

Review of Stephen F. Cohen's "War with Russia", 2019

Stephen F Cohen inspires strong reactions, both negative and positive.

He is absolutely right about the historical demonization of Russia, which had its roots in the United States' relationship with the Soviet union.

He is absolutely right about the demonization of President Trump, the so-called Russiagate. There is no substance there, and it is incredibly dangerous to cripple a president's ability to conduct foreign policy.

Undermining the presidency the way it is being done will have consequences for all future presidents, and could easily spell the end of the Republic as we know it. Politics is based on trust. If there is none, it will devolve into tyranny.

He is right about the fecklessness of the media. There is very little left of independent media. Nobody challenges the dominant narratives coming out of the New York Times, the Washington Post, and all of the want to be second-tier newspapers and all of the broadcast and Internet media that pick up material from such sources.

He is right about the lack of statesmanship at the highest levels of US government. He cites only one statesman in the halls of government: Rand Paul.

He is right about the absolute lack of scruples on the careerism of the high-level functionaries in government, singling out, very appropriately, John Brennan, James Clapper, and to a lesser extent James Comey.

He is right about the fecklessness of presidents Bush, both of them, Clinton and Obama. They either had no understanding of what their subordinates were doing, or had no ability to rein them in.

I strongly disagree with most of what Cohen writes about Ukraine. While Cohen's experiences with Russia and the United States, he has never lived here. I have lived here for 12 years, the period about which he presumes to know, and his account varies quite widely from what I observed and what I have heard from my Ukrainian friends and acquaintances. Being so egregiously wrong on the subject of Ukraine calls into question his credibility on all the other points. I agree with him, but has he really done his research? Is he, as accused, being taken in by Russian propaganda? I think to some degree he is.

This is a long review because it is a complex topic and because while I agree with most of Cohen's points I feel obliged to point out the areas in which I strongly disagree. Though I agree with most of what Cohen says about Russiagate, is being wrong about the history I know as a resident of Ukraine casts a long shadow of doubt.

Cohen closes with a point: "The once venerated American journalist Walter Lippmann observed, "when all think alike, no one is thinking." This is my modest attempt to inspire more thinking." Here, for your pleasure, is some of that additional thinking – contrarian, probably fewer will agree with me than with Cohen himself.

Ukraine

In May, 2019 in a 70% landslide Ukraine elected Volodymyr Zelenski, a Jewish comedian, to be president . The election gave the lie to a great many of Cohen's points:

There is no visible anti-Semitism here in Ukraine. The Jewish Zelinski defeated the half Jewish Poroshenko in a land that has only about a 1% Jewish population.

The Right Sector, about whom Cohen goes on endlessly for the threat they supposedly pose, was not a factor whatsoever in the election. They were not visible.

Zelinski's political godfather is Igor Kholomoisky, the richest Jewish oligarch in Ukraine. There are a number of Jewish oligarchs here, all corrupt. Ukraine is more dominated by Jews than any other country in Europe, and it is also more corrupt.

Jews dominate the parliament, the Verhovna Rada. With Zelinski's election a fellow named Groysman stepped down as prime minister. The position had been held by American friend Arseny Yatsenyuk. While there may be anti-Semitic mutterings, I know of no anti-Semitic incidents, and in fact the usual observation, by goy and Jewish friends alike, is that Jews run the place.

There are no Jewish fascists. The claim of neo-Nazis running Ukraine is a total canard. Fascists went extinct in 1945. Chasing fascist will of the wisps in 2019 only detracts from Cohen's other arguments. In fact, Ukraine is only tangential to his argument. It does not belong in this book.

I recommend two pieces of traditional wisdom to Cohen:

Everybody lies – you have to be skeptical across-the-board. Putin's Russia is the true heir of the Tsars and the Soviets. They use the same political techniques, including disinformation.

Do not attribute to malice that which can be adequately explained by stupidity. President Yanukovich was dumb. Bush II and Obama not much better.

Although Cohen goes on endlessly about Ukraine, it is not central to his argument about Russiagate. He would be better off without it. Therefore, I am including most of my Ukraine commentary as comments.

I totally agree with Cohen that the conviction of Paul Manafort is a political attack. Manafort's hands were undoubtedly somewhat dirty, but everybody involved in Ukraine has dirty hands. This is especially clear about the Biden family now. They undoubtedly took far more pelf out of Ukraine than Manafort did, and yet there is nobody laying a glove on them.

It is curious to see how muted Trump's support has been for the détente with Russia. Although as a candidate he advocated and the diminished involvement of America in wars, he has backed off.

Many such as Ann Coulter have lamented that the Jewish interests finally got control of them, one factor being son-in-law Jared Kushner. Trump simply lacked an adequate outside organization to staff his administration.

Certainly others have been substantial campaign contributors such as Sheldon Adelson. Look now at Bolton and Pompeo, and look also at those he needed, such as Lindsey Graham, who have always been aligned with the neoconservatives. Trump could not escape the war party, and now appears to be its captive. Voices of reason – Rex Tillerson, Steve Bannon, General Flynn got rapidly pushed the sideline.

There simply Trump did not have the base required to put together an administration of people he could trust with views similar to his own and he seems to have capitulated to the pro-Jewish, and largely anti-Russian arm sentiments of those who provided his supporters. He seems to have had to give in on immigration, which is an issue that doesn't concern Cohen whatsoever, but which is a straw in the wind.

Cohen repeatedly makes the point that international terrorism is the major danger in the world today. He says that they are a multinational force with assets usually available only to state actors. He repeatedly

makes the point that Russia has suffered more from jihadist terrorism and has any other Western country. What does he mean? It cannot be Chechnya. No – he covers that separately. Aside from that, one does not remember too many incidents such as that in St. Petersburg.

Cohen repeatedly brings up the point of the anti-Russian paranoia of Brennan and Clapper. This anti-Russian paranoia has been a fixture and it has been documented that throughout this Soviet era and even going back to Custine's 1839 [Letters from Russia](#) . America should be suspicious of Russia, but just because we're suspicious doesn't mean that the suspicious are well-founded, or that America is not guilty of misdeeds similar those committed by Russia.

Cohen makes the point that Putin is truly a moderate within Russia. There are hardliners to his right who will turn on Putin if he appears to be too soft on the United States. However high his approval ratings, Putin lives in the political environment in Russia just as Trump does in the United States. Putin's room to maneuver is limited when the United States does things like the Magnitsky Act or snubs him in Syria.

Citing evidence of Ukrainian complicity in the 2016 election, he says that the Clinton campaign was collecting "black" information on Trump from officials of the US backed Ukrainian government. Just this week it comes out that Manafort source Konstantin Kilimnik was not working for Putin, but was rather a longtime CIA source. Mueller should have known as much, and he should not have been dragged in as evidence against Manafort. Or Trump.

Accusations against Russia

Cohen is absolutely right to say that the Kremlin is wrongly accused of promoting white supremacist neo-Nazi movements in the West. One that sticks in my mind is the criticism of Marine Le Pen's National front for taking loans from a Russian bank. Quite simply, the establishment closed ranks to ensure that she could not get loans from banks that are tied in with the French establishment.

Likewise, the American right has very little to do with Russia, especially the alt right. Alt-Right blogger Brittany Pettibone took a trip to Moscow and displayed incredible naïveté in her interview with Alexander Dugan, Putin's pet philosopher and author of [The Fourth Political Theory](#) . It's true she was taken in (say I), but what is obvious is that she had no background whatsoever in what was going on in Russia. The alt right has no organization, a fact that is frustrating to friends and enemies alike. Nothing much to co-opt.

Cohen discusses democracy in Russia with Gorbachev. Gorbachev said that democracy is inevitable. 30 years later, I find this an interesting statement as democracy is on the wane in the United States and Europe. What Russia has it is a democracy in form but perhaps not practice. The same can be said for Ukraine. With the increasing suppression of a free press in the United States, Great Britain and Europe one can say as much for them. All of our future may more closely resemble China, who the totalitarians or the bureaucracy have immense control.

In any case, it is disingenuous for America to call Russia antidemocratic. They do have elections, and the elections are taken seriously by the citizens and although Putin has won the last few, this does not seem to be as thoroughly foreordained as under the Communists..

The polls showing Putin to be quite popular in Russia do not seem to be manipulated, or even capable of being manipulated given the relative openness of the press. This openness may wax and wane, but Putin's popularity has stayed pretty strong for most of the 20 years he's been in power.

Cohen claims that in the Skripal case, the nonfatal poisoning of a Russian immigrant and his daughter, not only are there no facts, there is no common sense. Putin had no possible motive, certainly not on the eve of the Russian presidential election to poison relations with the West. A couple of other English people affected by the same poison a few weeks later had nothing to do with the Russians. Lastly, why would Russia use an arcane method of assassination that could surely be traced to a state actor? And why would they be unsuccessful? Other intelligence agencies use simpler means – untraceable guns or staged car

accidents.

He loses me when he returns to Ukraine, claiming "The snipers who killed scores of protesters have been conclusively demonstrated to be of the right sector. The demonstrators and the right sector itself were not well enough organized pull the sort of thing off. They did not hold the high ground from which the shots were fired. They were certainly not cohesive enough to contain the secret, should anybody have known that their comrades in arms murdered 100 fellow protesters. Cohen does not need this argument and he should not make it. The bloggers that coincides as his sources are not authoritative. He should apply the same standard to them that he would ask of Russiagate sources.

Another argument he should abandon is that the Odessa Trade Unions House tragedy can be attributed to the right sector. There are a number of accounts, and a great deal of conflict among them. Wikipedia does a pretty good job of laying them out. My take is that Russia attempted to foment insurrection, as they had done in the satellite states in Eastern Europe at the end of World War II, in Transnistria, and in Crimea, Donetsk, Lugansk, Kharkiv, Mariupol and other Ukrainian regions. It is right out of the Soviet playbook. The scheme involves local actors, thugs, far enough removed that Russia has plausible deniability. In this case I will grant Russia their plausible deniability. To claim to know what happened, as Cohen does, is ludicrous.

Cohen's account of the war with Georgia in 2008 is somewhat one-sided. The Russians had certainly massed in South Ossetia in anticipation of some sort of a confrontation. Nonetheless, it appears they were successful in getting Shakhmurov to launch the first attack, giving Russia the moral high ground. Cohen is certainly right that the media portrayed as entirely one-sided.

Cohen's account has Joe Biden looking like a corrupt fool for his meddling in both Russia and Ukraine. Right on both counts. He is not a smart man, and he was in over his head. It is no surprise to find that he and his son were engaged in lucrative, clandestine somewhat hidden ventures in Ukraine. He does not mention the rich donations to the Clinton Foundation by Ukrainian oligarchs such as Victor Pinchuk. There is corruption on both sides of the Atlantic.

A thesis that Cohen might investigate more deeply is that George Bush and Obama were not terribly strong intellects. They were in the hands of the moneyed interests behind them. As if Obama switched courses and confused Russian politics, it may be that he was simply inept and was receiving conflicting signals from his supporters. The same can be said for John Kerry. The 2004 book [Unfit for Command](#) captures the sentiment of those who were in Vietnam at the time of his swiftboat service. Hillary Clinton herself is vicious but not too bright, as highlighted in the many books that have come out on her since the 1990s. The decision to eliminate Gaddafi appears to be one of her many blunders. As usual, and as Cohen notes, she chose the Russians as a scapegoat.

Cohen repeatedly makes the point, correctly, that the United States, as well as France and Germany, betrayed Russia. They went back on the promises made to Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastward. Cohen rightly names the Council on Foreign Relations as a major culprit behind the new cold war with Russia. One can be proud of Cohen for resigning from the CFR as a matter of principle.

Stalin

Cohen gives Stalin the credit for successfully pushing the Nazis back. Other historians would say that Stalin, rather like Churchill and Hitler, hindered his military as much as helped them. It was the Soviet people, and of course Ukrainians as well, who took the brunt of the fighting. Even with inept leadership, and sustaining huge losses, the Soviets, aided by Lend-Lease armaments from the United States, overwhelmed the Germans on the Eastern front.

Cohen is absolutely right to say "achieving elite or popular consensus about the profound traumas of the sorriest Soviet and post-Soviet past remains exceedingly difficult, if not impossible." This is of course true in Ukraine as well.

Cohen gives Putin credit for a monument to Stalin's many victims. A word that does not appear in the book is Holodomor. The Ukrainians were singled out, even among the peoples of Russia. Moreover, it was led by Soviet Jew Lazar Kaganovich. Putin may forget; the Ukrainians do not.

Cohen does not do himself a favor when he lists climate change as one of the planet's biggest dangers. If he were to do a little investigation, he will find that the same characters or behind Russiagate, are inflating the climate change bogeyman. The science is not there. Cohen needs to turn his investigative skills toward this as well. Or, lacking such skills, he should probably simply not mention it.

Russia does not help its cause when it claims to be defending the interests of persecuted Russian speakers in Ukraine, the Baltics, and Moldavia, and Georgia. This is similar to Hitler's probably somewhat more justified claim to be protecting the ethnic Germans in the Sudetenland and in Poland, which had been taken from Germany and part of the Versailles Treaty. At any rate, the West is probably right to be suspicious of Russia's angry defense of the Russian-speaking minorities. Putin is wrong to assume that these Russian-speaking minorities have Russian sympathies. It was clearly not the case in Ukraine, as was demonstrated during the events of 2014. See my comments for more on the language issue.

Cohen's discussion of groupthink and the New York Times being on the wrong side of history, starting as early as 1920, is all true. A question that he does not address is the disproportionate number of Jewish editors and reporters in the American press in general and the New York Times in Washington Post in particular.

There was always a question as to what's in the interests of the Jews. One must remember that the Bolshevik revolution was largely a Jewish project. It served them well that New York Times be a bit disingenuous about the crimes of the Bolsheviks.

Politics makes odd bedfellows. The alt right, like Cohen, is properly skeptical. Paleoconservatives such as Pat Buchanan, Laura Ingram, and Coulter and the like, are certainly going to be on his side. On the other hand traditional conservatives, and certainly neocons, seem to line up on the side of war – along with the so-called "liberals" – all supporting the interests of cheap labor through immigration, the defense industry, and Israel.

Cohen rightly attacks the credibility of the CIA. I recommend two books, [Deceits – My 25 Years with the CIA](#) by Ralph McGehee and [Legacy of Ashes – The History of the CIA](#) by Tim Weiner

Cohen talks about the "shock therapy" visited on Moscow by Washington in the 1990s which led to the creation of a small group of Russian billionaire oligarchs and the "globalization" of their wealth, lavishly between the United States and Russia.

As Amy Chua writes in world's on fire, most of them to emerge were Jewish. [World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability](#). The fact that Putin squeezed Jewish oligarchs out is not incidental to the story. One of them, American Bill Browder, has been a chief instigator of the new cold war. This reviewer naïvely gave his book "Red Notice" a five-star review. It is a well done piece, but totally one-sided.

This concludes my review of parts of the book that did not primarily deal with Ukraine. In other words, the parts that I mostly agree with. The first several comments are my notes on Ukraine, which are quite critical. Cohen doesn't know this country, and he simply does not apply a proper degree of skepticism. To sum it up, Ukraine is run by Jewish oligarchs who recently got a Jewish comedian elected as president. They are not fascists! There are no fascists here. Putin had the bad luck to have feet deal him a totally corrupt palooka in the form of Yanukovych. Cohen correctly states that Putin detested him. So did everybody here. It was truly a popular uprising that caused him to leave.

In conclusion, I give Cohen four stars for having the courage to go against his brethren in the press,

especially the extremely powerful Jewish contingent on both sides of the Atlantic. He would have a strong case if he never mentioned Ukraine. It would also be vastly more accurate.

Comments posted to the review (Amazon used to allow them)

Corruption in Ukraine.

On the subject of Ukraine, all of the governments have been corrupt. It is a legacy of the Soviet Union and the Tsarist regime before it. I have seen four of the country's seven presidencies.

- Victor Yushenko was considered not very effective. He could not control corruption. He has an American wife and was considered friendly to the US.
- Victor Yanukovich won because the two more liberal candidates, Yuliya Tymoshenko and Yushenko, could not unite to defeat him. There was widespread electoral corruption, certainly by Yanukovich but probably by the others as well.
- Petro Poroshenko, a half Jewish candy manufacturer, emerged out of the chaos created by Yanukovich's departure to become president in 2014. He had not been highly visible prior to that time. Poroshenko himself as tainted by corruption and was unable or unwilling to satisfy demands from the IMF and European Union to clamp down on corruption.
- And now we have Vladimir Zelinski, protégé of the country's highly corrupt number two oligarch. He pretends he can be independent – I'll believe it when I see it.

Maidan

Cohen Repeats the Russian propaganda line that "duly elected president Yanukovich was driven from office by anti-democratic forces."

Yanukovich was in a league by himself as far as corruption went. He was hated by just about everybody in Kyiv. His tax police terrorized small businesses. He implemented stupid policies, such as an embargo on grain exports, simply to transparently paper his friends with licenses. He and his family and Associates became prodigiously rich. I came in contact with some such as the Kluyev brothers, who among other things were awarded a solar farm in Crimea on a noncompetitive basis favored by extraordinary levels of government grants and high rates for electricity. He was a stupid thug from Donetsk, who in my coinage, "Broke more than he stole, and stole all he could."

Cohen claims that the 2014 "Revolution of Dignity" was inspired by the United States. While I have nothing good whatsoever to say about the CIA, my observation is that they were overtaken by events. They were too inept to know what was going on. In this case the people got out in front of the politicians. They were simply sick and tired of Yanukovich. I thought the CIA must be involved. I searched the anti-Ukraine Russian language websites thoroughly for stories linking the CIA to the Maidan uprising. I found nothing convincing.

Cohen describes Yanukovich correctly, saying he was "unsavory" and loathed by Putin. He was a stupid thug, looting Ukraine as thoroughly as he could, and not under Russia's control. He was not smart enough to appreciate good advice from Putin even if he received it. He would've especially resisted advice to reign in his greed.

We vacationed several times in Crimea. I never sensed any desire on their part to reunite with Russia. There were lots of Russians around, inasmuch as Ukraine had a long-term (through 2045 or so) basing agreement

to allow the Russian fleet in Sevastopol. Crimea had a separate organization then Ukraine's other oblasts – the autonomous Republic of Crimea or something similar. There was a party in the Crimean government that favored reunion with Russia, but it never received more than about 10% of the vote. There was no overwhelming desire on the part of the people to reunite with mother Russia.

Likewise, visiting Donetsk, while everybody spoke Russian, I did not sense that they were unhappy being Ukrainian. It is true that Donetsk and Lugansk, the coal regions, have a very different ethnic history. Rather like Australia, they were populated by criminals and ne'er-do-wells sent from all over Russia to do the dirty, dangerous work of mining when a Welsh engineer discovered coal about 1880. The Donbas had a different culture – not coincidentally, the hard knuckled culture that Yanukovich brought to Kyiv. It did not play well over the long-term with the Ukrainian people.

Cohen makes an issue of Putin's desire to "protect the Russian speakers" who might be discriminated against. Russian was spoken throughout Ukraine, the level rising along three separate clines:

1. West to East
2. Countryside to city
3. Poor to rich

Ukrainian is not merely a different dialect. As a speaker of Spanish and Portuguese, I can say with authority that the difference between Ukrainian and Russian is greater. I have a hard time learning Ukrainian.

It was said that 10 of the 11 largest cities in Ukraine were predominantly Russian speaking, the single exception being Lviv far in the West. I do not speak Ukrainian and it seemed to be true as far as I was concerned. I never had any trouble getting around.

Nevertheless, Russian speaking or not, I did not meet people who wanted to be reunited with Russia. They see themselves as a different people, not Russian.

The "Revolution of dignity" was scarcely controlled by anybody.

The best source I have found is "Ukraine Diary" by Andrei Kurkov. It recounts the events in much more detail than I personally remember, but there are no false notes – nothing in the book disagrees with my recollections.

The most significant, and overlooked fact, is the time period over which it played out. This book covers the period November 24, 2013 through April 5, 2014. During this period masses of people occupied central Kyiv, defying Yanukovich to control them. He could not evict them. It was a festive atmosphere, with people from Kyiv going every day to lend moral support. I happen to see them two or three times passing through Kyiv on errands, and I brought my daughter to see it as part of her visit to Kyiv in February.

It was mostly spontaneous. Although the Right Sector and other militants would have liked to take credit, they were simply not numerous enough. And there was no desire on the part of the large crowds to start violence. Simply by being there, demonstrating month after month Yanukovich's impotence, his inability to dispel them, they were winning the battle.

The account of Yanukovich's negotiations in 2013 for an agreement with the European Union is narrow and one-sided. The Ukrainians were thoroughly frightened disappointed with Yanukovich for number reasons. Yes, they hoped to become more westernized, but there was no great support for Yanukovich.

It appears that Putin considered Yanukovich unreliable as well and when Yanukovich vacillated he precipitated a crisis.

Cohen says "Western applauded armed street mobs that caused Yanukovich, still the constitutional president, to flee and put in power in ultranationalist, anti-Russian government. " No, that's wrong on several counts.

- It was not heavily armed. We of the citizenry were able to wander freely through the mind on square over the course of at least a month couple months.

- Yanukovich, after the shootings on Maidan Yanukovich retreated to his sumptuous estate, we which is not mentioned, and he fled by night to Russia in the convoy that could not have passed unnoticed, but was allowed to reach Russia unmolested.

- He was at the end of his rope and he realized it.

No, the government did not threaten ethnic Russians and other native Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine. They may have been concerned, but they weren't threatened. The government in Ukraine was too weak to threaten anybody.

You don't have to love the partners that fate throws your way. This is true of both Putin and the West

Fate was kind in giving Putin Assad in Syria, somebody smart who could work with. At this writing, Putin simply walking away from Maduro in Venezuela, who is as unsavory as Yanukovich. Likewise, nobody seems to be embracing Kim Il Un in North Korea. They're just impossible to deal with.

But to return to the point, Yanukovich was all Putin had, and he did his best, and he tried to make the best of the situation. Yanukovich turned out to be a feckless ally.

Maidan

Cohen claims that it is "virtually proven" that the shooters it Maidan were from the right sector, a neo-Nazi group.

His two sources are blogs. is the Oriental review, which is only an article, and it's hardly a disinterested party. They are not authoritative sources – if they were supporting the Russiagate narrative, he would laugh at them.

Does it make sense?

There was general consensus at the time that the shots came from above, from Marinsky Park and also from the tall buildings along the Khrusheskovo Street.

These were under the control of the government. While the protesters who were down on Maidan Square.

Another thing is the timing. There had been a stalemate, with the protesters occupying Maidan for two or three months. The government was unable to make them disperse.

The government lacked the power to make them go away, and ordinary soldiers seemed not to have the will to disperse their own country people.

Therefore it, common sense would say that Yanukovich had run out of options, or that Russia instructed him to do something to get it over.

Could the rebels have kept it secret if their own people were shot? Whoever did it had organization and discipline, which the rebels certainly did not. There would have been justifiable outrage if the news got out.

Whatever it was, the shots which created the "heavenly 100" martyrs, did the trick. It seems unclear that unclear who did it. But to say that it was Right Sector assumes a level of knowledge that seems not to exist.

To talk about the Kyiv regime as "anti-democratic" seems wrong.

They are right to say that Petra Poroshenko is intensely unpopular at home, as are his would-be successors.

This has been proven – but Zelinski has gotten elected.

The government does remain pervasively corrupt.

And Kyiv is seems incapable of fulfilling its obligations, however, interpreted, under the Minsk peace Accords.

This is a sign of disorganization and disunity much more than bad will.

Cohen can't have it both ways. Either the government is inept and corrupt, or a bunch of nasty ruthless fascists. The first is closer to the truth.

Crimea

Cohen points out that the West's annexation of Kosovo, which was the precedent for Putin's annexation of Crimea.

Also, the regime change policies of presidents in Iraq and Libya, and Ukraine.

Cohen rather disingenuously talks about the secession movements in Brexit, in Catalonia and critics referenda.

These were truly democratic efforts.

It would be a total stretch to say that the Crimean referendum was free and fair.

It was planned according to the same model as was used to install puppet governments in the Soviet satellites after World War II.

The outcome was totally predicted.

It is true that it was nonviolent, and that it seems to have a reasonable amount of public support.

However, it has also created a number of refugees – people coming to Kyiv who did not want to live did not want to become Russians.

There were a number of real Ukrainians in Crimea. They were threatened.

There wasn't any particular violence until the People's Republic uprisings started up and there were a number of our mobs inspired by Russia attempting to cover cities in eastern Ukraine. That failed, and Putin did not have the nerve to put his army in. The "little green men" with no insignia. Putin provided the logistical support, tanks and so on, and he and nonuniformed soldiers, but he did not come in and force to make the revolt succeed, and it did not, by and large.

It is true that Crimea is majority ethnically Russian. Certainly Russian speaking. But then Russian is the majority language in or was the majority language in 10 out of the 11 largest Ukrainian cities. Ukraine is probably the largest totally bilingual country in the world. Only in the far west, in Lviv, do people have a hard time understanding Russian.

And that seems to be a show – they do pretty well. This I say with authority. I speak pretty good Russian and although I read Ukrainian I don't speak it.

Cohen is right to say that Ukraine had "flawed, even corrupt, but legally constitutional democracy.

"Cohen criticizes "undemocratic developments in other member states, such as Hungary and Poland." With this, I would take issue. These states are asserting their own interests against those of the United European Union in Brussels. It's not undemocratic. They certainly speak freely with tourists such as myself, in English, Russian or German – same message all around.

Donbas People's Republics

However, it appears that you create that Russia acted opportunistically to reclaim Ukraine at the time that the country was weak and divided in the absence of Yanukovich.

It was seen that this assurance of access to the warm water port would've been enough.

When Yanukovich left, there was not any organized coup to take control.

It was chaos in Kyiv, and Russia acted to take advantage of that chaos, seizing Crimea.

They attempted to push their gains by formatting rebellion in the Russian speaking areas in the Southeast.

They encountered resistance, more than expected, and whereas they might've hoped to rip off a huge arc running from heart Kyiv are around to Odessa, they wound up getting only done yet scanned Lugansk. Even Mariupol resisted them.

This is a demonstration on the part of the people that there was no fervent support for Russia.

Ukraine's military had been eviscerated by especially Yanukovich, friend of Russia. The SBU, or secret police, were thoroughly compromised. It was the Ukrainian people who resisted Russia. This flies in the face of Cohen's narrative.

The question of granting enough home rule to keep Donbas territories in the Ukrainian state is a hard one. There Cohen should know that there is no good solution. The practical political solution would be to cut them loose. They were never an asset to Ukraine, they are out, clapped out coal country. Looking at their history, as in Kuzio does, is say that these people were migrants from all over Russia, ne'er-do-wells who move thereby that sorrows to mine coal and in return for staying out of prison in many cases. See Taras Kuzio, [\[\[ASIN:B06XJYC77H Putin's War Against Ukraine\]\]](#) for a history of Donbas.

They are not ideal citizens in Ukraine is well to be rid of them. What Ukraine needs to do is to find the will to let go, of its wounded pride, and get on with things.

The Azov battalion and the Pravi Sector that are fighting in the Donbas are nationalist battalions. Patriots. To call them ultranationalist might be too strong. But they are they are the ones who have the will to fight Russia what they see as Russian aggression.

There is strong animus against Russia, for good historical reasons, such as the Holodomor. See [\[\[ASIN:B010UOY14G:Red famine – Stalin's war on Ukraine\]\]](#)

The Ukrainian military has gotten significantly stronger over the past five years, and the role of these ultranationalist militias has diminished, but they were indeed essential to stop the advance of the rebels in 2014 and they did indeed hold Poroshenko somewhat hostage in that Yanukovich had rendered his army rather useless.

Cohen is right to say that the Donbas republics have their own ugly traits, and perhaps right to say that they quite only in defense of their own territory – the territory that they took from Kyiv in 2014. Also significant is that The life expectancy of their leaders tends to be rather short.

Putin has done what the Soviet Union frequently did, choosing thugs to run the local government. Thugs do not make good governors. When they get out of line, as the notorious commander Motorola (Arsen Pavolv) did, they die mysteriously. All fingers point to the Kremlin.

US – CIA Support

Cohen claims that Trump says he gave weapons to Ukraine to deter to "further aggression against Ukraine," for which Putin has neither the desire nor intention.

I believe Putin is right, but politics is a matter of perception, and most Ukrainians do not believe Putin has no more appetite.

I don't think that the arms sales do any great harm. They are largely defensive weapons.

So Cohen is right that it doesn't make any strategic sense. I would disagree that it does make geopolitical sense. It said it is throwing a bone to Ukraine, but Cohen is right that it won't do want change the balance on the battlefield much at all.

Poroshenko was a weak and wobbly president. He came out of virtually nowhere in 2014, simply a fairly successful oligarchic/candy maker.

He doesn't seem to have the stomach for a fight. He lost very decisively in the election that he didn't seem to have his heart in.

It appears that he has not wanted to take an offense in the Donbas. So that called the stalemate goes on, it being in either party's interest to end it. Both benefit from their being a war going on. It will probably continue under Zelinski as well.

Cohen asks what happens if something happens to that US trainers or instructing the Ukrainians how to use the new weaponry. To my understanding, the US trainers are staying well in the rear, even in western Ukraine, to conduct their training. They don't want to provoke an incident.

Cohen is right to ask whose decision it was, Trump's, or somebody else's. One of the constant disappointments in Trump is that he has allowed Bolton and Pompeo and Gina Haskell, hardliners, to set policy. Bolton in particular is prone to make pronouncements that come as a surprise to Trump. And, Trump seems not to be able to rein him in. It appears that the neocons have co-opted Trump's team. An unfortunate circumstance.

US politics and Ukraine

Cohen is right to go at Joe Biden, who is deeply bound in Ukrainian politics, and to the extent that Ukraine strongly supported Hillary Clinton, to their chagrin.

It doesn't mention the Kyiv Post. The lead reporters and editorial staff of the Kyiv Post were totally in the in the bag for Clinton. They detested Trump.

Cohen is right again to take on Foreign Affairs Magazine. Foreign Affairs, the mouthpiece of the Atlantic Council, is absolutely is a strong neocon rag. Interestingly, in my time in Ukraine I have seen fairly unbiased journalist fall under their sway. They provide influence and prestige. They have money. At the cost of objectivity.

Cohen goes on about the weapons that the United States was providing Ukraine. These are primarily defensive weapons, personal armaments – rifles and stuff like that – in antitank weapons.

The People's Republic's have tanks because Russia gave them tanks. They might use those tanks to gain territory.

Since 2015 there is a standstill, a an undeclared border that doesn't move a whole lot, The weaponry that the United States gave us will serve Ukraine to raise the ante of Russia decides to push further.

Anti-Semitism

Poroshenko did rehabilitate our Ukrainian nationalists such as Stephan Bandera in order to placate the people in the western Ukraine.

Even Timothy Snyder would not claim that they were our collaborators with that with the Nazi Germans. [[ASIN:0465031471 Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin]]. There were people in our hard place and made hard decisions. They had no love for either the Germans or the Russians. And they were certainly not mostly collaborators, other than by force.

Kyiv is renaming streets in the honor of Ukrainians, getting rid of the Russian names. For instance, a section of town called Petrivka after Peter the Great is now called Pochaeva, after the stream that runs through it. Symon Petliura replaces Kominternu. Sikorsky replaces Tankova. Antonovych replaces Gorky. Red Army Street reverts to its old name, Great Vasily.

With regard to Israel's tally of anti-Semitic incidents, a Israel's hardly area and unbiased source. We simply don't hear of anti-Semitic activity, especially from our Jewish friends and certainly not the Kyiv Post, which would be sure to report it. And, and let's note that once again we have a Jewish president.

Ukraine is not dominated by neo-Nazis. Never has been. Jews dominate the oligarchy.

It is not, as Cohen would have it, "a fact that Americans don't know." It is not a fact whatsoever.

Cohen writes "fascist or neo-Nazi revivalism is underway today in many countries, from Europe to the United States, but Ukrainian cases of special importance and a particular danger.

This is not true in Europe or the United States. Cohen seems to confuse a growth of nationalism, which is evident in Marine LePen Nigel Farage, Robert Fico, Victor Orban and many other many others with anti-Semitism. It is true that the Jews are aligned on the side of the New World Order, the EU, immigration etc., but the divide is political, not anti-Semitic.

The nationalists are want to assert their own nationality and reject the multinational program of the European Union and the internationalism of George Soros and others. This is not neo-Nazism. This is native Europeans looking out for their own interests.

I certainly agree with Cohen that nothing in Putin's 18 years in power smacks of Fascism. However, the same is pretty much true of Ukraine.

Poroshenko was half Jewish. Many of the leaders, such as such as Grossman Taruta and Yatsenyuk and Pinchuk are Jewish. They do not live in fear. If there is any fear, it's only that their corruption will be exposed. But there's not much danger that either.

I don't see a Holocaust denialism anywhere in Ukraine. The Holocaust is simply not an issue here. There are memorials to Jews who died in the war, almost everyplace. They were present in Crimea before it fell. Baba Yar is commemorated. The simply a nonissue.

The issue with Jews in Ukraine is the extraordinarily disproportionate political influence that they have. This is a matter of concern, and it may some day lead to some anti-Semitism. But the Jews are certainly not persecuted. If anything, they Ukrainians feel persecuted at least economically persecuted by the oligarchs.

A point not made - Cohen chooses not to make is that the leaders of the opposition to Trump have strong Jewish roots of New York Times and the Washington Post, though not now owned by Jews, have long been neocon outlets.

Within the Republican Party as he notes on the neocons who strongly anti-Russian.

European press is largely controlled by Jewish interests.

Putin had to contend with Jewish oligarchs who rose up under Yeltsin and fight them for control of Russia. He eventually got control.

Among the oligarchs that he with whom he did battle was Bill Browder, who an American, who succeeded in ending the Magnitsky act passed and in raising and type Putin fever in the United States.

One can say that Putin was opposed by the whole neoliberal establishment.

Nowhere mentioned is George Soros, who attempt it has been a very strong advocate of the European project, and has confronted Russia on many fronts.

One can hypothesize that the Jewish establishment was against Putin because he stood up against them.

Fascism

On the other hand, hyperventilates about the "truly ominous growth of extreme right wing, even neo-Nazi, movements in US backed Ukraine.

This Ukraine just elected a Jewish comedian as president, a protégé of Jewish oligarch Igor Kholomoisky.

The right wing was not whatsoever in evidence in these elections.

It was no surprise to me.

Cohen raises the canard of the Ukrainian Jew killers during World War II German occupation. He's probably just speaking of Stepan Bandera.

Timothy Snyder, gets this history a little bit more correct in his book [[ASIN:0465031471 Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin]]. Ukrainians were truly between a rock and a hard place. They did not like either the Nazis or the Soviets, and they would be readily liquidated for choosing the wrong answer and a split-second decision.

One of the scandals of postwar Ukraine is the Israeli persecution of Ivan Demjanyuk, the prison camp guard, low-level guard, who immigrated to the United States.

Ukrainian Jew killers is seems to be a canard as far as the people I know in Kyiv are concerned. Neither the Jews nor the nor anybody else sees my substance in it. He says

Once again, it is not the sign of what Cohen calls "rebirth of Fascism in a large European country. " Far from it.

The establishment of Washington supports – that certainly sided with Hillary Clinton in the election – is predominantly Jewish. Mr. Cohen, Jews are not fascists.

The Ukrainian Armed Forces and the SBU were infiltrated by Russian spies. Yanukovych hardly cared. There was a fairly major exodus when Yanukovych went to Russia.

The upshot is that these organs were not very effective in fighting against the annexation of Crimea and the occupational Donbas.

The fighting fell to the people.

This of course included the long time anti-Communists from Western Ukraine, the much vilified right sector, who were the most enthusiastically Ukrainian patriot patriots.

Cohen is certainly right to say that what happened in 2014 was not a revolution in the sense of eliminating corruption. No, corruption continues as before. As for democratic or, popular, it certainly was popular. Yanukovych was genuinely unpopular.

Cohen does say "how much of it was spontaneous and how much directed, or inspired, by high-level actors in the West remains unclear." This is a very significant point. As much as I would like to believe that CIA was involved, I have not found evidence. And I have looked for it. I expected I would find it.

Cohen's claims that assaults on gays, Roma, women, feminists and so on is simply not true. Ludicrous and unhelpful.

I live in the center of Kyiv, in a neighborhood with gypsies. I have gay friends. This is not happening. Kyiv is a fairly Western city and a quite tolerant city.

The Ukrainian Economy

Cohen says Ukraine is an "near economic ruin, with thousands dead, millions displaced, and other still struggling to regain the previous quality of life.

That is true mostly in the People's Republic's, for which Russia seems to bear disproportionate responsibility. The surprising thing in Kyiv is how little the war seems to have impacted things. Life goes on as if there were nothing amiss.

Cohen does not acknowledge the Russian pressure on Ukraine, including the constant gas wars concerning gas transit across Ukraine to Western Europe, embargoes on Ukrainian agricultural products and machine exports, etc. etc. were ongoing before 2014. Russia is guilty of heavy-handed diplomacy.

They had to do with money, how gas money was siphoned off by our corrupt Ukrainians and Russians including Yuliya Timushenko, Dmytro Firtash and several others. The whole thought the whole thing was corrupt and stacked by the Russians.

They used that the economic weapon to keep Kyiv in line and a fairly brutal fashion.

Cohen claims Kyiv seems to have an unrelenting impulse to be a "tail wagging the dog" of the US Russian war.

Cohen claims "Its capacity for provocations and disinformation is second to none, as evidenced again recently by the failed assassination and resurrection of journalist Arkady Babchenko." This incident was a stupid thing for the Ukrainians to do, but nothing much beyond stupid. No, Ukrainians are not pushing for confrontation.

We are distrustful of the United States, rightly so.

One issue that he doesn't raise, that his opposite number certainly would raise, is the downing of MH 370, the Malaysian airliner. That incident seems to be eight to have Russia's fingerprints all over it and Cohen doesn't mention it.

Cohen is certainly right about the cowardice of the American media. They are cowardly, partisan, and pack animals.

It is delightful to see independent voices crop up, such as Matt Tiabbi who would side with: generally on the Russiagate, Glenn Greenwald certainly would, and the Edward Snowden and Julian Assange.

They should be mentioned in this book. They support Cohen's case.