

Who Rigs Elections? Russia or the USA?

By [John W. Warnock](#)

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Region: [Russia and FSU](#), [USA](#)

Theme: [Intelligence](#), [Media Disinformation](#)

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*Turn on the news these days and all you can find are reports of how **Vladimir Putin** and the Russians were responsible for the defeat of **Hillary Clinton** and the Democrats in the US election last November. Endless allegations but so far no hard evidence.*

Yet we know thanks to Wikileaks that someone hacked in to the e-mails of the Democratic National Committee and a key Clinton associate, **John Podesta**. Was it the Russians? The Washington Deep State knows but no one is talking.

The Next Question, Please

As a former academic, the next question should be obvious. Has the USA ever interfered in a Russian election? Some might recall that in December 2015 Victoria Nuland, a well-known neocon, appointed by Hillary Clinton to be her Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, admitted in public that the U S government had spent \$5 billion “promoting democracy” in the Ukraine since 1991.

It used to be that the CIA was charged with clandestine intervention in elections in foreign countries, often done via their front groups and foundations. Then Ramparts blew their cover, **President Ronald Reagan** responded in 1983 by creating the National Endowment for Democracy. The NED channels government funds through a stable of innocent sounding organizations, administered by the US Department of State. Other monies go through the US Agency for International Development and the US Information Agency.

The Old Cold War

The US government and its allies in NATO had as their primary goal the overthrow of the state socialist regimes based on the model of the Soviet Union, the end of all regimes which operated a planned economy, and the re-introduction of a capitalist system with a market economy.

While it is usually claimed that the US government wanted to create liberal, representative democracies in these one party states, this was never a high priority for administrations in Washington. One recalls the strong support given to the vicious military dictatorships in Latin America and the historic support for the feudal regimes in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf region with their commitment to Sunni Islamist politics. US governments also supported the fascist governments of Salazar in Portugal and Franco in Spain in spite of the fact that these two regimes had fought on the side of Nazi Germany in World War II.

In the USSR: Gorbachev v. Yeltsin

The liberal reform of the Soviet Union began in the 1980s. **Mikhail Gorbachev**, General

Secretary of the Politburo, undertook a policy to “expand democracy within the socialist system.” In 1988 he created the Congress of the Peoples Deputies, a new more representative legislative body. Its first election was held in March 1989. The disintegration of the Soviet bloc began on a serious level in 1988. In June 1990 the Russian branch of the Congress of Peoples Deputies declared national sovereignty.

At the same time radical reformers gathered behind **Boris Yeltsin**. They wanted an end to the socialist system and the introduction of a capitalist economy. In June 1991 Yeltsin ran for the office of President of the Russian Federation and won. Gorbachev dissolved the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and resigned as Secretary. The breakup of the Soviet union followed and the United Nations recognized the new independent states.

The US Government Backs Yeltsin



The US government rushed to support those elements which pushed for national independence and the end of the state socialist planned economy. Much of the financial assistance was channelled through organizations and corporations supported by the NED.

USAID provided around \$300 million for the Russia project, run through the Harvard Institute for International Development (HIID). They institute promoted the “shock therapy” model identified with Jeffrey Sachs, who became head of HIID. Sachs had been chosen by the US government to lead a reform project in Poland after 1989.

Most of the “reforms” were imposed by President Yeltsin via decrees bypassing the legislature, which was opposed to the complete dismantling of the old socialist planned economy. They were often drafted by representatives from HIID. Yeltsin began by lifting price controls and ending state subsidies. The result was hyperinflation, a dramatic increase in unemployment, a serious rise of abject poverty and the disappearance of the medical and hospitalization system, which had been tied to places of employment under the planned economy.

The Constitutional Crisis of 1993

The conflict between Yeltsin and the parliament continued through 1993. In September Yeltsin abolished the federal Supreme Soviet and the Congress of Deputies by decree and called for a new constitution. There were major demonstrations in the streets against Yeltsin and his reform agenda. The police and military erected barricades of barbed wire around the “White House” – the Russian parliament building. Leaders in the Parliament called on demonstrators to seize the television station. Military from the Department of the Interior and Special Forces appeared in support of Yeltsin.

On October 4 the Army began to shoot at the White House. Soon after tanks began shelling the top floors of the White House. Then the armed forces stormed the building. As the members of the parliament and their supporters left the building they were arrested and

jailed. The following day Yeltsin banned the opposition parties and all their publications. Yeltsin's action was strongly supported by the US government and its NATO allies.

Yeltsin proclaimed a new constitution and held elections for the new legislature in December. But the parliament elected was still dominated by the Communist Party and Russian nationalist parties which were strongly opposed to the liberal path being pushed through by Yeltsin and his team of US advisers.



The Elections of 1996

Yeltsin moved ahead strongly with his privatization program. Major state assets were sold, generally for about 10 cents on the dollar. This was the plan advocated by the US government. However, the creation of a new capitalist class also produced a stable of very wealthy oligarchs who soon lined up behind Vladimir Putin.

Much of this was implemented by the Russian Privatization Center, which was created in 1992 by the HIID with a grant of \$45 million from USAID. Other grants came from the Ford Foundation.

In the election for the new parliament in December 1995, the Communist Party and the Russian nationalist parties won a majority of the seats on a program which opposed Yeltsin's policies. Public opinion polls showed that Gennady Zaganov, the Communist Party candidate for president, was well ahead of Yeltsin.

Once again it was the USA to the rescue. The Clinton Administration put together \$14 billion in loans, much of it from the International Monetary Fund. The German government kicked in \$2.7 billion, and the French added \$392 million.

Yeltsin had the advantage of total control of Russian television, a state monopoly. Throughout this conflict the parties in the parliament, who represented an alternative vision, were denied all access.

The Yeltsin campaign was run by three Americans, Richard Dresner, George Gordon and Joe Shumate. They were assisted by Steve Moore of Video International which had been trained by Ogilvy and Mather, the famous US PR firm. They flooded television with evidence of the horrors of the Stalin regime. It worked.

Manipulating Elections

Putin may have wanted Donald Trump to win the US election. Trump did pledge a new era of detente with Russia. But intervention? The NED directly operates in over 80 countries doing their best to influence elections. Where is the Russian equivalent?

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