

The Real Russian Interference in US Politics

If Russia were trying to interfere in U.S. domestic politics, it wouldn't be attempting to change the U.S. system but to prevent it from trying to change Russia's, argues Diana Johnstone.

By **Diana Johnstone**



The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was ostensibly a conflict between two ideologies and two socio-economic systems.

All that seems to be over. The day of a new socialism may dawn unexpectedly, but today capitalism rules the world. At first glance, it may seem to be a classic clash between rival capitalists. And yet, once again an ideological conflict is emerging, one which divides capitalists themselves, even in Russia and in the United States itself. It is the conflict between American unipolar dominance and a multipolar world.

The defeat of communism was brutally announced in a certain “capitalist manifesto” dating from the early 1990s that actually proclaimed: “Our guiding light is Profit, acquired in a strictly legal way. Our Lord is His Majesty, Money, for it is only He who can lead us to wealth as the norm in life.” The authors of this bold tract were Mikhail Khodorkovsky, who went on to become the richest man in Russia (before spending ten years in a Russian jail) and his business partner at the time, Leonid Nevzlin, who has since retired comfortably to Israel.

Loans for Shares

Those were the good old days in the 1990s when the Clinton administration was propping up Yeltsin as he let Russia be ripped off by the joint efforts of such ambitious well-placed Russians and their Western sponsors, notably using the “loans for shares” trick.

In a 2012 *Vanity Fair* [article](#) on her hero, Khodorkovsky, the vehemently anti-Putin journalist Masha Gessen frankly summed up how this worked:

“The new oligarchs—a dozen men who had begun to exercise the power that money brought—concocted a scheme. They would lend the government money, which it badly needed, and in return the government would put up as collateral blocks

of stock amounting to a controlling interest in the major state-owned companies. When the government defaulted, as both the oligarchs and the government knew it would, the oligarchs would take them over. By this maneuver the Yeltsin administration privatized oil, gas, minerals, and other enterprises without parliamentary approval.”

This worked so well that from his position in the Communist youth organization, Khodorkovsky used his connections to get control of Russia’s petroleum company Yukos and become the richest oligarch in Russia, worth some \$15 billion, of which he still controls a chunk despite his years in jail (2003-2013).

His arrest made him a hero of democracy in the United States, where he had many friends, especially those business partners who were helping him sell pieces of Yukos to Chevron and Exxon. Khodorkovsky, a charming and generous young man, easily convinced his American partners that he was Russia’s number one champion of democracy and the rule of law, especially of those laws which allow domestic capital to flee to foreign banks, and foreign capital to take control of Russian resources.

Vladimir Putin didn’t see it that way. Without restoring socialism, he dispossessed Khodorkovsky of Yukos and essentially transformed the oil and gas industry from the “open society” model tolerated by Yeltsin to a national capitalist industry. Khodorkovsky and his partner Platon Lebedev were accused of having stolen all the oil that Yukos had produced in the years 1998 to 2003, tried, convicted and sentenced to 14 years of prison each. This shift ruined U.S. plans, already underway, to “balkanize” Russia between its many provinces, thereby allowing Western capital to pursue its capture of the Russian economy.

The dispossession of Khodorkovsky was certainly a major milestone in the conflict between President Putin and Washington. On November 18, 2005, the Senate unanimously adopted [Resolution 322](#) introduced by Senator Joe Biden denouncing the treatment of the Khodorkovsky and Lebedev as politically motivated.

Who Influences Whom?

There is an alternative view of the history of Russian influence in the United States to the one now getting constant attention. It is obvious that a Russian who can get the Senate to adopt a resolution in his favor has a certain influence. But when the “deep state” and the corporate media today growl about Russian influence, they aren’t talking about Khodorkovsky. They are talking about alleged collusion between Russia and the Trump campaign. They are seizing, for example, on a joking response Trump made to a reporter’s snide question

during the presidential campaign. In a variation of the classic “when did you stop beating your wife?” the reporter asked if he would call on Russian President Vladimir Putin to “stay out” of the election.

Since a stupid question does not deserve a serious answer, Trump said he had “nothing to do with Putin” before adding, “Russia, if you’re listening, I hope you’re able to find the 30,000 [Hillary Clinton] e-mails that are missing. I think you will probably be rewarded mightily by our press.”

Many Trump opponents think this proves collusion. Irony appears to be almost as unwelcome in American politics as honesty.

When Trump revoked his security clearance earlier this month, former CIA chief John Brennan got his chance to spew his hatred in the complacent pages of *The New York Times*. Someone supposed to be smart enough to head an intelligence agency actually took Trump’s joking invitation as a genuine request. “By issuing such a statement,” Brennan wrote, “Mr. Trump was not only encouraging a foreign nation to collect intelligence against a United States citizen, but also openly authorizing his followers to work with our primary global adversary against his political opponent.”

As America’s former top intelligence officer, Brennan had to know that (even if it were true that Trump was somehow involved) it is ludicrous to suggest that Trump would have launched a covert intelligence operation on national television. If this were a Russian operation to hack Clinton’s private server it would have been on a need-to-know basis and there is no evident need for Trump or his campaign team to have known.

Besides, Clinton’s private server on the day Trump uttered this joke, July 27, 2016, had already been about nine months in possession of the Department of Justice, and presumably offline as it was being examined.

Since Brennan knows all this he could only have been lying in *The New York Times*.

The Russians, Brennan went on, “troll political, business and cultural waters in search of gullible or unprincipled individuals who become pliant in the hands of their Russian puppet masters.”

But which Russians do that? And who are those “individuals?”

‘The Fixer-in-Chief’

To understand the way Washington works, one can focus on the career of lawyer Jonathan M. Winer, who proudly says that in early 2017 the head of the Carnegie

Endowment, Bill Burns, referred to him as “The Fixer-in-Chief.” Let’s see what the fixer has fixed.

Winer served in the Clinton State Department as its first Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Law Enforcement from 1994-1999. One may question the selectivity of Bill Clinton’s concern for international law enforcement, which certainly did not cover violating international law by bombing defenseless countries.

In any case, in 1999 Winer received the State Department’s second highest award for having “created the capacity of the Department and the U.S. government to deal with international crime and criminal justice as important foreign policy functions.” The award stated that “the scope and significance of his achievements are virtually unprecedented for any single official.”

After the Clinton administration, from 2008 to 2013, Winer worked as a high-up consultant at one of the world’s most powerful PR and lobbying firms, APCO Worldwide. As well as the tobacco industry and the Clinton Foundation, APCO also works for Khodorkovsky. To be precise, according to public listings, the fourth biggest of APCO’s many clients is the Corbiere Trust, owned by Khodorkovsky and registered in Guernsey. The trust tends and distributes some of the billions that the oligarch got out of Russia before he was jailed.

Corbiere money was spent to lobby both for Resolution 322 (supporting Khodorkovsky after his arrest in Russia) and for the Magnitsky Act. APCO president Margery Kraus is a member of the Institute of Modern Russia, which is headed by Khodorkovsky’s son Pavel, with the ostensible purpose of “promoting democratic values” – in other words, of building political opposition to Putin.

When John Kerry replaced Hillary Clinton as secretary of state, allowing Hillary to prepare her presidential campaign, Winer went back to the State Department. Winer’s extracurricular activities at State brought him into the public spotlight early this year when House Intelligence Committee Chairman Devin Nunes (R-CA) named him as part of a network promoting the notorious “Steele Dossier,” which accused Trump of illicit financial dealing and compromising sexual activities in Russia, in a word, “collusion” with Moscow.

By Winer’s own [account](#), he had been friends with former British intelligence agent Christopher Steele since his days at APCO. Back at State, he regularly [channeled](#) Steele reports, ostensibly drawn from contacts with friendly Russian intelligence agents, to Victoria Nuland, in charge of Russian affairs, as well as to top Russia experts. Among these reports was the infamous “Steele dossier,” opposition research on Trump financed by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic National Committee.

But dirt seemed to pass the other way too. According to a Feb. 6 *Washington Post* story, Winer passed on to Steele the story of Trump being urinated on by prostitutes in a Moscow hotel with Russian agents allegedly filming it for blackmail material. The *Post* says the story was written by Cody Shearer, a Clinton confidante. A lawyer for Winer told the paper that Winer “was concerned in 2016 about information that a candidate for the presidency may have been compromised by a hostile foreign power. Any actions he took were grounded in those concerns.” Shearer did not respond to a request for comment from Consortium News. (Full disclosure: Cody Shearer is a member of the advisory board of the Consortium for Independent Journalism, which publishes Consortium News, and has been asked to resign.)

All this Democrat paid-for and created dirt was spread through government agencies and mainstream media before being revealed publicly just before Trump’s inauguration. The Steele dossier was used by the Obama Justice Department to get a warrant to spy on the Trump campaign.

Winer and the Magnitsky Act

Winer played a major role in Congress’s adoption of the “Sergei Magnitsky Rule of Law Accountability Act of 2012” (the Magnitsky Act), a measure that effectively ended post-Cold War hopes for normal relations between Washington and Moscow. This act was based on a highly contentious version of the November 16, 2009 death in prison of accountant Sergei Leonidovich Magnitsky as told to Congress by hedge fund manager Bill Browder. According to Browder, Magnitsky was a lawyer beaten to death in prison as a result of his crusade for human rights.

However, as convincingly established by dissident Russian film-maker Andrei Nekrasov’s investigative documentary (blacklisted in the U.S.), Magnitsky was neither a human rights crusader, nor a lawyer, nor beaten to death. He was an accountant jailed for his role in Browder’s business dealings, who died of natural causes as a result of inadequate prison care. The case was hyped as a major human rights drama by Browder in order to discredit Russian tax fraud charges against himself.

By adopting a law punishing Magnitsky’s alleged persecutors, the U.S. Congress acted as a supreme court judging internal Russian legal issues.

The Magnitsky Act also condemns legal prosecution of Khodorkovsky. Browder, on a much smaller scale, also made a fortune ripping off Russians during the Yeltsin

years, and later got into trouble with Russian tax collectors. Since Browder had given up his U.S. citizenship in order to avoid paying U.S. taxes, he had reason to fear Russian efforts to extradite him for tax evasion and other financial misdeeds.

It was Winer who found a solution to Browder's predicament. As Winer wrote in *The Daily Beast*:

"When Browder consulted me, he wanted to know what he could do to hold those involved in the case accountable. As Browder describes in his book, *Red Notice*, I suggested creating a new law to impose economic and travel sanctions on human-rights violators involved in grand corruption. Browder decided this could secure a measure of justice for Magnitsky. He initiated a campaign that led to the enactment of the Magnitsky Act. Soon other countries enacted their own Magnitsky Acts, including Canada, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and most recently, the United Kingdom."

Meanwhile, Russian authorities have been trying for years to pursue their case against Browder. Putin brought up the case in his press conference following the Helsinki meeting with Trump. Putin suggested allowing U.S. authorities to question the 12 Russian GRU military intelligence agents named in the Mueller indictment in exchange for allowing Russian officials to question individuals involved in the Browder case, including Winer and former U.S. ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul, among others. Putin observed that such an exchange was possible under the Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty signed between the two countries in 1999, back in the Yeltsin days when America was posing as Russia's best friend.

But the naïve Russians underestimated the craftiness of American lawyers.

As Winer wrote, "Under that treaty, Russia's procurator general can ask the U.S. attorney general ... to arrange for Americans to be ordered to testify to assist in a criminal case. But there is a fundamental exception: The attorney general can provide no such assistance in a *politically motivated* case (my emphasis). I know this because I was among those who helped put it there. Back in 1999, when we were negotiating the agreement with Russia, I was the senior State Department official managing U.S.-Russia law-enforcement relations."

The clever treaty is a perfect Catch-22. It doesn't apply to a case if it is politically motivated, and if it is Russian, it must be politically motivated. (The irony is that Mueller's indictment of 12 GRU Russian military intelligence agents appears to be more a political than a legal document. For one thing, it accused the agents of interfering in a U.S. election but never charges them under U.S. electoral law.)

On July 15, 2016, Browder's Heritage Capital Management firm registered a complaint with the U.S. Department of Justice accusing both American and Russian opponents of the Magnitsky Act of violating the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA); adopted in 1938 with Nazis in mind.

As for Russian lawyers attempting to bring their case against the Act to the U.S., the Heritage Capital Management brief declared:

"While lawyers representing foreign principals are exempt from filing under FARA, this is only true if the attorney does not try to influence policy at the behest of his client. By disseminating anti-Magnitsky material to Congress, [lawyer Natalia] Veselnitskaya is clearly trying to influence policy and is therefore in violation of her filing requirements under FARA."

Veselnitskaya was at the infamous Trump Tower meeting in the summer of 2016 to lobby a possible incoming Trump administration to oppose the Magnitsky Act. A British music promoter, not a spokesman for the Russian government, offered dirt on Clinton in an email to Donald Trump Jr. No dirt was apparently produced and Don Jr. saw it as a lure to get him to the meeting on Magnitsky. Democrats are furiously trying to prove that this meeting was "collusion" between the Trump camp and Russia, though it was the Clinton campaign that paid for opposition research and received it from foreigners, while the Trump campaign neither solicited nor apparently received any at that meeting.

The Ideological Conflict Today

Needless to say, Khodorkovsky's Corbiere Trust lobbied hard to get Congress to pass the Magnitsky Act. This type of "Russian interference intended to influence policy" goes unnoticed while U.S. authorities scour cyberspace for evidence of trolls.

The basic ideological conflict here is between Unipolar America and Multipolar Russia. Russia's position, as Putin made clear in his historic speech at the Munich security conference in 2007, is to allow countries to enjoy national sovereignty and develop in their own way. The current Russian government is against interference in other countries' politics on principle. It would naturally prefer an American government willing to do the same.

The United States, in contrast, is in favor of interference in other countries on principle: because it seeks a Unipolar world, with a single "democratic" system, and considers itself the final authority as to which regime a country should have and how it should run its affairs.

So, if Putin were trying to interfere in U.S. domestic politics, he would not be trying to change the U.S. system but to prevent it from trying to change his

own.

U.S. policy-makers practice interference every day. And they are perfectly willing to allow Russians to interfere in American politics – so long as those Russians like Khodorkovsky, who aspire to precisely the same unipolar world sought by the State Department. Indeed, the American empire depends on such interference from Iraqis, Libyans, Iranians, Russians, Cubans – all those who come to Washington to try to get U.S. power to settle old scores or overthrow the government in the country they came from and put themselves in power. All those are perfectly welcome to lobby for a world ruled by America.

Russian interference in American politics is totally welcome so long as it helps turn public opinion against “multipolar” Putin, glorifies American democracy, serves U.S. interests, including the military industries, helps break down national borders (except those of the United States and Israel) and puts money in appropriate pockets in the halls of Congress.

Diana Johnstone is the author of *Fools' Crusade: Yugoslavia, NATO, and Western Delusions*. Her new book is *Queen of Chaos: the Misadventures of Hillary Clinton*. The memoirs of Diana Johnstone's father Paul H. Johnstone, *From MAD to Madness*, was published by Clarity Press, with her commentary. She can be reached at diana.johnstone@wanadoo.fr .

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The Other Side of John McCain

If the paeans to McCain by diverse political climbers seems detached from reality, it's because they reflect the elite view of U.S. military interventions as a chess game, with the millions killed by unprovoked aggression mere statistics, says Max Blumenthal.

**By Max Blumenthal
in Washington**

Special to Consortium News



As the Cold War entered its final act in 1985, journalist Helena Cobban participated in an academic conference at an upscale resort near Tucson, Arizona, on U.S.-Soviet interactions in the Middle East. When she attended what was listed as the “Gala Dinner with keynote speech”, she quickly learned that the virtual theme of the

evening was, "Adopt a Muj."

"I remember mingling with all of these wealthy Republican women from the Phoenix suburbs and being asked, 'Have you adopted a muj?'" Cobban told me. "Each one had pledged money to sponsor a member of the Afghan mujahedin in the name of beating the communists. Some were even seated at the event next to their personal 'muj.'"

The keynote speaker of the evening, according to Cobban, was a hard-charging freshman member of Congress named John McCain.

During the Vietnam war, McCain had been captured by the North Vietnamese Army after being shot down on his way to bomb a civilian lightbulb factory. He spent two years in solitary confinement and underwent torture that left him with crippling injuries. McCain returned from the war with a deep, abiding loathing of his former captors, remarking as late as 2000, "I hate the gooks. I will hate them as long as I live." After he was criticized for the racist remark, McCain refused to apologize. "I was referring to my prison guards," he said, "and I will continue to refer to them in language that might offend some people because of the beating and torture of my friends."

McCain's visceral resentment informed his vocal support for the mujahedin as well as the right-wing contra death squads in Central America – any proxy group sworn to the destruction of communist governments.

So committed was McCain to the anti-communist cause that in the mid-1980s he had joined the advisory board of the United States Council for World Freedom, the American affiliate of the World Anti-Communist League (WACL). Geoffrey Stewart-Smith, a former leader of WACL's British chapter who had turned against the group in 1974, described the organization as "a collection of Nazis, fascists, anti-Semites, sellers of forgeries, vicious racialists, and corrupt self-seekers. It has evolved into an anti-Semitic international."

Joining McCain in the organization were notables such as Jaroslav Stetsko, the Ukrainian Nazi collaborator who helped oversee the extermination of 7,000 Jews in 1941; the brutal Argentinian former dictator Jorge Rafael Videla; and Guatemalan death squad leader Mario Sandoval Alarcon. Then-President Ronald Reagan honored the group for playing "a leadership role in drawing attention to the gallant struggle now being waged by the true freedom fighters of our day."

Being Lauded as a Hero

On the occasion of his death, McCain is being honored in much the same way – as a patriotic hero and freedom fighter for democracy. A stream of hagiographies is pouring forth from the Beltway press corps that he described as his true

political base. Among McCain's most enthusiastic groupies is CNN's Jake Tapper, whom he chose as his personal stenographer for a 2000 trip to Vietnam. When the former CNN host Howard Kurtz asked Tapper in February, 2000, "When you're on the [campaign] bus, do you make a conscious effort not to fall under the magical McCain spell?"

"Oh, you can't. You become like Patty Hearst when the SLA took her," Tapper joked in reply.

But the late senator has also been treated to gratuitous tributes from an array of prominent liberals, from George Soros to his soft power-pushing client, Ken Roth, along with three fellow directors of Human Rights Watch and "democratic socialist" celebrity Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, who hailed McCain as "an unparalleled example of human decency." Rep. John Lewis, the favorite civil rights symbol of the Beltway political class, weighed in as well to memorialize McCain as a "warrior for peace."

If the paeans to McCain by this diverse cast of political climbers and Davos denizens seemed detached from reality, that's because they perfectly reflected the elite view of American military interventions as akin to a game of chess, and the millions of dead left in the wake of the West's unprovoked aggression as mere statistics.

There were few figures in recent American life who dedicated themselves so personally to the perpetuation of war and empire as McCain. But in Washington, the most defining aspect of his career was studiously overlooked, or waved away as the trivial idiosyncrasy of a noble servant who nonetheless deserved everyone's reverence.

McCain did not simply thunder for every major intervention of the post-Cold War era from the Senate floor, while pushing for sanctions and assorted campaigns of subterfuge on the side. He was uniquely ruthless when it came to advancing imperial goals, barnstorming from one conflict zone to another to personally recruit far-right fanatics as American proxies.

In Libya and Syria, he cultivated affiliates of Al Qaeda as allies, and in Ukraine, McCain courted actual, sig-heiling neo-Nazis.

While McCain's Senate office functioned as a clubhouse for arms industry lobbyists and neocon operatives, his fascistic allies waged a campaign of human devastation that will continue until long after the flowers dry up on his grave.

American media may have sought to bury this legacy with the senator's body, but it is what much of the outside world will remember him for.

'They are Not al-Qaeda'

When a violent insurgency swept through Libya in 2011, McCain parachuted into the country to meet with leaders of the main insurgent outfit, the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group (LIFG), battling the government of Moamar Gaddafi. His goal was to make kosher this band of hardline Islamists in the eyes of the Obama administration, which was considering a military intervention at the time.

What happened next is well documented, though it is scarcely discussed by a Washington political class that depended on the Benghazi charade to deflect from the real scandal of Libya's societal destruction. Gaddafi's motorcade was attacked by NATO jets, enabling a band of LIFG fighters to capture him, sodomize him with a bayonet, then murder him and leave his body to rot in a butcher shop in Misrata while rebel fanboys snapped cellphone selfies of his fetid corpse.

A slaughter of Black citizens of Libya by the racist sectarian militias recruited by McCain immediately followed the killing of the pan-African leader. ISIS took over Gaddafi's hometown of Sirte while Belhaj's militia took control of Tripoli, and a war of the warlords began. Just as Gaddafi had warned, the ruined country became a staging ground for migrant smugglers on the Mediterranean, fueling the rise of the far-right across Europe and enabling the return of slavery to Africa.

Many might describe Libya as a failed state, but it also represents a successful realization of the vision McCain and his allies have advanced on the global stage.

Following the NATO-orchestrated murder of Libya's leader, McCain tweeted, "Qaddafi on his way out, Bashar al Assad is next."

McCain's Syrian Boondoggle

Like Libya, Syria had resisted aligning with the West and was suddenly confronted with a Salafi-jihadi insurgency armed by the CIA. Once again, McCain made it his personal duty to market Islamist insurgents to America as a cross between the Minutemen and the Freedom Riders of the civil rights era. To do so, he took under his wing a youthful DC-based Syria-American operative named Mouaz Moustafa who had been a consultant to the Libyan Transitional Council during the run-up to the NATO invasion.

In May 2013, Moustafa convinced McCain to take an illegal trip across the Syrian border and meet some freedom fighters. An Israeli millionaire named Moti Kahana who coordinated efforts between the Syrian opposition and the Israeli military through his NGO, Amaliah, claimed to have "financed the opposition group which took senator John McCain to visit war-torn Syria."

“This could be like his Benghazi moment,” Moustafa remarked excitedly in a scene from a documentary, “Red Lines,” that depicted his efforts for regime change. “[McCain] went to Benghazi, he came back, we bombed.”

During his brief excursion into Syria, McCain met with a group of CIA-backed insurgents and blessed their struggle. “The senator wanted to assure the Free Syrian Army that the American people support their cry for freedom, support their revolution,” Moustafa said in an interview with CNN. McCain’s office promptly released a photo showing the senator posing beside a beaming Moustafa and two grim-looking gunmen.

Days later, the men were named by the Lebanese *Daily Star* as Mohammad Nour and Abu Ibrahim. Both had been implicated in the kidnapping a year prior of 11 Shia pilgrims, and were identified by one of the survivors. McCain and Moustafa returned to the U.S. the targets of mockery from Daily Show host John Stewart and the subject of harshly critical reports from across the media spectrum. At a town hall in Arizona, McCain was berated by constituents, including Jumana Hadid, a Syrian Christian woman who warned that the sectarian militants he had cozied up to threatened her community with genocide.

But McCain pressed ahead anyway. On Capitol Hill, he introduced another shady young operative into his interventionist theater. Named Elizabeth O’Bagy, she was a fellow at the Institute for the Study of War, an arms industry-funded think tank directed by Kimberly Kagan of the neoconservative Kagan clan. Behind the scenes, O’Bagy was consulting for Moustafa at his Syrian Emergency Task Force, a clear conflict of interest that her top Senate patron was well aware of. Before the Senate, McCain cited a *Wall Street Journal* editorial by O’Bagy to support his assessment of the Syrian rebels as predominately “moderate,” and potentially Western-friendly.

Days later, O’Bagy was exposed for faking her PhD in Arabic studies. As soon as the humiliated Kagan fired O’Bagy, the academic fraudster took another pass through the Beltway’s revolving door, striding into the halls of Congress as McCain’s newest foreign policy aide.

McCain ultimately failed to see the Islamist “revolutionaries” he glad handled take control of Damascus. Syria’s government held on thanks to help from his mortal enemies in Tehran and Moscow, but not before a billion dollar CIA arm-and-equip operation helped spawn one of the worst refugee crises in post-war history. Luckily for McCain, there were other intrigues seeking his attention, and new bands of fanatical rogues in need of his blessing. Months after his Syrian boondoggle, the ornery militarist turned his attention to Ukraine, then in the throes of an upheaval stimulated by U.S. and EU-funded soft power NGO’s.

Coddling the Neo-Nazis of Ukraine

On December 14, 2013, McCain materialized in Kiev for a [meeting with Oleh Tyanhbok](#), an unreconstructed fascist who had emerged as a top opposition leader. Tyanhbok had co-founded the fascist Social-National Party, a far-right political outfit that touted itself as the “last hope of the white race, of humankind as such.” No fan of Jews, he had [complained](#) that a “Muscovite-Jewish mafia” had taken control of his country, and had been photographed throwing up a sieg heil Nazi salute during a speech.

None of this apparently mattered to McCain. Nor did the scene of Right Sector neo-Nazis [filling up](#) Kiev’s Maidan Square while he appeared on stage to egg them on.

“Ukraine will make Europe better and Europe will make Ukraine better!” McCain proclaimed to cheering throngs while Tyanhbok stood by his side. The only issue that mattered to him at the time was the refusal of Ukraine’s elected president to sign a European Union austerity plan, opting instead for an economic deal with Moscow.

McCain was so committed to replacing an independent-minded government with a NATO vassal that he even mulled a military assault on Kiev. “I do not see a military option and that is tragic,” McCain lamented in an interview about the crisis. Fortunately for him, regime change arrived soon after his appearance on the Maidan, and Tyanhbok’s allies rushed in to fill the void.

By the end of the year, the Ukrainian military had become bogged down in a bloody trench war with pro-Russian, anti-coup separatists in the country’s east. A militia affiliated with the new government in Kiev called Dnipro-1 was [accused](#) by Amnesty International observers of blocking humanitarian aid into a separatist-held area, including food and clothing for the war torn population.

Six months later, McCain [appeared](#) at Dnipro-1’s training base alongside Sen.’s Tom Cotton and John Barasso. “The people of my country are proud of your fight and your courage,” McCain told an assembly of soldiers from the militia. When he completed his remarks, the fighters belted out a World War II-era salute made famous by Ukrainian Nazi collaborators: “Glory to Ukraine!”

Today, far-right nationalists occupy key posts in Ukraine’s pro-Western government. The speaker of its parliament is [Andriy Parubiy](#), a co-founder with Tyanhbok of the Social-National Party and leader of the movement to honor World War Two-era Nazi collaborators like Stepan Bandera. On the cover of his 1998 manifesto, “View From The Right,” Parubiy appeared in a Nazi-style brown shirt with a pistol strapped to his waist. In June 2017, McCain and Republican Speaker

of the House Paul Ryan [welcomed Parubiy](#) on Capitol Hill for what McCain called a “good meeting.” It was a shot in the arm for the fascist forces sweeping across Ukraine.

The past months in Ukraine have seen a [state sponsored](#) neo-Nazi militia called C14 carrying out a pogromist rampage against Ukraine’s Roma population, the country’s parliament erecting an [exhibition](#) honoring Nazi collaborators, and the Ukrainian military [formally approving](#) the pro-Nazi “Glory to Ukraine” greeting as its own official salute.

Ukraine is now the sick man of Europe, a perpetual aid case bogged down in an endless war in its east. In a testament to the country’s demise since its so-called “Revolution of Dignity,” the deeply unpopular President Petro Poroshenko has promised White House National Security Advisor John Bolton that his country – once a plentiful source of coal on par with Pennsylvania – will [now purchase coal](#) from the U.S. Once again, a regime change operation that generated a failing, fascistic state stands as one of McCain’s greatest triumphs.

McCain’s history conjures up memory of one of the most inflammatory statements by Sarah Palin, another cretinous fanatic he foisted onto the world stage. During a characteristically rambling stump speech in October 2008, Palin [accused](#) Barack Obama of “palling around with terrorists.” The line was dismissed as ridiculous and borderline slander, as it should have been. But looking back at McCain’s career, the accusation seems richly ironic.

By any objective standard, it was McCain who had palled around with terrorists, and who wrested as much resources as he could from the American taxpayer to maximize their mayhem. Here’s hoping that the societies shattered by McCain’s proxies will someday rest in peace.

Max Blumenthal is an award-winning journalist and the author of books including best-selling [Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement That Shattered the Party](#), [Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel](#), [The Fifty One Day War: Ruin and Resistance in Gaza](#), and the forthcoming [The Management of Savagery](#), which will be published by Verso. He has also produced numerous print articles for an array of publications, many video reports and several documentaries including [Je Ne Suis Pas Charlie](#) and the newly released [Killing Gaza](#). Blumenthal founded the [GrayzoneProject.com](#) in 2015 and serves as its editor.

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