

What were we celebrating?

The Fourth of July fireworks were spectacular. The star bursts, aerial explosions, the bone-rattling concussions -- breathtaking.

I'm 67 years old, and I've experienced a lot of these celebrations of my country's founding. Those of earliest childhood are beyond the pale of memory, of course, and a few were missed while flying for the U.S. Navy overseas in the late 1960s, serving my country in another misguided and unnecessary war. But I was here for the rest, and always proud of why we went to such great lengths to commemorate our freedom. There was always something special about the Fourth of July.

Now as I watch, I'm confused.

For the past six years, we've allowed a cabal of ideological demagogues to wage war on the very freedoms we purport to celebrate. We've allowed them to lie us into an unnecessary war, a war in which thousands of innocent fellow citizens have been -- and are daily being -- killed or maimed, a war in which people are tortured in our name.

We've allowed them to undermine the protections of our Constitution, to spy on us, to deny the right to legal recourse, to intimidate and bully loyal opposition and to assert that such opposition is tantamount to treason.

We've watched them squander our national treasure to subsidize their megalomania, and to turn world opinion -- for the first time in history -- against us. We've watched them equate the national interest with partisan politics. We've seen them spurn competence and experience and appoint clueless cronies and fellow travelers to important positions in government. We've seen them declare, by their actions, that they are above the law.

In short, we have allowed them to damage our country and subvert our Constitution more profoundly in six years than in our entire history.

I'm an elderly American, a veteran, a father and grandfather, the descendent of a Revolutionary War soldier and patriot, a person who loves his country. And I want to know: What the hell were we celebrating?

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