**Brian Whitmore, “Phantom Limbs and Zombie Brains\_ How Putin’s Russia ‘Captures’ Its Neighbors”-20231108\_160008-Meeting Recording**

November 8, 2023, 10:00PM

1h 10m 3s

 **Harrison, Lonny** started transcription

 **Harrison, Lonny** 0:03
Great.
Well, welcome everybody.
Here in the room at UTA and to all those joining our live stream online, I'm Ronnie Harrison, director of the McDowell Center for Global Studies.
And today it's my privilege to welcome our guest and colleague, Professor Brian Whitmore.
We worries and assistant professor of practice in the model center and a non resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council.
He is also the founder and host of the internationally acclaimed podcast The Power Vertical, which provides cutting edge analysis of Russian politics and current affairs.
And you can listen to new episodes every week at powervertical.org, or almost anywhere you streaming podcast before joining the UTA faculty in fall of 2020.
Professor Whitmore was senior Russia analyst for Radio Free Europe, Radio Liberty and prior to that worked as a foreign correspondent for the Boston Globe in Moscow and Prague.
Whitmore has testified before the US Congress, as well as the European Parliament, and he is briefed officials on Russian affairs in the US, Canadian and various European governments, as well as NATO.
His work has been featured in the Washington Post, the Atlantic, the New Republic, foreign policy, Newsweek and elsewhere.
He has appeared as a guest commentator on the BBC, World Service, NPR and various other media, and in fact, since coming to UTI, he's featured regularly on the DFW MVC 5 Nightly news with Brian Curtis.
Sometimes it gets me in trouble, right?
And that just comes with the territory today.
Professor Whitmore is presenting his talk entitled.
I think I know it.
Phantom limbs and zombie brains.
How Putin's Russia captures its neighbors?
I get that memorized cuz it's such a creative title in the spirit of the season and we will have time for for questions for more at the end of the talk.
So join me in giving a warm welcome to Christmas.
Brian Whitmore.
Thank you for that kind introduction.
And then slides up here before I start the talk.
I just want to do a brief public service announcements on this hashtag.
Who else?
My my good friend and former colleague at radio for Europe also cumisha, who's a joint US Russian citizen.
Ohm, who works radio for Europe and the spacing Prague.
Some of you may have if you've taken Harrison, Professor Smith's Russia Today course have met her husband.
Bubble Butorac, who is the director of current time television and Radio, Free Europe Radio Liberty Umm, also has been unjustly imprisoned in Russia since October 18th.
Umm, she was in Russia for a family emergency in her hometown of Kazan.
Umm.
And she was arrested on October 18th.
Basically, for being an American and and I I only say that halfway facetiously, umm, she was arrested for being a foreign agent and not reporting it to the Russian government.
And that is all based on the fact that she is a citizen in the United States.
She is still incarcerated.
Umm, with no hope on the horizon.
But we're trying to raise consciousness.
Her husband Pavel, just did an excellent 8 minute interview on it's on the Radio Free Europe website.
Right now, I've been reaching out to him regularly trying to do anything I can to help out, to use the modest platforms, but I have at my disposal to get also out.
I've seen the inside of the Russian prison Nugget they made up, of course, but as a journalist and the thought of somebody is sweet contest, they also in our situation shakes me up.
As you can say, so I just wanted to make you aware that you can go to the next slide just briefly.
So I wanna get into the talk.
It's just different ways you could help out. Sue.
We're trying to make the the the, the hashtag free alsu trend as much as possible.
I mean that's that's what we can do here and on the radio Free Europe radio with the website see all sorts of instructions about how to do a parent think I had to explain that to this generation about it, how to work.
Social media is kind of funny to me, former trying to explain it to all of you, but just anyway, this is this is this is also.
I'm here so I just wanted to start the talk with that with this going on.
Yeah, I couldn't not mention it.
Yeah, quickly.
I can probably get it to you.
It's it's, it's it's uh, I don't have URL out there, but if you just search alsorferl.org and you'll have all sorts of information about her.
She's the she's works for the Tatar Bashkir service and radio for your radio liberty.
Which talked our language service at RFE on her husband's.
Pavel is also Russian for an American citizen, which needs to director of of current Time Television.
So yeah, I just wanted to start with that and just kind of get that out there because like I just decided to do this this morning and I there's no way I was not gonna gonna mention else in this situation.
So OK, I can gladly answer questions to get any materials.
Anybody that wants it this today's lecture is the third in a series that I've been giving here in UTA in which I'm trying to contextualize the war in Ukraine.
Ohm kind of move us away from the the blow by blow, if you will of the war and kind of put the whole thing in, in, in a broader context.
The the first lecture I gave in this very room, it must have been over a year ago and I'm mistaken.
What's called separated at birth?
Why Russia and Ukraine are different on the second, which was last semester, was the end of an empire.
Ukraine warned the last stage of Soviet breakup and today today again, it says, like, you know, my funny title, zombie brains and phantom limbs or phantom limbs and zombie brains.
How Russia captures its neighbors because of what is going on in Ukraine, as we're going to see in this lecture, represents the failure of that policy.
The fact that the war had to go kinetic, the fact that Russia had to actually think fade shows the failure of this policy in Ukraine.
That's the good news of the bad news is it succeeded in other places, and we're going to talk about that a bit today.
So just that's just where where we are with this this talk I test drove this talk at a conference in Germany in September that was sponsored by the German Foreign Office and it went over well with a 15 minute talk there.
I kind of broadened it out to be a little bit longer here.
I just mixing more more stories and anecdotes.
That's all you got to do there.
So this is the.
This is the kind of second time I'm giving this the the the first time in this at this length I'm.
Gonna start with is that let's see if we can go to the first slide up.
Yeah, we are witnessing right now.
We have been with this, but I would argue for the past two decades or So what I consider to be the final stage of the breakup of the Soviet Union.
Soviet Union, of course, formally broke up on December 25th, 1991.
My students know my story of standing on Red Square on December 23rd, 1991, just before I was about to fly out of this.
What was still the Soviet Union at that point for for two more days and looking at that red flag over over the Kremlin and thinking, my God, that things coming down in a couple of days, right.
And I grew up.
My generation grew up afraid of that flag, right?
We're Cold War.
It's like, you know, what are the generation that had to dive under our desks for?
Nuclear.
Nuclear air raid drills and I I still have a school child.
Never understood why we have to dive on our guests and how that was going to help us if there was a nuclear attack as a 60 year old adult by still don't understand the point of all of that, but that that the, the, the, the Soviet Union broke up on December 25th, 1991.
It was a Seminole event, but the Phantom Limbs and zombie brains of the Old Empire, Renate and continued in Russia, leveraged those phantom limbs and zombie brains of the old Empire to try to reassert control of the of of of the old empire.
Now, why are we now 30 years later?
Why are we only now in this final stage of the break of the Soviet?
Ohh, the Soviet Union broke up a generation of 30 years.
Makes me feel old.
I I was I I just turned 30 as it froze just about to turn 30 to break it up.
Umm.
But this means that in the entire generation, a lot of your generation, your counterparts in the former Soviet space grew up just like you don't remember the Cold War.
They don't remember the Soviet right.
If known as salgia.
We're all nostalgic for what was going on in our trust.
I'm nostalgic itself, right?
And we're all nostalgic for, well and so.
But they don't have it, and their parents have the nostalgia not because they necessarily love the Soviet Union or anything, but it was their youth.
That's what they remember from their you this generation has no nostalgia whatsoever.
No, in this generation has also grown up in contrast to their parents with more contract contact with the West.
They watch Netflix just like you, right?
They watch Hulu.
They watch, they read.
They read Western books.
They watch Western movies.
They absorb western culture.
They travel to the West, they speak foreign language.
No.
So this new generics are the first thing I say, and I say that, you know, the kids are right.
You know, we see in Georgia, you know, basically 2 generations of of you know, broadly defined kids there.
Umm, this generation grew up with different values and he grew up with an attractiveness toward the Western model, right?
It's very easy for us to the US and Western Europe to criticize our Western liberal democracy, right.
We're inside it and that's healthy.
That's good right?
For for them, looking from what they are, they see what we have and they want that they want to live in transparent, open, democratic societies.
They've seen that visited them and so there there's there's an attractive.
So while we in the West have the deficiencies, we live democratic model and that's all good.
This rising generation, the former Soviet space, they mainly see the positive.
In fact, there's sometimes when I'm talking to them, I have to say what we're not that good.
You know there's problems, right?
But they only see the posit.
Umm, it's notable that two things about the the revolutions we saw in the early 2000s, the Rose Revolution in Georgia in 2003 and the Orange Revolution in Ukraine and the subsequent revolution of dignity Rose Revolution was 2004.
The revolution that they can use, 2014, two things are really notable.
These revolutions were driven by people in their 20s.
If you were 30 on that that, that, that and my daughter's legacy in the center of chief, you are old.
They were driven by young people and the other thing is they were waving the flag of the European together with their national flag.
You're waving flag in your opinion and you see here in this picture, this, this young lady has the bigger communion and play of the Republic of Georgia and her hands.
And that's not by accident.
It's not uncommon to see people with face cream, like we'll see a football game or here with half of their face painted like the European Union flag and the other half of their face painted with the flag of their national their national flag training like Georgian flag or elsewhere.
So those are the two things that are notable.
And I think that was really the kickoff of this kind of change once these revolutions that took place in Ukraine and Georgia in 2003 and four respectively, for the rising generation of the former Soviet Union, prosperity equals Europe equals the web.
Umm, you also see another tendency among the young in the former 17 and I get this always when I talk to people outside of Russia and the former Soviet space, there's a growing awareness in places like Georgia and Dover, Ukraine, that they had been colonized by Russia.
There's a growing awareness of their own histories outside an independent firm, Russian Imperial structures.
In my first lecture, kind of touched on this about the history of Ukraine and how much of that history had nothing to do with Russia.
Brain was part of the police of the Wind and Commonwealth of the Grand Duchess that Juania, which were the functional equivalents at that time.
As of Europe, right, those are the European super states of that time.
So this is the broad context that we perceive from that.
There are natural organic processes happening in this country because, largely because a new generation is coming of age, not exclusively, but largely because of new generation is coming of age.
No, and that this is happening organically.
It's not some plot that was hatched in the basement of the State Department or the CIA as bladimir Putin would have you believe.
But if we could transform entire societies, I often joke as it got I wish we were that.
My friends of mine in Washington and the intelligence community or the diplomat would say God, I wish we could do that.
We can't do that.
This is an organic process.
It's the process the West supports.
Certain, but it's not a process.
The West is initiated.
The process is that's obvious, but if you go to the next slide, please.
But Russia's not sitting sitting by idly as this is going on.
But to stop these trends and to maintain its empire, Russia has deployed various strategies and tactics that students in my classes will be familiar with.
From that first class glance look haphazard and chaotic.
They're using disinformation.
They're using Russian controlled media to spread negative information about the West.
A lot of people in the former Soviet space until relatively recently, and even today some places continue to get their news from Russian state television because the Russian language is still kind of a lingua franca of the former Soviet space.
Now it is quickly being supplanted by English.
I noticed this when you Ukrainians and Georgians speak to each other, or we'll governs and and and and Kazakhs speak to each other.
They used to speak to each other in Russia.
Increasingly, they are speaking to each other in English.
Again, this is because of a rising generation that has adopted English as their lingua franca.
The language they speak when they go to Europe and it's obviously the language they speak when they come to the United States.
So you see this information, the use of Russian controlled media, Russian state media, and otherwise have Russian troll media spread negative information.
We see another topic.
My students will be familiar with the weaponization of corruption.
This is one of my favorite topics.
Anybody taking any of my classes will know this.

 **Aaron, Roderick Jermain, Sr** joined the meeting

 **Harrison, Lonny** 15:51
I think it's a national security threat at 1st order, the use of Kremlin connected business interests to establish networks of influence and fond of saying that corruption is the new communism because it spreads Russian influence the same way that communism used to spread Russian influence.
The difference being that communism, for all its faults and its faults, are legion.
And at least try to appeal to higher humanized peoples.
Corruption appeals to something even more powerful week basis.
Humans, let's face it, if you're making millions off of your ties with Russian businesses, you're going to be down for whatever Putin wants to, and we see this.
We see this in Europe.
See this in the United States and we see this elsewhere.
So the weaponization of corruption, we see frozen conflicts.
This is what I like to call Putin's arsonist firefighters.
First, you'd be an arsonist, and then you'd be a firefighter.
You stoke a conflict in the neighboring country.
Could be an ethnic would be complete based on something else based on language or whatever you stoke a conflict, provoke it, and then you come in and say, alright, we'll be at peace and then that gives you info entry and then you see outright annexation.
Most spectacularly, of course, Russia's illegal, forceful annexation of Ukraine, Crimean Peninsula in 19 in 2014.
So these things I've been following these things as journalists and analysts and scholar for decades, and they look haphazard.
If you look at it like what are the Russians doing?
They're just throwing stuff against the wall and seeing what sticks stuff here is that the other word I usually use in a in a less public setting?
That's not what they're there is a method to their madness on there.
There is a there is in in in this lecture.
What I wanna do is try to impose some order on what Russia is trying to do in order to keep control of the whole empire going to the next slide, please.
And I wanna basically introduce term here terministic capture.
I don't know how many of you are familiar with this term.
It it's it's come up in some of my classes.
Stay capture is actually a I want to kind of look at different forms of capture, but what I'm basically doing is ripping off the concept of state capture.
State capture is a term that was coined by the World Bank in 2000 and what it means as we, as we see on the screen, state capture is a type of systemic political corruption in which private interests significantly influences state decision making process to their own advantage.
It's basically an example what the World Bank was saying in 2000 was looking within a state and say private sector interest in that state basically.
And make the sticker do what you want.
No private sector in interests always lobby the state, right?
If you go to Austin, you'll be tripping over lobbyists.
If you go anywhere near the state Capitol, if I walk down K St in Washington, I'll be more than tripping over lobby as I probably won't be able to get through before the crowd and the swarm.
That's normal because lobbyists have to work within a framework of law, right?
The after they have to play by certain rules in a state captures situation.
They have captured all of that and they are writing the rules.
They are making the legislatures and executives, and these states are not independent from these private sector interests that have captured them.
So it is something that any economists will be familiar with now what's happened since the World Bank coined this term in 2000?
In this twist, for our purposes is that the state, the private interest in question that I'm talking about here in the former Soviet Union aren't really private at all.
They are connected to another.
You're connected to the Russians.
They're only nominally you're actually agile of the Russian state, and so this is we have this.
Basically a situation where nominally private sector interest in one state, the former imperial overlord of this empire, this fallen empire are acting on behalf of that safe to capture another, but they don't only capture the state and this is what I did, and now we're kind of getting in to the meat of of the lecture because I want to talk about the next slide.
Please, four types of captions.
Four types of capture uh.
We have social capture and we're going to elaborate on each of these in turn subsequent slides, but just to kind of introduce us and to set us up, we have social capture.

 **Price, Iya Khelm** joined the meeting

 **Harrison, Lonny** 20:56
Elites capture.
They capture finally land capture.
We're going to talk about two kinds of land.
Limited land capture total capture there is these scheme of how this works and we're gonna get to Ukraine in a moment because Ukraine is an example of what happens when this fails.
When all else fails.
That's totally I've fortunately, that appears to be failing at the moment as well.

 **Aaron, Roderick Jermain, Sr** left the meeting

 **Harrison, Lonny** 21:29
Umm, let's go to the next slide.
We'll start with social, but social capture involves a lot of different it involves the use of media to spread pro Kremlin and anti western narratives in receptive segments of society, and these tend to be kind of fine tuned to the society thereof.
Umm.
For example, in some parts of the former Soviet Union, umm countries like Georgia and Ukraine, the Eastern Orthodox Church is very powerful and very influential.
These are deeply devout societies.
Umm, deeply traditional societies.
Or at least certain segments of them are certainly in the older generations, less so in the younger generations.
Umm.
And in these societies you have a lot of homophobia.
Now the message the Kremlin spreads on its media in places like Georgia and Ukraine before they'll be pre war.
Ukraine.
Georgia to Moldova and elsewhere is that if you join the West, your Society's gonna be overrun with gay people.
And this scares the older, more traditional elements of society.
So this is the the use of the media to spread pro Kremlin and anti Western narratives, but also the latch onto issues last month to kind of wedge issues that are going to make the West less attractive to these societies.
They're all still.
There are also other narratives like that the European Union is a failed state.
It's overrun with migrants.
It's multicultural and wouldn't you rather live in a monoethnic society, right?
Again, a message that works with the older generations, the young generation, not so much, right?
Umm, it's not an accident.
The people that are receptive to these messages are not people.
You're right, the people closer to my age, but they will use things like this to make the West to make the West scary right.
They will push narratives that you know America's a failed state.
State do you know that if you want, I mean we we got a problem.
So you want to live in Washington?
Trust me, right?
But we're not a failed state.
We'll see the questions to the end, but we're not really a failed state.
If if if you but but you'll get a message that the United States is falling apart, you guys are gonna break up just like the Soviet Union.
Texas is declared independence in California's declared independence in the whole umm, so do you wanna watch yourself to that?
Right.
So you'll have disinformation narratives to capture segments of society.
That's one part of the second is the use of so-called compatriot policies on compatriot policies.
That is by trying to appeal.
To ethnic Russians or Russian speakers, they're not always the same.
There's of course some overlap, but ethnic Russian and Russophone populations to appeal to them that they are part of this larger Russian civilization and that their loyalties should lie more with Russia then would say Georgia or Moldova or Ukraine or Kazakhstan or whatever, like this appeal to completely policies.
There, there's, there's an excellent book by Andre Soldato.
His wife, Arena bottega about this this.
This was very prevalent in free annexation by me.
Where, where, where?
The Mayor of Moscow, Ruskov, was explicitly traveling to incentivize people to Crimea.
This in the 90s in early 2000s to basically establish so called patriotic groups in Crimea, Crimea.
How could you be a patriotic group if you were loyal to another country, but that was what they were doing.
So establish these kind of these, these these compatriot networks, I mean, when Russia finally in next Ukraine Crimea, they used they you.
They activate a lot of these groups to to to get this to to.
To make this work, so the use of compatriot, politics and identity politics great and again this is reminiscence.
And there's nothing new under the sun.
There's nothing new in itself.
I'm reading a book right now but 1930s and it's called prequel.
Uh, it's a book about during in the run up to the Second World War, early 1930s.
How Germany was trying to do this with German Americans, the United States, with a disturbing level of success.
I didn't realize the extent to which Nazi Germany had managed how many German Americans he had managed poems in the 1930s to the point where really the FBI was had had to really get on the case in the run up to the war.
So this is nothing new and there are a lot of these things that are reminiscent of Nazi Germany.
And not making it explicit that Harrison here, whenever you do that with lost the argument, I believe there is out there.
Forget what it's called whenever you bring.
Thank you.
Into the into the equation of each lost the argument, but I I can't help but notice the parallels here.
Umm, another is the use of passport ization and pension.
Russia will issue passports to citizens of other countries if they are ethnic Russians to try to create a fifth column inside of that country, and they will pay pensions.
To to retire people's in there.
They did this in Crimea.
They did this in in the Donbas region.
Crane.
They do this as Kaci and self assessment Orgia so passport, lization and pensions.
So again, my my good friend Agnia Bridas, who's my colleague at the Council fantastic book called the New Russian Empire, which is all about the policy of passport.
So this is another example of of of, of, of how Russia engages in social actually, because before you can get to state action, you things are kind of going in ascending order.
The first thing you need to do is get part of the society.
Umm, the final thing that I would point out that they do is they leverage ethnic, they leverage that the they will create ethnic conflicts and then they will and we saw this in Georgia's Ocasio and Self Setia region.
These conflicts in these two regions of Georgia started in the late Soviet period.
They started in the late Soviet period when the Soviet Republic of Georgia began to move toward independence.
Starting around 1980, not in the KGB had this clever idea, they said.
Well, if they want to declare independence from the Soviet Union, we're going to kind of establish a region inside these countries that wants to declare independence from them.
And then where does it stop, right?
So the conflicts in Abkhazia and South of Sepia now occasion Ossetians had problems with the government and Delisi and Georgia, the same way Texans might have problems with Washington, right?
Nothing.
We can't work out in our American, but when you have an outside power instigating financing this army, that creates a problem of a whole new level of magnitudes and a leveraging of ethnic conflicts, and it happens in places we know about like most people know about like Ocasio and self essential Donbas region and the green or Crimea.
But it also happens in very obscure places and not necessarily Russian speaking or Russian speaking, but not necessarily ethnic Russian places.
There's a region in Moldova.
Moldova already has one of these conflicts in the Transnistria, which is a region that runs along moved over Porter with cream, where people are predominantly Russian speaking, there's at least inside, although the called Dahsia.
That's an actual name of an actual region over it's.
It's basically Turks or Orthodox Christians in Russian.
So that's it's kind of an interesting combination like Orthodox Christian, Russian speaking books living in Moldova, Russia's leveraging that right now, they don't have they.
It's not created a separatist enclave there, yet they got coming up their hands full screen, but it's not for a lack of trying.
So this is the lowest level of capture medicine societal, social you can go to that next slide please.
Next we will remove up the ladder.
You go to Amy, capture.
Ohh the we capture involves the weaponization and instrumentalization of corruption.
Talk about the weaponization of corruption earlier to effectively capture the vote.
See, Mr Putin here.
Does anybody know who this guy is?
You can't go inside said.
That's a man named Victor Medvedchuk.
Victor medvedchuk.
You see Ukrainian oligarch very close to President Putin.
Very pro Russian it's been been made and Putin's main conduit in Ukraine after the war started, he was arrested.
He's actually been swapped with Russia to get Ukrainian prisons in the warrior, but for the in the in the period before the war, Mr Mendez, you controlled at least four televisions.
I know major interests in oil and gas and was a member of the Ukrainian Parliament.
He was one of the people that Putin considering installing his President of Ukraine had Ukraine had the war going differently.
I feel the war going better for for Russian now in Ukraine, Russia used other oligarchs as well throughout the 90s and early 2000s.
They relied on the so called dumbos oligarchs, the oligarchs that were in Ukraine's eastern Donbas region.
Umm, who are making a lot of money through their basically their business ties to Russia.
Umm.
Basically, seeking rents from states total a lot of the energy industry people like we're not argumento who is the richest man in Ukraine prior to the war.
Victor Pinchuk, the son of Ukraine's second post, Sophia president, needed Kuchma.
But something funny happened with themselves.
Overtime, they began to realize that now that they've stolen all their money, they're much better off in a democratic rule of law state.
They get to keep their money.
Umm.
Whereas if they're part of Russia, when your mom's not really your money taking away any point in time, just ask and you Russian Oliver about that.
So.
So Putin lost a lot of these on ours, but he hadn't had the shoot to the very, very bitter.
There's other examples of this.
An oligarch by the name of Vladimir plot.
Yup.
In Moldova?
Ohh, he was effectively how much was an interesting, slippery dinner.
The richest animal goes up.
He was playing every side against Animal American intelligence, convinced he was working for them.
He had Romanian intelligence convinced he was working for them, but he just really working right.
And if some point finally, we basically invite get the free Moldova in a magical thing happening in Nova, would Blake was taken out of the picture.
That's one hour removed from the seat Moldova.
Little tiny country.
Really cool country.
They make great wine wedge between Ukraine and Romania.
Umm.
And it's basically mostly Romanian speaking country, except for the Russian imports to keep him during the Soviet period period.
Umm it was divided.
Country was a 5050 country.
You could never get a functioning government.
Or have you gets removed from the scene and suddenly this remarkable young woman in my hands on you?
When is the presidential landslide and it's been governing the country effectively ever since.
When you remove this one person from the equation was under indictment, I think he's hiding it.
Cyprus now, if I'm not mistaken, he's under indictment from US.
We removed him and suddenly everything was hunky Dory.
Although there's really the superstar right now of of, of reform in the former Soviet states.
Umm.
And it's largely due to Maya and her political party that she put together a former employee of the World Bank, Harvard educated, used to be in think tanks.
I used to sit on panels with her at conferences.
Now she's the president of the whole country.
But if the point here is that you just remove this elite captured person from the equation and magically everything kind of got better.
You also have the leveraging of Soviet area networks.
Soviet Union ran on the networks.
My students will know formal institutions don't matter in law, doesn't matter.
Those are all window dressing there.
What the Russians call Pokazukha, right?
The real action is in these informal networks.
Patron client networks that exist in will still be Brian and a lot of these networks, a lot of them tied to the energy industry, persevered after the makeup looks and Russia continued to leverage these networks in almost all of the former Soviet republics to continue to increase their influence.
Because most of the former Soviet republics, not all but most, get their energy from Russia, some of them get it from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan.
The lion share is coming from, so they have these energy works that are going to help people in sections.
Very lucrative.
And so you have people.
Again, you make it worth your while financially and suddenly your political loyalties in most cases will follow to the leveraging of Soviet era networks, the planting of elites in neighboring countries, and I'm going to get into more of this in the state capture parts, but the perfect example of this is a man named Bidzina Ivanishvili, who is now currently, he holds no official position in Georgia, but he basically runs the he's an oligarch.
For me, all of his money in Russia with ties to Gazprom in the 1990s and early 2000s relocated to Georgia, financed a political party, took over the government and now rules the country.
And he has no official position.
He's just a rich dude.
The finances?
The ruling party I'm going to get to that in a minute.
That's an example of state cache and finally you have the leveraging of defense assistance.
Umm, the biggest case study in this is undeniable.
Our media, which is is in a protracted conflict with Azerbaijan over the disputed territory of Nagorno Karabakh, which they just recently lost to Azerbaijan.
Russia was providing Armenia with all of its debt and he was a consequence of Rejean.
Azerbaijan is oil rich gas rich.
Armenia is not, and so the entire the defense budget of Azerbaijan was larger than the full federal budget.
Full, full, full state budget of our media.
So they were defenseless against Azerbaijan without Russian assistance in Russia leveraged that assistance.
Basically, keep Armenia full.
Now, when the Armenians went ahead and had their own revolution in 2018 and elected a Pro, Western government will just magically Russia just didn't abide by its treaty obligations.
And when Azerbaijan attacked our Russian?
Ohh but the leveraging of defense assistance is a A.
Fine.
Let's go.
We got state capture.
OK.
We're up the next good on this has been the richest man in Georgia.
His fortune was larger than the entire budget of George.
It wasn't really his.
This is a dirty little.
There's like one of the richest man in the world.
It's not because he's based.
I called him Putin's wallets.
E in Georgia.
Did you mean which really came to Georgia and basically financed a political party?
Now again, as I said earlier, state capture traditionally refers to private sector actors capturing a state in their native country.
This new twist, nominally private sector actors from Russia capturing the state of another country through proxies and Evanni Shealy, is the class.
Finish really was oligarch in Russia in the 1990s, a pretty minor one.
Not very public.
I worked as a journalist in Russia in the 90s.
I had never heard of Ivanishvili until he popped up in Georgia in the two in the in the rate in 2012 or so.
He shows up in Georgia.
Richest man in George has more money to entire engine having more money than the US federal budget that we can make the magine.
How Richie?
Just can't imagine what you could buy.
You know, you buy the whole Congress, never mind.
Just one Congress, why should we show that he did just that?
Basically bought the political system.
Firstly, created a broad coalition that ranged from left to right, including politicians in Georgia.
Whom I respect, and I would talk to something or a conversation I had with George and politician indirectly.
All Assani was the former ambassador to the United Nations from Georgia.
Somebody who I had hoped would someday become the President to the round.
You trust this guy?
Be honest, money in Russian.
It's like all you don't, don't get involved conspiracy theories.
I'm not.
I'm not talking about conspiracy theories.
I'm talking about conspiracy practice, right, and sadly I I I was right quickly.
Once he got the leg, got his coalition pushed all the pro Western elements out correctly, is now not even in Georgia.
He's living in New York, or he's not president of Georgia, as I hope he would be someday.
And eventually is basically bought the system.
They have massive majorities in Parliament and they can basically do whatever they want.
Even though Georgia as a society is very pro Western, you go to Georgia as an American, the Georgian people will love you.
Umm, but now the government is in the hands of a pro Moscow proxy.
This is a classic example of state capture state capture failed in Ukraine.
It failed in Ukraine.
Ohm again.
I was that they they they tried to pull this off under the previous Ukrainian President or of the two presidents ago, now Victor Yanukovych, who was basically Moscow's men in Keith, together with me and shoot.
They attempted to do it, but the Ukrainians would have none of it.
Ukrainians kicked him out and that and and we, we know what happened from that point on 2014, the Ukrainians had their revolution of dignity in which they overthrew the uncode.
Which government?
He fled the country, fled to Russia, Ukraine had new elections and pro Western governments have been in power ever since.
In Ukraine, and this is what basically led up to the to the full on connect one and started go ohm if state captured fails then we go and capture.
When captured, this two types of limited.
This is something Erin talked about a little bit the basic the, the provoking of an ethnic conflict in a region then coming in and playing the role of the pieces.
Arsonist firefighter strategy the obvious examples of these are in Georgia.
Here we see this is a Kasia, this is a Setia look how close that is at least like 30 kilometers.
George is a little tiny country.
No, this is a matter of Texas.
Georgia.
That's right.
You can feasibly Dr you know in about 30 minutes and I have done.
I have to drive and I was driven from the least to the frontline of this here.
'Cause you Russian occupying these these areas since the early 90s almost since since the breakup of the Soviet Union, and they formally recognized their quote unquote, independence in 2008 during the the the Research Origin War of 2018.
Another example of limited land capture is in Moldova, with the Transnistria region.
Now what limited land capture allows you to do is you, as long as you're occupying.
In this case, 20% of Georges territory, you got leverage over the government in the capital.
You can make this thing.
These are called frozen conflicts.
Think about something that's frozen is you can always stick it in the microwave and eat it up.
And that's just what the threat that they Russia threatens to do.
So that basically keeps the government to these kind of things wrong, even if it is for Western, it's not right now, but even in in cases where it was umm and then when all else fails, this is always a sign of failure of all of these policies.
Then you go to total.
And the first attempt we've seen a total plan capture of course is the full on invasion of the brain that began in February of last year.
This is when the mask comes off.
Now, stepping back kind of put this in context, what was Russia trying to do before they pull on anybody else?
They basically in 2014 had a next Crimea in absorbed into Russia illegally.
Nobody recognizes that, but they said fact on the ground.
But they also invaded eastern Ukraine and took small parts of the Donbas.
Small parts of the small parts of the next and Luhansk oblasts, and started to start the call.
Them republics they've done yet.
People's Republic in the currents.
Russia didn't wanna next season Erika with the original plan was to create with a Trojan horse strategy.
Talked about this in class yesterday.
The effectively wanted to force Ukraine to keep those territories back, but with Russia still control, I mean, what Russia still in control of the border?
It was a Trojan horse kind of 5th column strategy where if Ukraine had accepted these, you know, accepted these territories back into Ukraine, then they would have been pretty dysfunctional.
Imagine a hostile foreign power like controlled Texas or California.
The United States would kind of not be elaborate like this was the plan in Ukraine.
Fortunately, 2 successive Ukrainian presidents were onto the game.
It wasn't too hard to be hard to the game I was on to.
The game was even there and didn't let it happen.
It got we had this weird situation 2014 to 2022 where you have this conflict to see this this kind of low intensity conflict in eastern Ukraine and Russia was showing activity start.
There's no way.
No way.
Not until you disarm, not until you give us the order back.
Not until all your malicious in these places disarm, and so it would.
It became this kind of weird situation where whoever gets the territory loses.
And that failed.
President Petro Poroshenko, the former Ukrainian president in Volodymyr Zelensky, the current Ukrainian president, both said, look, we're on to your game and we're not gonna play.
And that's when Putin decided to invade.
After that happened and.
President Zelensky, remarkably and beautifully, began to move on victim, and the truth started criminal case against him on the comment that you had the this oligarch we talked about earlier had been giving information to the Russians about the position of cleaning troops.
You've not only been using his television stations well programming propaganda, but he actually committed treason in anybody's book, giving the enemy who is occupied part of your territory the position of your truth is treason.
Member Troop was arrested for treason.
Is television stations were shut down and that was when basically from that moment on, I know it was pretty clear to this war was gonna gonna get a little bit hotter.
And that led to the to the, to the.
Still looking at the repercussions of very mindful of the times, I want to leave time for questions.
I want to make a few China just concluding remarks here to that.
Yeah, I mean, it is debatable whether we're in a new Cold War.
The Cold War was a specific period of history evokes certain in my case, memories.
In your case is probably put up whatever those stereotypes or whatever, but what we are certainly in is a normative on the Eurasian or the former Soviet.
We were in a conflict between two normative system between a Western system that's based on institutions and the rule of law and accountability and transparency, and this is a system that appeals to go back to my original comments to the young people, the younger generations, and not all.
Not only there's plenty of folks my age that are that want this as well.
I don't want to kind of binary picture in a Russian system that's based on patron client relationships sanctioned plutocracy, fluidity, informal power networks, unwritten in informal rules and roles.
My students will know that the Russian emigre scholar Alena Ledeneva christened this system this this.
This system of government system just, you know, in the Russian language Justin system.
But in this case it means this system of informal power networks without institutions, without laws that are meaningful.
Umm, when I and this is something I want to work on going forward.
It's kind of making my next research project.
Moscow is basically created a crime syndicate model because if you look at this Systema let and yellow describes elegantly in very academic terms, she's basically describing The Sopranos.
She's describing good fella and I joke about this, but I'm only I'm not really even half joking.
I'm not joking.
All because really some of my students are probably heard.
You can probably learn as much about how Russian politics work from watching a few episodes.
Few a few seasons and Sopranos, even a few episodes, and then you can bring your political science.
That's how Russia works.
It operates just like a crime, and so we basically have this Western liberal model.
This is nothing.
They're both competing for influence on the territory performance of the states.
The our system is not perfect.
I'll be the first to admit that, but it's horrible.
Like better than the.
It's a way.
It's way better and so this this is, this is what we're viewing now.
The elites that the public doesn't like the mafia model, they hate it, and the young people certain because they've seen what life is like in the West and they want that.
But you know who?
It's very, very, very, very, very attractive to.
It was boots, the specially the generation still around, still in power in the silver.
Is this this system means they can get rich and this system means they are not account, they don't have to deal with all these pesky things like rule of law and transparency and all that stuff.
They love it.
The public, especially the younger ones.
Umm.
Now when you look at the forms of capture, social and recapture makes state capture possible, state capture makes land capture unnecessary.
Umm.
And so this is this, this, this.
This is where we're at.
And there's one paradox I wanna leave you.
1111 paradox in one ward, the paradox is that it's tough to challenge a captured state.
George is a perfect example of this is a big debate in Georgia right now about whether they should want to get candidacy status.
You find it, I think just gave it for the last time I was in Georgia.
My friends in the Georgian opposition were divided because, like, well, if we get candidacy status, then this pro Russian government's gonna get to take credit for it and then they're just not going to abide by any of the rules of the European Union anyway.
But why should why bother and the other was like, yeah, that if we rejected and most of the society might just say, oh, the West doesn't want it's it's really a create this very paradox.
The final final leave you with is that we are guilty as much as all the bad guys I was pointing because this system of weaponized corruption wouldn't work with western banks.
Will play more Western financial institutions were playing ball and if we weren't letting these people launder their money in our institute.
They have.
Basically, they earn their money in this corrupt, dirty way.
In this corrupt system and then they put it in American banks, French banks, German banks, usually.
But but we we bear some responsibility and we assign kind of have to come to grips with this because there are a lot of Americans and a lot of Europeans who have gotten very rich off of this.
And the people that are paying the price for them getting rich are the people in these forms.
So thank you.
Yes.
Yeah.
You don't talk about a lot of Americans.
Got Rich, would you include Elon Musk in that?
I don't know enough about Mr Musk's finances.
Doesn't show me his books, but I wouldn't rule it out, but I don't.
I don't.
I it's not impersonal these people, but it's mostly in the fun.
The problem largely lies in the on because one of the things we've done or from the United States and in Western Europe since the 1980s, we have steadily deregulated our economics with deregulated or economies in the name of economic efficiency and growth.
And all of this is since the advent of Ronald Reagan and in your own 80s, this has been the watch.
It was.
There was even a word for it in the early 90s called the Washington Consensus.
Basically, deregulation and privatization.
Good.
And we took away all these regulations and suddenly it's really easy to hide money.
If you don't want to pay your taxes, and this our businessman loved this tax right?
But guess who else?
Loved people like poop.
Yeah, have sanctions helped them.
Yes, yes, the the the, I mean, prior to the war in Ukraine, I wrote an article with a series of policy recommendations about how we closed these loopholes because basically rushes using them to undermine our society.
And I made a series of recommendations like excluding Russia from SWIFT payment system, preventing Russia from trading on Western financial markets, preventing Russian stock debt from being bought and sold in Western markets.
And this whole series of recommendations and when I first presented them in Washington, like, yeah, that's never gonna happen.
Guess what?
After Russian, they right.
You give us a big favor.
Everything I did now looks best.
Everything I wrote there that we should do is now.
Now my article is now, you know, old hat.
Nobody.
Nobody really cares about it anymore, but it was kind of radical when I published.
But yes, sanctions have helped a lot.
There's still a lot of loopholes.
There's still a lot of sanctions evasion going on in this in the four in countries of the former Soviet space are the OR not sanctioned are used as conduits for this.
So, like Armenia and Georgia and Kazakhstan have been used as conduits to kind of hide dirty Russian money to kind of gets into our financial institutions and helps evade sanctions and also helps get goods that are sanctioned by export controls into Russian markets.
And we need to kind of crack down on these countries which which, which, which creates a difficult because we're we're you know, we want to bring them on as allies, but we want them to stop helping.
Russian explanations?
Yeah.
So questions one, would you say this is the reason you see a lot of American politicians get so odd, so into helping Israel but not but not willing to help Ukraine, hard to say, I mean that's that is the whole Ukraine issue has become polarized in our politics.
Unfortunately, Umm, it's not really strictly along party.
It's kind of an issue with the five to the Republicans and sorting unites the Democrats, except on the foreign Brian Frank.
But I I don't.
I'm going to be very careful about making allegations that American politicians are on the take here.
I know what happens in other countries.
I know the former Chancellor of Germany, Gerhard Schrader, has been taking Russian money for a long time, almost from the moment he left the chancellor.
It tends to the point where his name has become a verb.
We say if a European politician gets corrupted, we say that straight at his name has become a verb for corruption, right?
We know that we know the former Chancellor of Austria was on the tape with Rose.
She was caught on tape.
We know top Italian politicians from the the Lego Party, which is a foreign northerly, have been on the tape from March, so we know that I can say that publicly because I know it.
There's documentary evidence I don't have any documentary evidence of US politics and also what we're about when we saw the whole situation unfold with Wagner and promotion.
Umm, I saw the underboss of a mafia go after the boss and pay the price.
We, you know, to, to quote another TV series when you come at the King.
You that's not miss and Prigozhin came at the king and he missed.
Umm he when?
When that happened, I said he is going to be dead.
It may not be tomorrow.
It may not be next month, but he's gonna be dead because he may Putin.
Puppies mafia leaders don't look like this.
And so for me that was basically it was an underboss going after the boss, which happens in mafias all the time.
Yeah, look at.
Look, look how the people following his example.
Possibly.
Possibly I, I mean we still don't know how this is gonna play out over the long run.
In the short run, Putin put out the fire.
Well, you actually started the fire plane crash, so we put out of the the the fire, the political, but everybody's gotta be watching you.
Look, we've never seen look so weak is when this happens.
The I was.
I was reading stuff from Russian analysts who I really respect.
Months before the Vaughan happens, saying prego's gonna make a play.
Yeah, I had.
No, this might seem to speak publicly now.
He made a play.
He made a play, but his stated goal was getting rid of the Defense minister.
Should be showing group but he marched on Moscow.
You don't do that and get it unless you're 60.
Let's get from the wire.
Omar little come to Kenya.
Best not miss you came up the king, but then?
No, that's that is how I saw it.
No, that's that's simply that that shows so much.
But how politics works in this?
That's how I saw it.
It was basically this sanctioned oligarch because you don't become an oligarch by, you know, earning your money the old fashioned way, earning it you.
You become appointed in all that.
Would basically made people used to run a hot dog stand Saint Petersburg and it became a caterer.
And then he kind of got hooked up with Putin suddenly, magically started getting state contracts, got to supply food to all the prisons in Russia.
I didn't look into that.
Suddenly he's rich.
Suddenly, he had a private military, so he was an underground.
Yeah.
What extent is there any sort of resurgence of local languages and culture as a reaction against this unconfirmed that the Russians were trying to stay?
Ukrainian doesn't have its own language.
It's just corrected Russian or something like that.
So how are especially younger people, but maybe the state reacting to that kind of attempt to mitigate questions, are in Russia, outside of Russia?
I mean Ukrainian it's it's funny. Ukrainian.
Greater which, when I would be trained in 90s, you didn't hear much unless you went to Western.
What would be the chair to see her?
E You didn't. You didn't.
You put some mostly now across the entire country, even people whose Russian is the first language they speak at home with their families in public, it seemed as a patriotic act, speak Ukrainian, seen as a Green Patriotic Act to speak Russian.
I don't.
I don't speak Ukrainian speak Russian.
The women in Ukraine now, I don't.
I make a point.
Enough.
I begin in English and I say you know.
Very easily.
Right.
Because it's you, it's now you can speak, but no, the Ukrainian language, even among people whose Russian is the first language.
The two things that there's a there's somebody one, of course, is a ward.
Patriots, whether he said again, going back to my original kind of point, this young generation has come up come of age.
Ukrainian Russian at home.
But they were Ukrainian in school and a lot of friends, right?
So so this you have this people now in their 30s and they're finally, are you crazy?
You see a country which are bilingual in the sense that Russia will speak, spoken in the East and South in Ukrainian spoken.
Now everybody's to become truly a vibrant I would, you know, yes, in 25th students all over.
You're all over the.
Guess it's primarily.
And there was a bunch of studies from eastern Ukraine.
That wanted to see some students from Western it's been crazy.
Russian speakers.
Right.
Princeton the Russian seekers approach the Ukrainian seekers very shy in Ukraine.
So you know, and they're crazy percent in Russian, we could see Russian.
It's OK and the to be continued to be polite each we're speaking the opposite way.
Each we're being stubborn.
They Ukrainian speakers were insisting on speaking Russian.
The Russian seekers were insisting on speaking, and I was watching this and my jaw dropping.
That was countries changed.
So we're seeing this in Ukraine and Georgia, the Georgian language is always dominating and the but Russian every Georgia at the every Georgia, my rule of thumb in Georgia from speaking to somebody under 30 under 30 even I see I see English over 40.
That's my first time point, but no, you're seeing the it's having the opposite effect.
No, because if any language has very little relation to Russian other than it's a slump Ukrainian language, you speak very limited in my very limited, helps me understand Ukrainian more than myself.
Ukrainian sounds more like chef Polish than it does than it does the same with dollars.
Same with allies.
So no, we're seeing everybody, we're seeing a revival of Belarusian language, which it was 100, totally.
On so, those having the opposite effect.
This because you have this in Putin's making the case for them.
You have these young people say we've been colorized and you have, like, a yeah.
You're damn right I'm gonna keep calling you in that that has the opposite effect of making the local languages more popular.
And if at any of that, it's great, yeah.
The the people and the yeah, it was about.
All the compatriots, I think it might be just called the compatriots, but if you look up under result, doctor, this is about the use of the compatriot policy and government.
Just thought the question.
Prequel is by region. Umm.
What was the top you think it was?
How Russian uses?
The weeks and other countries are the passports and stuff.
Yeah, that was the.
That was Doctor of in Arena Porter gone.
And if I'm not mistaken, title of the book.
I'm not sick, but if you search underway.
Growing up Oregon and they always come together because their husband.
Umm and greatest right?
Which is just one of my favorite Russian yeah called companions.
Great book.
It's basically looked about how the Kremlin is always used Russian speakers anywhere in the world that clearly our country as potential.
Yeah.
Ohm houses Stainable is the crime syndicate model within Russia and is the only way for it to get rid of it, to just wait for the release to phase out.
That's good question.
It's that it's a sustainable for like, you know, centuries, because it really Russia's always been ruled by this kind of model whether we were talking about like medieval most city those are gonna Russia or the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union or the post Soviet Russian Federation it's really always done the same model with different window dress so it's very I don't want to be a scientist this is a problem I always run into in my own work is I want to be really careful about being to check this differentialis basically saying what is going to be this forever and ever and ever Amen.
But it's been like that since, you know, 1314 century in one form or another with different window dressing or whatever.
But at the end of the day, when you strip it bare and look at where power lies and who has a authority of legitimate authority, you don't see institutions.
You never see institutions.
You see clients, you see Mafia family, which has controlled.
So I sadly I think it's very it's very attractive to a week.
So it's like they get to get rich without any of that single loss.
Any other questions?
Ohh, workers would argue.
I think I've asked this before, but what could argue that they sort of shot themselves in the foot?
Because I've actually.
Keep going.
Like I said, I don't have a young people.
You mean war?
Yeah.
It never really had a problem using the young people's kind of fun.
Their tire history.
Now what's happening in Russia right now is it's not the young people in the capitals they're being, they're being very careful, protects the well off people in Moscow and Saint Petersburg in bigger cities like in some northern, but basically getting people from the process bother people fighting that war have been drafted in places of Dagestan, a lot of them are not even after.
That's the shift.
Yeah, they're, they're.
They're basically going for the poorest regions in the country and throwing them up from or.
They're pulling people out of risks.
Russia does that a lot.
The big country. That's why.
What is it still is why the group so particularly brutal?
Personal. Yeah.
Yeah, I mean, the regular group is always brutal, but they yeah, they basically conference about.
Yeah. Yeah.
When registered mobilizing in Moscow, I've been saying there's basically.
Area of Russia why wasn't there in 1991?
Would you like to know one move that came about matters?
Just one issue, a lot of.
Go to forms.
Basically right to the point of living standard breakdown.
OK, honey, for more, he said.
You have stores completely empty.
I definitely republics all the non Russian ethnic republics, you know, getting ideas about their own independence.
You know, a lot of purpose, storm.
Now you would.
I just talked to to people just recently in Russia.
You like give me shocked at how rich the place looks and there's a reason for because all that money, all that stolen money was outside of Russia that suddenly our law enforcement and regulators might have their iron correctly so.
There's so much.
Get a reservation?
Something that was that sustainable, not what should what.
So, so the the conditions aren't right.
Only one in high I was in Moscow.
I remember walking into stores in the store clerk whipped me.
Like what are you, an idiot?
We have nothing, you know.
Yes, shelter all empty, right?
It was.
It was like nothing I'd ever seen.
Look like a questionnaire.
America, actually the person in America, probably pretty good.
So you don't have anything remotely approaching.
Could it get there?
If possible, you did have.
10s of thousands trying to leave.
Yeah, yeah.
And you do have people.
Most of the people they and they're doing nothing to discourage them.
They haven't closed the borders.
They want all the trouble makers.
What's the trouble members?
Are you doing Washington or Rega?
Had a phone call question.
Buildings.
The opposition.
There's not a single opposition in Russia is not available.
Like single prominent, it's not.
The rest of the quarter.
The people's that should focus.
Yeah.
Yeah, they're, they're they're not.
They're not in Russian.
Yeah, they're not.
They're not.
She's she's in California.
You have questions?
Thank you.
All, thank you again.
We also, yeah, free alsue, this works. Her name.
I'll.
I'll sequella rferl you'll have all the information you need about who she is and what she's done.

 **Price, Iya Khelm** left the meeting

 **Harrison, Lonny** 1:09:28
Umm, I just watched the interview and he said I want my life back and my daughter's watching mother. Yeah.
Thank you everybody for coming.
Thank you.
Anyone who's with us online and signing off we have online.
I'm not sure.
Let's check.
Yeah. Stop the recording.
Nobody.
How do you stop the recording?
Doesn't look like anybody.
Those already stopped.
Ohh, it stopped OK.
It stopped by itself.
Maybe it stopped.
It's six, but I mean at 5.

 **Harrison, Lonny** stopped transcription