ANDREW MARR:  
Well listening to that interview with the Russian Ambassador was the former US presidential candidate, John McCain. He thinks the man who beat him to the Whitehouse, Barack Obama, has been insufficiently robust and he wasn’t much impressed by Ambassador Chizov either.

SENATOR JOHN McCAIN:  
Well it was very pleasant to take a trip down Memory Lane with the Russian Ambassador of the Cold War rhetoric and lies and distortions that characterised him at that time. There were at least twenty things that he said in that brief interview that were absolutely false, but a military assistance programme which we have with many other countries throughout the world in order to help them provide for their self-defence, I think it’s not only appropriate but I think it’s very badly needed. As you reported, there are Russian troops massed on the border of Ukraine and Vladimir Putin is making a decision as to whether to go in or not, in my view. And if it’s cost free, then I think he’s more likely to do … to intervene. And so I see nothing wrong with providing both lethal and non-lethal assistance to the Government of Ukraine, which has just had its nation invaded and dismembered.
ANDREW MARR: 
So among the many things you say that the Russian Ambassador was saying which were lies, do you include in that his promise that the Russians do not intend to go into Moldova, other parts of the Ukraine, Latvia, other parts of the Baltics and so forth?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: 
Well we’re already seeing agitation and statements made by the Russian Government and spokespersons about the need to protect Russian speaking population. I believe it was the Polish Foreign Minister, Mr Sikorski, that calls it “Anschluss”. Nothing that they say can be taken with any value whatsoever.

ANDREW MARR: 
You talk almost as if you see this as a parallel to the events of the late 1930s with anschlusses and referendums and constant territorial aggrandisement – in that case of course by Germany. Do you see a parallel?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN: 
I see a lot of parallels, but I don’t foresee a cataclysmic war. I think the fundamental problem here with our relations with Vladimir Putin is we fail to appreciate that he is a KGB colonel who said the greatest disaster of the 20th century was the break-up of the Soviet Union and he wants to restore that Russian Empire. That’s why I worry about Moldova particularly, since they’re not a member of NATO, and I worry about the pressure on the Baltics, which is already beginning. And I think he is calculating how much he can get away with, just as Adolph Hitler calculated how much he could get away with back in the 1930s.

ANDREW MARR: 
And yet we’ve seen more or less everything peaceful that can be done from the EU and the American Government. You’ve been very critical of President Obama over this; that we’ve now seen lists of people put on blacklists in terms of financial support; we’ve seen a sort of hostility towards the Russia Bank and we’ve seen a revision of all sorts of trade agreements. What more in realistic terms could be done, do you think?
SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
First of all, I’m not sure how much is going to be done particularly given the Europeans’ dependence to a large degree on Russian energy. I think there’s been a lot of hot air and very little action when you look at and compare it to what the Russians just did in invading another sovereign nation. I would resume immediately the missile defence system in Poland and Czechoslovakia. I would have military exercises with our Baltic friends. I would send a small delegation of our military to you, to Kiev, to talk about ways that we can help them rebuild their defences – particularly air defences. I would of course increase those sanctions. The Russians basically ridiculed what we have done and I don’t believe that it is very impactful. Yes it has had an impact on their stock market, on the value of the ruble, but I think that when you look at this situation from Vladimir Putin’s point of view, this is a win-win. I believe now Crimea is now at least in itself a captive nation and I think that Moldova is under threat and I think that … as well as Baltics. Mr Putin is not like us and that’s what we have to understand, and it does not meant American troops on the ground but it does mean a steadfast and strong, united front, which was optimised by a phrase “Peace through strength.”

ANDREW MARR:
Do you think the West is being led today by appeasers?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
Not … I wouldn’t use that word. I think it’s being led by people, maybe not necessarily now in the case of the British Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, but by certainly President Obama that want to push the reset button. The overheard conversation, “Tell Vladimir I’ll be more flexible.” It was a total misreading of the nature of Vladimir Putin, his ambitions and what he was willing to do. It was a complete misreading and now it’s time for a total re-evaluation.

ANDREW MARR:
Do you fear that we’re going to see Russian troops moving into the Eastern Ukraine?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
I think he’s making calculations right now as to the cost benefits associated with it. But it’s not an accident, it’s not just any old military exercise. It’s that his forces are massed on the border of Southern and Eastern Ukraine. I mean it’s just a fact on the ground. So I think he’s making his calculations and, frankly, I can’t predict this one.

ANDREW MARR:
Finally, there’s been a lot of talk about asset seizures, particularly of some of the great Russian oligarchs and tycoons in places like London - people like Mr Abramovich. Do you think that’s an unnecessary part of the response now?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
I think it’s very necessary. I think it’s got to be economic, it’s got to be diplomatic, it’s got to be in a form of helping these countries defend themselves. We have to convince Vladimir Putin that the price of further aggression is not worth the penalties that he would pay. And I have to be very frank with you. Eleven people one day sanctioned and then a few more and “a lot of talk, a lot of talk but very little action”, I don’t think has been very persuasive to Mr Putin.

ANDREW MARR:
And of course you yourself have been blacklisted by Mr Putin, so you can’t travel to Russia?

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
I have to cancel Spring break in Siberia.

ANDREW MARR:
It’s a lovely place. Senator McCain, thank you very much indeed for joining us.

SENATOR JOHN MCCAIN:
Thank you.

INTERVIEW ENDS