



A Warning From Chomsky and Ellsberg

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Paul Jay (PJ): Hi, I'm Paul Jay, welcome to the Analysis.news. Very special edition of the Analysis.news coming up, Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg. Be back in just a second.

In my mind, two of the most important public intellectuals in the world, Noam Chomsky and Daniel Ellsberg, join me today. In 1971, Daniel Ellsberg risked a lifetime in jail when he leaked the classified Pentagon Papers to the news media, exposing the lies of the US government about the Vietnam War.

Speaker on TV: It has now come out as the possible source of the Times Pentagon document. It is that of Daniel Ellsberg, the top policy analyst for the Defence and State Department.

Daniel Ellsberg on TV: Prepare to answer to all the consequences of these decisions.

PJ: At the time of Ellsberg's prosecution, Noam Chomsky was asked to comment.

Noam Chomsky on TV: Dan Ellsberg released to the American people information, historical information, about how a series of presidents enmeshed them in a vicious and costly war of aggression.

PJ: Now, 51 years later, Chomsky and Ellsberg, both in their nineties, are still tirelessly fighting to warn the people of the world about the existential dangers of nuclear war and climate change. They join me today on theAnalysis.news. I asked both gentlemen if they might have a question for each other, and Noam has a question for Dan. So go ahead, Noam.

Noam Chomsky (NC): [00:01:37] Well, my question to Dan is what I've had in mind for a long time. How can you look so cheerful when you know so much about the horrible things that are going on in the world?

Daniel Ellsberg (DE): Well, actually, it's almost a tic of mine. When I'm in a situation which I have been not infrequently, whether in Vietnam, or in D.C. or around here, when the shit is really coming down, I laugh. I don't know. I can't explain it. And it's very puzzling to a lot of people. How can you be laughing at this time? The more horrible things are, it's just a reaction that I have. So that's the answer to you. It's not that I don't smile at all when things are going all right, but when I'm looking this cheerful, it's kind of a barometer. It shouldn't be reassuring to people who know me. How about you?

PJ: I know there's not a lot to be optimistic about, Noam, but you don't stop fighting. You're doing it seems to me you're doing more interviews these days than even a year ago. It's like you're upping your game. What keeps you going, Noam?

NC: The situation becomes more serious, more dire, more urgent— there are lots of people, mostly young people, who are doing courageous, important work. I, unfortunately, just can't join them anymore. I'm not up to it physically. The least I can do is try to do what I can and talk about it.

DE: You've been doing wonderful work, Noam. These interviews you do regularly with C.J. Polychroniou; I learned a lot from them. I just read another one today on the challenge that our empire sees from China; the alleged rise of China. It's an extremely good interview, but they're all good, and I'm very impressed that you keep turning those out so fast. And just when they're needed. That's wonderful.

PJ: Noam, in terms of where we're at right now, there are negotiations going on now for the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in New York. It looks like not much is going to come out of that if anything. In fact, there seems to be no real negotiations going on at all about any kind of reduction in nuclear weapons. Noam, what's your take on just how dire this moment is? You use the word dire, so explain dire.

NC: Well, I don't think there should be much need to elaborate on the dire situation right now in Ukraine. A nuclear power plant has just been shut down today, but its situation is very dangerous. There are three or four others. They could easily be attacked by rockets. It could lead to a horrendous disaster. Furthermore, it's all too easy to think of scenarios that would lead us up the escalation ladder. As Dan has made very clear long ago, we should all understand there's no stopping, no sensible stopping going on. You step on the ladder, you keep going up to the doomsday clock. I don't think I even have to run through them. Inadvertently, one was mentioned, incidentally, in the long *Washington Post* article a couple of days ago, discussing in detail the US version of the background for the Ukraine war. In it,

they happened to mention, incidentally quoted a British military official who said the US and Britain were surprised that the Russians attacked. They didn't attack using the US/ British methods, namely total war, in which you destroy everything. Destroy the communication system, the energy system, the shock, and all.

How come the Russians aren't doing that? Well, look at how Kyiv is functioning. We can ask why they're not doing it, but they certainly can if the war goes on, they're very likely to. That could quickly lead to a lot of other things. Fortunately, the Pentagon has been, which seems to be the one peacekeeping force in the US government at this point, has been vetoing some of the more extreme proposals, like a no-fly zone, which means destroying any aircraft facilities which are in Russia. What happens then? It escalates, more attacks on— there were actually proposals in the Wall Street Journal and elsewhere, even in peace journals, that we should be accompanying ships. Naval vessels should be accompanying ships that break the Russian blockade.

What does that mean? It means you get into an attack, then where do you go? It takes no imagination to think of how this could escalate. The most important thing about that long Washington Post article is that it's all about how to conduct the war and nothing about how to end the war, which is the most important issue. Not a word. Like, not a word saying that. A couple of weeks before the war, the Russian Foreign Minister [Sergey] Lavrov said the sole issue is Ukraine joining NATO. Well, did he mean it? There is only one way to find out, take them up on it. Let's try and see if there's a possibility. Actually that's been what high US officials with any familiarity with the Soviet Union have been saying for 30 years. It's too risky and provocative to expand NATO to the Russian border and certainly not to move to Ukraine. Every high official you can think of, CIA Director Robert Gates, the hawkish Defense Secretary of [George W.] Bush, said that's just going to lead to war. No surprise. Keep doing it. Let's see. Maybe we'll be lucky.

I mean, take a look at official US policy, official policy. We have to fight the war in order to weaken Russia so severely that it will never be able to undertake aggression again. I mean think for 30 seconds. What does that mean? It means we have to weaken Russia beyond how Germany was weakened during the Versailles treaty because that wasn't enough to stop them from carrying out aggression. So what does it mean? We turn Russia into an agrarian society? Something like the Morgenthau Plan. Meanwhile, the Russians stand by and say, this is kind of fun. Let's see how far it goes. I mean, it's a lunatic world. Lunatic.

Now let's go to the NPT conference, which will probably get barely reported. Will anybody report the fact that the nuclear powers, including the United States, are violating it all the time? We all know what it says, Article Six. Nuclear powers will take good faith measures to end the scourge of nuclear weapons in the world. See anybody doing it?

I see you circulated for us an article. An interesting article from The Guardian pointed out that the arms control regime is languishing. That's not exactly correct. The arms control regime has been virtually destroyed by the Republican Party. First, George W. Bush eliminated the ABM Treaty [Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty], which is a very serious threat to Russia, among other things. Then you get to [Donald] Trump, who was wielding his wrecking ball and attacking everything he could see. The INF Treaty [Intermediate-Range

Nuclear Forces Treaty] and the [Ronald] Reagan/ [Mikhail] Gorbachev treaty led to a reduction of serious tensions in Europe. Get rid of that. Get rid of the Open Skies Treaty. It goes back to [Dwight D.] Eisenhower. It's not just languishing. He came very close, Trump, to eliminating the last serious treaty, the New START treaty. Fortunately, [Joe] Biden came into office and was able to accept the Russian offer, first to continue it by a couple of days. So it's not just languishing. It's being torn to shreds. It goes beyond.

Today, for example, the head of Mossad, Israeli Mossad, had a major talk in which she said the Iran Treaty is totally unacceptable. We're going to use whatever means we have to undermine it. What does that mean? We talk about how Iran did not live up to the treaty, which happens to be true after the United States eliminated it and totally disregarded it. After that, they began to do the same. Is that an argument against renewing the treaty?

In fact, I don't want to talk too long, but let me just go on one step. Everybody knows how to deal with the alleged threat of Iranian nuclear weapons. Impose a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East with inspections. We know that they work. US intelligence confirmed that Iran was living up to the joint agreement, JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action]. So there's a simple solution. Why not institute it? Who's against it? Iran is strongly in favor of it. Regional states have been pressing for it for 25 years. The whole global South is strongly in favor of it. Europe isn't imposing any objections. One country is vetoing it— the United States. Do you see that in the headlines? Of course, Israel is opposed.

Well, we can go into why the United States is blocking it, but everybody knows, even though they don't say it. It would jeopardize US aid to Israel. The United States doesn't even recognize that Israel has nuclear weapons. Of course, it has. If you recognize it, US law comes into play, which raises a series of questions about whether any US aid to Israel is even legal under US law. Well, nobody wants to open that door, so we don't do what we can easily do to end any alleged threat of Iran. Meanwhile, instead of that, we talk about Iranian violations, Iranian terrorists, one thing or another.

There is an international treaty now, the Treaty for the Prohibition of the Production of Nuclear Weapons. Well, the nuclear states haven't signed it, but about 100 others have. Could we make the first step by saying, well, let's move towards thinking about signing it? We couldn't because that would be a step forward. Lots of possibilities are not being discussed, just as negotiations to end the war in Iraq and Ukraine. Only sensible policies are not being discussed. No effort to try. Just war, war, and more violence. Let's see how far we can go, and maybe by some miracle, we won't destroy ourselves.

PJ: Dan?

DE: I'm glad that you asked the question earlier, Noam, you asked the question, why am I smiling through all this? I see that I am smiling. I can see it on the screen. I explained that when things look just impossible to get through, when things are terrible, when there's a total shit storm, I have this reflexive tic of laughing and smiling. What we've just heard from Noam, I think, explains why. Perhaps it's a hysterical reaction, and that's setting in right now. Noam has described the situation very well.

He mentioned, by the way, that just an hour ago today, as we speak, the Zaporizhzhya nuclear plant, the largest in Europe, has been disconnected from the European grid for the first time in its history because of fires that the Russians say were set by Ukrainian artillery. With the Ukrainians, whether they are or are not firing on Zaporizhzhya, it's not surprising since, if they were, given that they are human and they act like other nation states have acted, they're being fired on, as I understand it from Zaporizhzhya. So both sides, in other words, are playing this nuclear chicken, in effect gambling with the future in the case of Zaporizhzhya, the whole region enormously subject to radioactivity, worse than Chernobyl or Three Mile Island.

Both sides, by the way, say, oh yeah, we welcome inspection by the IEA [International Energy Agency], but they're still negotiating on it. As far as I know, it hasn't happened yet, to get people out of there. I signed a petition the other day, literally, for the UN, for the NPT Conference to call on all nuclear reactor sites to be free zones in effect: no stationing of troops nearby, no firing nearby, no combat for 30 km, they say, and so forth. Yes, the NPT Conference could speak on that, but as I understand it, they're not proposing to address the Ukrainian situation at all, despite the nuclear threats that are being made directly in that. They could even look forward to Taiwan as an issue, but they're not going to address these actual threats at all.

Speaking of the NPT Conference, the Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, which ends tomorrow, I believe. For the first time in the review conferences, there has been a draft proposal in line with what the UN Secretary [António] Guterres has called for during this conference, which is that the nuclear states commit themselves not to initiate nuclear war. A no-first-use commitment. This draft proposal from about a week ago incorporates that. Some people were celebrating that as the first time that it had happened. I didn't celebrate because I think the chance that the final documents will incorporate that commitment or even call on the nuclear states never to initiate nuclear war, never first use, the chance of that being in the final document I see is zero.

Now, in a way, nothing is zero. When I think things are certain, they happen sometimes. Sometimes that's very fortunate. Miracles happen, like the Berlin Wall coming down or Nelson Mandela coming to power without a violent revolution in South Africa. So miracles happen. And that's what we need, in effect, is a miracle of that sort. I don't think we're going to see it tomorrow. The usefulness of saying I'm certain they will not commit themselves to no first use tomorrow is that if they do it, I'm clearly wrong, and that's useful. I can then say my whole framework here is wrong. I've got to reconsider it. Actually, I welcome that when it happens, and I learn from it. Nevertheless, it's bad news unless it does happen.

The reason I'm sure that it won't is that our foreign policy since NATO began in the late '40s, I would say '47 it began, but in particular, since its doctrine evolved in the early '50s, it has been based on the threat or the assurance to our allies of initiating nuclear war against what was a nuclear state since 1949— the Soviet Union. So from its very beginning, NATO has been founded— in US foreign policy, we are NATO— has been foreign policy has been our threat, carried out by our preparations, our readiness, our deployment, our exercises, our development of weapons to initiate nuclear war against a nuclear weapons state, which even

in the smallest aspect, could arise anytime now in Ukraine. Putin is actually threatening that if NATO becomes more directly involved— obviously, NATO is involved, but it could be more. People have been pressing for US air to be directly in a new fly zone, for example. Zelenskyy was calling for that early on and others. That would mean NATO direct combat with Russia, which by the way, could confront the Russians with a clear-cut military defeat locally in Ukraine and push them back even before the February 24th control zone that they haven't done before this year.

In that case, Putin has definitely indicated that nuclear war is possible. He has more than 1,000 tactical nuclear weapons, small nuclear weapons of the kind we've been moving toward and renewing for some time. Yes, there could be even a small one, and it would be the virtual extermination of Ukraine and Ukrainians. It would also be highly likely to escalate, and that means not extinction actually but near extinction. Not even so near. Let's remove that word.

The latest report on this, publicized, I think it was in Nature magazine— a peer-reviewed article by [Alan] Robock and a number of others. The first time, I think, gives a lower figure over what would come from nuclear winter, from a large exchange between the US and Russia. We haven't seen, I don't think, figures like that before. The figure is more than 5 billion people. More than 5 billion people. Now, you could say it's good news. Say it's 6 billion. Well, that leaves 2 billion people. Edward Teller would say well, that's the glass a quarter full; 2 billion people left. It would be murder on a scale— we don't have any words, any concepts, or language for it. That's what we are budgeting and preparing for. Russia also, and other countries are modernizing their abilities to trigger this sort of thing. Preparing it, exercising it to kill, let's say, three-quarters of the human population on Earth right now. No one is saying what gives any power, what gives the United States or Russia, or ever has the right to make hostages of billions of people. Remember, this is more than 5 billion.

I looked up the other day the number of armed forces in all of the world right now. It's 1 billion and 100 million. It's pretty much a billion. So three quarters or more of those people killed would be civilians. Women, children, and infants. Yes, there would be people left in a ravaged world; as for the climate. This murder, as I say, is mostly civilians.

No war now with nuclear weapons, even the smallest, will be contained within the territory. Victims will not be contained within the territory of the adversaries, aside from the fact that most of the adversarial people will be civilians. No such war will be contained within that territory. Most of the people in a nuclear war will be outside the territorial boundaries of the adversarial states, and that includes nuclear winter— the southern hemisphere, even without a single warhead landing down there. Unlike radioactivity, which is pretty much confined by wind, equatorial winds into the hemisphere where the warheads land, the smoke from the burning cities would be lofted into the high stratosphere where it would rain out and go around the globe very quickly, within days, destroy, spread out and block most of the sunlight. Seventy percent of the sunlight. For years, up to a decade, killing all harvests worldwide, all hemispheres, everywhere. So within months or a year or two at the most, nearly everyone would starve to death.

I'll come back to the point. We have a Non-Proliferation Treaty renewal conference now somewhat discussing and rejecting the idea that it should be a rule of international human survival that no one should trigger it, and that really means no one could threaten it and prepare for it, which is what we're doing. People take some heart from the fact that even with Trump, but at any rate, under Biden, certainly, and Putin have renewed the commitment or the assertion that Reagan and Gorbachev made 40 years ago that nuclear war cannot be won and must not be fought. It's been 40 years since they said that. Of course, here we are, building up or preparing for nuclear war and making it on a hair trigger. On both sides, by the way.

The ICBMs [Intercontinental Ballistic Missile] that are vulnerable to the other ICBMs are on a ten-minute alert on both sides and subject to false alarms, which confront computers with using them or losing them within minutes. Only the ICBMs do that. Yet, we have just, in this country, budgeted for a whole new set of ICBMs. Projecting this series, the sequencing of the future, which should have ended 50 years ago, even from a Cold War point of view where nuclear submarines came in from both sides, sufficient to cause nuclear winter by themselves. The ICBMs, the vulnerable ICBMs, which pose this ten-minute hair trigger, were anachronistic and dangerous since that point. Yet, we're budgeting them.

So there are two big reasons why this situation persists. One is, very simple, Northrop Grumman makes a lot of profits right now from building these new ICBMs, as Boeing did in the past. They lost out in the bidding on this one. So Northrop Grumman and Lockheed create jobs, even unions, and political campaign donations. You'll make money from preparing for a first strike and for a preemptive attack, even though people actually understand that carrying it out, and using these weapons would kill nearly everyone. That's one reason.

The other reason is to come back to building those weapons makes it more plausible that we will, in the event of a small nuclear war, we will go first, as we've promised to do and still promise to do to NATO. And which backs up, by the way, Biden's growing support for defending, quote, Taiwan, 100 miles off mainland China, where they have conventional superiority built up over the last 20 years. The threat he talks about when Pelosi goes to Taiwan and what amounts to an official visit forbidden by the 1979 agreements with China, is moving very much toward calling Taiwan sovereign, which has been described as a red line for over half a century by China. It's saying secession. They're no more ready to see the secession of Taiwan, which they regard as part of China, than [Abraham] Lincoln was for good or bad in the Civil War. They're prepared, and they say that's a vital issue for them. They will go to war over this.

Just as Putin talks about the use of nuclear weapons as an existential threat to Russia, only he regards Ukraine as part of Russia. He's about, it seems, in probably a month or so to annex part of Ukraine in the Donbass. What should we make of this fact that any threat, the only thing that would call forth nuclear weapons, is a threat to Russia? The same thing goes for Taiwan. We know that China and Chinese people regard and demand of their leader that Taiwan be regarded as part of China.

If we move, as we are, as Biden is moving, it started under Trump to recognize instead a secession as Taiwan as an independent. Don't leave them free, as we put it, to have US bases

and to have offensive weapons and to sell them offensive weapons, which you can be sure that Raytheon, Northrop Grumman, Boeing, and General Dynamics are anxious to sell Taiwan in violation of the constraints we accepted in 1979.

So I come back to the point. We don't have a full alliance with Taiwan yet. Fortunately, though, that's the direction we're moving in. We should be in a position to be able to say to Putin right now, the world, everyone in the world, should be able to say to Putin, you're talking about the risk of a nuclear war over Ukraine, which we would not start in this case. It used to be that we were conventionally inferior to the Warsaw Pact, including the Soviet Union. That was the rationale for threatening to blow up the world if they went into West Berlin or Germany. But that is shifted. The Warsaw Pact, except for Russia, shifted sides, and they're now all in NATO. So now they have, and we have if you want, conventional superiority there, and it's Putin that is making the threats now. That's happening right now. So Putin is using his nuclear weapons the way we've used them for 70 years. The way you use a weapon, where you point it at somebody's head, a pistol in a confrontation. You're using the weapon. You couldn't make the threat, and if you get your way without pulling the trigger, that's why you have the weapon. Putin is saying now, NATO, don't come directly with your airpower or troops into this conflict, or you're risking that I pull my trigger. Okay, so everybody should be willing to say, well, you don't have any right to do that. That's outrageous. It's terrible. It's risky. It's reckless in a way that the human language can't even comprehend. But we can't say that, and we're not saying it because that's our policy. It always has been. It needn't be in Europe anymore.

We could easily say we will not use nuclear weapons first in Europe. How about that? Or against Russia or at all, as Guterres is frankly asking us to do. Biden isn't going to say that, even though, by the way, he did say it in his campaign. He couldn't conceive of a circumstance in which it would be advantageous for the US to initiate nuclear war. Fine, that was his position, but not as president any more than any of his predecessors since 1945, because on the one hand, it would change our relation to Europe. We would no longer be the protector of Europe, have it as a protectorate that gives us economic leverage as if we were European—participating in European arrangements. Second, he can't do it because he would be accused of inviting the Chinese into Taiwan by getting rid of a threat that is implicit in American foreign policy all the time. He's not going to do that. So here we are in this situation, and I say first, it led me into hysterical laughter at the beginning of this discussion. Finally, the cheerfulness here, if any, was also the prospect of having a discussion with you. That doesn't happen every day or every week at all. I really enjoy it. In fact, just the other day— I'll show you something. I'm sending stuff to my archives at UMass Amherst and sending it up, I came across in my files this paper that I read. A terrific paper by Noam Chomsky, US Involvement in Vietnam, written just after the war had ended, finally in 1975. You probably don't remember this paper, but I can recommend you. By the way, there's one problem with it. This version of it doesn't have the footnotes. So I'm working on an academic friend to get me the full thing with the footnotes because they all look— as you have constantly reminded me— we had been in '75, you and I, on the same side for eight years, since about '67, when I came back from Vietnam, working together. With the greatest

respect, you'd been on the right side much longer than that, all your life, as far as I know. Before those eight years, I had been participating as part of the wrong side. Anyway, we've been in for more than half a century working on this. I have not learned more from any person on Earth than from you, Noam. No one has contributed more.

Just going back to '67 when I read your book on the American Mandarins and whatnot. The sentence in it was actually just indirect. It said the US acted as if it had a right to do these things, to be demolishing Vietnam and threatening the world. I, as somebody who worked for the government for more than a decade, thought to myself, a new idea. I had never heard it discussed. Never heard the thought. Do you have a right to do this or not a right to do that? And that was a very seminal thought as far as I was concerned. It helped change my life. So thank you.

PJ: Noam.

NC: Let me just add that the fact that Dan was right at the heart of it for many years has been an extraordinary value. More than anyone else, he's been able to bring to us an understanding of how things work on the inside: what the planning is like, what the thinking is like, and how to understand what's happening now because nothing much has changed. It's an invaluable contribution. Quite apart from his 50 years of direct engagement, courageous, significant engagement with all the material he's brought forth. Now, on the background of nuclear planning, first, on the background of the Vietnam War, it's been an incomparable contribution to moving forward to try to achieve some measure of peace and justice in the world.

I'd also like to mention another point that Dan has been making for about, I don't know how long. I've heard it from him for many years. He pointed out that nuclear weapons are used. It's not that they might be used; they are used. The analogy he gave us was something like maybe the three of us walking into a grocery store, say I have a gun, and I tell the shopkeeper, open the cash register, or I'll blow you away. He opens the cash register and gives the money away. I didn't shoot the gun, but I used it. And that's the way things have been working for decades. In fact, that's official US policy.

There is a very important document confirming this, and it is barely discussed— the 1995 Clinton years. It's called Essentials of Post-Cold War Deterrence, STRATCOM, Strategic Command. How do we deal? This is now the post-Cold War. How do we carry out what's called deterrence? Deterrence means aggression, invasion, or something like that. So how do we do it? Well, what they say straight out is, nuclear weapons are always prominent in the background. They offer space in which we can carry out our regular efforts in what's called defense, like overthrowing another government or subversion or whatever it may be. Exactly Dan's point, STRATCOM.

Furthermore, they say that we must project a national persona. I'm virtually quoting now the national persona of irrationality and vindictiveness. We must present a picture to the world of some elements being out of control. We'll never be able to stop them. They'll go crazy. Curtis LeMay or somebody else. The world has to understand that about us. Let's call it the madman

theory. It's attributed to [Richard] Nixon on the basis of pretty thin evidence, diary entries, but it's right in major documents right in front of our eyes. STRATCOM document in 1995. We must project a national persona of irrationality and vindictiveness. Some elements are out of control. We must waive the nuclear threat constantly because it provides space for our regular activities. Dan's point, using nuclear weapons constantly. Well, that's worth thinking about not keeping in the shadows, and sure that remains today. Dan can tell us a lot more than I can.

DE: You remind me of that STRATCOM document, Noam. Very good. The tussle of a madman theory has been associated with Nixon. In fact, he was ready to use nuclear weapons in 1969, which was his first year in Indo-China. Against, by the way, a non-nuclear weapons state, but one that had allies of nuclear weapons states: China and Russia. He didn't carry that out for one reason. In November or October of 1969, there were 2 million people in the streets. All over the country, on one day, it was called the moratorium; they avoided the word that they originally thought of: general strike. It sounded too radical or too provocative, so they called it a moratorium: a stopping of business as usual. People took off from college, from business, and even major businesses and financial institutions.

On the same day in cities all over the country, 300 here, 10,000 there, and more than 10,000 in some of the cities. They added them all up on the same day, and it came to 2 million.

Nixon, by the way, counted in part by U2s, high-flying planes that we used over Russia to count the number of people in various big demonstrations. It wasn't a good time for Nixon to carry out his explicit threats and plans; plans to initiate nuclear war at that time. Roger Morris saw nuclear target photos for hitting North Vietnam near the Chinese border to send the Chinese a lesson. We got a moratorium on pulling the trigger for 15 years or so. Worthwhile by people demonstrating in that case.

Now, many other cases have arisen since then. Notice that STRATCOM in 1995 was during the [Bill] Clinton administration. Does that mean that Clinton wasn't mad enough to make these threats credible? Well, it happened to be a year in which they weren't needed very much because the Soviet Union had just dissolved, and the Warsaw Pact had dissolved. And Clinton was starting the process, a disastrous process of getting Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia into NATO. Breaking, as I think you said, the clear-cut commitments that had been made to Gorbachev earlier that NATO would not expand an inch beyond Germany. Ukraine understood from that very time on, by even people who had started the Cold War, I mean have been in its creation, [George] Kennan, disastrous expansion, in the effects it was likely to have on the right-wing in Russia, to change politics in Russia, and to be regarded as impinging on vital interests of Russia for that time.

Our policy ever since then from Clinton and Reagan and all the others, I'm sorry, not Clinton, George W. Bush, has been so directed. We're carrying out Kennan's ominous warnings, which were echoed, by the way, by Jack Matlock, put in by the Republicans as ambassador to Russia, a real expert who had been saying, don't do this, and many others, many academics, for once on the right side, were saying don't do this.

Yet we've moved to George W. Bush's pronouncement in 2008, Ukraine and Georgia will be part of NATO. This was against the strong internal objections of Germany, France, and others, against this as a reckless act. But they didn't come out. They went along with this underarm twisting on the US. That was 2008. Well, doing that ever since leads me to a very ominous inference that the US was certainly willing to risk what's happening now in Ukraine, with all its attendant risks of escalation to the world. I'm inclined to think, or at least it's equally possible, that they wanted it, that our establishment has wanted precisely this, not more. They don't want a nuclear war, but they're willing to risk it and gamble with it. What is happening right now is perfect. Better than, let's say, complaints by Russia or whatever. It has restored the supposed necessity of NATO with the US at its helm, with US nuclear threats on it. It has added to NATO, Sweden, and Finland, who were properly kept out of it since its inception. Now they're in. It's expanded NATO, which is exactly what Putin presumably did not want. It's a bonanza for the military-industrial complex, specifically for the firms. Let me name them again: Northrop Grumman, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Boeing, and Lockheed. Their stock has all gone up, and rightly so.

If you have no scruples about where you invest your money, then those firms are a good bet from now on. They have gone up, and they are going to stay there because their sales and prospects have enormously increased. Is that enough to be an element in what's happening? Yes, it is. I think E. P. Thompson said, not long ago, before they broke up when there was still the Soviet Union, he said it's wrong to say that the US and the Soviet Union have military-industrial complexes. It is more realistic to say they are military-industrial complexes and in its strategic role in research and development, physicists and engineers, budgeting, and everything else.

So these two aspects of restoring NATO leadership and so-called Atlanticist, instead of a European community from Portugal to Vladivostok, which Gorbachev called for and which others endorsed, that's not what the US wanted. They needed Russia as an enemy. Otherwise, why do you need NATO at all? If Russia is, as it was trying to be in the last years of Gorbachev, even under Yeltsin, corrupt and weak as he was, trying to be a friend to the United States and its partner, they even talked about joining NATO. That wouldn't make any sense. What would those weapons be for? That we're selling them or that they're making them themselves? If Russia is a friend, that doesn't make any sense. Why would the US be needed to protect Europe from a friendly Russia? No, that is not acceptable. In other words, moving to make Russia and see Russia and make Russia an adversary was essential to the US, and that's what we've got.

When do we want that to end? Noam, I totally agree with the point you were making earlier. This killing field in Ukraine right now must come to a stop. How is that possible? Only with negotiations in which we are showing no interest, and Putin isn't showing much interest. We definitely were making, as you said, we're describing aims that can never be achieved. Weakening Russia so it can't attack its neighbors, weakening Russia so it can't invade Georgia. When will that happen? Never. So the whole goal is to keep fighting, to think of continuing killing in order to— or whatever, sanctions to weaken another country, especially dangerously, a nuclear weapons state. Or to, let's say, restore Crimea. They're now being

attacked, but to restore Crimea to Ukraine, which [Nikita] Khrushchev gave Ukraine some time ago, kind of arbitrarily. When is that going to happen? Not very likely at all. When are Russian troops going to leave entirely the Donbass, where they've been for the last eight years? This is a recipe we're announcing for an indefinite war. And why not? It's good for the military-industrial. It's good for the US foreign policy establishment, with our current Secretary of State, [Antony] Blinken, [Lloyd] Austin, and the others being in no way better than the foreign policy team of Trump, Obama, or anybody else. So the same goes back to Taiwan. I keep coming back.

Noam, you're the person who has connected things consistently for the last half-century. One thing that you're very unusual on, unfortunately, is to see two existential risks. Not just climate, which is an existential risk, but also nuclear, which a lot of environmentalists, unfortunately, don't see. You've been pressing on both these points. As I say, you've really illuminated my world steadily with your global perspective on these things. Anyway, if we don't change our policy, which is also Russian policy on both climate and nuclear weapons, then the world is headed again— the word catastrophe doesn't encompass it. Mass murder, multi-genocide, omnicide, near-omnicide, none of these; we don't have words for it. So thank you again for what you're doing, but at least the discussion is possible.

The notion of no first use has at least been discussed, and that's not enough, in the Non-Proliferation Treaty and in NATO. One of your recent articles pointed out that the idea of a Europe unified from Portugal to Vladivostok doesn't look in the cards now, thanks to the fact that we have, and I'm sorry to say, I believe successfully provoked aggression, crime, and murder from Russia. But nevertheless, we have acted to increase the likelihood of that now for at least a quarter of a century, and we've got it. So voices like yours and others to change that policy and make it not acceptable that we won't negotiate or the people we support Ukraine, but our support is unconditional for an endless war that has to change or we won't- The forces playing chicken have the world in their back seats.

PJ: Okay, Noam, do you want to do a final response to what Daniel was saying?

NC: I'll try to be brief. Dan brought up something of extreme importance. The overall framework of global policy within which all of this is taking place. Since the Cold War began, there have been two possible visions of the direction in which Europe might go. One is what's called the Atlanticist distribution. Basically, NATO, the US runs it, the US sets the rules. We have what's called a rule-based international order in which the United States sets the rules and Europe obeys. Europe doesn't like it. They obey anyway. So, for example, Europe is strongly opposed to the US sanctions on Iran and to the withdrawal from the Iran treaty, but they obey. That's the Atlanticist vision. There's another vision. The Gorbachev vision goes back to [Charles] de Gaulle. Europe is an independent third force in international affairs, independent of the United States, and has a bigger economy than the United States, intellectual resources, and other cultural resources. It can be an independent force. In Gorbachev's version, a common European home from Portugal to Vladivostok, that's the other vision.

Well, the US, of course, has always been in favor of the Atlanticist vision in which it calls the shots, which means a military alliance. The Gorbachev vision meant no military alliances. Co-equals, no victor, no loser, co-equals. We work together on both sides. We transform our societies towards more effective social democracies; that's basically the Gorbachev vision. US vision is Atlanticist, NATO, military alliance. We expanded the Russian borders in violation of people like Matlock, Kissinger, and almost anybody who knew anything about Russian affairs.

Well, Putin's war of aggression was certainly provoked, but it was certainly not justified. No aggression ever is. It's a criminal act like the US invasion of Iraq and like the Hitler/Stalin invasion of Poland. The criminal act could have possibly been prevented by paying attention to Russia's crucial demand that you reiterated right before the invasion that NATO and Ukraine be neutralized, kind of like Austria or Mexico, for that matter. Mexico can't join a hostile Chinese military alliance. The country would be blown away. So yeah, neutral status; it could have been avoided. Well, Putin, by invading, there were opportunities that might have been pursued by Emmanuel Macron, French prime minister, [Olaf] Scholz in Germany. They just dismissed them flat out. No response pursuing them. Maybe something would have worked. The US, of course, opposed them. It might have moved forward, might have actually moved towards an accommodation which could lead to something like the common European home.

Well, instead, he handed the United States on a silver platter exactly what it wants. Subservient Europe, just following US orders and demands. I don't know if that's going to last. Europe is going to suffer severely from this conflict, not the United States. As Dan pointed out, the military system is just exulting, as are the fossil fuel industries. They couldn't be happier.

The German-based European system is suffering. They can't survive this way. In fact, they can't even move to renewable energy without Russian resources. There's a natural interaction between Russia and Europe that is basically unbreakable. They furthermore can't have access to the vast China-based Eurasian program, which is by now reaching already into Europe. China is establishing the biggest battery company in the world in Europe and Hungary. They're moving, and Germany and the rest are going to have to deal with it somehow. I don't think this Atlanticist system is going to be able to survive it. We will see, but that's been the conflict.

Well, what about China? There's supposed to be a China threat. There is. China doesn't follow orders. It's not like Europe. We tell Europe we want you to observe sanctions that you hate. They say, okay, we hate them, but we'll observe them. China doesn't listen. They go their own way. That's intolerable. That's what internal documents are called. Successful defiance of US policies. Can't allow that.

It's kind of interesting, as Dan pointed out correctly, these escalating tensions with Taiwan, this sheer insanity. There is a policy, the one-China policy, it's been in place for 50 years and has strategic ambiguity. It's been working. Why upset it? Why have huge naval operations rim back in the Pacific with dozens of countries participating, aiming at China? Why have, as Biden established, going beyond Trump, a row of what he calls sentinel states, heavily armed

with US precision weapons: South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Australia? They try to get India in, but India isn't really participating. All aimed at China to counter the China threat. It's not that China is a nice place. There are a lot of rotten things, but the threat is they don't obey orders. We're not going to accept that. That old policy is very successful. Defiance, incidentally, is from 1960s policy when the Cuban State Department declared that the threat of Cuba is in successful defiance of US policy going back to the Monroe Doctrine, which declared our right to control the hemisphere. No threats. Just can't accept that. Can't accept it from a small island like Cuba, which we can torture and attack for 60 years. Certainly can't accept it from China. So we'll have a strategic posture established by Trump, continued by Biden of being ready to fight two wars simultaneously with China and Russia. As Dan pointed out, there are no words in the language for this. Lunacy doesn't work. Catastrophe doesn't work. They have to invent something new. That's where we are.

DE: If I may say, just on that last point, which Noam said very well. What I was trying to say earlier was our policy has been nothing other than a madman policy from its beginning, and it remains that way. To define it— when you say is it lunatic. It's a threat of unequivocally insane action, an evil action. It's a threat. It's a preparation. It's a risk. Unfortunately, it's not the leaders, but a large part of the follower, a large part of the public, readily humans accept the idea that to threaten a massively, unprecedentedly evil action is not necessarily evil in itself. We can use it instrumentally. Risk is not necessarily mad.

It has its successes. West Berlin, 200 kilometers inside East Germany, surrounded by Soviet divisions which we couldn't penetrate at that time, was kept out of the Warsaw Pact, out of the Soviet Union, by our threat to blow the world up. It worked. I don't think any other way could have kept Berlin in. It was very successful. As you say, it was like 7/11 on the other extreme of the spectrum where the cashier handed over the money. We got what we wanted from that but at the risk of maintaining this apparatus to blow up the world.

Trying to change public attitudes to recognize that there is insanity even to the risk and to the threat and the preparation, not just to carrying it out. Just this last week, what seems to be the major rival to succeed Boris Johnson in England has changed a little. It's now, I think, Liz Truss. She was asked on a program; I just saw it yesterday on YouTube, are you ready to press the button on Trident submarines and initiate nuclear war? The interviewer spelled it out, he said, which would lead to the destruction of humanity and civilization. Are you ready to do it?

Theresa May, when she was premier, she had to answer the same question. On her first meeting in Parliament, her first answer session. They both gave the same answer. Of course, Theresa May said yes. Liz Truss said the other day, yes, it's a principal duty of the Prime Minister. She could have said more precisely, under some circumstances. She just said it's a principal duty to be ready to press that button. Yes, I am ready to do it. The guy pressed her on it. He said, you know, if I were in that position, I would feel sick. I would be sick to my stomach at the thought of doing that. She said I'm ready to do it.

Now (A), what else could she say? She's vying to be the Prime Minister of the British nuclear force. Would she be a candidate if she said no, I couldn't do that under any circumstances?

She more or less had to do it. Politically, people did point out that she did this very unemotionally. Matter of factly, yes, I would fire a Trident, which, as I said, would lead to nuclear winter, essentially triggering it. She's saying, I would do this insane lunatic action, which, in words, well, that should make her a candidate not for 10 Downing Street but for a padded cell in which she would have a lot of company. It would not be isolated. There would be a large wing of the institution for the criminally insane that would be populated by most of our leadership and her officials. But that's not the way it is, and the public so far accepts that. There would be people who vote for that in all the nuclear weapons states. Remember, we've got a country, as Noam pointed out, with a Republican party that not only for years, as you've been saying, is the most dangerous party in its absolute determination to stop any restraint on the emission of CO2, but now denies that Biden is President, showing that there are just no limits to human denial. And that's something I've learned in my old age. It's taken a long time, but there it is. There are no limits, left or right, really. Any human is capable of doing this. I haven't actually seen you, Noam, but I have to say my generalization is very strict. I think any human, without exception I haven't seen it, you may not have the demonstration of it, is capable of participating in group activities that do harm and denying them and turning their eyes from them. That's the human characteristic we have to find a way to transcend.

PJ: Thank you so much, Noam. Thank you so much, Dan. I don't think I can end with any form of laughter, hysterical or otherwise, but I'll try. We're going to pick this up in another segment we're going to do next week. So everyone can look forward to that. Thanks again.

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