targets across Ukraine in retaliation.[\[1234\]](#) They did it again in July 2023, killing a civilian couple and wounding their daughter, and leading to a major Russian missile salvo against the port city of Odesa.[\[1235\]](#)

## **Russian Nazis**

Sometimes the War Party likes to point out that there are Russian Nazis too.[\[1236\]](#) This is true. However, some of them are now fighting for Ukraine.

On multiple occasions, Ukrainian-backed Russian Nazi units, at least some of whom had trained in Britain, such as the Russian Volunteer Corps (RDK), have launched cross-border raids into Russia's Kursk and Belgorod regions[\[1237\]](#) armed with Western weapons, armored personnel carriers and fatigues.[\[1238\]](#) The Russians accused the CIA of controlling them.[\[1239\]](#)

According to a classified Defense Department document revealed by the Discord leak, "Ukraine provides comprehensive support to Russian volunteers ready to liberate Russian territories from President Putin's tyranny by armed means." It added, "Such detachments are equipped with various qualitative types of Nato weapons," and said the personnel "passed respective training for usage of such weapons and has successful combat experience from various parts of the front line in Ukraine." The document cited intelligence saying the groups hoped to "seize territory" in "Bryansk, Kursk and Belgorod Oblasts . . . and declare newly created states," and described Ukrainian plans for "a larger military component based on volunteers to create a civil war front in Russia."[\[1240\]](#) Reuters also confirmed Kiev's backing for the Nazi groups in question.[\[1241\]](#)

It turns out RDK leader Denis Kapustin (a.k.a. Nikitin, a.k.a. "White Rex") has "ties to neo-Nazis and white nationalists across the western world," according to the *Financial Times*. In 2019, he earned a 10-year ban from the "Schengen zone"—which allows paperless travel throughout Europe and includes most EU states—for organizing white supremacist fight clubs.[\[1242\]](#) He worked with Olena Semenyaka on the Azov movement's international outreach for years,[\[1243\]](#) and taught at the neo-

Nazi Sigurd Culture Camp in Wales in the summer of 2014. Declassified UK reported that Kapustin had moved to Ukraine in 2017 at the invitation of Russia's National Socialist Society's founder Sergei Korotkikh.[\[1244\]](#)

They said that other prominent Russian neo-Nazis were also traveling to Ukraine to join the RDK, including Aleksey Levkin, leader of the band Hitler's Hammer,[\[1245\]](#) who had organized a Nazi black metal concert in Kiev and helps run a prominent Nazi Telegram channel. A few weeks after Russia invaded, Levkin posted a photo of a British-made NLAW rocket launcher with the caption "mastering NLAW," suggesting he was learning to use the UK-supplied anti-tank weapon.[\[1246\]](#)

British Sky News said, "When [Kapustin] asked if he minded being labelled a Nazi, he didn't 'think it's an insult.'" As far as the American-backed war spreading into Russia, and by such unsavory individuals, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller cited the diffusion of responsibility: "As a more general principle . . . we do not encourage or enable strikes inside of Russia and we've made that clear. But as we've also said, it's up to Ukraine to decide how to conduct this war."[\[1247\]](#)

After his militia killed a group of civilians, including a young boy, Kapustin mocked the child's death and family since he was half-Tajik and Muslim. He posted photoshopped swastikas over the heads of the family members like halos and wrote, "Russia will be Aryan or lifeless."[\[1248\]](#) At least 100 fellow Russian Nazis joined the war on the Ukrainian side.[\[1249\]](#)

In May 2023, Kapustin's men—"some of whom have endorsed neo-Nazi ideologies," NBC both fretted and minimized—attacked Russian troops inside Belgorod across the border in a two-day raid, where they

drove American-supplied Humvees and MRAP armored personnel carriers into battle.[\[1250\]](#) “The so-called red lines, or what the United States has seen as escalatory, have been moving. It puts us in a little bit of a dangerous position where I don’t think either side really knows [what] the red line of the other is,” Andrea Kendall-Taylor, former CIA analyst and Russia director on Biden’s NSC, admitted to *Foreign Policy*.[\[1251\]](#) The *Times* conceded Kapustin and his men were Nazis and that they claimed to have “definitely got a lot of encouragement” from Kiev for the attack. The *Times* also admitted the Russian Nazis have been welcomed by the “new Ukraine.” They went on to acknowledge what a center-right, non-Hitlerian conservative President Putin is, noting that “[s]ome on the far right in Russia long ago soured on Mr. Putin, particularly for his jailing of so many nationalists, but also for his policies on immigration and for what they perceive as granting too much power to minorities like ethnic Chechens,” adding, “Since the 2014 Maidan revolution and the onset of war between Ukraine and Russian-backed separatists in the eastern Donbas region, many of them have made a home in Ukraine and are now fighting on the side of their adopted country.”[\[1252\]](#)

A year later, *Politico* gave Kapustin a favorable profile. It begins with his quote, “We’re the bad guys but fighting really evil guys.” Well, German authorities say he’s “one of the most influential neo-Nazi activists” in all of Europe and banned from their country—but that is only a problem because Kapustin’s Nazism is “a godsend to Russian propagandists, who are seeking to whitewash their murderous invasion of Ukraine as an attempt to ‘de-Nazify’ Kyiv.” As long as he is willing to attack inside Russia, “Kyiv sees

Kapustin as an ally against President Vladimir Putin.” The magazine hid behind the old “far-right extremist parties have near negligible support in national representative politics” trope, as though the Rada had not included Nazis for years, including the longtime speaker of the parliament, Andriy Parubiy, and as though the only measure of their power is how many seats they hold in the Rada without including regional and city governments or the heavily armed militias fighting in the war. They also invoked the “Nazis fight on Russia’s side too” argument, as though that has any relevance to the question of the American people being forced to support extremists fighting for Ukraine.

Working on Kiev’s behalf, the Russian Nazis launched “their biggest cross-border raids of the war around Kursk and Belgorod, remaining on Russian soil and fighting for more than two weeks” in March 2024, and that is all that matters. Dettmer reported, “The whole enterprise is a pet project of Kyrylo Budanov, the head of HUR [Ukrainian military intelligence]. As the cross-border raids unfolded last month, Budanov praised the Russian paramilitaries as ‘good warriors’ on a national newscast.”[\[1253\]](#)

## **Assassinating Tatarsky**

An ethnic Russian veteran and war blogger from Donbas, Vladlen Tatarsky, was assassinated with a bomb on April 2, 2023, in St. Petersburg. The young woman who brought the bomb admitted it, saying she had been deceived by a Ukrainian contact into believing it contained a hidden microphone rather than a bomb.[\[1254\]](#) Though U.S. government-backed propagandists at Bellingcat tried to spin the restaurant where the victim was

killed as some sort of “gathering point” for Russian “cyber warriors,” reporter Alexander Rubenstein showed those claims were false. It was just a normal restaurant and the killing a crime and terrorist attack.[\[1255\]](#)

Azov movement Nazis invoked their murder of Tatarsky while threatening the author to “stop being a fascist,” of all things.[\[1256\]](#) Then they cashed another U.S. government check.

## **Threatening Crimea**

Soon after, the White House told the *Times* they were considering greenlighting Ukrainian attacks on Crimea, “even if such a move increases the risk of escalation,” and even though “the Biden administration does not think that Ukraine can take Crimea militarily.” National Security Council spokeswoman Adrienne Watson insisted that “[w]e have said throughout the war that Crimea is Ukraine, and Ukraine has the right to defend themselves and their sovereign territory in their internationally recognized borders.” Officials told the *Times* this put Kiev in a position of strength before future talks with Russia. “In addition,” they added, “fears that the Kremlin would retaliate using a tactical nuclear weapon have dimmed.”[\[1257\]](#) Secretary Blinken warned Ukraine against attempting to retake the peninsula, saying it was a “red line,”[\[1258\]](#) but two days later Victoria Nuland said the U.S. still supported Ukraine hitting targets there.[\[1259\]](#)

Ukrainian officials continue to threaten to take back Crimea.[\[1260\]](#) Though there is a real threat that would lead to a major escalation of the



war, the reality is that their military does not have the capability to do so, only to launch missile strikes from afar.

## **ATACMS**

For a time, President Biden rightfully held back on providing long-range Army Tactical Missile Systems (ATACMS) rocket artillery, apparently keeping in mind Russian warnings that to do so would be “crossing a red line, and [the U.S.] will become a direct party to the conflict.”[\[1261\]](#) Early in the war, Sullivan said that Biden had decided not to provide missiles with a range of 300 miles “to ensure that we do not end up in a circumstance where we are heading down the road towards a third world war.”[\[1262\]](#)

When Biden secretly supplied the missiles anyway in March 2024, the Ukrainians immediately used them to attack Russian targets in Zaporizhzhia and Crimea.[\[1263\]](#) They later massacred civilians on a Crimean beach, and justified it by claiming the people had no right to leisure while the war was still going on.[\[1264\]](#) According to the Discord leak, Zelensky already planned on using the new rockets against targets inside Russia at his first opportunity.[\[1265\]](#) Sullivan and Blinken both then reiterated they had U.S. approval, saying it was just “common sense” that they can use these American weapons to hit Russian forces they say are preparing to reinforce the invaders anywhere inside Russia.[\[1266\]](#)

It might seem absurd that the United States would tell Ukraine they are forbidden to strike at the nation that invaded them, except for the fact that America and its allies are implicated in every bit of this fight and could well be held responsible for our client state’s rash decisions. Yet over time those

restrictions were dropped, and Kiev has attacked inside Russia with neo-Nazi militia units, as well as drones and long-range rocket artillery—and ultimately with regular combat forces.[\[1267\]](#) In this sense it is a relief the Russians do not seem to be going anywhere. Escalation or not from Kiev’s side, their position in Ukraine does not appear to be threatened. Were that to change, the risk of a worse Russian reaction would increase. While Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mark Milley’s rule number two for engagement in this conflict was “Contain war inside the geographical boundaries of Ukraine,”[\[1268\]](#) those days are over. The question is how far will it spread.

## **Cluster Bombs**

In July 2023, the Biden administration announced they would go ahead and send cluster bombs to Ukraine,[\[1269\]](#) even though just a year and a half before, spokeswoman Jen Psaki said it would “potentially be a war crime” if Russia used them.[\[1270\]](#) More than 100 countries have banned cluster bombs by treaty, though neither the U.S., Ukraine nor Russia are signatories to it.[\[1271\]](#) In fact, NATO member state Turkey had begun supplying “U.S.-designed, artillery-fired cluster bombs” to Ukraine at the end of 2022.[\[1272\]](#)

It is an inescapable fact that for the indefinite future, farmers and small Ukrainian children will accidentally pick up unexploded bomblets, or “bombies,” and be torn to shreds. The American and Ukrainian governments know it too.[\[1273\]](#) Other civilians attempting to farm, build or otherwise disturb the dirt will also be killed. This will continue for years,

and if Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia are any indication, decades.[\[1274\]](#) Perhaps that is why the leaders of the latter two nations, as well as the Hmong-American community, begged President Biden not to send them to Ukraine.[\[1275\]](#)

Lawyer Bruce Fein told journalist James Carden that there is no question that under international law, the United States of America is a co-belligerent in this war due to massive breach of neutrality by material support for Ukraine, and is therefore legally “vulnerable” to reprisals by Russia. Though Congress had not voted to declare war, they appropriated more than \$175 billion for the effort. Fein warned that the U.S. had “employed the concept of co-belligerency to target for extermination any group or individual who provides material support to al-Qaeda or ISIS.” By American standards, our leaders could be in real trouble.[\[1276\]](#)

## **Restrictions Lifted**

In May 2024, Biden officially lifted the restrictions on Ukraine’s use of American munitions against targets inside Russia,[\[1277\]](#) despite the fact that the administration “had been reluctant to take the step, worried about provoking Russia into an escalation that could drag in NATO,” according to the *Times*. They also said, “Britain, Canada, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Sweden and Poland” had already approved such strikes.[\[1278\]](#) In June, just a few days after receiving permission from the Biden administration to use them against targets “anywhere” in Russia,[\[1279\]](#) the Ukrainians used their HIMARS rocket artillery systems to hit sites near Belgorod.[\[1280\]](#) Weeks

later, their mayor claimed that more than 200 civilians had been killed in the attacks.[\[1281\]](#)

One might take Russian warnings as irresponsible threats. But from another point of view, they can seem like sober, adult responses to reckless Western actions. As Putin said in May 2024: “This constant escalation can lead to serious consequences. If these serious consequences occur in Europe, how will the U.S. behave, bearing in mind our parity in the field of strategic weapons? Hard to say. Do they want global conflict?”[\[1282\]](#) Foreign Minister Lavrov similarly warned that Western promises to provide nuclear-capable F-16s to Ukraine marked a “signal action . . . in the nuclear sphere,” stressing that any further “nuclear escalation” between our countries could have “catastrophic consequences.”[\[1283\]](#)

# Hotter than the Sun

## The 800-Megaton Gorilla

In October 2022, President Biden warned that the world was closer to “nuclear Armageddon” than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis. [\[1284\]](#) That this was due to policies he personally pursued at the top of his agenda for the last 30 years seemed completely lost on the man. [\[1285\]](#)

He was right about the danger. [\[1286\]](#) Hydrogen bombs, otherwise known as thermonuclear fusion bombs or “strategic” nuclear weapons, [\[1287\]](#) in the high kiloton or low megaton range can kill an entire city in a single shot. [\[1288\]](#) For context, plutonium fission atom bombs, like the one President Harry Truman used against the civilian population of Nagasaki, Japan on August 9, 1945, are used, essentially, as the percussion cap on modern thermonuclear weapons to create a state literally hotter than the center of our sun. [\[1289\]](#) Such extreme heat allows for the fusion of hydrogen isotopes, causing explosions thousands of times more powerful than the ones the U.S. used against Japan in World War II. [\[1290\]](#) Bombs equivalent in strength to Fat Man and Little Boy are now considered battlefield or tactical nuclear weapons, compared to the strategic H-bombs. The biggest ever detonated was the Soviets’ Tsar Bomba, at 50 megatons, though it was only detonated at half-strength. [\[1291\]](#) Both sides still have around 1,500–2,000 nuclear and thermonuclear bombs deployed, with approximately another 3,000–4,000 each in reserve. Russia’s stockpile is said to be the slightly larger of the two. [\[1292\]](#)

## Ain't Nuked Us Yet

From the very beginning of the war, President Biden and his government knew exactly what kind of fire they were playing with. The day the Russians rolled into Donetsk, *Foreign Policy* reported that some White House officials were “expressing caution that arming Ukrainian resistance could make the United States legally a co-combatant to a wider war with Russia and escalate tensions between the two nuclear powers.”[\[1293\]](#)

The *Times* later reported that the U.S. and Ukraine began planning for a potential Russian nuclear strike at the beginning of the war, stationing radiation detectors across Europe and training Ukrainian doctors on radiation exposure. They set up a group of officials to dig up all the old preparedness plans from the last Cold War.[\[1294\]](#)

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark, the same guy who almost got us into a war with Russia over Serbia in 1999,[\[1295\]](#) said bring it on. He is not scared of nuclear weapons and neither should you be. “What I’m hearing from some people in the administration is, ‘Oh my gosh, I hope [Putin] doesn’t use a tactical nuclear weapon! That would change everything.’ But the truth is . . . it’s just another way to kill people.” Clark added, “We’ve got to work through that. We can’t allow ourselves to be self-deterred because he’s going to fire four or five tactical nuclear weapons.” He complained that Russia’s strategic deterrent was preventing the Biden administration from simply dictating what they must do. “[W]e haven’t followed through because we can’t quite get this tactical nuclear weapons issue resolved. We’re the big dog in international affairs. We’re the most powerful nation in the world, and we have a strong nuclear deterrent.” So enough with the

defeatist attitude. “[W]e can’t simply say, ‘Well, he might fire a couple of tactical nuclear weapons, and ohh, and that would change international relations.’ Yes it would, but it would change it against Russia, not against us.” Again, the people of Ukraine are simply extras in this morality play. “The only thing that will change it [to being] against us is if we jump back in fear if he uses such a weapon,” Clark concluded. “The best way to prevent him from using that weapon is to convince him that it won’t help.”[\[1296\]](#)

Do not worry. The professionals have this all gamed out.

## **Russian Threats**

The Russians certainly do bear their own responsibility for heightening nuclear tensions as well. Since the beginning of the war, officials of the Russian government have warned against direct intervention by the United States or other major powers, at least usually indirectly threatening them with nuclear war. This includes President Putin himself, who raised the nuclear alert level at the start of the war.[\[1297\]](#)

In December 2022, Putin said he was considering whether to abandon Russia’s no-first-strike doctrine in favor of “disarming” preemptive strikes, stating, “If Russia does not use nuclear weapons first, it won’t use them second, either.”[\[1298\]](#) He said he believed the United States is attempting to move toward a “disarming strike” option against Russia to go with its preexisting first-strike doctrine. As far as any changes to Russian policy, Putin said, “[I]f a potential adversary believes it is possible to use the preventive strike theory, while we do not, this still makes us think about the

threat that such ideas in the sphere of other countries' defense pose to us. That is all I have to say about that.”[\[1299\]](#)

In June 2024, he warned, “If somebody’s actions threaten our sovereignty and territorial integrity, we consider it possible to use all means at our disposal. For some reason, they believe in the West that Russia will never use it,” before going on to boast about the power of their modern weapons.[\[1300\]](#)

The Pentagon says that the Russians have increased the presence of their nuclear submarine fleet in the Atlantic.[\[1301\]](#) In June 2023, Putin announced he was moving nuclear weapons into Belarus, the first time Russia has deployed atom bombs in a foreign nation since the fall of the USSR. As Reuters noted, “Putin has repeatedly raised the issue of U.S. B61 tactical nuclear warheads deployed at bases in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Turkey. Moscow is also unhappy about a reported upgrade of the B61.”[\[1302\]](#)

In November 2023, Putin announced Russia’s withdrawal from the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty that the U.S. had signed but never ratified, but that both sides had essentially abided by for decades anyway. He said he simply wanted to “mirror” the U.S. position on the issue,[\[1303\]](#) and that they would only resume testing if the Americans did first.[\[1304\]](#) Robert O’Brien, who was Trump’s national security adviser, proposed a renewal of testing in an important *Foreign Affairs* piece.[\[1305\]](#) Biden, to his credit, had been opposed, not that he had done anything to get the treaty ratified during his time in office.[\[1306\]](#)



In September 2024, the Russian president announced a new, looser nuclear weapons doctrine in response to Ukraine's incursion into Kursk and threats that the U.S. and UK would allow Kiev's forces to use longer-range missiles against targets inside Russia.[\[1307\]](#)

## **Western Threats**

Officials told the *Times* that after Ukraine's successes in Kherson and Kharkiv in the fall of 2022, they were so convinced the Russians were considering using nuclear weapons that they sent many private and public warnings and enlisted the help of other nations to do the same.[\[1308\]](#) This was when President Biden spoke of the danger of "Armageddon." He has also said he would not put ground forces into Ukraine due to the risk of nuclear conflict, saying it would mean "World War III." Biden insisted, "We have a sacred obligation on NATO territory . . . Article 5," but went on to add that "we will not fight the Third World War in Ukraine."[\[1309\]](#) Again he was admitting, in effect, that Ukraine would not be worth fighting over at any point in the future, and that his government should have dropped the idea that they would ever become a treaty ally a long time ago.

The U.S. and EU then threatened that if Russia used nuclear weapons in Ukraine, their army would be annihilated.[\[1310\]](#) Former Army General[\[1311\]](#) and CIA Director David Petraeus,[\[1312\]](#) likely speaking for the Biden administration,[\[1313\]](#) said that if Russia used nukes in Ukraine, the U.S. would "take out every Russian conventional force that we can see and identify on the battlefield in Ukraine and also in Crimea and every ship in the Black Sea."[\[1314\]](#) The *Financial Times* later said that the U.S., UK

and France all gave the same warning to the Russians privately.[\[1315\]](#) So after Putin has already gone psycho or desperate enough to break out the A-bombs, the U.S. promises to go to full-scale conventional war with the avowed goal of destroying Russia's entire army in Ukraine. They can only imagine the mad dictator they consider Putin to be would then see reason, become calm and wisely back down before American might. The fact he did not use nukes in that circumstance, whether or not he ever intended to, probably reinforced the idea for American officials that their escalatory threats were what convinced him to back down, making it more likely they will adopt this thinking when dealing with the broader situation or the next nuclear threat.

## **Ukrainian Tough Talk**

President Zelensky and his advisers have demanded the U.S. threaten nuclear strikes on Russia. As journalist Joshua Yaffa wrote, "In Kyiv, the prospect of a Russian nuclear attack is both horrifying and a nonfactor." They had made the decision to fight for their 2013 borders, as one Zelensky adviser told him: "even if there exists the possibility of strikes with weapons of mass destruction." He said President Biden should "[s]end a message to Putin now, not after he strikes—'Look, any missile of yours will lead to six of ours flying in your direction.'" [\[1316\]](#)

When the U.S. was urging Ukraine not to use rockets they provided against targets in Crimea, then-Gen. Zaluzhnyi told the *Post*, "To save my people, why do I have to ask someone for permission what to do on enemy territory? . . . Because Putin will . . . use nuclear weapons? The kids who

are dying don't care." If he was sending tens or hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians to destruction in a war they have already lost, why indeed should he not place billions more lives on the altar of their useless sacrifice? Zaluzhnyi had vowed to reclaim Crimea as soon as he had the means, telling the *Post*, "I'll do something. I don't give a damn—nobody will stop me."[\[1317\]](#)

The good news is that Ukraine cannot threaten Crimea or any of the previously Ukrainian territory the Russians have seized, rendering the threat of Russia reaching for nukes in desperation less likely. Putin played down the prospect at a public forum in June 2024.[\[1318\]](#)

The day before, an NSC official announced in a speech that the Biden administration was prepared to scrap the entire doctrine of arms control and limiting nuclear weapons stockpiles and turn to not only modernizing, but expanding the arsenal as well.[\[1319\]](#)

## **Future Primitive**

In spring 2023, the Russians suspended their participation in the New START treaty, the last major deal between our nations limiting nuclear weapons stockpiles and deployments,[\[1320\]](#) withdrew from the Conventional Forces Europe Treaty, announced the imminent stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus for the first time in nearly 30 years[\[1321\]](#) and the training of their forces on mid-range Iskander missiles.[\[1322\]](#) New START will expire in February 2026.[\[1323\]](#)

A little more than a year later, the United States said they would again deploy mid-range nuclear missiles in Germany for the first time since 1987,

including a complement of SM-6 anti-ballistic missiles, but also Tomahawk cruise missiles and “developmental hypersonic weapons.”[\[1324\]](#) After Trump accused Russia of violating the INF in order to withdraw from it himself, Putin had ordered a halt to production of the missiles in question, apparently in a trust-building measure to attempt to save the treaty. But after the Biden White House announced plans to station their own missiles in Germany, Putin ordered an end to Russia’s moratorium and threatened to deploy them,[\[1325\]](#) warning of the potential for a 1962-type missile crisis. “The flight time to targets on our territory of such [hypersonic] missiles, which in the future may be equipped with nuclear warheads, will be about 10 minutes,” the Russian president said, adding, “We will take mirror measures to deploy, taking into account the actions of the United States, its satellites in Europe and in other regions of the world.”[\[1326\]](#) Incidentally, the Russian navy began increasing their visits to Cuba, including the day Putin made his threat to “mirror” U.S. actions, at the end of July 2024, in an obvious warning.[\[1327\]](#)

## **Doomed**

### **Losing Avdiivka**

The loss of the Donetsk city of Avdiivka in February 2024[\[1328\]](#) was a disaster for Ukraine. Gen. Zaluzhnyi’s advice to abandon the town was one of the main reasons that President Zelensky fired him and the rest of his staff. He promoted General Syrsky to replace him since he pledged to stay in the fight, but the battle was already lost. When “White Leader” Andriy

Biletsky's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade (a.k.a. the Azov Regiment) arrived, they saw it was too late and withdrew. But instead of Zaluzhnyi's planned retreat, it was a rout. Hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers, if not more, were taken captive.[\[1329\]](#) But it was the "depletion" of Russia's army, by the tens of thousands, Zelensky claimed, that made it all worth it, embellishing[\[1330\]](#) a seven-to-one advantage in fatal casualties.[\[1331\]](#)

One innovation which had helped to tip the scales towards the Russians was the FAB-1500 warheads or "glide bombs." These are similar to American Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) guidance kits, with wings being retrofitted on to old, dumb Soviet-era bombs, most of them 2,000 lbs., some of them more than 3,000 lbs. This allows Russian jets flying in their own airspace to accurately bomb Ukrainian targets from standoff ranges, and at a rate of more than 100 per day. While they reportedly can be shot down by missile interceptors, those can be overwhelmed, and the cost differential involved makes it a losing battle. [\[1332\]](#) These are far more devastating for ground troops than ground-fired artillery shells, and helped the Russians to seize both Bakhmut and Avdiivka.[\[1333\]](#)

## **Stab in the Back**

After taking the latter city in early 2024, Russian forces "maintained their momentum," moving into more surrounding territory as well.[\[1334\]](#) Meanwhile, Zelensky continued to insist his goals were nothing less than total victory when his forces should have been digging in for a stronger defense.[\[1335\]](#) The basis for their future fascist stab-in-the-back theory is

obvious: the West promised everything, but then started to run out of shells and money and the rest.

Alexey Arestovich, the former Zelensky adviser who predicted, even called for the war to advance Ukraine's accession to NATO,[\[1336\]](#) later gave this theory a test. He said it was wrong for Zelensky to split the blame between Boris Johnson and Gen. Zaluzhnyi. "The real responsibility," he said, "lies with those who promised us, Ukraine, real support for a real, large-scale war and did not provide it. Essentially, they betrayed us." He said that they won their war against the initial Russian invasion and they could have had peace with the Istanbul agreements, "and then several hundred thousand people would still be alive." But then on April 26, 2022, they were brought to Ramstein Air Base in Germany and promised the weapons required to continue the war. The first major shipments did not arrive until June, and, he said, "[W]e could not win this other war without aircraft and long-range missiles and five times more supplies for the ground forces. None of this happened. We paid a huge price for this."[\[1337\]](#)

He did have a point about Biden's big promises. The fact remains that the West simply does not produce enough shells for both Ukraine and their own needs. It was a cruel thing to do to them. What it would have taken to truly win the war is another question, though Biden was at least right to fear what might happen to us if he helped Ukraine achieve their stated goals.

## **It Appears to Be Jammed**

Another problem for Ukraine is that air-dropped Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB),

[\[1338\]](#) HIMARS and ATACMS rocket artillery, and Excalibur Howitzer-fired artillery rounds have already been rendered obsolete by Russian electronic counter-measures.[\[1339\]](#) Expensive American-supplied Patriot defensive missiles have also been repeatedly overwhelmed by counterfire, including by new Russian hypersonic missiles.[\[1340\]](#)

## **Body Counts**

Assessments of Ukrainian and Russian casualties have been suspect all along. Both sides rush to exaggerate the other side's losses and minimize their own. The author prefers conservative estimates.

In September 2024, the *Journal* said that a secret Ukrainian report from earlier in the year estimated Ukrainian troop losses at 80,000 dead and 400,000 wounded. They also said that “Western intelligence estimates of Russian casualties vary, with some putting the number of dead as high as nearly 200,000 and wounded at around 400,000.”[\[1341\]](#)

The following month, the UN said at least 11,743 civilians had been killed, and another almost-25,000 wounded in the war, mostly but not entirely by Russian forces.[\[1342\]](#) This is surely a catastrophe, but at least the civilian population has been able to flee most of the fighting, causing the total to be far fewer than it could be otherwise. Another 6.3 million Ukrainians have fled the country, 3.7 million more have been internally displaced.[\[1343\]](#)

Despite the unbelievable ratios claimed by the Zelensky government, a source close to the Ukrainian general staff told Frank Ledwidge that their casualty numbers were about the same as those of the Russians.[\[1344\]](#)

Yuriy Lutsenko, the former prosecutor general and head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, who fought on the front lines in the war, also said in January 2024 that Ukraine had half a million casualties, dead and wounded. “I think that they should name the number of dead Ukrainians. I know that they don’t want this. . . . Yes, it will be a shock,” he said.[\[1345\]](#) By 2024, Ukraine was also releasing criminal prisoners to fight on the front lines.[\[1346\]](#)

Our leaders could negotiate. But they said the plan was to keep the war going for years.[\[1347\]](#)

## **It’s Just Not Enough, Is It?**

Gen. Zaluzhnyi told Secretary Austin that to “achieve the president’s objective of liberating the entire territory of Ukraine will require \$350–400 billion worth of assets and personnel.” That and 17 million rounds of ammunition.[\[1348\]](#) Yulia Tymoshenko apparently had enough. In December 2023, she wrote that Zelensky should “propose a way out of this difficult, tragic situation. Show leadership.”[\[1349\]](#) But over at *Foreign Policy* magazine, the experts found the “pathway to victory.” Echoing Gen. Zaluzhnyi, they said all Ukraine needs is:

Air superiority, the ability to breach mine obstacles, better counter-battery capability, and more assets for electronic warfare. . . . First, armed UAVs that use real-time reconnaissance to coordinate attacks with artillery . . .

Second, armed UAVs to suppress enemy air defenses, as well



as medium-range surface-to-air missile simulators to deter Russian pilots. And third, unmanned vehicles to breach and clear mines. . . . [Also] armed UAVs carrying Maverick and Hellfire missiles, loitering munitions, precision-guided artillery shells, and extended-range standoff missiles fired by aircraft. These systems would be coordinated in an electromagnetic environment shaped by Ukrainian operators to dominate the local airspace, saturate the battlefield with munitions, and clear mines to open the way for a ground assault.[\[1350\]](#)

Once we get the electromagnetic environment shaped—and hand over every last weapon in the U.S. arsenal—this thing will be a cakewalk. Meanwhile, Zelensky’s aide admitted that even if the U.S. gave them everything they promised, “we don’t have the men to use them.”[\[1351\]](#)

But in early 2024, Emily Harding—a former U.S. intelligence analyst who had advocated arming Ukraine on the 1980s Afghan model before the war[\[1352\]](#)—complained that America had not done nearly enough to transfer heavier weapons to the fight. “We’ve been fiddling while Rome burns. We’ve been debating amongst ourselves, like, exactly what tiny weapons system is going to push us over the top or not now for two years,” she said at an event hosted by the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “If we had not been dithering early on, if we had actually provided the things that we should have provided, we would have been much better off now.”[\[1353\]](#) But she had no explanation for how the much larger and wealthier Russian Federation could ever be forced out of Ukraine, or why

escalations by Ukraine would not simply be matched by the Russians as they have been already. Harding also could not explain how this assault on cities and “oblasts” Americans have never heard of on the farthest fringes of the empire amounted to the sacking and burning of Washington, D.C., the capital city of our country, 5,000 miles west of where this was all taking place. Perhaps she was referring to the looting of the U.S. Treasury.

Between the beginning of Russia’s invasion in February 2022 and the end of 2023, the United States had given Ukraine almost \$50 billion in weapons, including more than 3 million 155mm artillery shells.[\[1354\]](#) They consume these rounds at three times the rate the U.S. can produce them.[\[1355\]](#) American and allied weapons stocks have been vastly depleted,[\[1356\]](#) yet Ukraine is still destined to lose. Russia produces better than three times more artillery shells than the U.S. and Europe combined, approximately 250,000 shells per month, or about 3 million a year, according to NATO officials. They’ve imported hundreds of thousands, maybe millions more, from Iran[\[1357\]](#) and North Korea.[\[1358\]](#) Russian forces in Ukraine fire them at a rate of 10,000 per day, compared to only 2,000 by Ukraine’s side.[\[1359\]](#) The U.S. has shipped Ukraine 6 F-16s, 76 tanks, 3,600 armored vehicles, 39 HIMARS rocket launchers, and more than 400 million bullets and grenades.[\[1360\]](#) What are we supposed to do, give them navy destroyers and B-52 heavy bombers?

Harding went on to cry that it is “self-centered” for Americans to worry about provoking Russia into a wider war—which they still have the ability to do—because “that just hasn’t happened,” even though she herself stipulated that the U.S. was not handing over all the weapons she

demanded, which could very well be the reason why not. “Russia’s a bully. They respond to strength,” she confidently asserted with all the depth of a 16-year-old student council secretary. These are our CIA analysts. Harding helped run the Iraq desk when the Islamic State Caliphate was busy taking over the entire west of the country in 2014, if that’s any indication of her measure of dangers and how to deal with them.[\[1361\]](#)

Harding then deployed the War Party’s best new talking point.[\[1362\]](#) The crazy conspiracy theory that the war is meant to make money for the arms merchants who finance the Center for Strategic and International Studies—like BAE Systems, Boeing, Booz Allen, General Atomics, General Dynamics, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, Northrop Grumman, Raytheon and SAIC,[\[1363\]](#)—is real, and it is spectacular. “The money that we spend on Ukraine doesn’t leave the U.S. It goes to the U.S. defense industry. It goes to U.S. companies that send aid to Ukraine. The vast majority of it stays here,” she proudly proclaimed from atop a modest pile of 2024 dollars and human bones.[\[1364\]](#) President Biden[\[1365\]](#) and his staff and allies Blinken,[\[1366\]](#) Nuland,[\[1367\]](#) Vindman[\[1368\]](#) and McConnell[\[1369\]](#) have all boasted the same. The dangerous Military-Industrial Complex (MIC) has been rebranded the “Defense Industrial Base” (DIB), and is great for the economy.[\[1370\]](#) Any American family living in their car in the WalMart parking lot could tell you that.[\[1371\]](#)

## **Russian Army Growing**

In June 2024, objecting to a reporter’s question about the reality of a “stalled” war with terrible casualties faced by the Ukrainians, President

Biden insisted the Russian military had been “freaking decimated,” then changed the subject to his induction of Finland and Sweden to the alliance.

[\[1372\]](#)

But just a few months before, Gen. Cavoli, commander of European Command, said the Russian army was actually now 15 percent larger than it was at the start of the war, due to their decision to raise the maximum conscription age from 27 to 30. “Over the past year, Russia increased its front-line troop strength from 360,000 to 470,000. . . . In sum, Russia is on track to command the largest military on the continent.” He explained that the plan to strategically weaken the Russian Federation had simply failed. “Regardless of the outcome of the war in Ukraine, Russia will be larger, more lethal, and angrier with the West than when it invaded.”[\[1373\]](#) Deputy Secretary of State Kurt Campbell added that Russia had “almost completely reconstituted militarily.”[\[1374\]](#) That much had been clear at least a year previously, according to Gen. Cavoli.[\[1375\]](#)

The Russians say they have increased their production of artillery shells by 150 percent,[\[1376\]](#) and tanks by 100 percent.[\[1377\]](#) They were scheduled to spend over \$100 billion on their military budget in 2024.[\[1378\]](#) “The longer the war lasts, the more addicted the economy will become to military spending, raising the risk of stagnation or even outright crisis once the conflict is over,” noted Vasily Astrov, an economist at the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies.[\[1379\]](#) So that is how that works.

**Khodorkovsky: Fight**

Putin's old nemesis, Mikhail Khodorkovsky of Yukos oil, who had helped finance the Maidan revolution in 2014,[\[1380\]](#) warned at the 2023 Munich conference that the U.S. could not back down in Ukraine or else China would invade Taiwan.[\[1381\]](#) Every one of these nerds invokes the high school bully analogy, fantasizing that now they can use American military power to have their revenge. But it has been the U.S., acting under War Party and foreign exile consensus, that has been the bully all along, and despite being repeatedly punched in the nose, they never seem to figure it out.

## **The Israel Model**

In early summer 2023, U.S. officials began again to speak of what they called the "Israel model" for Ukraine. Wisely erring against making war guarantees their capital cities are not willing to cash, their great idea is instead to simply flood the new, smaller Ukraine with entire new arsenals of weapons, under the theory that if correctly "calibrated," this will deter, rather than provoke future conflict.[\[1382\]](#)

Some of them recognize the folly of further arming Ukraine after the war, instead concluding they must be brought into the alliance instead. Gen. Richard Barrons, former commander of the British military's Joint Forces Command, told the *Post*, "A properly rearmed Ukraine would be a strong deterrent to Russia, but it would be possibly tempted to have its own adventure." Therefore, he concludes, "The best answer from a Ukrainian perspective, if not necessarily from a Western perspective, is to have Ukraine in NATO, because then the guarantees are clear and difficult to

dodge, and also Ukraine has to subscribe to NATO ambition and policy, so the adventurism is less.”[\[1383\]](#)

But Samuel Charap argued that bringing Ukraine into NATO could prolong the war since the Russians would have to assume that the U.S. would then deploy forces there. “So even if there were consensus among allies to offer Kyiv membership (and there is not), granting Ukraine a security guarantee through NATO membership might well make peace so unattractive to Russia that Putin would decide to keep fighting.”[\[1384\]](#)

Biden knew it too. Just after they announced Finland’s membership in NATO in April 2023, he thankfully joined with the Germans and Hungarians in agreeing not to offer Ukraine a “roadmap” to joining, as Poland and the Baltic states had been pushing. Punting the question into the indefinite future, a senior U.S. official told the press: “In order for us to get to the question of when and how to get Ukraine into the alliance, we must, as the secretary-general has noted, ‘ensure that Ukraine prevails as a sovereign, independent nation.’”[\[1385\]](#)

Before heading off to Vilnius for the NATO summit, in July 2023, Biden stuck with the script: Ukraine may not join the alliance since they are at war with Russia, and “We’re at war with Russia, if that were the case.” However, he still insisted that “we have to lay out a rational path for Ukraine to be able to qualify to be able to get into NATO,” due to the perpetual “open-door policy.”[\[1386\]](#)

At the summit, the member states unanimously voted for a resolution stating that they “reaffirm the commitment we made at the 2008 Summit in Bucharest that Ukraine will become a member of NATO.” While they

would only promise this would happen “when Allies agree and conditions are met,” they also agreed that Ukraine “has moved beyond the need for” a Membership Action Plan to join. “Ukraine has become increasingly interoperable and politically integrated with the Alliance,” they noted. The supposed Atlantic alliance also established a Ukraine-NATO Council for coordinating their de facto membership status as much as possible. And they created a permanent new bureaucracy to subsidize Ukraine’s military. [\[1387\]](#)

Zelensky denounced NATO’s position. “It’s unprecedented and absurd when [a] time frame is not set . . . for the invitation nor for Ukraine’s membership. While at the same time vague wording about ‘conditions’ is added even for inviting Ukraine.” [\[1388\]](#) *Post* reporters wrote that “members of the U.S. delegation were furious with Zelensky’s tweet.” [\[1389\]](#) They later added that it “almost backfired,” having “so roiled the White House that U.S. officials involved with the process considered scaling back the ‘invitation’ for Kyiv to join.” [\[1390\]](#)

Oleksiy Goncharenko, from Petro Poroshenko’s European Solidarity party, said in December 2023, “In Washington, several sources confirmed to me that Blinken told Europeans to stop talking to Ukraine about NATO. There will be no NATO. The topic of NATO annoys the U.S. elite, and they clearly sent a signal that Ukraine will not become a member of the alliance immediately after the war.” [\[1391\]](#)

But then how cynical and dangerous has this entire exercise been? Nearly half the reason for the war is that Joe Biden refused to negotiate a treaty saying the United States will cease working toward bringing Ukraine

into NATO. They clearly realize the risk of war between Russia and the alliance if they try it. They either wanted the war or were just too stubborn—*proud* cannot be the right word for it—to climb down from their “open door” nonsense.

President Biden admitted it, though his statement did not seem to be signaling a change in their position, just conceding the reality of it. He told CNN that talk of Ukraine’s membership in NATO was “premature.” This did not seem to be a reference to his State and Defense Departments’ official statements in the autumn of 2021, in the lead-up to war, or his adamant refusal to negotiate the made-up “open door” before the war. It was only that “there’s other qualifications that need to be met, including democratization and some of those issues.”

We cannot bring Ukraine into NATO because it would lead to war with Russia, and besides, it is not like they are a Western democracy after all, more of an eastern despotism. So, while Biden conceded Ukraine was a bad fit for the Western alliance, he would go ahead and send them some cluster bombs.[\[1392\]](#)

A couple of days later, NATO put out a communiqué promising that “Ukraine’s future is in NATO,” pending “democratization and military integration,”[\[1393\]](#) which could be extended indefinitely since the place is nowhere near a democracy, their military has been mostly devastated by the war, and Putin is certain to demand terms in the end much harsher than the proposed deal of March and April 2022. Military integration with NATO after the war will probably not be on the table. As NATO head Jens



Stoltenberg said, “[U]nless Ukraine prevails, there is no membership to be discussed at all.”[\[1394\]](#)

## **Late 2023 Offers**

In the fall and winter of 2023, Putin publicly[\[1395\]](#) and privately[\[1396\]](#) offered a ceasefire that would have frozen the lines of contact, “far short” of his supposed goal of taking all of Ukraine. The Biden administration rejected the offers outright.[\[1397\]](#)

That is pretty messed up considering the administration had been telling the Ukrainians that they were going to have to deal since they were running out of men in a stalemated “war of inches.” These conversations were said to include “what Ukraine might have to give up.”[\[1398\]](#) Zelensky, on the other hand, publicly said he could not give in, presumably until his or Putin’s army had been completely defeated. A ceasefire at that stage “would mean leaving this wound open for future generations,” he said. “Maybe it will calm some people down inside our country, and outside, at least those who want to wrap things up at any price. But for me, that’s a problem, because we are left with this explosive force. We only delay its detonation.”[\[1399\]](#)

But they were talking. A “knowledgeable American official” told Seymour Hersh in March 2024 that when Biden learned about new negotiations between Ukraine and Russia in late 2023, he again moved to cancel them for his own political needs, threatening Kiev that he would suspend all non-military aid. In doing so he had sealed Kharkiv’s fate.

[\[1400\]](#)

In an interview in mid-March 2024, Putin implied he was coming for Odesa next: “Of course. Population density in these regions was always high enough, climate wonderful.”[\[1401\]](#) He knew by then that time was on his side. “We are for peace negotiations . . . but it is not because the enemy is running out of ammunition,” he boasted.[\[1402\]](#)

## **Backing Down, Finally?**

At the end of December 2023, *Politico* explained that not only did the administration no longer intend to help Ukraine achieve victory, but said that was never their plan. “That’s been our theory of the case throughout—the only way this war ends ultimately is through negotiation. We want Ukraine to have the strongest hand possible when that comes.” Of course, “[s]uch a negotiation would likely mean giving up parts of Ukraine to Russia,” an unidentified White House spokesman told them. But that is not what they said before. The priority changed to simply staving off disaster until after the November 2024 election, and they were not embarrassed to admit it.[\[1403\]](#)

In the aftermath of the Avdiivka disaster, the *New York Times* reported how the American and European foreign policy establishments knew that Ukraine could not win the war, and the West could not afford to produce enough weapons to keep them fighting. They published another the same day about how the Ukrainian government and military knew it too.[\[1404\]](#) Charles A. Kupchan, a former national security official in the Obama years who had been working on the backchannel talks with Richard Haass, said it was time to start negotiating. “Even if Russia can stay the course, I don’t

think Ukraine can. There is no foreseeable pathway toward a battlefield victory for Ukraine,” he told them, dismissing the idea that more missiles or even F-16 fighter-bombers would make any difference. Gen. Cavoli, the supreme allied commander of NATO forces in Europe, said that the war was a “stalemate,” and the best they could hope for was to try to regroup and launch another 2023-type offensive in 2025.[\[1405\]](#)

At the Munich Security Conference, President Zelensky told the assembled leaders that if not rearmed by the West, Ukraine would be destroyed by Russia. This was noticeably different messaging from before, when negotiations represented unacceptable capitulation to and appeasement of the aggressor,[\[1406\]](#) and when Ukraine was on the verge of total victory over the evil Russian orcs and would take back all of Crimea any day now too. The *Post* did not dismiss his comments as Russian propaganda.[\[1407\]](#)

In March 2024, Sullivan traveled to Ukraine and announced that the administration was climbing down from their stated war goals. Gone, hopefully forever, were the ridiculous and impossible aims of expelling Russia from all of the Donbas, much less the Crimean Peninsula. Now, for Ukraine to “succeed” and “prevail,” according to Sullivan, simply means that it “emerges from this war sovereign, independent, and free, able to deter future aggression with a strong, vibrant democracy; with deep democratic institutions; with an economy that’s growing.” In other words, Russia gets to keep everything they have taken so far, and maybe more, and the Democrats would pretend to believe Ukraine is a “sovereign, independent democracy” so they can finally back out of this thing. “We

believe that Russia has already failed in this war,” he said.[\[1408\]](#) The *Times* agreed. “Recovered territory is not the only measure of victory.”[\[1409\]](#)

Republican War Party stalwart Marco Rubio, never confused for a Defend America First type,[\[1410\]](#) has also signaled that he no longer thinks it is good politics to stick with this lie. He admitted it was a lie and that he had been lying all along: though he knew Ukraine “could not achieve victory . . . I tried not to talk about this publicly because I thought it undermined the leverage that Ukraine had.”[\[1411\]](#) But his continued support is exactly what cost them whatever leverage they did have back in 2022. As bad a person and senator as that makes Rubio, the point is that he has admitted it now, possibly opening more room for the GOP leadership to align with their voters[\[1412\]](#) on this issue.

In mid-October 2024, Der Spiegel revealed that Kiev was also finally willing to redefine victory. “We believed that victory had to mean the unconditional surrender of (Russian President Vladimir) Putin’s Russia,” but that was “a mistaken view of victory,” their source said, adding that they recognized they would have to make concessions to win the war.  
[\[1413\]](#)

## **Putin’s Peace Feelers**

In April and May 2024, the Kremlin said they wanted a ceasefire and an end to the war along then-current lines, suggesting the two sides use the documents nearly agreed upon in Turkey in 2022, but also warned they would continue fighting “for as long as it takes.”[\[1414\]](#) In other words, the Russians assessed they had taken virtually all of the land they wanted—

though they did not control all of Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia or Kherson—and had largely achieved their goal of weakening the Ukrainian army. Russian Ambassador to the U.S. Anatoly Antonov said, “Retreat or withdrawal of the Russian Federation Armed Forces to hypothetical dividing lines is excluded. Let us remind you: there is a Constitution of Russia. The borders of our state, which include new federal subjects, are clearly marked there.”[\[1415\]](#) Accepting his offer would indeed be a defeat for Kiev and the West, but apparently not compared to a worse one if they put it off. In June, obviously feeling confident, Putin told the Foreign Ministry that Russia was prepared to negotiate if the Ukrainians were willing to withdraw from the four provinces Moscow has officially annexed, adopt official neutrality and continue to fore swear nuclear weapons.[\[1416\]](#)

Russian forces continued their slow, successful physical annexation of Donetsk.[\[1417\]](#)

## **No, Fly Zone**

Biden and the Pentagon were more reluctant, but pressure kept building for them to “do something” like declare a “no-fly zone” over Ukraine. It came up again in the summer of 2024.[\[1418\]](#) Just to make sure everyone understands: even though TV makes it sound like a magic spell the president can cast against his enemies with no consequences, a no-fly zone would mean the U.S. military declaring full-scale air war against Russian planes over Ukraine, as well as against anti-aircraft guns and missiles based inside Russia which threaten them. Their pilots would be killed. So would ours. It is a virtual certainty this policy would lead to general war between

the United States and Russia.[\[1419\]](#) Anyone who says otherwise is a liar or a fool.

## **Electoral Needs First**

Seeming to confirm the late Justin Raimondo's theory of Libertarian Realism,[\[1420\]](#) White House staffers were not even ashamed to admit to the press how important the war was to President Biden's ultimately aborted reelection campaign in 2024. "White House anxiously watches Ukraine's counteroffensive, seeing the war and Biden's reputation at stake," *Politico* wrote. "Senior U.S. officials are convinced that future support for the Ukraine war—and President Joe Biden's global reputation—hinges on" Ukraine's success in the war. Without that, he would not be able to run on his "hoped-for triumphant return to the world stage." Instead of a tax cut for working people, the Biden team had decided he would run on Ukraine as "another foreign policy win" in the campaign.[\[1421\]](#)

Politics is not everything. But it clearly played far too central a role in the president and his war council's thinking on the matter, with the fate of mankind hanging in the balance. Ultimately, Biden was so old and confused halfway into his last year in office, his own party forced him to drop out of the race anyway.[\[1422\]](#) His designated successor, Vice President Kamala Harris, emphasized the need to continue to support Ukraine, of course threatening what Putin never has, that he would attack "the rest of Europe" after taking over all of Ukraine if the U.S. ceased shipping them weapons and money. But she did not dare to try to spin the war as an American or Ukrainian victory.[\[1423\]](#)

## Behind Enemy Lines

Attacks inside Russia by Ukraine have continued throughout the war, enraging them and endangering us.[\[1424\]](#)

After Ukraine attacked downtown Belgorod with drones, killing 21, including three children, in December 2023;[\[1425\]](#) killed another 25, including five children, in January 2024;[\[1426\]](#) and struck again in mid-February, killing seven more,[\[1427\]](#) NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg announced that “of course” the alliance supported Ukraine’s right to attack inside Russia: “Ukraine has the right to self-defense, and that includes also striking legitimate military targets, Russian military targets, outside Ukraine.”[\[1428\]](#) In October 2024, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on Ukraine’s increased drone war inside Russia, including massive swarms attacking “missile storage facilities, strategic fuel reservoirs, military airfields and defense plants.” While they claimed to be helping to force Russia to the negotiating table, it is doubtful such attacks are very effective in any broader strategic sense. Then again, Secretary Austin promised another \$800 million for Kiev’s domestic drone industry. Even after accounting for mass embezzlement, that could still be quite a bit.[\[1429\]](#)

Again, normally, if this was a two-nation war, and the Ukrainians were simply the underdogs, who could blame them for hitting back? But this is our government’s war too and even if these are not American drones, we are still implicated by the actions of America’s client. It is exactly the kind of situation that George Washington warned about.[\[1430\]](#)

## Losing Kharkiv?

In May 2024, in response to Ukrainian attacks on Belgorod, the Russians launched an offensive to create what Putin called a “sanitary zone” for “counter-fire purposes”[\[1431\]](#) near the city of Kharkiv—in other words, to put long-range Ukrainian artillery at a safe distance from Russian towns and cities.[\[1432\]](#) Putin claimed no intent to take the city itself,[\[1433\]](#) though the incursion did put his forces within artillery range.[\[1434\]](#) Initial reconnaissance troops faced little resistance and rolled right in,[\[1435\]](#) taking more than 290 square miles in a couple of days, more than Ukraine grossed in the entire 2023 offensive,[\[1436\]](#) and forcing thousands to flee.[\[1437\]](#) This compelled Kiev to devote some of their last reserves to the area. However, as Frank Ledwidge noted, it is a massive city and would require a major Russian effort to take it. The initial forces deployed seemed to be oriented toward creating that enlarged buffer zone, rather than conquering the city,[\[1438\]](#) though they did hit it with missiles and glide bombs incessantly, in an apparent attempt to force the population to flee.[\[1439\]](#)

Still, the status of Kharkiv remains at risk. This is in part due to the fact that Ukraine remains one of the most corrupt countries in the world. Millions of dollars that were supposed to be used to fortify the city and the land between it and the border were simply stolen; the trenches were never dug and fortifications were never built.[\[1440\]](#)

Ledwidge also said the Russians were advancing town by town, slowly taking control of all of Donetsk, and predicted that Kiev’s forces would soon have to withdraw from the oblast entirely. He said British reporters in the country knew this as well but that the “pro-Ukraine” political line of



their editors prevented them from telling the story in the kingdom's important newspapers.[\[1441\]](#)

In late July 2024, the Russians made major gains in Donetsk after Ukraine was forced to divert resources to the defense of Kharkiv. Soldiers complained about the lack of reinforcements as more and more men fled the country rather than submit to the draft.[\[1442\]](#) “Morale is at its lowest ebb,” reported the extremely pro-war Daily Beast.[\[1443\]](#)

At the same time, Ukrainian forces were getting hammered by the Russians slowly taking the strategically important Donetsk town of Chasiv Yar, which had also nearly been razed to the ground by artillery and glide bombs.[\[1444\]](#)

As previously mentioned, Andriy Biletsky's 3rd Separate Assault Brigade helped lead the fighting at Kharkiv in the summer of 2024,[\[1445\]](#) earning the “Courage and Bravery” award, and declaring one last time for the fact-checkers in the back that the brigade “was founded by the first commander of the Azov regiment, Andriy Biletsky, [and] was formed on the same principles as the legendary Azov regiment and the entire Azov movement.”[\[1446\]](#)

## **Kursk Assault**

In a mirror image of Russia's assault on Kharkiv, more than 10,000 Ukrainian army troops, with tanks and armored vehicles, launched a major assault[\[1447\]](#) into Kursk[\[1448\]](#) and Belgorod[\[1449\]](#) on August 6, 2024. The attack reached at least 20 miles into Russia, and saw the capture of hundreds of prisoners, the shoot-down of at least three helicopters[\[1450\]](#)

and a drone attack on Russia's Lipetsk Oblast, on the far side of Kursk. [\[1451\]](#) The Ukrainian military said they relied on intelligence provided by Western satellites and drones during the operation, [\[1452\]](#) also noting their use of GBU-39 guided bombs and HIMARS systems to hit targets inside Kursk. [\[1453\]](#) UK Defense Ministry sources said the Ukrainians were also using British Challenger 2 tanks, [\[1454\]](#) while the Russians said the invaders were driving American Bradleys. [\[1455\]](#) A Pentagon spokeswoman noted Ukraine had full authorization from the Biden administration to do so. When a reporter asked if they would support an attack on Moscow, she replied: "I'm not going to put a specific range on it." [\[1456\]](#)

President Zelensky said his goal was to force Russia to end the war. [\[1457\]](#) Gen. Zaluzhnyi, by then ambassador to the UK, and Emil Ishkulov, commander of Ukraine's 80th Air Assault Brigade, warned him not to try it. Ishkulov was apparently fired over his refusal. [\[1458\]](#)

Experts told the *New York Times* from the beginning they believed it was a useless sacrifice, since it provided no real tactical advantage. [\[1459\]](#) Ukrainian forces were still badly outmanned and outgunned in Donetsk and much of the east. Kiev's choice to pull experienced brigades from the front to lead the invasion was a huge risk, leaving their other forces exposed, such as those at Chasiv Yar, Pokrovsk, Toretsk and Niu-York. [\[1460\]](#)

The Russians had evidently been demining the area in preparation for an offensive in the Sumy region, but did not yet have their troops in place before Kiev launched this surprise attack. [\[1461\]](#) Some of Ukraine's best-equipped forces appeared to have made a trap for themselves and then walked right into it. They had effectively been lured by derelict Russian

officers[\[1462\]](#)—Russian POWs reportedly said they had been warned but did not believe it[\[1463\]](#)—into marching deep into enemy territory. They seemed to have humiliated the Russian state, but did not weaken its military forces, only undermining their own. The Russians sent reservists and mercenaries to fight, while keeping their main forces on task in the Donbas.  
[\[1464\]](#)

Meanwhile, back in Donetsk, poorly trained and equipped Ukrainian conscripts were getting blasted to pieces. An officer complained that “[s]ome people don’t want to shoot. They see the enemy in the firing position in trenches but don’t open fire. . . . That is why our men are dying. When they don’t use the weapon, they are ineffective.” Others, doubting their leaders’ plans, simply walk off or flee from the battlefield. “The main problem is the survival instinct of newcomers. Before, people could stand until the last moment to hold the position. Now, even when there is light shelling of firing positions, they are retreating,” another soldier said.[\[1465\]](#)

Officials in Kiev confirmed their goal had been to lure Russian forces away from the front in Donetsk.[\[1466\]](#) By early September, critics were already slamming Zelensky for taking such a big risk for no reward. Instead of pressuring the Russians to divert offensive units, Ukraine had simply hollowed out its own defensive capability and was on the verge of losing the logistically important city of Pokrovsk. Russian troops had walked right in to the nearby towns of Niu-York and Novohrodivka.[\[1467\]](#) Perhaps surprisingly, Ukrainian forces continued to hold their symbolic gains in Kursk into November,[\[1468\]](#) as Russian troops kept gaining ground in Donetsk.[\[1469\]](#) Ukraine lost the strategically significant town of Vuhledar

in early October.[\[1470\]](#) The *Post* reported that Russian tactics were improving and the front line was near a “breaking point.”[\[1471\]](#)

A military expert from the Finland-based Black Bird Group said that Russia took 270 square miles of Donetsk in August and September, approximately three times more than in June and July, while their reinforcements were off on their public relations mission in Kursk. Echoing the Russians when their side suffers high casualty rates, Ukrainian officials insisted the war is all about attrition, not land, and that they were wearing the Russians out by losing to them all the time. “This is the most important thing—to exhaust the enemy,” President Zelensky told the nation in a TV address.[\[1472\]](#)

But it was his own men who were exhausted and walking off the battlefield.[\[1473\]](#) By the end of October, Russian forces had taken more territory in 30 days than any time since the beginning of the war in 2022, including the strategically important towns of Vuhledar and Selydove, [\[1474\]](#) and at least half of the part of Kursk that Ukrainian forces had been occupying since late August. A Pentagon official planning the war told *The Economist* that “[a]t this point we are thinking more and more about how Ukraine can survive,” rather than achieving victory of any kind.[\[1475\]](#) Pokrovsk was still held by Kiev, but otherwise Russian forces were having their way across Donetsk and the small part of Luhansk which had remained outside of their control. The frontlines were mostly manned by volunteer militias.[\[1476\]](#) In another story, *The Economist* reported that one out of five soldiers had gone AWOL.[\[1477\]](#)

As the *Financial Times* reported, the soldiers at the front knew they would not be able to push the Russians back to Ukraine's 1991–2013 borders, and only wanted to see talks begin. The same was true about officials in Kiev. "Most players want de-escalation here," a senior member of the government told them. Their new foreign minister, Andrii Sybiha, evidently floated proposals for compromise with U.S. officials after taking office in September. The new slogan is "land for security guarantees"—a "tacit" acceptance of Russian sovereignty over the land they have already taken in exchange for NATO membership. But of course that is the Catch 22—any further move to bring Ukraine into the alliance would only force the Kremlin to continue the war on until regime change in Kiev.[\[1478\]](#) The Russians continue to insist on full recognition of their sovereignty over all of the five oblasts, not just the areas they already control, as well as neutrality and a total ban on future membership in the alliance.[\[1479\]](#)

Two-thirds of Ukrainians told pollsters in September that they supported negotiations with Russia.[\[1480\]](#) However, "[t]he biggest domestic problem for Zelenskyy might come from a nationalist minority opposed to any compromise, some of whom are now armed and trained to fight," the *Financial Times* noted. Oleksandr Merezhko from Zelensky's Servant of the People party, who chaired the Rada's foreign affairs committee, told them, "There will always be a radical segment of Ukrainian society that will call any negotiation capitulation. The far right in Ukraine is growing. The right wing is a danger to democracy."[\[1481\]](#)

In late September 2024, Putin announced Russia's new, updated nuclear weapons doctrine. It said, "Aggression against Russia by a non-

nuclear country, but with the participation or support of a nuclear country, was proposed to be viewed as their joint attack on Russia.” He said their launch-on-warning posture now included against apparent attacks by plane, drone, cruise or hypersonic missile, and crucially that, not only existential threats to the Russian state, but now a lower threshold, “critical threats to Russian sovereignty with conventional weapons will be sufficient for a nuclear response.”[\[1482\]](#) In late October, they ran a drill simulating retaliatory nuclear strikes on the United States.[\[1483\]](#)

Meanwhile, U.S. officials were saying that maybe the incursion proved it was okay to invade nuclear weapons states after all.[\[1484\]](#) Washington has gone beyond reckless to mad, greatly increasing the risk of war between the major powers over a lost cause our governments are rightly convinced is not worth getting involved in directly.

The two nations had been making major progress toward a new “partial ceasefire” limiting strikes on energy infrastructure, according to diplomats involved who were disappointed since they thought the talks might eventually end the war.[\[1485\]](#) The Russian Foreign Ministry announced that negotiations would now be put on a “long-term pause.” Progress toward peace talks had taken another shot in the gut.[\[1486\]](#)

## **Take Warning**

When the U.S. and Britain began to seriously propose allowing Ukraine to use longer-range cruise missiles against targets in Russia,[\[1487\]](#) Putin drew a line, telling reporters, “This would in a significant way change the very nature of the conflict. It would mean that NATO countries, the U.S.,

European countries, are at war with Russia. If that's the case, then taking into account the change of nature of the conflict, we will take the appropriate decisions based on the threats that we will face.”[\[1488\]](#) As shown above, a conversation among German officers, intercepted by the Russians, confirmed that the British and French had forces on the ground helping the Ukrainians operate their most sophisticated long-range missiles.

When Zelensky came to Washington in late September 2024 to debut his plan for victory in the war, senior officials told the *Journal* they were “unimpressed,” as it was just the same old request for more and longer-range weapons, neither of which can account for their lack of manpower. Perhaps this represented progress compared to the administration lying and demanding we all pretend to believe along with them. It was President Biden himself who was holding up permission for Ukraine to use long-range missiles inside Russia.[\[1489\]](#) This was evidently based on CIA assessments that Putin's threats to expand the war were to be taken seriously this time.[\[1490\]](#)

But Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski told the *Journal* that he had been pressuring Blinken and Sullivan to authorize Ukraine's use of the long-range weapons, and dismissed the idea that Moscow would escalate in response. He said Putin was “throwing . . . everything he has at Ukraine,”[\[1491\]](#) when the concern, as the *Times* paraphrased the CIA, was that “Russia is likely to retaliate with greater force against the United States and its coalition partners,” presumably including Poland, “possibly with lethal attacks,” if such permission were given.[\[1492\]](#)

In mid-October Zelensky gave a speech to the Rada explaining his victory plan: immediate entry into NATO, blanket permission to use allied arms inside Russia, joint-air defense, invasions of Russian territory to create “buffer zones,” a secret “deterrence plan” which was presented to the allies’ national governments and a deal to “protect” Ukraine’s natural resources. NATO membership and joint-air defense would mean general war with Russia, so that is a negative.[\[1493\]](#) They were already pushing their luck in Kursk. The rest of it was fanciful, and none of it likely to help end the war on Ukrainian terms.[\[1494\]](#)

The *Times* later said that Zelensky was even pushing for Tomahawk cruise missiles with a range of more than 1,500 miles, almost surely meant to be rejected. Why? “Military analysts and diplomats” told them that it may well have been “to show Ukrainians that he has done all he can, prepare them for the possibility that Ukraine might have to make a deal and give Ukrainians a convenient scapegoat: the West.”[\[1495\]](#) Fair enough.

## **Negotiate Now**

Major-General Vadym Skibitsky, the deputy head of Ukraine’s military intelligence agency, HUR, said in May 2024 that he understood Russia would soon complete their reconquest of Donetsk and correctly predicted a push into Kharkiv. He also recognized that Ukrainian forces were simply outmanned by the invaders and simply could not win the war.[\[1496\]](#)

In the summer of 2024, an incredible 94 percent of the American people, and 88 percent of Europeans, said they wanted a negotiated settlement.[\[1497\]](#) In February, 72 percent of Ukrainians had said the same.



[\[1498\]](#) The Biden administration cited “democracy” as their excuse for every drop of blood they shed, every dollar they print and every American internet post they censor. But they clearly did not care the slightest bit what the people of the country think. The new Trump administration should send someone capable to hammer out a deal if the secretary of state is not up to it. Ukraine’s territorial integrity is a peripheral interest to America, while it’s obviously central to Russia’s policy.

In September 2024, German Chancellor Scholz called for a new peace conference to be held, and to include Russia this time after all three parties in his coalition suffered defeats in regional elections against two parties that opposed support for Ukraine in the war.[\[1499\]](#)

## **Population Collapse**

The real tragedy is that, just as Professor Mearsheimer predicted, Ukraine has been wrecked. The Russians have not only killed at least high tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians, but they have also waged a devastating war on Ukraine’s civilian infrastructure, especially electricity production and distribution facilities.[\[1500\]](#)

By late July 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said that more than 6 million Ukrainians had fled into Europe, including more than 1.2 million of them into Russia, and another 500,000 elsewhere throughout the world. They said it was the largest civilian displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War. The UN said that another 3.7 million people were internally displaced.[\[1501\]](#)

This means the war has displaced between 25 and 30 percent of the entire Ukrainian population within and outside Ukraine. Many of them will never come home. With birth rates already extremely low for Millennial families,[\[1502\]](#) this could be devastating for the future of the country. [\[1503\]](#) In September 2024, Ukrainska Pravda reported, based on CIA data, that Ukraine had the highest mortality rate and lowest birth rate in the world.[\[1504\]](#)

## **Russia's Pyrrhic Victory**

### **A Less-Russian Ukraine**

One of the major ways Russia's invasion has undermined their own interests is by taking Russians out of Ukraine. When there are free and fair elections in Ukraine, the guy with more support in the eastern, Russian-leaning parts of the country tends to win, such as in 2004, 2010 and 2019. That is what necessitated such heavy-handed intervention by the Americans to cancel the results of those elections in the first place. So even if it had been easy for Russia to take over the Donbas like it had in Crimea, the policy still would create obvious problems for them. If the Russian Federation's annexation of those oblasts stands, they are removing Ukraine's pro-Russian population centers from civil society and government, leaving a more nationalist substate behind, one they have bombed to pieces, that has much less incentive to compromise in the future.

So if the Russian war is successful on its own terms, and they succeed in absorbing such a large percentage of the Russian-speaking eastern

population, they will now be leaving behind a western-Ukraine dominated government in Kiev for the duration, with little chance that a fair election would install a pro-Russian government ever again. More likely they would have a fanatically anti-Russian regime there instead, possibly one intent on oppressing the ethnic Russians left inside Ukraine's new borders.

By the flawed logic of government intervention, to prevent this, Russia would have to take Kiev, or worse, march all the way to Romania and Poland and push the Ukrainian-speaking populations out of the country entirely, or at least enough to completely break their resistance, which would mean a far more catastrophic conflict and diplomatic crisis. And it would lead to another major problem: they would have started a war to keep NATO off their border, then moved their border to NATO lines instead. Otherwise, they would have a much more adversarial Ukrainian state on their new border for the indefinite future.

And it has not been easy like Crimea. Putin's goal of reabsorbing the Donbas and Novorossiia without conquering the capital and truly vanquishing his opposing army has left Ukraine with the ability to continually replenish their forces with young men, and the allies to resupply them with weapons they have used to resist for years, with no end in sight.

## **Ukraine's Same Problem**

Conversely, if the Ukrainians succeed in reabsorbing the Donbas, they would be stuck with a pro-Russian population that they have treated as foreign enemies for the past decade. That could pose a serious challenge to Ukrainian nationalists at the ballot box, again giving Russia veto power

over their foreign policy, which was invoked as Ukraine's reason to refuse to implement the Minsk II deal.[\[1505\]](#) At this point, at least some influential Ukrainians are saying they would be better off without the Donbas anyway. "We need to amputate Donbas like a gangrenous limb," a former senior member of Zelensky's cabinet said. "Nothing good will ever come to Ukraine from Donbas."[\[1506\]](#)

## **Militarizing Ukraine**

Before his failed uprising and assassination, the Wagner Group's Prigozhin had complained that "as for demilitarization [of Ukraine] . . . they had, say, 500 tanks at the start of the special operation, now they have 5,000 tanks. They had 20,000 people who could fight back then, now 400,000 can. In what way have we demilitarized it? It turns out we did the opposite—we fucking militarized it."

## **Don't Call It a Comeback**

Putin's war has not only played into the Western narrative of the defensive nature of all their provocations, but has seemed to solidify the alliance against Russia, especially in the east. Poland has been providing massive assistance to Ukraine in the war, including bases for training, weapons transfers and the rest. Their government now says they want the United States to station nuclear weapons on their territory.[\[1507\]](#)

Then again, the war has revealed the weakness of the alliance in a few ways as well. Just as the economic war has seemingly backfired, the

conflict has shown the limits of American and allied forces in Europe. Our navy may have them overmatched, but in a tank and artillery war, Western limitations are more obvious than ever. The U.S. and allied countries complain that they are running out of shells[\[1508\]](#) and the more sophisticated rocket artillery systems[\[1509\]](#) and have been reluctant to part with their tanks,[\[1510\]](#) which were proven obsolete anyway. More than \$175 billion bought them less than a stalemate in Ukraine. It is becoming less clear whether it is the West or the Russians who are being strategically drained and defeated here.

## **Alliance Enlarged**

The war in Ukraine has given NATO its reason to exist that they were desperately searching for in vain just three years before, solidifying the alliance. Despite Russian warnings,[\[1511\]](#) Finland and Sweden joined the alliance in April 2023 and March 2024, respectively.[\[1512\]](#) As Biden said in January 2023, when announcing the future delivery of U.S. Abrams tanks, Putin “thought that he was going to . . . end up with the Finlandization of Europe. Well, he’s got the NATOization of Finland. He’s gotten something that he never intended.”[\[1513\]](#) As NATO head Stoltenberg boasted while also admitting the truth about the motive for the war: “He went to war to prevent NATO, more NATO, close to his borders. He has got the exact opposite.”[\[1514\]](#)

Russian Foreign Ministry official Sergei Belyayev said, “It is obvious that [if] Finland and Sweden join NATO . . . there will be serious military and political consequences,” adding that it would “require changing the

whole palette of relations with these countries and . . . retaliatory measures.”[\[1515\]](#) Russia then moved anti-ship missiles close to their border and threatened to deploy nuclear weapons to Kaliningrad. Putin said that “if military contingents and military infrastructure were deployed in Finland or neighboring states, we would be obliged to respond symmetrically and raise the same threats for those territories where threats have arisen for us.”[\[1516\]](#)

Once Finland and Sweden finally did join the Atlantic alliance, they immediately participated in NATO’s Steadfast Defender exercises, and put their, and our, and Russia’s population in far greater danger, not less.[\[1517\]](#) Putin ridiculed their obvious folly in an interview with Russian state media, calling it an “absolutely senseless step from the point of view of ensuring their own national interests. . . . [W]e didn’t have troops [on the Finnish border], now we will. There were no weapons systems there, now they will appear.” He then said he would move troops to the border,[\[1518\]](#) along with nuclear-capable[\[1519\]](#) Iskander-M missiles.[\[1520\]](#)

Professor Mearsheimer insists that in all his studies of great powers, he has learned they are always fearful of losing that power, and that deliberately making them feel surrounded, while it may be appealing to the sensibilities of their antagonists, is instead a very wrongheaded policy which could lead them to react in highly disproportionate ways. In this case, adding more and more members to NATO in the middle of a war, and promising that Ukraine may still join someday, only increases the risk of escalation rather than making the bully back down, as the Western hawks would have it.[\[1521\]](#) “This will certainly lead to tension. We can only regret

this,” said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. “We had excellent relations with Finland. No one threatened anyone, there were no problems or complaints against each other. No one infringed on anyone’s interests, there was mutual respect.”[\[1522\]](#)

In January–May 2024, NATO held its largest exercises since the last Cold War in 1988, with more than 90,000 troops from all now 32 allied countries participating, practicing for conflict with Russia. It must be for the public relations, as any real conventional war with the Russian Federation would turn nuclear in a day or two and they all know it.[\[1523\]](#)

In June, NATO announced that they had succeeded in putting together a combined army of 500,000 men at “high readiness,” 300,000 of whom they said were on standby for war with Russia.[\[1524\]](#) They also said they had prepared five major land corridors they could use to rush troops to Romania, Poland and Finland.[\[1525\]](#)

In July, the Finnish parliament ratified a Defence Cooperation Agreement (DCA) allowing the U.S. Navy full access to 15 of its ports.[\[1526\]](#) Russia promised to respond with “necessary measures,” including, menacingly, “of a military-technical nature,” the same phrase they used to describe the invasion of Ukraine.[\[1527\]](#)

Meanwhile, Secretary of State Blinken insisted that what is left of Ukraine will join NATO someday, ongoing border dispute and all.[\[1528\]](#) Hopefully he was just lying and they were telling the truth the other times when they admitted the door was actually closed.

Perhaps not. In July 2024, NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary with a big event in Washington, where they announced that “Ukraine’s future is in

NATO,” and that it was on an “irreversible path” to membership in the alliance, while pledging €40 billion in further military and economic support.[\[1529\]](#)

The fact that Ukraine was certain to lose the war just as it had already lost so much of its territory seemed not to factor into Western thinking on the matter, unless they were trying to keep the war going longer.

Many experts cited in this book signed an open letter warning against any further moves to integrate Ukraine into the alliance, citing the obvious fact, for one, that “[t]he closer NATO comes to promising that Ukraine will join the alliance once the war ends, the greater the incentive for Russia to keep fighting the war and killing Ukrainians so as to forestall Ukraine’s integration.” The skeptics added, “Admitting Ukraine would reduce the security of the United States and NATO Allies, at considerable risk to all.”[\[1530\]](#)

## **Frozen Conflicts**

### **The Arctic Melts**

The U.S. has been preparing for great power conflict with Russia and China over dominance of the resources of the Arctic, especially now that the Northwest Passage above Canada has finally opened up travel between the North Atlantic and North Pacific oceans.[\[1531\]](#) The problem, of course, is that the Russians are already there, with 15,000 miles of coastline above the circle, approximately 53 percent of the Arctic’s seaboard.[\[1532\]](#) In recent



years they have invested billions in public and private funds to develop resources and reopened old Soviet naval bases there as well.[\[1533\]](#)

In June 2024, the Defense Department released their new Arctic Strategy. They said that due in part to the “accession of Finland and Sweden to the NATO Alliance . . . this increasingly accessible region is becoming a venue for strategic competition” with Russia and China, and therefore “directs the Department to enhance its Arctic capabilities, deepen engagement with Allies and partners, and exercise our forces to build readiness for operations at high latitudes.” They said the addition of the two new nations to the alliance “strengthen[ed] the Western security architecture in the region,” but acknowledged they were creating their own security dilemma, saying that “an extended Alliance border with Russia in the Arctic increases the need for DoD to manage risk in the region.”

The Russians and the Chinese have their own Northwest Passage between Eastern Asia and Europe—the “polar silk road”—they would like to develop. Interestingly, the document stresses this aspect rather than Russia’s modest military buildup in the area, though they do not really propose to do anything overt about it but expand their own forces and operations in the region.[\[1534\]](#) The navy has spent hundreds of millions of dollars building up the port at Nome, Alaska, with an eye toward turning it into a coast guard and naval base. They have also transferred dozens of F-35 fighters to Alaska, while the navy and special operations forces train.[\[1535\]](#)

In July 2024, U.S. and Canadian fighters intercepted Russian and Chinese bombers off the coast of Alaska,[\[1536\]](#) while Russian fighters

intercepted American bombers near the Finnish border.[\[1537\]](#)

## **Korea Scalds**

Russia had mostly stayed out of the permanent standoff on the Korean Peninsula since the end of the Cold War. But in gratitude for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) supplying massive numbers of artillery shells to Russia, during a trip to Pyongyang in June 2024, Putin made a deal with the North promising mutual aid if either country were to be attacked[\[1538\]](#) and raised the possibility of future weapons sales. South Korean leaders then said they would reconsider American requests to supply arms to Ukraine. The Russians, in turn, threatened: "As for the supply of lethal weapons to the combat zone in Ukraine, it would be a very big mistake, I hope it will not happen." Putin continued, "If it does, then we too will then make respective decisions, which South Korea's current leadership is unlikely to be pleased with."[\[1539\]](#)

In October 2024, just as this book was going to press, the U.S. and Ukraine claimed that North Korea had deployed a few thousand troops to Russia, allegedly to fight the Ukrainians in Kursk.[\[1540\]](#) Putin's government officially denied it, though he seemed not to.[\[1541\]](#) This was potentially a major change in the situation, not just on the tactical level on the battlefield, but regarding South Korea's and other reactions and counter-reactions to having the far-flung, East Asian nation involved in Russia's fight so far from home. It also raises the danger of battlefield experience gained on the part of the DPRK's forces and who-knows-what.

The Pentagon spokesman[\[1542\]](#) and the new NATO chief[\[1543\]](#) both crowed that this surely showed desperation on the part of the Russian government, even though DNI Haines reported at the beginning of the year that their army was only growing,[\[1544\]](#) and Putin had already ordered a new mobilization in mid-September.[\[1545\]](#)

These were unnecessarily heightened tensions at one of the most dangerous potential flashpoints for nuclear war in the world[\[1546\]](#)—more collateral damage from an unnecessary war, and another diplomatic catastrophe for the Biden administration.

## **Transnistria Steams**

In 2024, the locals, complaining about “economic coercion” from the Moldovan government in the form of new trade taxes, asked for help from Russia.[\[1547\]](#) And Putin thankfully ignored them.[\[1548\]](#) The U.S. assured the Moldovans they were “watching” the situation closely and “firmly” supported Moldova’s “internationally recognized border” that they have not controlled in more than three decades.[\[1549\]](#) On cue, somebody attacked a military base there with a drone strike on March 17, 2024, which local authorities blamed on Ukraine,[\[1550\]](#) while the Moldovan government called it a Russian provocation.[\[1551\]](#)

If Putin and his forces mean to take Transnistria, they will almost certainly have to take Odesa and the rest of the Black Sea coast first. More likely, they are just trying to stir up a bit of extra trouble for their Western enemies as Moldova prepared to hold a vote on whether to join the EU.[\[1552\]](#) It passed—barely.[\[1553\]](#)

## **Bosnia Simmers**

Perhaps due to some level of Russian interference,[\[1554\]](#) or simply the unsustainable nature of Bill Clinton's violently imposed agreements, in 2023 and 2024 things started heating back up between the Muslim-dominated government in Sarajevo and the Republika Srpska in Bosnia, as well as between the Serbian government and that of the Kosovo NATO protectorate. In Bosnia, Republika Srpska President Milorad Dodik had raised the idea of declaring independence from Sarajevo over complaints that they were essentially trying to override the Dayton agreement and assert more sovereignty over the Bosnian Serbs.[\[1555\]](#) Though he seems to have backed down, the problem is certainly not solved.[\[1556\]](#) Dodik, perhaps sensing a color revolution coming, also passed a new law requiring NGOs who receive foreign funding to register and label their papers with markings that stipulate such, prompting the Council of Europe to officially complain.[\[1557\]](#) They went ahead and passed it anyway.[\[1558\]](#)

In January 2024, Biden ordered F-16 fighter-bombers to fly over Bosnia to “underline U.S. support for its territorial integrity” against “secessionist activity” by the Republika Srpska.[\[1559\]](#)

## **Kosovo Boils Over**

In May 2023, 90 NATO peacekeepers and 50 protesters were injured in a riot that began after Serbian Kosovars objected to a claimed victory by ethnic Albanians in local elections, which the Serbs had boycotted and whose turnout was only 3.5 percent.[\[1560\]](#) Secretary Blinken condemned

them for disobeying his advice and escalating the situation, and issued a joint statement with France, Germany, Italy and Britain rebuking them too. [\[1561\]](#) The U.S. then kicked Kosovo out of the Defender Europe NATO exercises as punishment for their overly violent reaction to the protest and sent 700 more peacekeeping troops to join the occupation. [\[1562\]](#) Despite U.S. meddling and pressure, the governments in Belgrade still refuse to recognize Kosovo's independence or join the sanctions regime against Russia. [\[1563\]](#)

According to Biden administration officials, in September 2023, the Serbs began amassing troops at the new international border, implicitly threatening to invade. After the Americans spread the word among their European allies, threats started being issued and the Serbs backed down. [\[1564\]](#) In early 2024, Kosovar authorities banned the Serbian currency, which was widely used among the few Serbs left there after the Kosovo Liberation Army's ethnic cleansing campaign following the 1999 war. This led to a contentious fight at the UN, where Serbia accused the Kosovars of an attempt to make the quality of life for the Serb minority so bad that they would give up and leave for Serbia. Even the U.S. ambassador, Linda Thomas-Greenfield, said the U.S. opposed the action, as well as recent so-called "law enforcement operations" targeting the Serb minority. [\[1565\]](#)

These conflicts may very well be heating up due to Putin's interference, as the American government claims. Not that they have proved it, but it would make sense for them to move Serbian pieces on the chessboard to distract and entangle Western governments in another

simmering conflict, or at least threaten to, in the middle of the proxy war in Ukraine. Then again, even Blinken admits the Albanians started it this time.

## **Georgia Liquefies**

In March 2023, the government of Georgia worked to pass a Foreign Agents Registration Act, like we have in the United States. “The bill’s authors said it would make clear when the work of entities is financed by representatives of foreign states, and it was modeled on the U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938,” the AP reported.[\[1566\]](#)

It said that any civic groups that received more than 20 percent of their funding from abroad had to declare themselves foreign agents. U.S.-supported President Salome Zourabichvili[\[1567\]](#) swore to veto it from America, where she was on an official visit.[\[1568\]](#) Fistfights broke out in the parliament over the new law on its first read.[\[1569\]](#)

In an action reminiscent of recent color-coded revolutions, groups backed by the NED and American NGOs[\[1570\]](#) poured into the streets to denounce this “authoritarianism” and alleged turn away from Europe, in some cases throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at police.[\[1571\]](#) The protesters also attempted to storm parliament again,[\[1572\]](#) as they did during the Rose Revolution coup of 2003.[\[1573\]](#)

Georgia is a very poor country. When the NED comes in throwing around more than a million dollars per year[\[1574\]](#) for “activists” to toe their line, it is no problem at all to create massive mobs on demand.[\[1575\]](#)

Western media immediately fell in line with the narrative that this was a “Russian-style law.” The *New York Times* called it “one of the most

heavy-handed tools of Putinism”—even though its sponsors cited the American FARA law of 1938 as its model. The *Times* provided many claims, but in 2,000 words no evidence or even a reason to believe the Russians had anything to do with it.[\[1576\]](#) By claiming this law—not banning but merely identifying NGOs and media outlets as foreign agents—would hurt pro-Western forces in the country far more than Russian ones, they gave away the game. This is not what “the Georgian people” want. It is what Washington wants from them. Those who go along get paid with U.S. tax dollars. Those who do not are smeared as agents of the Kremlin.

In a perfect reflection of the hubris and lack of self-awareness of the Western imperial class, the BBC wrote that “[h]istorically, the term ‘agent’ in Russia and Georgia has the meaning of ‘spy’ and ‘traitor,’ giving a negative connotation to the work done by civil society,” adding, “It suggests they are acting in the interest of foreign forces rather than doing good for the country and society.”[\[1577\]](#)

Of course, the efforts of the West are completely selfless and benevolent. Any misunderstanding is due to a language barrier between our side and our new eastern wards. Someone just needs to explain it to them slowly. The U.S. Embassy in Tbilisi issued a statement calling their parliament’s vote a “dark day for Georgia’s democracy.” They went on to explain what was at stake, saying the new law was “incompatible with the people of Georgia’s clear desire for European integration and its democratic development.” They said that “these laws will damage Georgia’s relations with its strategic partners and . . . raise real questions about the ruling party’s commitment to Euro-Atlantic integration.”[\[1578\]](#)

State Department spokesman Ned Price added that the U.S. was very concerned the new law “would strike at some of the very rights that are central to the aspirations of the people of Georgia.”[\[1579\]](#) Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs James O’Brien threatened sanctions against lawmakers from the Georgian Dream party who supported it,[\[1580\]](#) while White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said passage of the law would “compel us to fundamentally reassess our relationship with Georgia.”[\[1581\]](#) New USAID director Samantha Power, having learned nothing about unintended consequences of foreign interventionism from the catastrophic results of the Libyan war she championed in the Obama years,[\[1582\]](#) declared that the new Georgian FARA law “gravely threatens Georgia’s Euro-Atlantic future and the ability of Georgians to fulfill their own economic, social, and other aspirations. I call upon the Georgian Parliament to drop these proposed laws.”[\[1583\]](#)

George Soros’s Open Society Georgia Foundation hilariously declared: “This bill aims to leave defenseless the abused children and women; people with disabilities, minorities, scientists, workers . . . socially vulnerable families, farmers, miners, internally displaced [and] homeless.” But then they got to the real point: “Adopting this bill will . . . also damage our aspirations of Euro-Atlantic development. This law will obstruct our path to membership in the EU as this law was found illegal in the EU.”[\[1584\]](#)

The Western powers and their sock puppets won. The parliament dropped their attempt to limit foreign intervention in their country in the face of massive foreign intervention in their country.[\[1585\]](#)



However, against warnings from the EU[\[1586\]](#) and U.S. State Department,[\[1587\]](#) the Georgian foreign agents law again passed the parliament in May 2024, leading to massive protests.[\[1588\]](#) Perhaps that is because there are more than 10,000 foreign-backed NGOs operating in Georgia, signing even more paychecks.[\[1589\]](#) “The NGO sector is the largest and most important lift into the upper middle class,” an activist explained to *The Nation*. “They want to protect their rents.”[\[1590\]](#) The movement amounted to what analyst Brad Pearce called an “organized labor protest by the foreign influence industry.”[\[1591\]](#) Imagine a group called “Transparency International” fretting that they will have to disclose their foreign donors.[\[1592\]](#)

The foreign ministers of the Baltic states and Iceland joined the protesters in the streets.[\[1593\]](#) President Zourabichvili vetoed the law,[\[1594\]](#) but the ruling Georgian Dream party had the votes to override it.[\[1595\]](#) While opponents claim Georgian Dream is a pro-Kremlin party since its founder, Bidzina Ivanishvili, made his fortune in Russia, the party’s record is one of embracing the EU and shunning the Russians’ EEU.[\[1596\]](#)

Opposition parliamentarian Tako Charkviani threatened after the law was passed: “Believe me, there will be a color revolution in Georgia.”

A few months later, Georgian Dream won the parliamentary elections of October 2024. President Zourabichvili, the same lady brought in from France to be the puppet foreign minister after the Rose Revolution of 2003,[\[1597\]](#) along with various so-called “election observers”—of course backed by America’s International Republican Institute (IRI) and National

Democratic Institute (NDI)[[1598](#)]<sup>1598</sup>—and a mission from the EU,<sup>1599</sup> denounced the results, saying they represented Russia’s “takeover” of the country.<sup>1600</sup> Tens of thousands of protesters turned out to demand the election results be “annulled.” While explaining why this was so important to the West, the AP stopped to remind readers that Georgia is a tiny little country “between Russia and Turkey,” that they could otherwise not find on a map to save their own lives, where the regime had been growing “more authoritarian” recently. Heydar Aliyev in Azerbaijan next door must have thought that was pretty funny. The protesters, they said, had already foresworn negotiations and compromises with the ruling party, and had promised to fight “until victory.” They did also note that Zourabichvili “did not provide specific details or present evidence of Russia’s involvement in vote theft.”<sup>1601</sup> She told protesters, “I spoke to six presidents, including the presidents of EU member states. I spoke to foreign ministers,” and that all but Hungary’s Victor Orban rejected the results. *Politico* reported, “The opposition wants Western nations to help overturn the results of the vote,” and “vowed to seek international support to overturn” the election. They falsely claimed that observers disputing the results were “independent,” unless they were strictly referring to their relationship with Georgia’s national government. They also said crowds were smaller than those opposing the anti-registration act in the spring, and that momentum did not seem to be with them.<sup>1602</sup>

The Biden administration also claimed the election must have been rigged,<sup>1603</sup> threatening sanctions and other undefined “consequences” for

their misbehavior,[\[1604\]](#) and demanded an investigation and the repeal of the foreign agent law.[\[1605\]](#)

“We’re going to watch very carefully as events unfold in the next few days,” a senior U.S. government official ominously warned. “Obviously, Georgian citizens have a right to freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and it’s going to be critical that the government fully respect [the] rule of law and fundamental freedoms.” This was reminiscent of Victoria Nuland’s threats to Viktor Yanukovych in December 2013 that he had no right to clear public spaces or government buildings that had been seized by those seeking to overthrow him, and that if he did, it would be the pretext for the next stage in escalation by the United States.[\[1606\]](#)

## **Armenia Sublimates**

One consequence of Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan’s subservience to the United States, is that he lost the weight of Russia’s protection,[\[1607\]](#) and lost the ethnic Armenian enclave of Artsakh or Nagorno-Karabakh to Azerbaijan in a swift ethnic cleansing campaign in September 2023.[\[1608\]](#) This was a result of the devastating autumn 2020 Second Nagorno-Karabakh war. At the end of that conflict, Russian troops replaced Armenian ones in the enclave.[\[1609\]](#) During the 2023 cleansing campaign, they stood by and watched as 120,000 people were expelled.[\[1610\]](#) Azeri President Ilham Aliyev then threatened to cut a corridor across Armenia to the Azeri enclave of Nakhchivan on the Armenian-Turkish border.[\[1611\]](#) After Aliyev demanded sovereignty over formerly Azeri villages inside Armenia,[\[1612\]](#) they had no choice but to give in.[\[1613\]](#)

This was all fine with the liberal, rules-based international order because the hereditary, aggressive military dictator of Azerbaijan is their guy.[\[1614\]](#)

After the loss of Artsakh, Pashinyan froze participation in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and threatened to leave.  
[\[1615\]](#) Russia warned them not to.[\[1616\]](#)

## **The Baltics Bubble**

There is no real reason to fear that Russia would invade the Baltic states. They do not have much to fight about, and they do have that war guarantee from NATO. Then again, two of the three have fairly large ethnic Russian minorities, and territory long-considered Russian, such as the Estonian city of Narva,[\[1617\]](#) and the alliance is engaging in the kind of forward deterrence that could just as easily provoke another avoidable conflict. For example, Germany is now set to permanently station troops in Lithuania, at a base right near the Russian border with Belarus.[\[1618\]](#) Like American forces in South Korea, they are meant to be a tripwire that the enemy dare not cross because the worst consequences await—but if he does anyway, then where does that leave Europe, and the rest of the world? All other things being equal, sometimes a tough defensive stance may be appropriate in circumstances like these. But the West does not have a very good track record lately when it comes to correctly calibrating their deterrence—provocation dial.

## **The Real Enemy**

## **Bigger Fish to Fry**

It is a fact. Al Qaeda-tied jihadists are still fighting Russia in Ukraine. NPR even ran a piece attempting to rehabilitate them as simply a bunch of great guys helping Ukraine defend themselves, emphasizing that Chechen soldiers are fighting in the Russian army there too.[\[1619\]](#)

The Polish magazine *Dziennik Polski* interviewed a Chechen fighter in Ukraine who was a veteran of the early-2000s war in the Russian republic, as well as the U.S.- and allied-backed jihadist invasion of Syria. The headline reads, “Abdul Hakim: Don’t think of us as terrorists,” but the man then goes on to explain that this is exactly what he and his friends are: “mujahideen” holy warriors out to kill Russians wherever they can find them. He said they had signed an agreement with the Ukrainian government and planned to recruit 1,000 men to join the fight.[\[1620\]](#) Ukraine’s military intelligence agency posted a video online showing Hakim and confirming his and the Chechen Division’s role in the International Legion fighting Russia in Bakhmut.[\[1621\]](#)

As Haid Haid of the Royal Institute for International Affairs in London pointed out,[\[1622\]](#) many jihadists moved on to join their friends fighting in Ukraine after being kicked out of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham’s mini al Qaeda state in Syria’s Idlib Province in 2021.[\[1623\]](#)

## **It’s Not Over Yet**

By necessity, the U.S. and Russia still share at least limited amounts of information about the threat of al Qaeda and ISIS terrorism, with the U.S.

helping Russia to thwart attacks on its soil at least twice during Trump's first term[\[1624\]](#) and even during the Biden administration. One day after Russian police killed a group of terrorists plotting to attack a Moscow synagogue, in February 2024, the U.S. Embassy warned them of another impending attack in which Americans were said to be in danger.[\[1625\]](#) But on March 22, Tajik ISIS-K terrorists attacked a theater in Moscow, killing 144 and wounding more than 180.[\[1626\]](#) ISIS claimed credit for the massacre[\[1627\]](#) and posted bodycam video to prove it.[\[1628\]](#)

American officials for some reason admitted (boasted?) to the *New York Times* that they refused to “share any information about the plot beyond what was necessary” before the attack.[\[1629\]](#)

ISIS-K (for Khorasan, an old name for the northeastern Persian Empire in modern-day Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan), as the U.S. calls it, began its life as an Afghan government-backed group of Pakistani terrorists who turned on their masters.[\[1630\]](#) There is no reason to believe they are working for the U.S. or other Western intelligence agencies now. The U.S. specializes in making, not controlling, Frankenstein monsters. Putin and his security forces are responsible for their own negligence, but his skepticism toward American intentions with recent warnings are in part a result of the U.S. government taking their eye off the real danger and instead targeting Russia, our would-be partner in the terror wars.[\[1631\]](#) Not that al Qaeda or ISIS could destroy our countries. They are just the only enemy on the planet truly motivated to kill us, and Russians and the others, mostly for what our governments have done to them.[\[1632\]](#)

It would be nice to think that the terror wars are over, but, nurtured on and off over the years by the U.S. and its allies, these groups continue to blow back against the people of both our nations. It was al Qaeda, not Russia, who slaughtered nearly 3,000 of our people on September 11, 2001, [\[1633\]](#) not to mention their shoe, [\[1634\]](#) underpants, [\[1635\]](#) printer cartridge, [\[1636\]](#) Fort Hood, [\[1637\]](#) Pensacola [\[1638\]](#) and Corpus Christie [\[1639\]](#) plots, some of which were successfully carried out. It was ISIS-K who slaughtered 170 Afghan civilians, 11 U.S. marines, a soldier and a navy corpsman at the Kabul airport during the withdrawal of August–September 2021. [\[1640\]](#) They also attacked the Russian Embassy in Kabul, killing six, in 2022. [\[1641\]](#) America’s wars against the bin Ladenites’ other enemies, including Russia [\[1642\]](#)—and for that matter Iran [\[1643\]](#) and their Iraqi, [\[1644\]](#) Syrian, [\[1645\]](#) Lebanese [\[1646\]](#) and Yemeni [\[1647\]](#) friends in the Middle East, or their Taliban rivals in Afghanistan [\[1648\]](#)—are truly benefitting only the worst enemies of the American people. [\[1649\]](#)

Not that we should ally with those countries in offensive attacks—our government has proven it cannot be trusted with such a mandate [\[1650\]](#)—but undermining other nations’ fights against al Qaeda, ISIS (al Qaeda in Iraq and Syria) and ISIS-K amounts to treason against the public in the name of a poorly conceived grand strategy.

But the American foreign policy establishment cannot break out of their anti-Russia fever. Just like when dealing with Iran and their so-called Shi’ite “axis of resistance” in the Middle East, Washington’s resentment against al Qaeda for their kamikaze attack on the Pentagon evaporates. In one example, after the Islamic State killed 224 people in the October 2015

bombing of Russian Metrojet flight 9268 out of Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, U.S. officials “delighted” in its destruction. “U.S. spies root for ISIS-Russia war,” Nancy Yousef and Shane Harris reported in the Daily Beast.[\[1651\]](#)

For the 2024 Moscow attack, Putin himself blamed Ukraine. Russian authorities say they followed the four surviving shooters for 230 miles southwest until it was clear they were headed to Ukraine. Though it is within the realm of possibility due to the presence of some bin Ladenites among Ukraine’s volunteer forces, the author knows of no information to substantiate the claim. It can be very hard to prove for certain who put some low-level terrorist gunmen up to their acts ultimately.

Echoing Bill Clinton’s self-professed innocence after Bosnia, Kosovo and September 11,[\[1652\]](#) Putin wondered aloud, “Are radical and even terrorist Islamic organizations really interested in striking Russia, which today stands for a fair solution to the escalating Middle East conflict?” Favoring some Muslims in some places is never going to be enough for the bin Ladenites as long as our governments occupy and intervene against others.

On June 24, 2024, terrorists in Dagestan attacked a synagogue, two Orthodox churches and a police station, killing 20. They cut the throat of Rev. Nikolai Kotelnikov, a Russian Orthodox priest, before burning his church to the ground.[\[1653\]](#)

That same month, former FBI agent Ali Soufan, citing the recent arrest of eight suspicious illegal aliens from Tajikistan in New York, Los Angeles and Philadelphia after sneaking into the country at the Mexican border, paraphrased the CIA’s ignored warning from August 2001,[\[1654\]](#) saying,



“Islamic State Khorasan Determined to Attack in U.S.”[\[1655\]](#) This is no idle threat. The federal government has alternatively groomed and provoked these bin Ladenite madmen by the thousands over the last 40 years, while continuing every policy that motivated their betrayal in the first place. [\[1656\]](#) From Eastern Europe to the Caucasus to the Balkans and the Middle East, America’s security forces continue to put our people in grave danger.

## **Taylor Swift**

In July 2024, the CIA claimed to have helped national police thwart an ISIS plot to attack a stadium in Vienna, Austria during a concert by pop star Taylor Swift.[\[1657\]](#) They said “tens of thousands” could have been killed, which makes sense if there was, in fact, a credible plan to bomb the columns and collapse a stadium full of young children and their parents. This does not at all appear to be another case of the FBI entrapping an idiot into agreeing to some farfetched plot,[\[1658\]](#) but the real kind. Bin Ladenite terrorism remains the greatest threat to the people of the United States and the West. Just imagine that it had happened and react to that accordingly.

In 1993, some Egyptian Islamic Jihad terrorists almost succeeded in collapsing one World Trade Center tower into the other mid-day.[\[1659\]](#) Only six people were killed, and the ATF killed six more at the Branch Davidians’ house in Waco, Texas two days later, kicking off that tragic 51-day siege,[\[1660\]](#) so people mostly just forgot about it.

This was a catastrophic failure of imagination. Instead of the American public and political establishment getting serious about the dangers of jobless Arab-Afghan fighters wandering the West, looking for targets,

[\[1661\]](#) after such a potentially disastrous near-miss, they continued playing the same game all through the 1990s, until they hit the two towers again on September 11. That woke up even the most cynical covert operators to the danger—that is, until the so-called “redirection” of 2006.[\[1662\]](#) The U.S. has mostly returned to the bin Ladenites’ side since then, while still continuing the policies that radicalize them against the civilian population of this country, especially support for Israel’s brutality against the Palestinians and Lebanese.[\[1663\]](#)

The U.S. government continues to put Austrian and American children at risk along with them.

## **Partners**

### **Oil, Gas, Satellites**

So what is it all about?

Well, it isn’t the threat of Soviet Communism, dead and gone more than 30 years now. Putin was correct when he consistently referred to America as Russia’s “partner” for all those years. In 2021, the U.S. imported somewhere around 20 million barrels of Russian oil and gas per month.[\[1664\]](#)

On February 19, 2022, just three days before the war began, the U.S., Russia and Ukraine successfully launched a rocket and satellite into orbit together.[\[1665\]](#) In July, the two major powers announced a new deal to continue to fly each other’s astronauts to the International Space Station.[\[1666\]](#) In October 2022—in the middle of this horrible proxy war—the

American SpaceX corporation launched a rocket carrying a Russian cosmonaut to the station.[\[1667\]](#) Cooperation continues. In September 2024 a Russian rocket launched with 2 cosmonauts and an astronaut aboard to deliver them to the international space station where our guys also get along just fine.[\[1668\]](#)

## **Trudging Forward**

Despite everything, Putin has been pretty good at compartmentalizing different issues and, at least in the recent past, has no problem working on many things with the U.S. while disagreeing on others.

What choice does he really have? The global order went from a bipolar world to a unipolar one, centered in Washington, D.C., three decades ago. Only in the past decade has American influence begun to slowly recede. The U.S., as its foreign policy establishment loves to remind us, is the world's only remaining "superpower." The old ideological conflict over the Soviet Union's communism is long gone. A politically correct crusade against Russia's 2000s-era-style conservatism is a poor substitute.

It may be true that American power is waning in the world, but that is mostly due to W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden's \$10 trillion project destroying the Middle East for the last two decades. The "unipolar moment" could only ever be temporary anyway. Of course Russia, China and India would become wealthier and more influential. It is one of the side effects of helping bring them out of communism.[\[1669\]](#) That is not their fault, but to their credit. So the BRICS rise[\[1670\]](#) and the Americans panic. But as Thomas Graham wrote in *Foreign Affairs*, "Even a

defeated Russia would still retain vast territory in the heart of Eurasia, the richest endowment of natural resources in the world, a colossal nuclear arsenal, and a permanent veto-wielding seat on the UN Security Council, among other assets.” Therefore, “[l]ike it or not, the United States must find a way to live with Russia.”[\[1671\]](#)

He went on to write that if we can re-normalize relations with Russia, we could use them to balance against China.

Or perhaps we could normalize relations with everyone and not worry so much about the Old World’s alliances. Marxism is over. The only global ideological contest now is between America’s “rules-based” world empire and those who resist it.

## **Now What?**

### **A Trillion More**

British and Ukrainian military experts told the London *Times* that in these inflationary times, they are going to need at least another \$300–800 billion in weapons to attempt to match the Russians.[\[1672\]](#)

Once the war is finally over, the World Bank estimates that the financial cost of reconstruction of Ukraine, sure to be picked up by regular Americans, will be more than \$400 billion.[\[1673\]](#) One could safely estimate it will be a few hundred billion more than that by the time they are done. Of course, the people who decide the policy do not have to pay any of that themselves. They just conscript us to work for it instead.[\[1674\]](#)

## Trump Closes a Deal

In April 2024, it was the then-presumed Republican Party presidential nominee Donald J. Trump who broke the stalemate in the House when he declared his support for a “loan” of \$60 billion to Ukraine instead of a straight transfer.[\[1675\]](#) They do not have to pay it back. We do.

A Daily Beast reporter seemed surprised to find that civilians on the Kiev side were dismayed by the news. Due to the country’s extraordinary corruption, they reasoned, it would be enough to prolong the war, but not do any good in the fight.[\[1676\]](#) Officials told the press they hoped it would simply be enough to help Kiev hold the lines; any hope of regaining territory was long gone.[\[1677\]](#)

## Russiagate ’24

During the election season of 2024, the intelligence agencies again created narratives of Russian sabotage and interference in an apparent attempt to solidify support behind Biden’s Ukraine policy, if not the outgoing president himself. They put a piece in the *New York Times* alleging a “probable” Russian troll farm was falsely claiming a Ukrainian troll farm was targeting the 2024 election. The only notable thing about it was the story itself, with U.S. intelligence agencies again choosing to push a narrative about Russian preferences for former President Trump on the American people. The *Times* even cited Clint Watts, the former FBI agent who had blatantly admitted his “Hamilton-68 dashboard,” which supposedly tracked Russian bots and trolls, was an utter fraud.[\[1678\]](#) As

long as Watts spins in the right direction it is good enough for the newspaper of record.[\[1679\]](#)

Another story, reminiscent of the false Russian connection to the Spanish mail bombing campaign of 2023, claimed the Russians were waging a “low-level sabotage” campaign across Europe that made little sense, including supposed attacks on a paint factory in Poland and an Ikea store in Lithuania. American and European officials told the *Times* that these “arsons and attempted arsons . . . are part of a concerted effort by Russia to slow arms transfers to Kyiv and create the appearance of growing European opposition to support for Ukraine.” While admitting that these targets have nothing to do with the war effort, they simply argued that “Russia is trying to sow fear and force European nations to add security throughout the weapons supply chain” by setting a furniture store on fire. They accused the Russian GU, but demonstrated nothing.[\[1680\]](#)

In July 2024, CNN and NBC put out another evidenceless story claiming the Russians were using “information warfare” against the American people, again, supposedly in support of Trump’s candidacy. The DNI’s office told NBC, “We have not observed a shift in Russia’s preferences for the presidential race from past elections, given the role the U.S. is playing with regard to Ukraine and broader policy toward Russia.” But we already know for a fact that John Brennan and James Clapper lied about that back in 2016. Brennan “hand-picked” Hillary Clinton supporters like Andrea Kendall-Taylor[\[1681\]](#) to claim in their also-evidence-free 2017 Intelligence Community Assessment that the Russians preferred Trump. House staff who later reviewed their source materials said that the Russians

considered Trump to be “mercurial,” “unreliable” and “not steady,” but Mrs. Clinton to be “manageable and reflecting continuity.” They saw no evidence the Russians wanted Trump to win back then.[\[1682\]](#) Brennan, a former Communist[\[1683\]](#) and CIA director during Obama’s support for Jabhat al Nusra in Syria, is also a disgraceful liar. Now the spies cite his lies from eight years ago to tell us that nothing has changed. Indeed.

As for the terrifying new Russia “AI-enhanced” troll farm,[\[1684\]](#) the Justice Department “did not detail whether the bot network had been particularly successful in its messaging efforts.”[\[1685\]](#) CNN noted that “ODNI officials did not reveal many specific examples of what they see as Russian election influence activity, but they said it has included familiar tactics such as amplifying influential U.S. voices online to promote the Kremlin’s agenda.”[\[1686\]](#) The deadly and terrifying foreign retweets of Americans who oppose U.S. Russia policy. What will these deadly enemies do to us next?

In September 2024, two months before the election, the intelligence agencies said they assessed that the Kremlin favored Trump again. The only danger they could articulate to the *Times* was that Russian media and websites were “spread[ing] propaganda and disinformation about Ukraine.” They did not attempt to explain just how much influence those efforts might have had on Americans. They said U.S. authorities had seized fake news sites that were made to look like the *Washington Post* and *USA Today*, but cited no evidence that anyone saw these alleged fake sites or were swayed by them in any way.[\[1687\]](#) They also claimed Russian-spread videos had been viewed 16 million times without telling readers that YouTube and

TikTok each average about 41.6 million views per hour all day long—more than Netflix.[\[1688\]](#) Nor did they mention that the videos in question were standard pro-Trump fare, no different than the individuals in question would have put out anyway.

The Justice Department then indicted two RT employees for secretly financing a conservative media organization while accusing RT itself of promoting Trump.[\[1689\]](#) This was more obvious interference by the U.S. government. As the indictment itself acknowledges, RT was kicked off cable TV and YouTube years ago. Their reach in America is nonexistent. The conservatives who were part of this alleged Russian-backed podcast network were already well-established writers and podcasters with their own opinions—including Tim Pool and Benny Johnson—and the Justice Department said they were deceived into believing the company was owned by Americans.[\[1690\]](#) Despite all the headlines, they were not accused of spreading “disinformation.”[\[1691\]](#) More abstract discord-sowing —“amplifying U.S. domestic divisions”—was all, even though the alleged targets of the operation were some of the most prominent figures in conservative alternative media, who may have made money, but would have seen no major change in their audience sizes.[\[1692\]](#) In other words, if one were to take the claims in the indictment at face value, it would amount to not much more than some contractors fleecing RT, with no effect on the American public at all. Judging by the indictment, the investigation had been ongoing for months at least. The timing of the announcement and the subsequent media storm suggest another plan by the Justice Department to tip the electoral scales against the challenger since the targets were all major



pro-Trump boosters and the indictments came just two months before election day.

It is true that since the late W. Bush years, Russian-backed media has taken every opportunity to embarrass the U.S. government. As the silly ICA of 2017 complained, they covered America's wars, the Occupy Wall Street movement, fracking controversies and whatever else they could in a mildly sensationalistic way. The author was an unpaid guest on RT a handful of times in 2010[\[1693\]](#) before deciding to no longer appear, since my agenda is purely parochial,[\[1694\]](#) meant to expose the government for the benefit of our country, no one else's.[\[1695\]](#) But the reality is that while some alternative media figures got some practice being on television, RT and Sputnik's reach was always very limited, and the Americans they featured were saying and doing what they thought was right anyway. Anything that casts doubt on the government's false narratives is deemed by the liars themselves to be "dis-, mis- or mal-information,"[\[1696\]](#) because of course it is.

These indictments were just the feds jerking the American people's chain again, trying to make them feel afraid of something that cannot hurt or affect them in any way. But compare the allegation that Russia overpaid a handful of already-hugely successful podcasters to put out a few more shows each month—which had no effect at all on their overall output, viewership or perspective—to America's intervention in Serbia, Belarus, Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan and the rest. Bush and Soros's Orange Revolution this was not.

In late October, the *New York Times* cited undefined “intelligence assessments” saying that “Russia . . . aims to bolster the candidacy of former President Donald J. Trump, while Iran favors his opponent, Vice President Kamala Harris.” They cited random accounts on Telegram and Gab, sites that have absolutely negligible reach in the United States, along with zero-traffic alleged fake news sites and Facebook accounts, without giving reason to believe any of it, if true, would amount to anything. The American people should take these claims as nothing but lies by our own intelligence agencies, acting as secret police, interfering in the presidential election, again.[\[1697\]](#)

## **Tilting at Windmills**

In late 2023, the Republican Party started to block some aid to Ukraine, for some members out of principle, but for others simply as a way to hurt Biden’s standing and try to get more money for immigration enforcement. Sen. Chris Murphy, who stood on stage with the Social Nationalists and took credit for the regime change of 2014,[\[1698\]](#) threatened that Putin would “[march] into a NATO country” next because of their opposition.[\[1699\]](#)

President Biden again claimed in his 2024 State of the Union address that Russia—directly comparable to Adolf Hitler’s Third Reich in World War II—was determined to spread the war, thus U.S. military support for Ukraine, and presumably his repeated sabotage of peace talks, were defensive moves meant to protect the whole world. “If anybody in this room thinks Putin will stop at Ukraine, I assure you, he will not.” Biden

went on to assert that “Ukraine can stop Putin if we stand with Ukraine and provide the weapons it needs to defend itself.” He incoherently conflated Putin’s claim to the far-eastern and southeastern regions of Ukraine, based on history, shared ethnicity and religion, with a desire to “reestablish the Soviet Union” and go back “to the days when there was NATO and there was that other outfit that Poland, everybody belonged to.” By that he meant the Warsaw Pact, which is an obvious non sequitur to anyone familiar with a map of Europe and the history of the 20th century. When asked whether the United States was on a path to war with Russia, the president mumbled, “No, we’re on a slippery slope for war if we don’t do something about Ukraine,” before drifting off. “It’s just not gonna . . . anyway.”[\[1700\]](#)

In response to this and similar statements, Putin started comparing military spending figures. “In 2022, the U.S. defense spending amounted to \$811 billion, if memory serves, and Russia spent \$72 billion. The difference is more than ten-fold.” He added, “The United States’ defense spending amounts to about 40 percent of the global figure . . . while Russia accounts for 3.5 percent. Considering this difference, are we planning to fight NATO? This is nonsense.” He reiterated what the war was about: “We are defending the people who live in our historical territories,” obviously meaning Russian, not Soviet, lands, then went off again about Russia’s exclusion from post-Cold War European security structures, NATO expansion and the deployment of Western forces in the East. “Did we move towards the borders of the NATO bloc’s member countries? We did not bother anyone. They were moving towards us.” He concluded, “What are we doing? We are only defending our people on our historical territories. It

is therefore complete nonsense when people say that we intend to attack Europe after Ukraine.”[\[1701\]](#)

Putin has blood on his hands, and it is not like he is perfectly sincere here, but the fact remains his narrative simply makes far more sense than the lies American politicians and media tell us all day, which do not add up at all. In fact, the assessment released by the national intelligence director in February 2024 conceded their claims were not true, stating that Russia “almost certainly” does not seek war with the West. “President Vladimir Putin probably believes that Russia has blunted Ukrainian efforts to retake significant territory, that his approach to winning the war is paying off, and that Western and U.S. support to Ukraine is finite.”[\[1702\]](#)

After all, Biden also admitted in so many words that Ukraine was not worth defending anyway: “There are no American soldiers at war in Ukraine, and I am determined to keep it that way,” he promised.[\[1703\]](#) His administration was content to back an army he knew would eventually lose, and was clearly not willing to do what it would take to help them win, since it would not only cost the lives of American GIs, but their entry into the conflict—and their deaths—could serve as obvious tripwires for general war between NATO and the Russian Federation.

In July 2024, under heavy political pressure at home after a terrible performance in a debate with former President Trump, Biden held a summit in Washington celebrating the 75th anniversary of the creation of the NATO alliance. He once again repeated that if Russia were to win the war they would then move on to attack other European countries,[\[1704\]](#) even though the director of national intelligence wrote in February 2024 that “Russia

almost certainly does not want a direct military conflict with U.S. and NATO forces.”[\[1705\]](#) Regardless, Reuters reported NATO’s plan to create up to 50 brigades of 3,000 to 7,000 troops each.[\[1706\]](#) The *Times* seemed to imply the days of promises to help Ukraine regain control over their five lost provinces was over. “While Ukrainian officials insist they are fighting to get their land back, growing numbers of U.S. officials believe that the war is instead primarily about Ukraine’s future in NATO and the European Union.” They actually quoted Ukrainegate figure Eric Ciaramella, now an expert at the Carnegie Endowment, observing that neither side seemed to have the ability to make any major changes to the lines as the stalemate continued. He urged Western leaders to bring Ukraine closer to the EU and NATO as soon as possible to guarantee indefinite support for their war. To their credit, the *Times* also acknowledged that such a move could incentivize the Russians to expand their war goals to include the capital city again if that is what it would take to keep them out of the alliance.[\[1707\]](#)

In what was perhaps an accidentally astonishing portrayal of the elderly Biden’s staff manipulating his position, the *Post* reported the president was wary about the promise to bring NATO into the alliance and had even rejected the language about Ukraine’s “irreversible path” to membership before being overridden by Sullivan and his other senior aides. They pressured him into accepting language about Ukraine’s need to fight corruption as a compromise. Even then, he tried to insist only on using the term “Euro-Atlantic integration,” until under further pressure he accepted the verbiage about NATO membership.[\[1708\]](#) Off-script, Biden had told *Time* in May that the future relationship with Ukraine would only mean

arming them. “It does not mean NATO. I’m the guy who said I’m not prepared to support the NATOization of Ukraine.”[\[1709\]](#)

Britain, Germany, France, Denmark, Belgium, Poland, Canada and Italy have made a big show out of giving security guarantees to Ukraine. [\[1710\]](#) In June 2024, the Biden administration released their own new bilateral security agreement. It simply promised to continue supporting Ukraine in the war and to keep giving them weapons and money.[\[1711\]](#)

## **Cut and Run**

It took the American national security establishment 20 years to admit they could not pacify the Pashtuns of Nangarhar and Kandahar, Afghanistan. If the public is content to wait until they concede their errors, this could also be a very long war. Remember, Plan A was to spend years backing an Afghan-style insurgency against Russian forces after the Ukrainian army was broken. Compared to initial forecasts,[\[1712\]](#) the Ukrainians have done a remarkable job holding their military forces together. But then, even assuming a major Russian breakthrough at some point and the dissolution of Kiev’s army, if nobody stops them, they could just go right back to supporting Nazi-led guerrillas like back in the old days.

Regardless, the longer this war continues, the worse the outcome will clearly be for all sides. All politics aside, the American people must demand an end to U.S. intervention in Ukraine.

# Trump II

“Bwahahaha!”

—Justin Raimondo

# Nice Miss

## Heroes in Error

The 2023–2024 election season included President Biden being forced out of the race by leaders of his own party[1] after his advanced age and possible dementia became too difficult to ignore,[2] his unchallenged replacement on the ticket by his vice president, Kamala Harris,[3] and two different apparent kooks trying to assassinate Donald Trump. The first, in Butler, Pennsylvania, came within a hair's breadth of succeeding,[4] and the second—an avowed supporter of Ukraine[5] who had traveled to the country to help organize volunteer fighters,[6] successfully recruiting at least one Afghan commando[7]—was confronted just minutes before he would have been in range of the former president with an SKS rifle on the golf course at his country club in Palm Beach.[8]

The alleged shooter, Ryan Routh, had been brainwashed by the Democratic Party and TV news into believing that the war in Ukraine was a simple matter of good versus evil.[9] He must have thought he was being a hero in trying to murder a man who said he wanted to end the war. Perhaps he had also been convinced that Ukraine had the slightest chance of regaining lost territory and that Trump could do anything but spare them more losses by forcing a deal. “Ryan was very upset about the fact that Trump was trying to negotiate a deal with Putin instead of trying to really have Ukraine’s back,” a Frenchman whom Routh helped get a position in the Ukrainian army told the *Wall Street Journal*. Multiple Americans,



including a former CIA officer, warned U.S. authorities about his threats against Trump. Neither the FBI nor Secret Service followed up with any of them.[\[10\]](#) The Secret Service's negligence at the scene in Butler was as bad as could be imagined.[\[11\]](#) At Trump's club in Florida, an agent found the shooter before he had a chance to fire at the former president, but, just as negligently, they had failed to clear the entire course.[\[12\]](#)

As this book goes to press in the fall of 2024, results of any official investigations have been kept secret, and the major journalistic institutions seem to have lost interest in both assassination attempts, so details about the shooters, their motives and associations remain a mystery. The two cases revolve around plausible "lone nuts," and perhaps the media deliberately downplayed the stories to avoid inspiring copycat attacks, but both remain too odd to dismiss without serious investigations and accountability.

But all the War Party's lies[\[13\]](#) and threats[\[14\]](#)—and perhaps these attempts on his life—evidently just made people like Trump more. He was elected to a second term as president of the United States in a landslide in November 2024.[\[15\]](#)

Numerous times during the Biden years, Trump had assured audiences that the Russia-Ukraine war would never have happened if he had still been president. Of course this was an unprovable counterfactual. But he has also said he is determined to end it, writing on social media: "I, as your next President of the United States, will bring peace to the world and end the war that has cost so many lives and devastated countless innocent families." He added, "Both sides will be able to come together and negotiate a deal that ends the violence and paves a path forward to prosperity."[\[16\]](#)

In his September debate with Harris, Trump refused to back down on the question, saying he wanted to end the conflict, and reminded the audience of the very real threat of nuclear war breaking out between the major powers.[\[17\]](#)

Senator J.D. Vance, Trump's new vice president, had also long-favored a diplomatic solution and an end to our strategic posture of confrontation, though he is very close to Silicon Valley investor Peter Thiel, whose software is used to help plan the war,[\[18\]](#) and so carries a conflict of interest against peace.

In September 2024, Trump told former George W. Bush spokesman Marc Thiessen[\[19\]](#) that he stood by his previous statement[\[20\]](#) that he would attempt to force Putin to negotiate by threatening to vastly expand military aid to Ukraine. "I did say that, so I can say it to you. But I did say that and nobody picked it up. They don't because it makes so much sense."

"There is an increasingly vocal isolationist faction in the Republican Party that believes Trump is their ally," Thiessen wrote, adopting the age-old smear for anyone on the right with anything less than the Bushes' taste for blood, adding approvingly that "any fair examination of Trump's first-term record shows that he is no isolationist." He cited Trump's bombing of ISIS, Wagner Group mercenaries and government forces in Syria, the assassination of Iranian Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani in Iraq, as well as the arming of Ukraine and threats against North Korea—but not his attempt to make peace with it.[\[21\]](#) He also called antiwar Republicans the "anti-Ukraine right," and said they were motivated by "hostility toward Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky," as though any significant

opposition to this war must be based on mindless animus against Ukraine or its leader, rather than a fair assessment of morality and American national interests.

We the People may not be able to expect much better than that when it comes to Trump's brand of America First foreign policy. Or perhaps the vile torture apologist Thiessen is the one engaged in wishful thinking.

## **The Same World Order**

Robert O'Brien, Trump's last national security adviser in his first term and possibly a high-level official in his second administration, has written up a new take on the same old neoconservative doctrine of global hegemony in the name of so-called "national conservatism." Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, O'Brien said that in order to take on the "new Beijing-Moscow-Tehran axis," Trump would launch another "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran—which he blamed for all the Middle East's problems—as well as the containment of and complete economic "decoupling" from China. He also came out in support of the deployment of more nuclear submarines and the new B-21 long-range bomber, hypersonic missiles and a return to nuclear weapons testing.

O'Brien complained that the Biden administration had "dragged its feet" in sending enough munitions to Kiev, saying it was probably enough to help them survive the war with Russia, "but not enough to enable it to win." He did say that Trump wanted to see a negotiated settlement, but also that he would continue to send Ukraine weapons, bolster allied forces in

Poland and the rest of Eastern Europe and demand that Ukraine be admitted to the EU without the usual red tape.

America First, nuthin', O'Brien wrote, Donald J. Trump is the real internationalist: "Although critics often depicted Trump as hostile to traditional alliances, in reality, he enhanced most of them. Trump never canceled or postponed a single deployment to NATO. His pressure on NATO governments to spend more on defense made the alliance stronger." Bill Kristol or Joe Biden could easily have made the same pitch for the empire: "Americans should not underestimate what their country has achieved or downplay the success of the American experiment in lifting people at home and abroad out of repression, poverty, and insecurity."[\[22\]](#)

## **Transition**

It remains uncertain whether Trump has learned from his experience as president the last time around. Personnel is policy, as they say, and Trump seems to be as reliant on hawks as ever. As this book goes to press, President-elect Trump has announced that his former CIA director and secretary of state, Mike Pompeo, will not be joining him in the new administration, nor will his former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley,[\[23\]](#) nor son-in-law Jared Kushner.[\[24\]](#) This is very good news. Unfortunately, he also named the hawkish New York Congresswoman Elise Stefanik for UN ambassador,[\[25\]](#) and the absolutely horrible Ukraine war supporter Rep. Mike Waltz—who signed on with Liz Cheney to stop Trump from leaving Afghanistan,[\[26\]](#) and supports conscripting young girls into the military[\[27\]](#)—to be national security adviser.[\[28\]](#)

In an absolute betrayal of his pretensions toward an America First foreign policy, Trump named the avowedly interventionist Senator[\[29\]](#) Marco Rubio[\[30\]](#) who has supported every single horrible thing that he possibly could since joining the legislature,[\[31\]](#) to be his secretary of state. [\[32\]](#) Trump's enemy, the Russiagate theorist and avowed war hawk, former Representative Adam Kinzinger, said he thought Rubio was a "good choice."[\[33\]](#)

Trump then named Fox News host Pete Hegseth—an Iraq and Afghan war veteran who has supported the war in Ukraine in the past, claiming "the future of America and the Western world" were on the line there[\[34\]](#)—as his nominee for secretary of defense. On the bright side, Hegseth is an avowed supporter of the Defend the Guard campaign, the most crucial part of the American antiwar movement.[\[35\]](#) Led by great War on Terrorism-era combat veterans at BringOurTroopsHome.us, the Defend the Guard movement is pushing for 50 state laws forbidding the president from nationalizing guard forces to use in violent overseas conflict without an official declaration of war from the Congress.[\[36\]](#) To have a supporter in the Defense Secretary's office is a potentially huge advance for non-interventionism, even if it just means he would withhold the generals the Pentagon has sent out to the state legislatures to try to stop it over the previous few years.

Trump also announced his nomination of former DNI John Ratcliff to run the CIA. Ratcliff, a Trump loyalist who came from the House of Representatives, revealed the "Clinton Plan Intelligence," on the origins of Russiagate, as Special Counsel John Durham labeled it, which upset so

many FBI investigators when they were finally told about it.[\[37\]](#) Career agency officers told CNN they were pleased at the choice.[\[38\]](#)

The president-elect also named Tulsi Gabbard for director of national intelligence,[\[39\]](#) which is very good news. She is clearly serious about forging a new long-term peace with Russia and China,[\[40\]](#) and while a hawk when it comes to the bin Ladenites, we know that she will certainly never take their side.[\[41\]](#) And at least President Trump will have an honest assessment of the truth, without simply being prisoner to the permanent bureaucracy's claims.

What these appointments reveal about Trump's future foreign policy, especially in Europe, is hard to predict. There were certainly credentialed and credible America First non-interventionists who could have taken those roles. One may wonder whether Trump has ever heard their names before, or if they will have a chance to take important roles in his new administration. The fate of our country may depend on it.

Shortly after the 2024 election, Trump's staff began talking about potential solutions to the war in Ukraine.[\[42\]](#) There had also been no word yet on any plans Biden might have to bring up the dead-letter Logan Act to threaten Trump with more lawfare for getting elected while refuting his policy. Calling for a Christmas Truce could get him impeached again.[\[43\]](#)

Americans must loudly support efforts to end this war now. The War Party must not get away with "reining him in" on Russia policy for a second time.[\[44\]](#)

## **Rogue Statist?**

Could Trump make peace? Anything is possible. He has a famously personal negotiating style, having almost achieved a deal with the DPRK's Kim Jong-un based on mutual trust built up between the two.[\[45\]](#) To Washington's imperial court, the very possibility represents a threat to the future of the war they wish to see continue—even though they all know victory for Ukraine is impossible and that their leverage is decreasing with each passing day.

With much luck, Trump will be resentful enough against his establishment enemies to actually make an effort to keep them off his National Security Council this time, and make peace.

# Good Night and Good Luck

“Of all the enemies to public liberty, war is, perhaps, the most to be dreaded, because it comprises and develops the germ of every other. War is the parent of armies; from these proceed debts and taxes; and armies, and debts, and taxes are the known instruments for bringing the many under the domination of the few. In war, too, the discretionary power of the Executive is extended; its influence in dealing out offices, honors, and emoluments is multiplied; and all the means of seducing the minds, are added to those of subduing the force, of the people. The same malignant aspect in republicanism may be traced in the inequality of fortunes, and the opportunities of fraud, growing out of a state of war, and in the degeneracy of manners and of morals, engendered by both. No nation could preserve its freedom in the midst of continual warfare.”

—James Madison



“Between government in the Republican meaning, that is *Constitutional, representative, limited*, government on the one hand, and Empire on the other hand, there is mortal enmity. Either one must forbid the other or one will destroy the other.”

—Garet Garrett

“War and militarism were the gravediggers of classical liberalism; we must not allow the state to get away with this ruse ever again.”

—Murray N. Rothbard

“If America has a service to perform in the world—and I believe it has—it is in large part the service of its own example. In our excessive involvement in the affairs of other countries, we are not only living off our assets and denying our own people the proper enjoyment of their resources; we are also denying the world the example of a free society enjoying its freedom to the fullest.”

—J. William Fulbright

“We don’t have the strength for Empire; and we don’t need it. Let it fall from our shoulders. It only weakens us, exhausts us, and hastens our destruction.”

—Alexander Solzhenitsyn

“For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

—Matthew 16:26

“I thought it was unfortunate that Mr. Horton repeated, in effect, pro-Putin talking points about Ukraine.”

—Bill Kristol

“You do what you can.”

—Bill Hicks

# **Fool's Errand**

## **Same Old Nonsense**

The current fear campaign against Russia in the American media is no different from the demonization of any of the U.S. government's enemies here and around the world: virtually the entire popular narrative is fake. But the older generation is used to hating Russia and the young have been sold a line about "Russian aggression" throughout Eastern Europe for years now. There is also the harm done by the Russiagate hoax that claimed the dastardly Putin inflicted President Donald Trump upon our land, which has seemingly forever damaged the brains of America's Democrats and made peaceful coexistence for them unthinkable.

But the U.S.A., not Russia, is the world empire. And it should not be. For the middle part of North America to attempt to maintain primacy in the Old World never made sense. Our supposedly limited constitutional republic should never have tried it.

## **Flat Broke**

In the later months of 2024, America's national debt was over \$35 trillion. [\[1\]](#) Former Federal Reserve Chair and Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen says she expects the number to hit \$50 trillion before the end of the decade. [\[2\]](#) Currently the annual interest on the debt is more than \$1 trillion—more than the official defense budget. [\[3\]](#) Monetary and price inflation are

destroying Americans' standard of living.[\[4\]](#) A major part of this expense is military spending. While the government pretends to appropriate a mere \$849 billion per year on the national security state, expert Winslow Wheeler, after adding up all the hidden costs of the current wars, Veterans Affairs and nuclear weapons spending, found that the real total is \$1.767 trillion per year.[\[5\]](#)

And while it is possible that economic catastrophe could end the era of attempted predominance before a nuclear war does, the more responsible course would be to recognize the self-destructive nature of our current policy and call the whole thing off now while we are still ahead.

## **Kagan Concedes**

In February 2022, even Robert Kagan, jumping the gun in anticipation of a quick Russian victory in Ukraine, wrote in the *Washington Post* that the “unipolar moment” was truly over. The former power disparity between the U.S. and the two major independent powers of Russia and China has now begun to shift back. “It is time to start imagining a world where Russia effectively controls much of Eastern Europe and China controls much of East Asia and the Western Pacific,” he said. “Americans and their democratic allies in Europe and Asia will have to decide, again, whether that world is tolerable.”[\[6\]](#)

Tolerable? Compared to what? Better dead than also-red, white and blue? A few weeks later, Kagan admitted in *Foreign Affairs* that your author is exactly right about everything:

Although it is obscene to blame the United States for Putin's inhumane attack on Ukraine, to insist that the invasion was entirely unprovoked is misleading. Just as Pearl Harbor was the consequence of U.S. efforts to blunt Japanese expansion on the Asian mainland, and just as the 9/11 attacks were partly a response to the United States' dominant presence in the Middle East after the first Gulf War, so Russian decisions have been a response to the expanding post-Cold War hegemony of the United States and its allies in Europe. Putin alone is to blame for his actions, but the invasion of Ukraine is taking place in a historical and geopolitical context in which the United States has played and still plays the principal role, and Americans must grapple with this fact.

However, Kagan insisted that recent administrations had "played a strong hand poorly" when they should have "wield[ed] U.S. influence more consistently and effectively," implying the United States should have launched wars to help Kiev take control of Crimea and the Donbas back in 2014.[\[7\]](#) Kagan did not mention whether his own, his father, wife, brother or sister-in-law's advocacy for the last generation of intervention in the Middle East and Central Asia from the most important think tanks, newspapers, journals, the vice president's office and State Department might have distracted from the stronger Eastern European policy he now wishes we had. Nor did he explain how those interventions demonstrated the efficacy of U.S. military power in realigning Eurasian regions with American goals. And, of course, he did not acknowledge that both Russian

policies he claims we should have already gone to war over were the direct consequence of an illegal coup d'état engineered, in part, by his own spouse.

By 2023, Kagan conceded in a panel discussion at the Brookings Institution: “I have to admit, because if you think about it, there is no way that Putin’s conquest of Ukraine has any immediate or even distant effect on American Security.” This is Nuland’s husband. “You know, to say that Putin’s acquisition of Ukraine is going to affect American Security and we couldn’t tolerate it from a security point of view is kind of ludicrous when you think that ‘Wait a minute, Moscow once controlled half of Europe and we think those were good days now.’”[\[8\]](#) Yes, it does not matter to the people of the United States who controls Ukraine. But who is this “we” that thinks the era of Soviet totalitarianism in Russia and all of Eastern Europe and Central Asia were the “good old days” other than the Kagans—the absolute horror show their advice has helped to bring to the Middle East notwithstanding? In a September 2024 interview, Nuland herself admitted that Russia’s performance in the war “completely dispelled this myth of this massive superpower military that could roll across Europe any time it felt like it.”[\[9\]](#)

In 1996, Kagan quoted John Quincy Adams’s admonition that America should not “go abroad in search of monsters to destroy,”[\[10\]](#) and asked, “But why not?” The answer is that Kagan is the monster. His family has made its fortunes off America’s wars and proxy wars for decades. And they have helped to turn the United States into a corrupt, bankrupt empire rather than setting anyone free. He declared then that to not dominate the planet

was “a policy of cowardice and dishonor.”[\[11\]](#) But what does the blood-soaked Robert Kagan, co-author of Iraq War II and husband of the greatest champion of Ukraine’s Nazi movement since Heinrich Himmler, know about honor?

## **Strobe’s Second Thoughts**

In 2018, Strobe Talbott conceded that NATO expansion had been provocative, but argued in his own defense that “[i]f the leadership of a country has any view but the following, it’s not going to be the leadership of that country for very long. And that is: We do what we can in our own interest.” Talbott then mused rhetorically, “Should we have had a higher, wiser concept of our real interests that would require us to hold back on what many people would say is our own current interest?”[\[12\]](#)

It is a simple matter of time preference. Should we worry more about angering and provoking Russia, ruining our countries’ friendly relationship and risking going back to the bad old days of the Cold War or worse 20 years from now? Or should we worry about collecting Polish votes and Lockheed dollars for the Democrats today? To us, the answer is obvious. To them it was too, but they got it wrong.

It never had to be this way. Putin and his men obviously are responsible for the decisions they have made and the blood on their hands. But the fact remains that the U.S.A. picked this fight so far from our shores. That the likes of George Kennan and Brent Scowcroft warned against it proves the decision could have simply gone the other way.

## Rockefeller Men

Even establishment oracle and NATO expander Zbigniew Brzezinski was finally convinced that America had overreached in the Bush and Obama years and desperately needed to retrench, cooperate with Russia and China, and deputize more of the imperial law enforcement to smaller allied nations before the entire empire fell apart. The era of American predominance “is now ending,” he wrote.[\[13\]](#)

Brzezinski’s counterpart, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, said it was time to negotiate before the Ukraine conflict escalated into a real war between major powers. Essentially denouncing the administration’s “weaken Russia” policy, he told Western leaders at the World Economic Forum that “[n]egotiations need to begin . . . before it creates upheavals and tensions that will not be easily overcome. Ideally, the dividing line should be a return to the status quo ante.” He said, “Pursuing the war beyond that point would not be about the freedom of Ukraine, but a new war against Russia itself.”[\[14\]](#) Kissinger later added, “We are at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created, without any concept of how this is going to end or what it’s supposed to lead to.” He said he thought it made sense to bring nations like Poland “that have been part of Western history” into NATO, but that Ukraine did not share that history, and that “I was in favor of the full independence of Ukraine, but I thought its best role was something like Finland”—before they had joined the alliance too, he meant.[\[15\]](#) Kissinger also argued that a moderately powerful Russia has been an important balance against other states “for half a millennia,” and that we might regret taking them down too far.[\[16\]](#)



In January 2021, the influential foreign policy theorist Walter Russell Mead wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that the entire post-World War II, U.S.- and UN-based international order was over. He identified Bush's Iraq War II, Obama's war in Libya, the 2008 financial crisis and other examples of elite Western incompetence which have undermined America's influence at home and in the rest of the world.[\[17\]](#)

## **Fiona's Arc**

In a speech in March 2023, the ubiquitous British-American policy adviser Fiona Hill went even further, stating that much of the world had grown so sick and tired of American hegemony that they were taking the opportunity presented by the Russia-Ukraine war to find another way around U.S. political and economic dominance. It was not just Russia and China demanding their independence, but “[o]ther countries that have traditionally been considered ‘middle powers’ or ‘swing states’—the so-called ‘rest’ of the world—seek to cut the U.S. down to a different size in their neighborhoods and exert more influence in global affairs.” She added, “They want to decide, not be told what’s in their interest. In short, in 2023, we hear a resounding no to U.S. domination and see a marked appetite for a world without a hegemon.”[\[18\]](#) This may have been a felony level of self-awareness for a resident of the nation’s capital. Good thing the UK is reluctant to extradite due to third-world U.S. prison conditions.[\[19\]](#)

## **Empire of Dunces**

It is the supreme irony of the world that at the turn of the third millennium, after the end of the Soviet Union, when the unipolar American superpower had achieved a greater sway over human affairs than any before it, its stewards were the least competent imperial managers that could be imagined. The Bushes, Clintons, Obama, McCain, Kerry and Biden have been a disaster—and the rogue Trump was far short of ideal last time around, and is personally hawkish enough on some countries, at times including Russia, to give at least some reason to worry about his second term.

But what right does Washington have to raise the risk of nuclear war between major powers over territory which even they acknowledge is far outside anything that could be considered America's vital national interests? When even Henry Kissinger says your foreign policy is too belligerent and dangerous, then that must be because it is.

Vladimir Pozner, a man with a French-American-Russian background, is host of an interview show in Russia. Back in 2018, in the midst of the “low-level” fighting compared to the 2022– stage of the war, he warned in a speech at Yale University that it is “an extremely dangerous moment today.” He said the risk of apocalyptic confrontation is much worse now than it ever was during the even worst times of the first Cold War, and that, like it or not, much of the conflict was of the American government's doing. “Back then Russians were ‘anti-White House’ or ‘anti-Wall Street,’ but not anti-American in their vast majority.” Now Russian society is anti-American at “the grassroots level, and there's a reason for it.”[\[20\]](#)

Yet at the same time, there is no good reason for it at all.

# Enough Already

## Outlaw Enforcement

In his last State of the Union address in 1992, President George H.W. Bush declared, “A world once divided into two armed camps now recognizes one sole and pre-eminent power, the United States of America.” He said that “they regard this with no dread. For the world trusts us with power, and the world is right. They trust us to be fair, and restrained. They trust us to be on the side of decency. They trust us to do what’s right.”[\[21\]](#)

It was not true. With this attitude, the U.S. government brought on the terrorists’ war against this country and the so-far generation-long war to suppress them—and still sometimes supports them. And it caused the current crisis in Eastern Europe. Even if one, through ignorance, believed Iraq War I was a great success, that was more than 30 years ago. The administrations of Bush’s successors have laid bare the truth: the selflessness of the American-imposed world order is but a thin public relations exercise justifying imperialism. It is the same reason the U.S. had to rename British and French “counter-revolutionary warfare” to “counter-insurgency” in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq[\[22\]](#)—Americans like to believe their nation is on the side of the world’s poor and weak against their tyrannical oppressors. But it is not.

This is a paradox lying at the core of modern American great power politics: the project of global dominance is rife with conflicts of interest while its leaders claim to be motivated only by universal principles of liberty and peace and the rules-based order. The U.S. is merely enforcing

the law, you understand, but they will also launch an illegal regime-change war whenever it suits them. They will overthrow elected governments for access to oil fields and pipeline routes. The American CIA will even torture prisoners at former Soviet KGB bases in Poland if they feel like it.[\[23\]](#)

But Washington's claims regarding the benevolence of their hegemony and intention to spread only security and fairness are not believable to anyone except the members of the U.S. foreign policy establishment itself. They evidently refuse to acknowledge to themselves, even in their darkest, drunkest night, that their past dishonesty and violent interventions have made it impossible for the rest of the world to accept their claims of benign selflessness. Muslims, Chinese and Russians have every reason to presume the most dishonest and self-serving intentions behind every American policy and claim. How could they not?

The part of the "U.S.-led world order" that represents the ideals of property rights, liberty and peace—for example, the official outlawing of war by the UN Charter and the implicit understanding that modern violent conflict simply bears too great a cost for innocent people—is wrecked, sidelined, humiliated, discredited. Who in the world do the authors of the wars in Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Somalia, Libya, Mali, Syria, Yemen, Palestine and Ukraine think they are to tell anyone else to obey the law?

## **Deterrence for Dummies**

Western governments have repeatedly admitted they will not bring Ukraine into the NATO alliance, and have already shown they do not, in fact,

consider Ukraine a vital enough interest to actually fight for it by sending anything but small numbers of deniable American forces to assist them.

Even the hawkish Polish minister of foreign affairs, Radosław Sikorski, knows that America's vow to defend even Poland in the event of a real conflict with the Russians is little more than a bluff, though of course he does not perceive the moral hazard in it. He says he has pushed so hard for the expansion of U.S. military bases there—which he admitted was in violation of President Clinton's vows in the 1997 Founding Act—precisely in an attempt to trap America into a deeper military commitment. He acknowledged the Washington Treaty which created NATO does not necessarily do so itself. America's so-called "security umbrella" is nothing but a tripwire for conflicts that the empire may not truly be willing to fight.

[24] Ironically, barring the outbreak of a major power war due to a miscalculation and spiraling violence out of Ukraine, it is clear that Russia is no threat to the United States or our Western European allies, and probably not even to Poland or the Baltics either. There is no question that it has been Western, especially American, provocations which have caused them to remilitarize.

## **Leaving the Past**

For the Biden administration to have negotiated fairly, they would have had to admit the truth of their responsibility for the crisis, and the reality of its scope. They would apparently rather die.

But that is why the political climate must change. America's relationship with Russia is the single most important matter facing

humanity. We all deserve policies that will bring an end to the current system which requires a perpetual nuclear sword hanging over all of our necks while tragic proxy conflicts are waged against innocent people. The threat of a real war breaking out is higher than at any time since the early 1980s, if not the early 1960s—and all over a conflict that we have every reason to believe would never have happened if our government had not taken such provocative steps so far away from their jurisdiction.

This essential issue is one where libertarians, realists and America First conservatives—and progressives too—can lead by telling the truth and demanding an end to this insane game of militarism and global hegemony, and immediate ceasefire negotiations toward a permanent peace deal. After a generation of disastrous Middle Eastern wars, America’s patriotic right no longer believes in our country’s supposedly divine mission to dominate the rest of planet Earth. The liberal hawks and their neoconservative compatriots have long lost Middle America, and even the enlisted military forces themselves.[\[25\]](#)

The old Casper Weinberger-Colin Powell Doctrine[\[26\]](#) insisted the American people must be united behind any violent foreign intervention. George W. Bush was willing to settle for only the right. But as Presidents Obama and Trump both found during their times in office, American conservatives can no longer be counted on to support these policies. As Rachel Bovard of the *American Conservative* magazine told NBC in March 2022, “America First foreign policy has made a lot of inroads.” Establishment Republicans, she told them, are “speaking to a generation of us that watched them fail [in Iraq and Afghanistan],” and now “they’re

making the same argument about Ukraine to a highly skeptical audience.”[\[27\]](#)

The Republican Party leadership disagrees, of course. They attacked President Biden only for his supposed weakness, rather than his recklessness which they have shared in. Rebuking some recalcitrant younger members of the House in March 2022, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell attempted to minimize the antiwar right, insisting, “There may be a few lonely voices off to the side. I wouldn’t pay much attention to them.”[\[28\]](#) They have kept that same narrative going up to the present day, though there has been notable dissent by some of the more-populist “MAGA Republicans” who came to power with Trump and are less loyal to the older GOP establishment.[\[29\]](#) After Trump’s reelection in 2024, the outgoing Republican Senate leader announced that he would set up a showdown with the new president and his allies for the new year, to put up a “roadblock . . . over Ukraine and other foreign policy matters” and thwart his supposed “isolationism.” The hawks will not go out without a fight.[\[30\]](#)

The gulf between the people and the government of this country is growing ever wider, with the all-important issue of war and peace between the U.S. and Russia at the center of it. But military recruitment numbers tell the truth: the people do not believe in the wars anymore.[\[31\]](#)

The United States Constitution describes a limited republic, whose government exists to protect the liberty and safety of the people of our country, not to attempt to decide the fate of all Eurasia forevermore. America fights a 19th-century, European-style battle for imperial dominance dressed up in pieties of 20th-century global universalism. The

American political establishment is foolish to see the world in such terms. It is an avowedly good thing for Germany and Russia to forge a closer relationship, even if it is at the minor financial expense of some American firms in the short term. To cause a war, and one that increases the risk of the annihilation of our world, over such temporal, narrow and parochial concerns is the lowest of human folly.

Is it not fair to ask: What the hell does Paul Wolfowitz know? Is he not tied for wrongest man of the modern era? Why should the United States of America be bound to the doctrines in some dumb Pentagon memorandum he and his men wrote 30 years ago demanding we few in the northern half of the New World, way over here between the planet's greatest oceans, must remain the dominant political and military force over the rest of the world forever? How could any American expect other populations and governments to accept this? How could they think we could ever afford it?

## **Call This a Govment?**

The *Financial Times*'s Henry Foy says Russia is so dangerous because the Kremlin's operating principle, as he put it, was that "the stability of the state supersedes the freedom of the individual, and entails fake opposition parties, rigid control of the media and impossible barriers to entry for political figures not approved by the regime, offset by the illusion of the traditional trappings of a true democracy."[\[32\]](#)

But his description could just as easily apply to the United States, not due to traditional Russian paranoia of being invaded, but traditional American paranoia that they will not let us overthrow their government and



dominate them. Look how our national security state and political establishment behave when they fear for a moment that Donald Trump knows what America First means or that he might be serious about it. The Russiagate scam of 2016, the Ukrainegate and laptop suppression hoaxes of 2020, and the kangaroo courts' attempts to bankrupt or imprison him in the run-up to the 2024 election, along with new evidenceless Russiagate narratives by the usual suspects,[\[33\]](#) show what happens when the American people elect anyone not preselected by the establishment elites—even a New York billionaire.

The FBI and CIA ran a piece in *Politico* in February 2024, based on interviews with 18 “former officials and analysts . . . including political appointees from both parties and career intelligence officers,” discussing how “on edge” they are that the American people could elect a person who might consider reorganizing their agencies. They dare call it treason when in fact even their talking to the press that way represents their own illegitimate interference in our electoral process. Maybe Americans prefer that a president do something government employees do not agree with. That is the democracy they pretend to be fighting for when clearly all they care about is protecting their own power, privileges and extraordinarily high salaries.[\[34\]](#)

Virtually every state in the union makes it as difficult as possible to create new political parties or keep them on the ballot, solely over the threat that they could possibly split the vote against the major parties, much less have a chance of replacing their duopoly—and everybody knows it.[\[35\]](#) Remember when Julian Assange revealed that some vice president at

Citigroup had picked President Barack Obama's cabinet for him?[36] But we are supposed to keep fighting wars and backing extremist groups all over the planet in the name of spreading self-government to the world no matter the consequence, even when we Americans clearly do not have it ourselves, and by large majorities no longer approve.[37] When Trump threatens NATO, read the fine print. He is just playing hardball by demanding that the allies pay their fair share for their own defense, at least 2 percent of GDP, as they have agreed to do. The important point, though, is that his voters and increasing numbers of Americans agree. We cannot afford for the whole world to be our responsibility, especially when our government keeps causing the problems in the name of preventing them.  
[38]

A recent op-ed in the *Times* castigated "Black America Firsters," who opposed the Democrats in the 2024 election because they "cannot reconcile spending billions of tax dollars in the Middle East and Ukraine while Black communities in this country struggle with longstanding underinvestment." [39] Is that truly so unreasonable? Many Israelis have a higher standard of living than many Americans, [40] who are forced to subsidize their socialist healthcare and education. Government employees in Kiev are driving Lamborghinis [41] while Americans get evicted. [42]

The national government has also hollowed out the American economy with their massive subsidies for war industries at everyone else's expense. Even during supposedly good economic times, there are millions of homeless. The cost of living increases every day. Meanwhile, American bridges and dams collapse regularly, killing people and causing incalculable

damage, as a result of those in charge always looking outward and neglecting the people they are sworn to protect.

Just in late September and early October 2024, two important stories showed how they do not even try to live up to their responsibilities at home. The first was Hurricane Helene, which caused massive flooding, mudslides and casualties in Appalachia. More than 200 people were killed. This was at a time the administration was sending massive aid and equipment to Ukraine and Israel, including U.S. military reinforcements to the Middle East in case Israel's war against the Palestinians spread into a regional conflict with Iran and their Shi'ite allies. While people drowned and were stranded behind destroyed roads, no one from the many military bases nearby came for them. Those resources are for global hegemony, not protecting the American people, even when they are dying within line-of-sight of their supposed defenders. The government deployed far fewer resources than they eventually did for Hurricane Katrina's victims in New Orleans back in 2005. Denizens of Washington were completely indifferent to their plight.[\[43\]](#)

Even better: within a week of Biden announcing another \$8 billion for Ukraine's war,[\[44\]](#) accurate reporting on Department of Homeland Security chief Alejandro Mayorkas's statement that "FEMA does not have the funds to make it through the [hurricane] season"[\[45\]](#) was deemed wild online "disinformation" in the major media.[\[46\]](#) Candidate Trump said FEMA was giving people \$750. Many prominent publications then misquoted him, adding the word "only," which he did not say, and called him a liar for it.[\[47\]](#) All criticism of the administration's disaster response then became evil,

Twitter-fueled “conspiracy theory” and “misinformation.”[\[48\]](#) Democrats demanded social media companies employ another vast round of censorship of the American people[\[49\]](#) since reality was making them look so bad.[\[50\]](#)

There is also the should-be absolutely shocking fact that on his way out, in the autumn of 2024, the president of the United States of America announced a new plan saying they hoped to replace all lead drinking water pipes by 2035.[\[51\]](#) Our government has spent more than \$17 trillion[\[52\]](#) on militarism since the end of the first Cold War, much more if one were to include the cost of nuclear weapons production and storage, the civilian intelligence agencies’ black budgets[\[53\]](#) or Veterans Administration healthcare and pension costs.[\[54\]](#) They have not won a fight since Bush Sr.’s surprise attack on Panama in 1989.[\[55\]](#) President Biden voted for, cheered for and led the way on this all along—while Americans are still drinking government water out of poisonous pipes.[\[56\]](#)

As columnist and author Garet Garrett wrote generations ago, “A . . . mark by which you may unmistakably distinguish Empire is: ‘Domestic policy becomes subordinate to foreign policy.’”[\[57\]](#) The people of the country must always defer to the grand strategies of global planners we would not trust to run our home counties. In the name of self-government and free markets, Washington has built a world empire, one that has helped to undermine self-government and free markets here at home, while helping to destroy other nations entirely. They have made a mockery of the principles of the Declaration of Independence and helped to discredit them in the eyes of billions, and right at a time when, if our leaders had the vision

to match their power, much of the world was listening and ready to follow our lead.

By launching aggressive wars, torturing, murdering and holding people in prison indefinitely without trial, as well as spying on Americans and framing the innocent on terrorism or treason charges—including a frontrunner for president—they have also subverted the principle that our government is supposed to be bound by the same laws it enforces.

U.S. government employees are great at forgetting all the terrible things they have done. In this case it makes sense to take advantage of that fact and urge the new administration to allow Ukraine to negotiate peace and quickly seek to normalize relations with Russia, with an emphasis on persuading Putin to rejoin New START and to jointly return to the INF, Open Skies, Test Ban and ABM treaties as soon as possible. Our government's reckless, confrontational posture against Russia must end.

Conservatives and Constitutionlists have long argued against American participation in NATO. The decision of the previous generation to embrace the expansion, rather than a retrenchment of American forces, has led to nothing but trouble. But Europe's economy is equal to that of the United States;[\[58\]](#) they can build up their armies or negotiate agreements as they see fit to defend their own countries. If they had kicked the U.S. out and created their own EU army, it is highly doubtful they would have taken the aggressive posture toward Russia that the last six American presidents have. The current refugee crisis from the wars they helped the U.S. fight in Afghanistan, Libya, Syria and Yemen would also be much less likely, as would the catastrophe on their eastern frontier in Ukraine. NATO may be a

security “umbrella,” as they call it, but it also causes distortions in defense priorities and lays possible tripwires for war far outside of any legitimate interpretation of America’s national interests. And so what if Germany and Russia get closer? It is not the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. What are they going to do, destroy the EU and prevent America from trading with Poland or the Baltics? Of course not.

The War Party smears people who think the U.S. government’s job is to protect the lives and liberty of Americans as dreaded *isolationists*, but as the great Ron Paul[\[59\]](#) pointed out, “The real isolationists are those who impose sanctions and embargoes on countries and peoples across the globe because they disagree with the internal and foreign policies of their leaders. The real isolationists are those who choose to use force overseas to promote democracy, rather than seek change through diplomacy, engagement and by setting a positive example.”[\[60\]](#)

Virtually no faction anywhere in America truly favors actual isolationism and autarky as a foreign and economic policy. Of course we can have relationships of every kind with the rest of the world without constantly extending war guarantees and intervening where we have no business. The founders called it “independence.”[\[61\]](#)

Defend America First means exactly that. Let us now finally abandon our empire to save our country. Let us ignore the interventionists and truly embrace the concept so well-articulated by Thomas Jefferson more than 200 years ago as one of the “essential principles” of the United States government: “peace, commerce and honest friendship with all nations, entangling alliances with none.”[\[62\]](#) It was George Washington who

warned us against “passionate attachments” to, and “entangling alliances” with even England and France. “It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world,” he advised in his farewell address.[\[63\]](#) It is long past time for the American public to insist that our government follow this advice and stay within the proper bounds of the limited republic they helped to create, so that we can truly live in peace and prosperity together and with the rest of mankind.

# Appendix: Maps

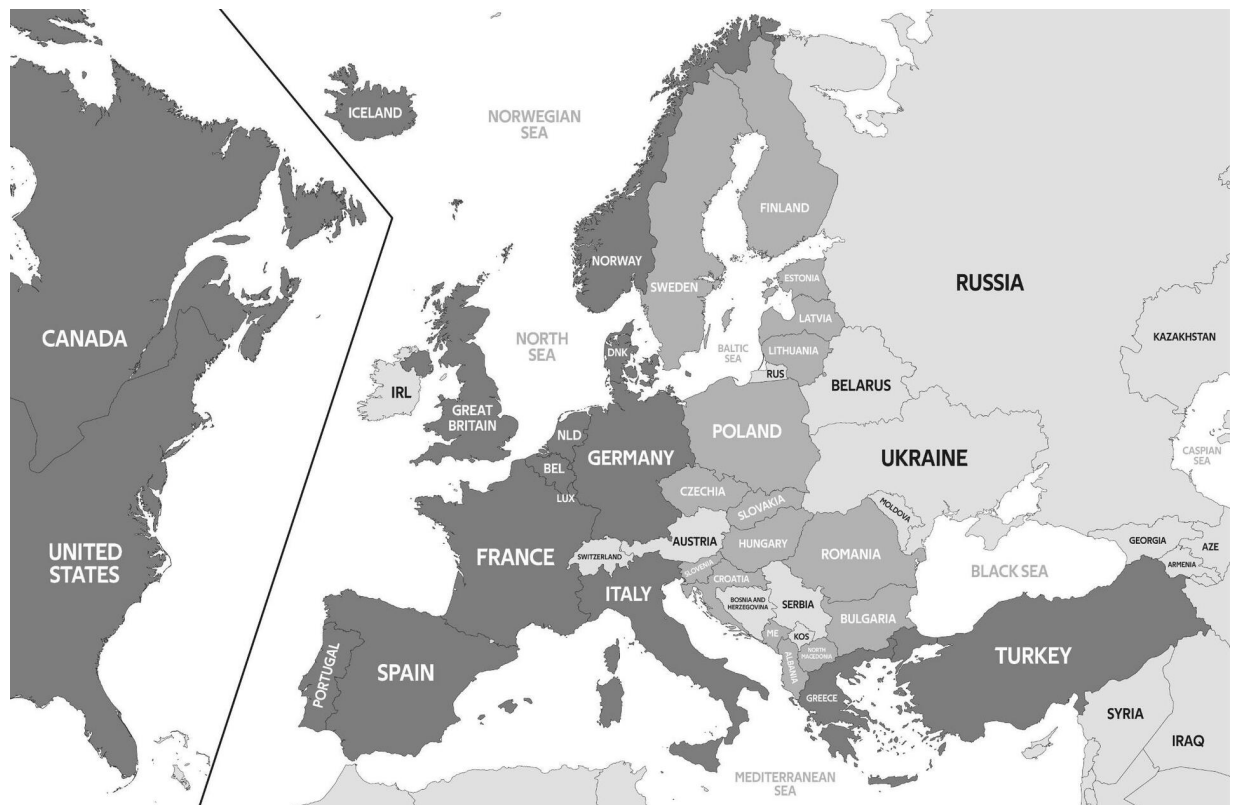


Europe ([CC BY-SA-3.0](#))





Eastern Europe ([CC BY-SA-3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/))



NATO members ([CC BY-SA-3.0](#))



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The Caucasus (Andrew Zehnder)



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# About the Author

Scott Horton is director of the Libertarian Institute, editorial director of Antiwar.com, host of *Antiwar Radio* on Pacifica, 90.7 FM KPFK in Los Angeles, California and podcasts the *Scott Horton Show* from ScottHorton.org. He is the author of *Fool's Errand: Time to End the War in Afghanistan* (2017), *Enough Already: Time to End the War on Terrorism* (2021), and editor of *The Great Ron Paul: The Scott Horton Show Interviews 2004–2019* (2019) and *Hotter Than the Sun: Time to Abolish Nuclear Weapons* (2022). He has conducted more than 6,000 interviews since 2003. Scott lives in Austin, Texas, with his wife, Larisa Alexandrovna Horton.

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# Endnotes

## Chapter 1: George H.W. Bush

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[120] The author is occasionally confused with The Other Scott Horton, as I affectionately call him. Other Scott (no relation) is an international human rights lawyer, journalist for *Harper’s* magazine, professor at Columbia University, co-founder of the American University of Central Asia in

Bishkek and author of *Lords of Secrecy: The National Security Elite and America's Stealth Warfare* (New York: Nation Books, 2015). He taught Saakashvili law and Hayekian economics at Columbia, inspiring his initial anti-corruption push, and has been associated with Mr. Soros in various capacities over the years. There is zero reason to believe that has been in anything but the most honorable circumstances. He is a great guy. I have interviewed him many times. But just to be clear: we are different people, and the author has no such associations. And for his sake, I am sure he would disagree with many conclusions in this book. Myron A. Farber, "The Reminiscences of Scott Horton," The Rule of Law Oral History Project, Columbia University, November 21, 2012, [https://columbia.edu/cu/libraries/inside/ccoh\\_assets/ccoh\\_10571338\\_transcript.pdf](https://columbia.edu/cu/libraries/inside/ccoh_assets/ccoh_10571338_transcript.pdf).

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## Chapter 4: Barack Obama

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## Chapter 5: Donald Trump

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