

Seeing No Neo-Nazi Militias in Ukraine

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In the Ukraine crisis, U.S. and European politicians and media have relentlessly condemned Russia for violations of international standards, particularly Moscow's acceptance of Crimea's hasty vote to secede from Ukraine and rejoin Russia. But the West has gone nearly silent regarding Kiev's violation of rules for controlling armed militias, including neo-Nazi forces.

For instance, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has harshly criticized Russia's annexation of Crimea, has refrained from similar outrage over Ukraine's unleashing of extremist militias that have inflicted extensive bloodshed and abuse on ethnic Russians in rebellious eastern Ukraine.

The OSCE, which includes both Ukraine and Russia among its 57 member states, has a ["Code of Conduct on Politico-Military Aspects of Security"](#) which says that all members "will at all times provide for and maintain effective guidance to and control of its military, paramilitary and security forces" and that each state "will ensure that its armed forces as such are politically neutral."

Yet, Ukraine has intentionally dispatched far-right militias, some waving neo-Nazi banners, to attack towns and cities in eastern Ukraine. Though this reality has drawn spotty recognition even in the Western media, there has been little criticism of the Kiev regime for these tactics.

Instead the typical response - especially from U.S. officialdom and media - has been to dismiss claims about the close association between the Ukrainian government and neo-Nazi extremists as "Russian propaganda." That denial has held even as accounts of neo-Nazi militias have popped up in publications as hostile to Moscow as the New York Times, the London Telegraph and Foreign Policy.



Image: Sen. John McCain appearing with Ukrainian rightists of the Svoboda party at a pre-coup rally

in Kiev.

An Aug. 10 [article](#) in the New York Times mentioned the neo-Nazi paramilitary role at the end of a long story on another topic. If you plowed through the story to the last three paragraphs, you would discover the remarkable fact that Nazi storm troopers were attacking a European population for the first time since World War II and that these neo-Nazi militias were largely out of control.

“The fighting for Donetsk has taken on a lethal pattern: The regular army bombards separatist positions from afar, followed by chaotic, violent assaults by some of the half-dozen or so paramilitary groups surrounding Donetsk who are willing to plunge into urban combat,”

the Times reported.

“Officials in Kiev say the militias and the army coordinate their actions, but the militias, which count about 7,000 fighters, are angry and, at times, uncontrollable. One known as Azov, which took over the village of Marinka, flies a neo-Nazi symbol resembling a Swastika as its flag.” [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“NYT Discovers Ukraine’s Neo-Nazis at War.”](#)]

The conservative London Telegraph offered more details about the Azov battalion in [an article](#) by correspondent Tom Parfitt, who wrote: “Kiev’s use of volunteer paramilitaries to stamp out the Russian-backed Donetsk and Luhansk ‘people’s republics’... should send a shiver down Europe’s spine.

“Recently formed battalions such as Donbas, Dnipro and Azov, with several thousand men under their command, are officially under the control of the interior ministry but their financing is murky, their training inadequate and their ideology often alarming. The Azov men use the neo-Nazi Wolfsangel (Wolf’s Hook) symbol on their banner and members of the battalion are openly white supremacists, or anti-Semites.”

Based on interviews with militia members, the Telegraph reported that some of the fighters doubted the Holocaust, expressed admiration for Adolf Hitler and acknowledged that they are indeed Nazis.

Andriy Biletsky, the Azov commander, “is also head of an extremist Ukrainian group called the Social National Assembly,” according to the Telegraph article which quoted a recent commentary by Biletsky as declaring: “The historic mission of our nation in this critical moment is to lead the White Races of the world in a final crusade for their survival. A crusade against the Semite-led Untermenschen.”

The Telegraph questioned Ukrainian authorities in Kiev who acknowledged that they were aware of the extremist ideologies of some militias but insisted that the higher priority was having troops who were strongly motivated to fight. [See Consortiumnews.com’s [“Ignoring Ukraine’s Neo-Nazi Storm Troopers.”](#)]

Inconvenient Truth

More recently, Foreign Policy's reporter Alec Luhn encountered the neo-Nazis of the Azov and other militias in the port city of Mariupol. He [wrote](#):

"Blue and yellow Ukrainian flags fly over Mariupol's burned-out city administration building and at military checkpoints around the city, but at a sport school near a huge metallurgical plant, another symbol is just as prominent: the [wolfsangel](#) ('wolf trap') symbol that was widely used in the Third Reich and has been adopted by neo-Nazi groups. ...

"Pro-Russian forces have said they are fighting against Ukrainian nationalists and 'fascists' in the conflict, and in the case of Azov and other battalions, these claims are essentially true."

The West's silence about this inconvenient truth is especially startling because it should come as no surprise to the European Union, which has long been aware of the extremist positions held by the Svoboda party, which emerged as a major political force in Ukraine after the Feb. 22 coup ousting elected President Viktor Yanukovich.

In December 2012, barely a year before the coup, the European Parliament expressed concern about "the rising nationalistic sentiment in Ukraine" represented by Svoboda, whose founders included admirers of World War II Nazi collaborators, such as Stepan Bandera and Adolf Hitler's Ukrainian auxiliary, the Galician SS.

A [parliamentary statement](#) from Brussels noted "that racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic views go against the EU's fundamental values and principles" and urged "pro-democratic parties" in Ukraine's parliament "not to associate with, endorse or form coalitions with" Svoboda.

After the coup, which was strongly supported by Svoboda and spearheaded by its associated neo-Nazi militias from the west, Svoboda and other far-right political groups were given several ministries in recognition of their crucial role in the anti-Yanukovich putsch.

Now with Svoboda at the center of power in Kiev, the EU has muted its alarm, all the better to maintain the white hat/black hat scenario favored by Official Washington and the mainstream U.S. media. That narrative portrays the Kiev regime as the blameless white hats and Russia's President Vladimir Putin and the ethnic Russian rebels in the east as the evil black hats.

Amnesty International's Report

Besides the fascist leanings of some Ukrainian militias, there is also the issue of their brutality. On Monday, Amnesty International issued [a report](#) condemning abuses committed by Kiev's Aidar militia against civilians north of the rebel-held city of Luhansk.

"Members of the Aidar territorial defence battalion, operating in the north Luhansk region, have been involved in widespread abuses, including abductions, unlawful detention, ill-treatment, theft, extortion, and possible executions,"

the Amnesty International report said.

“The Aidar battalion is one of over thirty so-called volunteer battalions to have emerged in the wake of the conflict, which have been loosely integrated into Ukrainian security structures as they seek to retake separatist held areas.”

The Aidar battalion commander told an Amnesty International researcher:

“It’s not Europe. It’s a bit different. ... There is a war here. The law has changed, procedures have been simplified. ... If I choose to, I can have you arrested right now, put a bag over your head and lock you up in a cellar for 30 days on suspicion of aiding separatists.”

The AI report continued,

“Our findings indicate that, while formally operating under the command of the Ukrainian security forces combined headquarters in the region members of the Aidar battalion act with virtually no oversight or control, and local police are either unwilling or unable to address the abuses.

“Some of the abuses committed by members of the Aidar battalion amount to war crimes, for which both the perpetrators and, possibly, the commanders would bear responsibility under national and international law. “

In other words, evidence is mounting that the Kiev regime has waged its so-called “anti-terrorist operation” against ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine by using out-of-control paramilitaries, some guided by Nazi ideology. This behavior, fitting with the far-right political extremism previously known to EU leaders, also violates norms agreed to by the Ukrainian government in its commitment to the OSCE.

Yet, apparently for geopolitical reasons, the Obama administration, the EU and the OSCE have muted any criticism. This silent hypocrisy has been largely echoed in the Western mainstream media.

Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, America’s Stolen Narrative, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes America’s Stolen Narrative. For details on this offer, [click here](#).

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