

Senators sound Ukraine “War Drums”, not “Peace Chimes” on Christmas Eve

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On the day before Christmas, when the world’s two billion Christians celebrate the birth of the prince of peace, the Washington Post accorded Senators Rob Portman and Jeanne Shaheen – Republican and Democrat, from Ohio and New Hampshire, respectively – a guest editorial entitled [Ukraine stood with the West in 2014. Today we must stand with Ukraine](#).

The decidedly less than pacific title, tone and substance of the screed is in marked contrast to the Christmas Proclamation chanted on the occasion to 1.2 billion Roman Catholics that, toward the end of a chronology of the world from its creation to the birth of Jesus, contains a line worth reading more than once: in the forty-second year of the empire of Octavian Augustus, when the whole world was at peace (anno Imperii Octaviani Augusti quadragesimo secundo, toto orbe in pace composito).

The 18th century English writer [Laurence Sterne was not the only one to remark](#) that at such a moment, and such a moment only, when Augustus had closed the temple of Janus (and of war), would God descend to the earth.

Not so much as a matter of theology but of politics – and the most essential human morality – that concept would be beyond the ken of the *Washington Post* and Senators Portman and Shaheen, both leaders of the Senate Ukraine Caucus. As indicated, they chose exactly the day they did to publish an unapologetic call to war. A war that could rapidly escalate into a catastrophe that humanity so far has been spared.



Senators Shaheen, Portman and Murphy after laying flowers at a memorial to Ukrainian troops killed in the Donbass. Photograph: U.S. Embassy in Kiev.

The senators, who in any other nation would be more concerned with at least feigning interest in the well-being of the people of the states they nominally represent and the nation that handsomely pays them, began their war tocsin with the assertion that in 2014 in “what Ukrainians call the Revolution of Dignity, the people of Ukraine stood up to their Russian-backed leaders....”

They of course are referring, in however oblique and inverted a manner, to the violent, deadly uprising incited in large part by their then-colleagues Republican John McCain and Democrat Christopher Murphy (also a prominent member of the Senate Ukraine Caucus) over eight years ago, in December 2013. Addressing a crowd of what the *Washington Post*

stated were hundreds of thousands of anti-government forces in the capital of Kiev, [McCain stated](#): “We are here to support your just cause: the sovereign right to determine [your] own destiny freely and independently. And the destiny you seek lies in Europe.” He seemed to be informing them of – or issuing orders regarding – that fate.

[Murphy chimed in](#) with “Ukraine’s future stands with Europe, and the U.S. stands with Ukraine.”

What the Senate began with a coup, the Senate continues in the form of a war, prospectively one that could drag in the world’s two major nuclear powers.



Senators McCain and Murphy and then-ambassador Geoffrey Pyatt in Kiev in December 2013. Photo: Agence France-Presse.

As to the Ukrainian government that was overthrown two months later, the one labeled (or libeled, it’s the same thing) as “Russian-backed,” it was one that permitted annual NATO war games (ones transparently aimed at Russia) like Sea Breeze and Rapid Trident to occur on its soil and in its territorial waters. It’s not enough that the administration of Viktor Yanukovych accommodated the U.S., including the Pentagon, and NATO; the fact that it had the temerity to cultivate normal state-to-state relations with its nation’s eastern neighbor was sufficient to incur its political death penalty. An event that Senators Shaheen and Portman hail as Ukraine’s national foundation myth; some combination of the drafting of the Declaration of Independence and the convening of the Continental Congress here and the storming of the Bastille in France.

The “yearning for freedom” of eight years ago, the conscript fathers assure the reader, that motivated [the setting on fire and killing of hundreds of police officers and the torching of much of the Ukrainian capital](#), now burns yet brighter than ever as is evidenced by a

passionate desire of “joining the European Union and NATO.” As no one else seems to mention this basic fact, Ukrainians in effect voted in a referendum on NATO membership when they elected Yanukovych president in 2010, rejecting the leader of the first American-engineered regime-change “color” coup of 2004-2005, Viktor Yushchenko, who only received 5.4% of the vote. If the election was a plebiscite on NATO membership, and in effect it was, the answer was a firm No.

But not to McCain and Murphy, not to Portman and Shaheen and not to [Joe Biden, who played a pivotal role in the coup of 2014.](#)

Portman and Shaheen are both inflammatory and delusional in claiming “Russian troops invaded the Ukrainian border regions of Donbas in 2014,” an absurdity claimed by few others outside a psychiatric ward. Whom the gods would destroy they first make...senators.

Their blathering about “Media reports warn that Russia could invade Ukraine as early as January” conjures up the quip by the Austrian journalist and dramatist Karl Kraus over a century ago: How do wars start? Diplomats tell lies to journalists, then believe what they read.

The jointly (no doubt ghost-) written piece runs through the litany of how the U.S., NATO and [whichever post-putsch Ukrainian leader has not been deposed or charged with treason](#) at the moment are the epitome of both the classical and cardinal virtues and the Russians are – Russians. Over a century of meticulously-cultivated, handsomely-funded Russophobia under the guise of interstate rivalry and “ethnic studies” has not been without effect.

In what lies somewhere firmly between hubris and derangement, the Pentagon’s two praetorians issue this choice observation: “Russia has shown its intent to violate its international commitments by demanding NATO cease expanding to sovereign countries....” When, except in the minds of the likes of Portman and Shaheen, did Russia explicitly or even implicitly agree to NATO expanding to absorb every nation in Europe other than itself (if even that exception is allowed), including then of course all those that border it, and where U.S. and NATO strategic bombers and missiles are within immediate striking distance of Moscow.

All the above by way of prelude to the real purpose of their article: getting the U.S. more involved in the war in the Donbass – as the [Russian Foreign Ministry claimed recently there are 4,000 U.S. among 10,000 military instructors from NATO countries training the Ukrainian military for war in the region](#) – by adding to \$2.5 billion of military assistance and equipment, including “lethal assistance such as antitank missiles and heavy machine guns,” already delivered to Kiev.

Hardly enough for the senators’ satisfaction. Congress must expedite the provision of more military hardware such as “antiaircraft, antitank and anti-ship systems” and what is termed electronic warfare capabilities. If delivering such weapons and capabilities is not actively entering the war as a belligerent it’s close enough to it to give Russia the impression it is.

Not content to beat the war drums over the Donbass, they compare Russia’s “invasion” of that region to “similar” acts of aggression in Crimea and in “the occupied Georgian regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia.” It shouldn’t come as a surprise that the U.S. and NATO won’t rest until the “occupied territories” of Donetsk, Lugansk, Crimea, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and, for good measure, [Transdnister](#) are “liberated.”

Portman and Shaheen also urged their [commander-in-chief Biden, as observed earlier no disinterested party to the Ukrainian catastrophe](#) of the last eight years, to demand that Ukraine's president of the day Volodymyr Zelensky "require Russia to withdraw troops from the border before further negotiations begin." If that sounds like crude diktat it's because it is. Mind you, the two are not addressing Russian "invasion forces" in the Donbass but Russian troops in their own nation.

And of course they demand that Biden impose more sanctions on the Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline. That project has to be aborted and it doesn't much matter which ruse is employed to effect that end. So it can be thrown in as a legislative amendment as it were. In that context Russia was also accused of hostile acts against Moldova - using "its outsize energy resources as a weapon" - which for thirty years has had its traps set for Transdnier with the full support of the U.S. and NATO.

Lastly, Portman and Shaheen advocate the creation of an "international coalition" in Europe and "elsewhere" to confront Russia, contemptuously dismissing Russian security concerns in respect to "Ukraine, Georgia, the Baltic states and other former 'republics' of the Soviet Union." The quotes around the word republics is theirs. That the former Soviet union republics mentioned were also part of Russia for a century or more before there was a Soviet Union is conveniently ignored.

The senators' Christmas Eve appeal for exacerbating the almost-eight-year war in Ukraine with even more direct American involvement is a stark indication of what the New Year portends.

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