

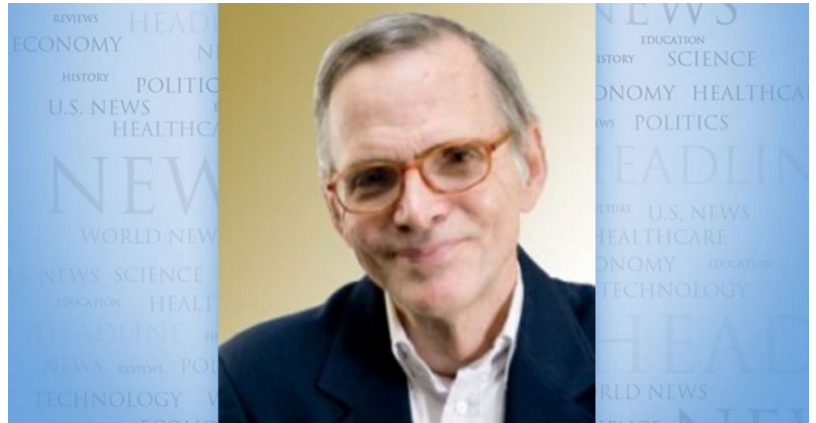


Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on December 15, 2014

America as the Soviet West

How bad is the state of politics in America today? So bad that former Vice Predator Dick Cheney should make us glad that John McCain (R-Ariz.) is still in the U.S. Senate.

McCain, to my knowledge, has never made his record of military service a political issue, even though many, perhaps most, people running for office today lack any history of military service. But McCain's history as a Navy pilot who served for five and half years as a prisoner of war in North Vietnam naturally comes to mind when the burning issue of the day is CIA torture of prisoners in the war on terror.



McCain is, in fact, the perfect foil to Cheney, who by his own admission had "other priorities" when the Vietnam War was being fought. So when Cheney dismisses protests against the use of torture by the American "spooks" as the whining complaints of bleeding hearts, his credibility is measured against the testimony of McCain and found severely wanting.

Most of us grew up believing that human torture was something practiced by the evil nations America had fought in the many wars of the 20th century. Liberal or conservative, we believed America stood against such things. It violates national, international, and U.S. constitutional law. (Does anyone really believe that waterboarding, for example, does not constitute "cruel and unusual punishment" banned by the Eighth Amendment?)

What is nearly as obscene as the practice of torture itself is the fact that it is so often defended today by many who call themselves conservatives, Cheney being one of them. Increasingly we learn that human rights are not among the values America's conservatives really want to conserve. Nor do they really wish to block the growth of "big government," as they support the expansion of the biggest big government program of all, the program called "war" or "national security."

The reaction of so-called conservatives to the report of the Senate Intelligence Committee's report on CIA interrogation techniques is instructive in this regard. So is the reaction of the dominant newspaper in my state, the *New Hampshire Union Leader*, asking in an editorial last week what TV's fictional Jack Bauer would do with those "wusses" in Congress who believe the United States and its agencies should not resort to torture. They might as well ask what "Dirty Harry" Callahan would think of constitutional limitations on interrogation of criminal suspects.

It seldom fails. Whenever we find the bloody boot of tyranny on the throat of helpless individuals, in violation of national and international law and in contempt of human rights, we will find Dick Cheney, the *Union Leader*, and other counterfeit conservatives rallying in support of the state machinery.

Had they been in Budapest in 1956, when Soviet armored divisions were crushing helpless Hungarian freedom fighters, Vice Predator Cheney, the *Union Leader*, and many other Republicans would probably have been rooting for the Russian tanks that squashed the incipient new government and its supporters



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in Hungary. In fact, that is essentially what the Eisenhower administration did. Four years later, Congressman Michael Feighan (D-Ohio) released the text of a November 2, 1956 State Department telegram sent to Yugoslavian dictator Marshall Tito, assuring that Soviet ally: "The Government of the United States does not look with favor upon governments unfriendly to the Soviet Union on the borders of the Soviet Union." Thus assured, Moscow sent the tanks to Budapest.

Surely, you remember the Soviet Union. That was the totalitarian regime that locked up suspects in secret prisons, kept them there without charge or trial, and tortured them without remorse. Of course, the United States defeated the Soviet Union.

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