

EXCLUSIVE: Top Trump Aides' Deeper & Linked Roles in Putin Agenda Revealed; Russian Mafia Nexus With Trump & Aides Goes Back Years

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New threads in the Team Trump/Team Putin tangled web show Manafort and Page linked to each other as part of a Russian plot to control Ukraine and also show a mutual Russian mafia godfather linking them with each other and Trump, providing even deeper and more fertile ground on which to question Trump's pro-Russia, Pro-Putin positions and their origins. Author's note: this is the most important article I have ever written in my life; please share with as many people as possible as soon as possible, as this is

a matter of national importance before the election that the major media outlets have missed and not to their credit.

By Brian E. Frydenborg ([LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter @bfry1981](#)) November 4th, 2016

Photo illustration by Slate. Images by Pool/Getty Images, Brendan McDermid/Reuters, Sarah Rice/Getty Images

AMMAN — **EXCLUSIVE research and analysis** reveal a significantly deeper relationship than previously understood between current and former members of the **Donald Trump** presidential campaign with agents and allies of Russian President **Vladimir Putin** concerning efforts to advance the Russian government's interests, including a major Russian mafia godfather.

Two figures in particular, former Trump Campaign Chairman **Paul Manafort** and (presumably-still) foreign policy advisor **Carter Page**, were key figures (Page at least claims to be) behind major geopolitical events that convulsed Ukraine beginning in 2004 with the Orange Revolution and whose effects are still being directly felt as a result up through today with the war in Ukraine. Manafort and Page were linked by lines of power and influence connecting them through a short chain of major players and entities (including one major Russian company, reported here for the first time), and their presence and roles in the region overlapped in key areas for several years as they worked for Putin's key allies—pro-Russian Ukrainian political (especially **Viktor Yanukovych**) and business elites (especially **Dmitry Firtash**) working with Russian political and business elites (especially those at Russian oil-giant **Gazprom**)—to enact a plan designed to corrupt and dominate the Ukrainian state and to serve the purposes of Vladimir Putin's anti-Western, anti-American agenda. A partner of Manafort's—**Richard "Rick" Gates**—was also involved with burnishing his efforts there, and both of them and Page ended up on Trump's campaign in key positions, positions from which they are easily the figures most likely responsible for Donald Trump's and his campaign's unprecedented pro-Putin, pro-Russian positions that have made him the most pro-Russian (and pro-Putin) candidate in American history. Additionally, there is a shared Russian mafia godfather—putin-linked **Semion Mogilevich**, at least through **Felix Sater**—in connection with this Ukrainian plot, a major money laundering real-estate deal in Manhattan, and

(also reported here for the first time) a major Trump real estate deal that was also in Manhattan, all three criminal activities occurring within the same time period.

(Infographic coming soon)

To begin to understand the big picture, one has to go back to 2004.

In 2004, [Carter Page moved to Moscow](#) and set up Merrill Lynch's branch there. His [bio on the website of Global Energy Capital LLC](#), which Page founded and where he is currently a managing partner, states that "[h]e spent 3 years in Moscow where he was responsible for the opening of the Merrill office and was an advisor on key transactions for Gazprom, RAO UES and others."

As Page was setting up shop in Moscow, **Paul Manafort** began running Victor Yanukovych's political life.

Yanukovych is a notorious, scandal-ridden Ukrainian politician that first attracted global attention in the Ukrainian presidential election of 2004. Leonid Kuchma, the outgoing president during these elections, had appointed **Victor Yanukovych** as his prime minister late in 2002 and had backed him as a pro-Russian (and pro-Putin) candidate in the 2004 election, even to the point of trying to rig and steal the election for Yanukovych, which [sparked the Orange Revolution](#) that, in turn, led to the Ukrainian Supreme Court-ordered redo election that resulted in the defeat of Yanukovych and victory for the more pro-Western Viktor Yushchenko, who had almost been killed [by a mysterious poisoning incident](#).

Yanukovych had already developed [a reputation for extreme corruption](#) by this time, but that did not stop Paul Manafort from running Yanukovych's campaign late in 2004 for the redo election. Despite the loss, Manafort stuck around and was charged with rehabilitating the disgraced Yanukovych and strategizing for his political party, the Party of Regions, [helping them](#) helping them over the ensuing years to gain power at the expense of Ukraine's pro-U.S., pro-Western post-"Orange Revolution" government.

This type of work was hardly out of the ordinary for Manafort, as his client list includes dictators like the Democratic Republic of the Congo's (then [Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko](#)), the [Philippines' Ferdinand Marcos](#), Somalia's [Siad Barre](#), Sani [Abacha of Nigeria](#), and [Kenya's Daniel arap Moi](#); other [clients include Jonas Savimbi](#) (the leader of the Angolan human-rights-abusing rebel guerilla group UNITA), and the Kashmiri American Council (a [front for the terrorist-dealing Pakistani government intelligence service ISI that had helped create the Taliban](#), among other nefarious dealings).

Criminal Scheme #1: Part I: Manafort & Putin Allies Flood Ukraine With Dirty Gas Money

Court documents allege that Manafort first became acquainted with Yanukovych in 2003, a time when he also began cozying up to some of Ukraine's most powerful oligarchs, at least ones allied with Yanukovych and Putin. Throughout the rest of the decade, Manafort entered into a variety of shady business deals with some of these oligarchs and others, deals that generally seemed to have some ulterior motive in advancing Putin's agenda in the background. In particular, the court documents also maintain that he befriended Ukrainian natural gas businessman and Putin ally **Dmitry Firtash** around the same time he began interacting with Yanukovych. Firtash, featured in the Panama Papers revelations and linked to the essential head of the Russian mafia, **Semion Mogilevich** (also a friend of Putin's and on the FBI's Ten Most Wanted list from 2009-2015), had been the main middleman bringing in both Russian and Central Asian natural gas to Ukraine since 2002.

A Swiss-registered company called RosUkrEnergo (RUE) was created in mid-2004 by the outgoing Ukrainian President Kuchma and the not-going-anywhere Putin to replace the company represented by Firtash handling Ukraine's Russian-related gas imports. The imports ostensibly came from the former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan but through shady deals that seemed mostly orchestrated and subsidized by Gazprom, the Russian gas giant company then dominated, and soon to be majority-owned, by the Russian Government and close Putin allies; additionally, the gas traveled through pipes wholly owned by Gazprom that went mostly through Russian territory. But not much changed with RUE in that Firtash ended up owning 45% of the new company, a stake which is partially a front for Mogilevich to control the company. A total of 50% of RUE was owned by Gazprom, making clear the incestuous nature of the entire arrangement.

But there was a bigger picture, a greater purpose, to all these machinations than just Gazprom dominance of the region's gas industry, and the specifics of the deal make the following scheme quite easy to understand: Gazprom would basically sell billions of dollars of gas to Firtash through RUE at a steal of a price; Firtash would then sell billions of dollars of the gas at hiked-up prices to Ukraine; the profits would then be used to fund pro-Russian politicians in Ukraine with billions of dollars; and, finally, bankers that were close Putin allies would open up lines of credit for Firtash in the billions of dollars so that Firtash could buy key Ukrainian assets and multiply his influence even further.

It's no coincidence that this scam came into being not long after Yanukovych's defeat at the hands of a more pro-Western candidate and as that candidate's pro-Western government was trying to limit Russian influence in Ukraine. Unsurprisingly, some of the disputes between Ukraine and Russia involved fighting over gas deals. This all culminated in [a January, 2006, shut-off of Russia's gas flow](#) into Ukraine and therefore into much of Europe as well, which got the vast majority of its gas from pipes passing through Ukrainian territory.

Soon after the shutoff, a new arrangement was made: [RUE would now be the exclusive and direct supplier](#) of all natural gas coming from Central Asia (Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan) and Russia, and it would sell to the Ukrainian market through a joint venture with Naftogaz Ukrainy, Ukraine's state-owned energy company, the joint venture [being called UkrGazEnergo](#).

But there was another key factor in the deal: RAO EUS—Russia's major and majority-state-owned power company—would import Ukrainian-generated electricity into European Russia, with RUE providing that energy from the gas it was importing from Turkmenistan into Ukraine, [gas RUE would buy from its own UkrGazEnergo joint-venture after it had already sold that gas to Naftogaz; RUE would then sell this gas to Ukrainian power plants to produce the electricity that would be sold to RAO](#) with which it would supply Russia. One of the reasons for this complexity is that at each stage along the way there was the possibility of marking up the price when it suited the purposes of those who set up the system in the first place.

Naturally, [this deal was so unpopular with Ukrainians](#)—who felt cheated at getting sold gas at hiked-up prices—that Ukraine's parliament voted against the deal, albeit it ended up being a nonbinding vote and the agreement went ahead anyway. This arrangement would last from 2006 through early 2009, when another dispute derailed it.

A Page-Manafort Connection Through Gazprom, RAO EUS, Firtash, & Mogilevich?

It is important here to note that Carter Page's tenure at Merrill Lynch was from 2004-2007; the only two companies his aforementioned current bio mentions in relation to this tenure are Gazprom and RAO EUS, claiming that he was an advisor on "key transactions" of theirs; it is hard to imagine transactions more "key" than those involving gas being transported from Central Asia and Russia to

Ukraine and Europe and being sold to both, than the creation of RUE, than RAO's subsequent entry into the Gazprom/Firtash/Ukraine scheme; if Page is telling the truth about his role, it is inconceivable—considering that he advised *both* Gazprom and RAO—that he would not be aware of what was going on.

However, [Julia Ioffe's profile of Page](#) raises important questions about whether Page is exaggerating his role, and is filled with anecdotes from people knowledgeable about these types of deals who had never heard of Page and people who did suggest he was actually a nobody (though the veracity of their claims are unverifiable as well, some perhaps being of the sour-grapes variety, others perhaps not wanting information on him to get out, others doing saying to confirm that they had actually worked closely or directly alongside Page); maybe Page himself deliberately kept a low profile, staying under the radar purposefully. Without a more formal investigation, it is impossible to know what the full picture is; even if Page exaggerated his role, if he was talking to people at both Gazprom and RAO at this time—even if his discussions were and interactions may have been more informal than formal (he was apparently often tasked with meeting and greeting, setting up meetings and seeing them through)—it is certainly a realistic possibility that he still knew a lot and performed an advisory role, one that was perhaps unknown by his colleagues at Merrill.

Finally, (and the author of the article the reader is currently reading [raised this possibility at the end of July](#)) if he knew what was going on and was involved, there is certainly a possibility of interest being piqued if he came to know that another American in Manafort was involved on the other side of these deals, and that interest could have led to him making contact, perhaps even coordinating, with Manafort. The reverse is also true of Manafort reaching out to Page.

This is admittedly speculative, but a real possibility nonetheless, and is certainly not one bit less speculative than an enormous amount of discussion and reporting on the e-mail/server situation with Hillary Clinton. The questions about a possible Manafort and Page link deserve more official scrutiny and need to be answered through a formal investigation because it is clear that those in question have no intention of talking.

Criminal Scheme #1: Part II: Manafort & Putin Allies Use Dirty Gas Money to Prep Yanukovich Comeback

Russian Government

As for the dispute that derailed the 2006 gas deal, the foundations were laid with the popularly unpopular 2006 deal itself.

A former prime minister and gas tycoon in her own right and a co-leader of the Orange Revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko, rose to become prime minister again in December 2007, and it was clear that she was on a mission to drive out Russian domination of the whole gas system push against Russian influence in Ukraine overall: this meant taking on Firtash, the Russian mafia, and RUE.

The first step was to get rid of the UkrGazEnergo entity run by RUE and Naftogaz, but then Tymoshenko set her sights on taking RUE and Firtash out of the loop, an admittedly more ambitious step, which led to a series of hostile exchanges between Russia and Ukraine. But in October of 2008, Tymoshenko finally worked out a deal with Putin to remove RUE from Ukrainian gas deals, but they were subsequently unable to agree on pricing, leading to another shutdown on the part of Russia of gas going into Ukraine, and by extension, most of Europe, for almost three weeks in January. But on January 19th a long-term, ten-year agreement was reached, and only a few days later normal flows were restored, much to the relief of not only Ukraine, but also Europe, as it was the middle of winter; additionally, the parties agreed to take future disputes to arbitration in an international commercial dispute court in Stockholm, Sweden.

If it seemed the players of Team Putin gave up too easily on having RUE taken out of the game, they had other plans in motion to counter Tymoshenko's effort to limit Russian influence in Ukrainian politics.

Criminal Scheme #2: Manafort Key Agent in Laundering Dirty Gas Money to U.S. During Crackdown

Even before Putin agreed to let Tymoshenko kill RUE, his agents—including Firtash, Mogilevich, and Yanukovich (the latter with Manafort acting as his right-hand man)—were already putting in place plans to go around and escape her efforts; some of these involved setting up a fake U.S. investment fund that was initially capitalized with \$100 million; Firtash (acting on behalf of himself and Mogilevich) paid Manafort and his people—including **Rick Gates**—\$1.5 million to handle the money. The main purpose of said fund was to act as a conduit to launder money from the Firtash/Mogilevich gas dealings that were being scrutinized by the Tymoshenko government.

Among the various fraudulent deals they went into was one for \$895 million for the site of the famous Drake Hotel on Park Avenue in New York, with Firtash wiring \$25 million towards the project to make it look legitimate, and a further \$25 million was later laundered through the project, but rather than truly move forward and apply the money to the project, the Drake property was never actually purchased: the deal, like their other deals, never closed and eventually fell through after many third parties had spent a lot of time and money trying to close it out and after many employees were not paid, but not before Manafort, Firtash, Mogilevich, Yanukovych, and their allies were able to keep substantial funds away from the prying eyes of Tymoshenko and Ukrainian authorities during crucial periods of her time as prime minister.

Unfortunately for Firtash, Mogilevich, and their backers, unlike money, natural gas is not something that can be laundered: in early 2009, Tymoshenko [orchestrated a seizure](#) by Ukraine's own state-run Naftogaz—allowed under the agreement she made with Putin—of 11 billion cubic meters of gas from RUE's gas stockpiles, a quantity worth billions of dollars at the time; Tymoshenko had effectively cut out the middlemen who had been hiking up prices and using those profits to poison and pollute Ukrainian politics for Putin's plans.

Playing a longer-term game, Firtash initiated a lengthy arbitration process through Stockholm...

Unfortunately for Tymoshenko, though she had risen to be Prime Minister late in 2007, in that election and even in the prior 2006 parliamentary elections, Manafort had groomed Yanukovych's Party of Regions into a party that campaigned using modern, highly effective techniques and tactics; in both elections, the Party ended up having the most seats in parliament of any single party by significant margins, but ended up being in the opposition because of alliances made between Tymoshenko's bloc and other parties. Of course, Manafort and The Party of Regions were operating with a gigantic advantage: the enormous amount of money flowing from the massive gas scam. All this meant that Yanukovych's opposition was certainly within striking distance of taking over the government, and that even by 2006 Manafort and the gas scheme had already achieved great success in rehabilitating Yanukovych and his party and in making them together a smoother political machine with more power and influence.

The distance would close, and that strike would happen, in 2010.

Uniting Criminal Schemes #1 and #2: the Downfall of Tymoshenko and Setting the Stage for War

Early in 2010, Yanukovych won the presidential race (with [a lot of money from Firtash](#), who had made over \$3 billion from these crooked gas deals), defeating Tymoshenko in a runoff election, the culmination of over five years of work with Manafort and the whole gas scheme crew. Not long after, [Tymoshenko lost her position as prime minister](#) in a vote of no-confidence. Meanwhile, in the wake of his victory, Yanukovych worked to [undo many of the Orange Revolution reforms](#), curbing democratic freedoms in areas ranging from the courts to the press. Most notably, in December, 2010, Tymoshenko was retroactively [charged with abusing her power during her recent stint as prime minister](#), and, after [a widely condemned politically-motivated show trial](#), was [sentenced to prison](#) in October 2011.

Manafort and Gates actually lobbied American lawmakers on behalf of Yanukovych's government from 2012-2014, defending the imprisonment of Tymoshenko and trying to discredit her, as well as trying to improve the image of their client and his government; they did this [without disclosing their lobbying activities](#) as required by U.S. law. Incidentally, in these efforts, they utilized the services of two DC lobbying firms, including Podesta Group Inc., run by the brother of Hillary Clinton's current Campaign Chairman, John Podesta (the day after this information was made public in mid-August, 2016, [Manafort resigned](#) from the Trump campaign during a week in which his role had already been eclipsed by the addition of Kellyanne Conway and extreme-right-wing Breitbart News' Stephen Bannon to run the Trump campaign; it is unclear if Gates also resigned or stayed on board, and the Trump campaign has refused to clarify).

For his part, Firtash also got some \$3 billion in gas assets back which had been seized by Tymoshenko's government at the arbitration court in Sweden, as once Yanukovych was in power, [Ukraine and Firtash essentially became the same party](#) in the case, with Ukraine's lawyers dropping opposition to Firtash's case and happy to [see \\$3 billion in gas](#) go from the ownership of the Ukrainian people back to Firtash; [it was clear in this matter](#) that the Yanukovych government was willing to fight for the interests of Putin and Firtash, but not its own people; without Ukraine's representatives making a case, the court simply sided with Firtash in June of 2010.

Firtash also got his aforementioned credit from Putin's bankers not long after Yanukovych's victory, specifically [some \\$11 billion in credit from a consortium of banks arranged by Gazprombank](#), the flagship banking arm of Gazprom (the corruption is so blatant that the companies apparently do not care that their

names announce it to the whole world); Gazprombank would not disclose which other banks were part of this arrangement, but by itself it lent him \$2.2 billion, the largest possible amount under Russian law and almost one-quarter of the bank's total capital, making him Gazprombank's single largest individual borrower; Firtash used this to expand his holdings (especially in the chemical and fertilizer industries) and power in Ukraine, all while [staying close to Yanukovich](#). These moves actually made him the fifth-biggest fertilizer maker in Europe and helped him establish relationships with politicians throughout Europe; when reporters asked him where all the money came from to enable him to do all this, he replied: "It's a secret." From January 2011 on, Firtash was again buying Gazprom gas at a discount through shady offshore front companies, then selling it back at a higher price to his new assets, to the tune of billions in questionable profits, in something of a return to the old system before Tymoshenko had rocked the boat.

But the spirited Tymoshenko was not content to only be on defense during this period; during her trial and from prison, [she filed a lawsuit in a U.S. District Court](#) in Manhattan in April 2011; in it she names Firtash, Manafort, Mogilevich, Yanukovich, and their front companies as defendants, including [initially RUE](#) (but RUE [was switched out](#) to name the front companies that controlled it for Firtash and Mogilevich in [later amended complaints](#)); the suit accused them of setting up a series racketeering, fraud, and laundering enterprises in the U.S. designed to keep dirty gas money away from Ukrainian authorities when she was prime minister and that such activities resulted in material harm for her as they resulted in the downfall of her government and her being put on trial and in prison. After being rejected several times, [a fourth and final](#) version of the suit [was rejected](#) in September, 2015; while not ruling out criminal wrongdoing on the part of the defendants, the judge ruled that the higher-than-average standards for convictions under the RICO statute were not met; still, [in the longer ruling](#) rejecting the third complaint, it was noted that "the Court accepts as true the allegation that some of the money that passed through the U.S. Enterprise was "funneled back to Ukraine" — albeit by unidentified actors — and somehow used as "financing" for Tymoshenko's "persecution.""

Yes, after the 2010 election, everything was going perfectly in regards to Ukraine for Putin and his people working with Manafort, but, as in 2004, there was one thing that they did not plan well for, and it was the same thing that confounded Soviet leaders for decades and led to the downfall of the USSR: [the people had other ideas](#). Many Ukrainians—especially younger ones—realized what was happening to their country, and were hopeful of better opportunities and a better future by having Ukraine orient itself more to the West, towards Europe and the U.S. and less corruption. Yanukovich sought to placate these desires by courting major trade deal with the EU.

But November 2013, protests erupted over Yanukovych's about-face backing out of this long-desired EU trade deal in the face of a Russian counteroffer. In particular, protests erupted in a main square (the Maidan Square) in Kiev, Ukraine's capital, protests that did not go away and came to be known as the Euromaidan protests. After months of a tense situation, [security forces shot and killed dozens of protesters](#) on February 20th, 2014; in response to the government's use of violence, the protests swelled exponentially, fueled by mass public outrage at the bloodshed, and [by the end of February 22nd](#), the Ukrainian parliament had voted Yanukovych out of office, security forces had melted away in Kiev, protesters had taken over the capital, [Tymoshenko was freed from prison](#) (in [a wheelchair](#), recovering from what she said was [physical abuse and ill-treatment](#) at the hands of her guards and authorities), and Yanukovych has fled the city; soon, he would flee the country to Russia with the help of [none other than Putin](#); today, he is [still wanted by Ukrainian authorities](#) for the deaths of the protesters, but he hopes to one day return to Ukraine again as president, which he still contends he is legally. Firtash has fled Ukraine as well, and is also [wanted by U.S. authorities](#) for a separate racketeering and bribery scheme; he is living in [a sort of exile in Austria](#).

Sergey Ponomarev for The New York Times

Putin had overplayed his hand: his royal straight flush of an ace of natural gas, a king in Yanukovych, a queen in Firtash, a jack in Mogilevich, and a 10 in Manafort did not anticipate a wild-card joker in the form of [Yanukovych's allies fleeing him](#); that joker lined up with four 2s consisting of many of the Ukrainian people to make five of a kind, the people beating Putin's flush. But Putin had invested a lot into Ukraine over many years, into controlling its politics and energy sector through gas, Yanukovych, Mogilevich, Firtash, and Manafort: faced with his whole house of cards collapsing in on itself in the face of popular resistance, and with a government hostile to him and his intentions once again in place after a decade of effort designed to restore and maintain Russian hegemony over Ukraine, Putin went to Plan B: the dismemberment of Ukraine and war.

Which is exactly where [the situation is today](#) (and, of course, [gas is in the middle](#) of the conflict).

Criminal Scheme #3: Trump Manhattan SoHo Deal

At the same time this was all going on in Ukraine and on Park Avenue in New York, Donald Trump spent years working on a project involving the famous SoHo property in Manhattan. Trump's point man on this deal? [Felix Sater](#), the [son of a mob captain of Mogilevich's mafia operation](#); Sater's company's offices were in Trump Tower itself.

Sater, a man with a violent past, had himself previously been caught up in [an elaborate 1990s \\$41 million stock fraud scheme](#) on Wall Street that had used the Russian mob [to launder money](#) at a time when [Mogilevich was active in large-scale stock fraud](#) and laundering in the U.S. and Canada. Sater ended up assisting U.S. authorities for years, even on CIA-related national security issues involving missile purchases in either Afghanistan or Russia, and the details on all this remains a mystery: his operations with the government remain secret and his file from the Wall Street fraud case remains sealed, and was sealed at the time, interestingly enough, [by then-U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of New York, Loretta Lynch](#), currently the U.S. Attorney General. In fact, [the whole case was and remains sealed](#), so there is also virtually no information on the specifics of the Russian mafia's activities in the Wall Street scam, but there is a reasonably good chance or even higher that Mogilevich was involved since he was already such a major figure in the Russian mob at this point, was actively pursuing similar schemes in the U.S. at the time, and had a connection to his old *capo* in Sater.

As for Trump's SoHo deal, this was a time when Trump was [aggressively courting Russian business](#), and Sater had [other business dealings](#) with Trump [before and after](#) the SoHo deal, even showing Trump's kids around in Moscow. It turns out that a significant portion of the deal's Sater-facilitated financing—some \$50 million—came from a firm in Iceland [linked to the Panama Papers revelations](#) and one widely known as a hub for the money of Russians “in favor with Putin;” considering Sater paved the way for this investment, it is hardly unreasonable to assume that there is a high probability that this money came from those Russians. Furthermore, the SoHo deal was [structured to cheat](#) the U.S. government out of tens of millions in taxes.

In the end, the deal went terribly for Trump, who was sued for fraud—his children Eric and Ivanka had inflated the level of interest in order to attract buyers—and in a 2011 settlement, [he refunded 90% of the deposits](#) on the building's condos. None of this stopped Sater from being brought into the Trump Organization as a “Senior Advisor to Donald Trump” even [after Trump was made aware](#) of Sater's criminal past. Circumstantial evidence points to Sater still being connected to the Russian mafia [Trump and has lied](#) repeatedly about his relationship with Sater in an attempt to falsely minimize it (either that or his memory is terrible).

One must wonder why likely Russian investors were so eager to invest \$50 million in this deal, and if it was an excuse to launder money, rather than an actual investment, as was the case with the Park Avenue deal involving Manafort & Co.

Most recently, [Sater donated the maximum amount](#) allowed to Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Putting the Pieces Together: Not a Pretty Picture

It is also crucial to note that the whole Russian operation in Ukraine—using Russia's natural resources, deals related to them, and the profits from selling them [to dominate](#) and corrupt political elites of [neighboring](#) and other countries [along with hacking and \(mis/dis\)information operations](#)—is [hardly unique](#) to Ukraine; [Putin is trying to do much the same thing](#) throughout [Europe](#), and if he is trying to do this by gaining influence over a U.S. presidential candidate—in this case Donald Trump—through agents like Manafort, Gates, Page, and/or others, this would simply be current Russian standard operating procedure for how it spreads its power [throughout the world](#) in the era of Putin; such [hybrid warfare](#) and “Cold War”-type or [non-hot warfare](#) being directed at America should not only not surprise Americans, it should be expected.

In the end, Manafort and Gates made millions off the activities mentioned here (e.g., hand-written records from the office of Yanukovich's Party of Regions show the Party had [set aside payments totaling \\$12.7 million](#) specifically for Manafort from 2007-2012 alone), profiting to an obscene degree all while helping to weaken and corrupt democracy as well as major international energy deals, to undermine U.S. interests, to help Putin and his allies profit enormously, to help Russia dominate Ukraine. The culmination of their work for over a decade can be seen in the first war on European soil in two decades. And [it was this resume which earned them spots on Trump's campaign](#) as he sought to become the leader of the free world. For some time it even seemed Manafort [had more influence on Trump](#) than anyone whose last name was not Trump.

Less is known about Gates and his role, but he was important enough to be trusted with the vetting of Melania Trump's Republican National Convention speech—Donald Trump's wife's introduction to the nation as a whole—a task at which [he famously failed](#), and failed miserably.

What is known about Page is that he was one of only five foreign policy advisors Trump could actually name in [a Washington Post interview](#), suggesting his influence on Trump was far from insignificant. As his relationships with important Russians are being looked into by the U.S. government—despite questions of how serious his role was at Merrill and how deep his ties to Gazprom and RAO actually were—to simply dismiss him as being a charade would be premature, indeed. What is certain is that questions about his role remain, questions which need to be answered, especially in light of his [incredibly anti-American, pro-Russian views](#) that could just as easily be coming from [Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov](#) or a “pundit” on RT.

Manafort and Gates have plenty of other questionable dealings, including one [particularly scandalous piece of drama](#) with a Russian oligarch [featured in the Panama papers revelations](#) and close to Putin. There are [at least two U.S. government inquiries into Manafort](#) and [one into Page](#), and Trump associate and Republican political operative [Roger Stone is being investigated by the FBI](#) for his ties to WikiLeaks and its founder Julian Assange, who have questionable ties to Russia and who the whole world knows is receiving information stolen by Russian government hacks related to Clinton, Podesta, and the Democratic party. There are also other Trump campaign staff and/or associates with questionable ties to Russia: [Michael Caputo](#) and [retired Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn](#), and one American ex-spy [alleges a plot by the Kremlin to co-opt Trump](#) against the backdrop of all this.

Information on all of these incidents, people, and connections have been available for some time, but parts of it have not been reported on in the context of this election year and Donald Trump. The new analysis presented here is the first show **A.)** that the virtual godfather of the Russian mafia, Semion Mogilevich, links during the same time period the triumvirate of **1.)** Trump’s criminal SoHo deal run by Felix Sater (and this article being the first to point out that Sater is), Mogilevich’s *capo*’s son and a likely associate of Mogilevich himself, **2.)** the criminal laundering scheme in New York for which Tymoshenko sued Mogilevich, Manafort, Firtash, Yanukovych, et al., and **3.)** the whole Putin-orchestrated Russian scheme to dominate Ukraine over the last decade and then some, to put Yanukovych and his Party of Regions in power, a scheme run by Manafort, Firtash, and Mogilevich, of which the second scheme was a part, and is also **B.)** the first to raise the very possibility of a link between Manafort and Page as part of the overall Ukraine gas operation, as Page claims he was advisor to not only Gazprom but also—as first pointed out here—ROA UES at the time of a major

deal in which both companies were key players and that was part of the just-mentioned giant Eurasian gas scheme designed to help Putin control Ukraine.

Added onto [the number of other well-reported](#) connections, relationships, deals, investments, trips, and associations—both direct and indirect—between Donald Trump, his family, multiple close associates, campaign surrogates, and multiple people directly part of his campaign (all the way up to and including his Campaign Chairman for the second half of the primaries through Trump's winning the nomination, the Republican National Convention, and beyond: Paul Manafort, the man who got Trump across the finish line to put him within striking distance of the White House) on one side and Vladimir Putin, Russian and Ukrainian business oligarchs close to Putin, Ukrainian politicians corrupted by and/or allied with Putin all the way up to Ukraine's presidency, and the Russian mafia and associates of it on the other hand, the new information presented here means there are enough pieces of a puzzle being put together that there is now by far the sharpest, clearest picture of the overlapping worlds of Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin that has been reported to date.

Yes, they may be two pictures, but the boundaries between each are blended into each other. FBI investigators recently announced that [they did not suspect](#) a direct link or an improper relationship between Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin themselves, so the least likely problematic situation—that Donald Trump himself was a willing Manchurian Candidate who had willingly consented to be Putin's puppet—can almost certainly be ruled out, but the cause for serious, unprecedented concern hardly begins or ends with that scenario.

After all, with this new analysis, one can now tie the de facto head of the Russian mafia—Mogilevich—to Trump through Sater on that SoHo deal, and the financing that came through the Icelandic firm for that project has a good chance of having come from Putin-linked business oligarchs. And some of these oligarchs could very well be tied to the giant Eurasian gas scheme—in which Gazprom and RAO are key players and both of which Carter Page was advising at this time—that Putin uses as a tool of domination, where Mogilevich works hand in hand with Firtash and Firtash works hand in hand with Manafort and Yanukovych.

And Manafort, Gates, and Page all ended up on the Trump campaign.

Possibly giving a huge assist to Putin's grand scheme? The American people—who seem not to care enough about possible Russian interference in their election—the American news media—[which seems to far prefer](#) parsing through every sentence and word of every Clinton-related e-mail, rather than examine what could be a very real plot to influence a major-party candidate to have more pro-Russian positions that has ever before been conceivable in a presidential

election—and the Republican Party—which seems generally only too happy to be silent on this since it is playing out to the benefit of its candidate—are all failing to do their part to shine a giant spotlight on this issue, far more an issue of national security than anything involving [Hillary Clinton's e-mails ever was](#).

“Questions: Questions That Need Answers”

Individually, none of these things would be particularly damning. A couple might raise eyebrows. But this many connections that go this deep and overlap both with the people involved and the times during which they occurred should set off nuclear alarms if the subject is a major-party candidate and a major-party nominee for the U.S. presidency who is [closer than many past candidates](#) at having a shot to actually win. Even more than causing concern and worry, the facts reported here raise immensely important questions that intensely need clear and immediate answers from not only the Trump campaign and Trump himself, but also from the news media and robust federal investigators, namely:

- Who advised Donald Trump to take the positions he has on Russia, Putin, Ukraine, NATO, Syria, etc.?
- How exactly did Manafort, Gates, and Page come to be involved in the Trump campaign? (In [Julia Ioffe's account of Page](#)—the most exhaustive yet—multiple answers were been given and none have been confirmed but people sure seemed angry about being asked about him)
- Is Trump getting information from Russian propaganda outlets masquerading as news—[as this report suggests](#)—and if so, who is feeding him this information?
- Regardless of the possibility of any recent possible payments/arrangements that could have been made between the Kremlin and/or Kremlin-linked sources and Manafort, Page, Gates, and others, can people like Manafort and Gates—who have made millions working on behalf of Russian interests and someone like Page who has a long relationship with, and is apparently [still an enthusiastic investor](#) in, an entity like the Russian majority-state-owned and Putin dominated Gazprom—be trusted to be American political advisors, or do past dealings like the ones in which they engaged make them a national security threat and/or a liability capable of being manipulated/utilized by hostile foreign governments? If so, how can the U.S. better guard itself from infiltration by American citizens working on behalf of foreign powers, agents, or interests? (This election cycle it can sadly yet definitively be said that the Fourth Estate of the news media cannot be trusted to shine a bright enough spotlight for long-enough to make this something that disqualifies)

- Is Rick Gates still with the Trump campaign, and is he still being investigated along with Manafort?
- Is anyone else tied to Trump under investigation for matters pertaining to Russia?
- What do Trump's lifelong tax returns show in relation to Russia, Russian oligarchs tied to Putin, and companies known for hosting their money and/or laundering their money?
- Was there any effort by Russian oligarchs and Sater to launder money through Trump's SoHo deal, and were there any other reasons, if Russian money was definitely involved, that they wanted to invest money into Trump? If Russian money is definitely involved, whose money was it and where did they get it from? Were they involved in the giant gas scheme, directly or indirectly?
- What was the role Merrill Lynch—an American company—played for Gazprom and RAO when they were engaged in highly illegal activities that undermined American interests in Ukraine and destroyed democracy there, and what exactly did Page do while he was there?
- Finally, and perhaps most important: what did Trump personally know about the pasts of Manafort, Gates, and Page?

Conclusion: Trump Has Terrible Judgement in Selecting Associates

Especially for a candidate with no previous political background, the two most important decisions such a candidate can make during a campaign are the selection of a vice presidential candidate and the selection of a campaign manager, followed by selections of other senior staff. For a candidate who repeatedly [claims he will surround himself](#) with “the best people,” the selection of Paul Manafort alone raises a deeply troubling doubt about Trump's competence in choosing his personnel. Either Trump knew about Manafort's corrupt past—in part or in full—or he did not know—in part or in full; either situation shows that he cannot be trusted to choose people to be in his closest of inner circles without that are clean, either because this does not bother him or he is too lazy or too incompetent to properly vet.

NBC

And all the relationships and ties and dealings all have too much in common taken together to be mere coincidence. As Trump is fond of saying, “there’s somethin’ going on,” and *it is imperative that Americans know **exactly** what is going on* when it comes to Trump, Putin, and all their little men’s interactions with each other. So far, Trump and his people have stonewalled all attempts to clarify these matters, and Manafort, Gates, and Page are nowhere to be found. The American people, news media, and government must demand answers, and demand them now.

Time is running out. Get to it.

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