

## The War in Ukraine and the Glaring Omissions in Discourse about It

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** This is all what's driving me crazy about this war in Ukraine, which is, you know. I don't think Russia has justification for a full scale invasion of Ukraine, not legally or morally. I don't think they're justified in the destruction that they're bringing to the Ukrainians. And of course, looking at any war for any of this time of war, you're going to be sick to your stomach, it's clearly the worst thing humanity can unleash on itself. It's, you know, the whole premise is that you have to dehumanise an entire population and be willing to end human life on a mass scale without blinking an eye, without hesitation. And it just breeds the worst possible instincts in everybody, there is... I mean, war is the most horrific thing. Like, no one can look at it, be anything other than repulsed. The problem is that we're looking at this war in a way that we don't look at any other wars, which is creating the perception, this false perception that what Vladimir Putin's doing is something extraordinary. When it's not. It's quite ordinary, unfortunately. And the people who are most vocally denouncing it and pretending that it's something never before seen or not seen since Hitler are the very people who have either done it or justified it or both. And this is the reason, at least for me, for the need to push back on the prevailing narrative. It is not because I think that Russia is justified or I admire what Putin is doing or believe that the war isn't horrific. Of course, all those things are obvious, but it's being exploited by the likes of Madeleine Albright, who wrote an op-ed, you know, three weeks ago that was very morally righteous about condemning Vladimir Putin as some kind of like war criminal without the slightest understanding that she herself did the same thing. You know, there was that amazing clip where Condoleezza Rice went onto Fox News to talk about the Russian invasion, and the Fox host Harris Faulkner said to her, not sarcastically or satirically, but earnestly, she said "to me, if you invade another country without legal justification, no matter what else you do, that's automatically a war crime", and Condoleezza Rice, nodded her fucking head, as though that was, of course, a moral precept that every decent person recognised. And I honestly don't think that either of them is aware at the moment they're doing that, that they're describing the actions of the US government, including Condoleezza Rice. Like, there's a disconnect that is so reinforced constantly in the discourse, and this war is perfect for it, that I don't think

they're consciously aware of the fact that they do the same thing and are deliberately pretending that they don't. I don't think that they actually internalise what they are and what they've done.

**Q. Anthony Omene (QAO):** No, absolutely not. There's a straight line that you can draw, as I mentioned before, from Albright's policy to the invasion of the Iraq War, but it's not as if she was, I guess, like, she wasn't the progenitor of it and it didn't originate with her. But what does surprise me is that her policy doctrine is very much the same as the Wolfowitz doctrine. You remember way back in 1992, when the document was leaked to the New York Times, and it was a document that was created for the defence committee. It was written by Paul Wolfowitz and by Scooter Libby, and it basically outlined what the United States's plans were, or at least what its strategic interests were in the aftermath of the dissolution of the Soviet Union. And what it basically said was that that paramount to our goals is the health and stability of the US economy. And the way to do that is to say that the US must defer or defeat attacks against the United States, that it has to extend its defence arrangements, that is, any nations that are an allyship already with the United States the relationships must be deepened. And then for those that are not necessarily cooperative with the United States, they have to be pressured into it that no other regional power- and this is important- no other regional power is able to dominate a region that is critical to US interests. So by talking about establishing or strengthening barriers of any other global threats, what Wolfowitz is saying in that document is that the US basically has a right to establish an empire wherever it pleases. And then the fourth goal they talk about like, you know, democratic or regional stability and, you know, the spread of democracy and so on and so on. But that third point should have been fucking frightening, and it was when it was leaked to the New York Times. I remember there was a speech by Ted Kennedy that talked about- Ted Kennedy, of all people!- talked about it being tantamount to naked imperialism. And what happened in the very next administration? Well, it's not as if they doubled back on the policy approach from this document. They did exactly what it was that Wolfowitz and Libby laid out. But they did it in such a way that it seemed progressive, because when you do this to nations that are deemed barbaric, to nations that are deemed hostile or enemies or whatever, and by reducing the will of all of the people within a country to the personality of one leader that you can make it very easy for people to hate, then you can always justify the bombing of Yugoslavia because Slobodan Milosevic is the genocidal madman. You can justify the invasion of Iraq because Saddam is ripping babies out of incubators. You can justify a second invasion of Iraq because he's throwing his political enemies into industrial shredders. And you can justify giving Vladimir Zelensky whatever it is he needs. Which, by the way, if you want to talk about Ukraine being the last bulwark of democracy, well, they just banned all but their right wing parties in the country. So basically, like centrist and leftist parties were -and on top of the fact that the Communist Party was already banned- they just banned a number of other political parties. So you only have like centre right and right wing parties that are even allowed to stand for office in the country. So he's asking for a NATO no-fly zone. And in the eyes of many people it is, of course, we should give him a no fly zone. We have to stop this tyrant.

**GG:** And it's not like he just got authoritarian and repressive in the way that people point to Putin being because of this war. Last year, in January of 2021, they also banned two or three opposition TV stations. They just issued an order preventing them from operating in the ground, the airwaves alleging that they were subversive and loyal to Russia and the like. So I mean, the idea that Ukraine is a democracy that we're defending like a Western European democracy or whatever...

**QAO:** ...is laughable.

**GG:** Yeah, exactly.

**QAO:** And just sort of like turn at the point here is that we're seeing the exact same thing happen with regards to reducing an entire nation down to one person because there is no economic measure that can be taken against Russian people broadly, there's no form of collective punishment that is too much for anybody because it's whatever it takes to stop Putin, regardless of the fact that people are going to starve, regardless of the fact that Russia is a country that we have already seen the effects of shock doctrine on it, that in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR, you had meth addicted child prostitutes running rampant in the country that had experienced the most precipitous drop in life expectancy that we've ever recorded in history. None of that matters because there is no punishment we can inflict that is too great because we are focussed on stopping this tyrant. We reduced the entire country down to one tyrant. We have no idea or at least don't want to consider that this is collective punishment. And even if we do consider it collective punishment, it's justified because the Russians should get up off their arse and overthrow this tyrant. So it's OK for us to lay an economic siege, it's OK for us to have people starve and eat boot leather. It's fine. We can do an economic siege of Stalingrad, we can completely do that, and it's fine because there is no measure that is too far to stop this evil figure.

**GG:** Well, but what was so amazing about it, too, is that morality that says that Russian people are responsible for what Putin does because they have the power if they wanted to overthrow him and they don't, is the rationale that Osama bin Laden used explicitly when asked why he targeted so-called civilian infrastructure, obviously not the Pentagon, that was a military target, but the World Trade Centre and wherever else, you know, that other plane was going. And he, that was his argument, he said, Americans choose their leaders and so they're responsible for the evil acts that they do. And in the case of Russia, there's a complete inconsistency, a contradiction in the discourse. If the argument is, is that Putin is like this despotic totalitarian figure, that the minute you utter a syllable of dissent against him, you get thrown into like a gulag or killed, then it becomes much harder to invoke the Osama bin Laden rationale that while the Russians are responsible for Putin's act because they somehow have the power to overthrow him. If he's like this entrenched tyrant that everyone is living in complete fear of opposing or criticising in any way, then it becomes even harder. But the

emotions of this war have been so exploited and manipulated that there's just no rational engagement of the brain at all, like I've never really quite seen emotions be so, you know, played with so powerfully across so many countries in the world to prevent people from engaging the part of their brain that's supposed to be the centres of reason. There's just none of that. It's just, you know, like I said, valid disgust at war, but without any step after that to ask critically how we're reacting as a result of that disgust and what it really means.

**QAO:** Thanks for listening. To listen to the full live episode of the Unredacted show with Glenn Greenwald and me, Q. Anthony Omene, find us on Callin. Download the app from the App Store on iPhone or iPad to join the Conversation Live every Thursday at 4:30 p.m. Eastern Time.

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