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## U.S. Hypocrisy On Election Meddling

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Although Donald Trump has taken the oath of office as president, speculation continues to swirl about alleged Russian interference in the 2016 elections to his benefit. The evidence that Moscow's actions were designed to help Donald Trump is anemic. Nevertheless, politicians, pundits, and mainstream journalists express outrage at Russia's supposed election hacking and insinuate that it tarnishes Trump's victory. Senator John McCain even asserted that such cyber activities constituted an act of war.

This indignation about Russian interference in America's election reflects astounding hypocrisy on multiple levels.

For example, mainstream U.S. media and politicians have done little to address Ukraine's meddling in the presidential election. There is credible evidence of blatant interference by the Ukrainian government to undermine Trump's candidacy and boost Clinton's prospects. Kiev's intelligence apparatus leaked numerous bits of negative information about Trump and several of his advisers. All of those leaks sought to portray the GOP candidate and his associates as tools of Vladimir Putin.

The greater hypocrisy, though, is that Washington's hands have never been clean about meddling in the political affairs of other countries—including democratic nations.

It is indisputable that the CIA helped fund and otherwise assist pro-Western parties against their leftist opponents in both France and Italy during the early years of the Cold War. But that was mild interference compared to the Agency's conduct in other countries. The CIA helped overthrow democratic governments in both Iran and Guatemala in the mid-1950s and help install brutal, autocratic successor regimes. Indeed, Washington meddled in elections in more than two dozen countries, both during the Cold War and since then.

Indeed, the U.S. has found any number of creative ways to influence foreign politics. There are several ostensibly "nongovernmental organizations" (NGOs), most notably the International Republican Institute and the National Democratic Institute, that exist supposedly to help educate populations in newly democratic countries about the mechanics and virtues of democracy. The reality is that they fund and help train political factions that are deemed friendly to the United

States, and specifically to Washington's foreign policy. Despite the "nongovernmental" label, such organizations receive federal funds and are hardly free of influence from U.S. officials.

Recent years have been no exception to the rule. Victoria Nuland, the Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs in the Obama administration, openly boasted about the expenditure of some \$5 billion to assist "pro-democracy" forces in Ukraine since 1991. Although such funding was not inherently hostile to the duly elected government of pro-Russian President Victor Yanukovich, it did strengthen the anti-Yanukovich factions that took to the streets during the 2013-2014 political crisis in that country.

When demonstrators tried to unseat Yanukovich, Nuland and her colleagues engaged in even more blatant meddling. A leaked telephone call between Nuland and then-U.S. ambassador to Ukraine Geoffrey Pyatt revealed their attempt to select the personnel for a successor government. Other political leaders reinforced such efforts. John McCain, for example, showed up in Kiev to urge on the demonstrators in their bid to unseat the elected government before the expiration of its term in 2016.

For a country with such a lengthy track record of interference in the political affairs of other democratic nations, expressing outrage about Russian interference ratchets hypocrisy to a new level. U.S. conduct, of course, does not excuse Moscow's activities, especially if a detailed and objective investigation confirms that such meddling occurred. But Washington also needs to clean up its own conduct and practice what it preaches.

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