



## **Col. Wilkerson on Ukraine, Nord Stream & the Cold War with China**

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you guys for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host, Zain Raza and today I'll be talking to Lawrence Wilkerson about US foreign policy. Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired colonel who served in the US Army for 31 years. He was also inside the US government and served as Chief of Staff to then Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002 to 2005. He's now a senior fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Lawrence Wilkerson, thank you so much for your time today.

**Lawrence Wilkerson (LW):** Thanks for having me.

**ZR:** I would like to start with Ukraine. Last time I interviewed you, sending the battle tank Leopard 2 or the Abram tank to Ukraine were in discussion and debate. Now, sending these advanced weapons has become a reality. Training of Ukrainian soldiers on how to operate these tanks is taking place on German soil as we speak and it is expected that these tanks go into Ukraine in operation sometime in March. The debate has now shifted to fighter jets and long range missiles. Last week, during the annual Munich Security Conference, Ukraine's Vice Prime Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov, even asked the West to supply cluster munitions and phosphorous bombs. In Biden's so-called surprise visit to Ukraine, the US pledged an extra 500 million aid to Ukraine, which would also attain military equipment such as Javelins, Howitzers and artillery ammunition. Many analysts say Russia's highly anticipated early year offensive has begun and is focused now on Kreminna, one of the entry points to Bakhmut. How do you assess the developments and do you think these weapons will change the tide of war in favor of Ukraine?

**LW:** I do not basically think they will change the tide of war in favor of Ukraine, and there are a number of reasons for that. Take the M1 Abrams tank, for example. We had much

experience with that in the first Gulf War, kicking Saddam's army out of Kuwait as President George H.W. Bush put it. It takes about a 5000 gallon tanker with each tank to keep the tank going. Why? Because it consumes fuel. It doesn't get miles per gallon. It's the reverse. It takes a tanker per tank. So this is not a real augmentation to a battlefield unless the tank is going to be fairly static. And tanks that are fairly static aren't all that effective. The leopard is a bit better, as are the British tanks. But it's not a major augmentation of Ukraine's ability to fight the Russians. Now, the ones that they're talking about, things even like F-16s and other fighter aircraft, are basically preposterous in my view, because as was discussed extensively in a webinar recently, it takes months, it takes months, six months at a minimum, to train an F-16 pilot where he's not more dangerous to himself in the aircraft than he is to the enemy. It takes a year and a half to train your munitions people who keep the F-16 armed and ready to fly and maintained in general and then another OJT on the job training of about a year. So let's talk about not just the logistic aspects of those kinds of fighters. Let's talk about where they're going to fly from, because the moment they fly from an airfield, that airfield under international law is subject to attack by the country against whom they're flying. And so Putin would be perfectly within his rights to begin to bomb Germany or Poland or wherever the aircraft were flying from. And you just don't have enough fields in Ukraine to accommodate these kinds of aircraft and they would be destroyed on the ground there by Russians. So this is a lot of hype, a lot of propaganda, a lot of money to make, money for Lockheed Martin, Grumman, Raytheon, Boeing and others. But it's also extremely dangerous, extremely dangerous because it increases the propensity for escalation. And that's not a good thing to be doing. As I've said so many times, yesterday I said it dramatically I think, we need to negotiate. We need to negotiate in the outline of a negotiation, which is already there. All we need to do is convince ourselves that unlike the Minsk Treaty and other obligations we underwent - we being Washington and London, NATO in general - we need to keep the damn treaty afterwards instead of violating it. Putin has been fairly religious about keeping his end of the deal. Now, we don't want to say that, especially our media doesn't want to say that, but he has. We've been the violators. So we need to negotiate. We need to stop this conflict, not arm it even further.

**ZR:** Talking about negotiations, at the Munich Security Conference China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, mentioned that China is going to propose a peace plan soon, and it is expected to come any time within the next few days. Now Wang Yi is visiting Moscow, and China's already stated that their relationship with Russia is rock solid. The US and EU are viewing the Chinese route with a great deal of skepticism. The US has warned China that any military shipment to Russia is a red line. Whereas the EU Commissioner, Ursula von der Leyen, said that China has already sided with Russia and cannot be viewed as a neutral actor. How do you assess China's role in terms of trying to pursue peace and diplomacy? Can they be trusted?

**LW:** I've known Wang Yi since the summer of 2001. He was our interlocutor when we did policy planning talks there, along with Cui Tiankai. Wang Yi is probably one of the best diplomats in the world. Sergei Lavrov is another one. In fact, I would put Sergei and Wang Yi

up there at the top of the world's diplomats right now. They will work for their countries, there's no question about that. That's what any diplomat should do, is work for his country. Sergei works not for Vladimir Putin, he works for Mother Russia. And Wang Yi works not for Xi Jinping, except incidentally he works for China. And the interest of both of those countries are in a negotiated settlement, an end to this conflict. When Wang Yi says that sovereignty of nations should be respected, the borders shouldn't be violated, that things should be settled on a peaceful basis rather than a warlike basis, he's sincere. He means that. It's the best policy for China. Let's face it, China is going to swamp the United States eventually, economically. If demographics and other factors that are quite serious don't interfere China will replace us as the number one economy in the world. That's what they want to do peacefully, not by way of the bomb or the bayonet or the submarine or whatever. In finding a nexus between Russia's interests and Beijing's interests, Wang Yi and Sergei both are working what I would call is strategic statecraft. If the Empire based in Washington and London won't listen, then they will team up to try and make it listen. It's not so they can take us on militarily, though that is a last resort option and I would hesitate to say who would win that one - it would be a Pyrrhic victory for either side and probably destruction of much of the human race - what they want to do is end this conflict in the heart of Europe and get on with business. And I mean that, literally get on with business. And we should want that, too. If we can't compete, if we can't convince ourselves, our own society, our own market strength and so forth isn't commensurate to the struggle, then we need to quit altogether and get off the battlefield, as it were. If we're going to compete strategically, economically, financially and otherwise, that's fine. Let's do it. I think we've got as good a chance of winning that battle, or at least competing in that campaign as anyone else. Let's stop this business of using our military to enforce what is essentially a shrinking hegemony. What are we using Ukraine for really? Besides a cash cow... We're using it to attempt to reestablish hegemony over Europe. We were losing that. Now, temporarily, we regained it. The Germans are going to contest that very shortly. When they get rid of a few people, they're going to contest that, and that's going to be a major trauma in the heart of Europe, too. We need to avoid that for as long as possible. And that means ending this conflict and taking the equanimity that comes out of the ending of it, however rancorous it might be initially, and having some kind of decent transatlantic relationship instead of one that is pure western hegemony.

**ZR:** The argument against peace and diplomacy, which is most notably voiced by our Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, or the EU Commissioner Ursula von der Leyen, is that there is no peace possible without Ukraine having all its territories reconquered. And the argument usually follows this line; should the West put Ukraine in the strongest position with weapons so that it can avail more concessions when negotiations actually start to take place? What do you make of these arguments?

**LW:** Well, the negotiations should have taken place last week, last month. We're late. And yes, I think some of this posturing on both sides, but principally the bluster on Biden's part, I mean, I couldn't believe some of the remarks he made in the last 48, 96 hours. Therefore,

domestic political consumption more than anything else, and no one knows better than Joe Biden how dangerous that is, to use the politicking for his reelection. To enforce his position vis a vis Vladimir Putin. That is absurd. Utterly absurd. Understandable, because that's what American Presidents do, sad to say. But not at this critical juncture. And gaining negotiating stance or position is a fine ploy, but doing it in the way Biden did it is just a recipe for disaster. So let's stop this, let's stop this bellicose rhetoric and let's actually begin to do what we should do, which is to sit down and negotiate and let's do it forthwith. I'm a little alarmed at some of the statements I hear coming out of people who should know better. Like some of those you just cited. Ukraine is going to be a Ukraine without its eastern oblast. That's got to be part of this discussion, these negotiations. Now, is that determined by observed referenda in those oblasts? Yes, I think it should be. But if the result is affiliation with Russia rather than Kiev, that's got to be accepted. If the result is a pox on both your houses, we don't want anything to do with you all, then it stays an autonomous region. And obviously if the results are in Kiev's favor then they go that way. But that's lost. Crimea is lost. You might be able to trade Crimea for Putin's recognition of Kosovo. You do something like that. But you've got to have these negotiating positions reasonable and you've got to have empathy for the other side. I think Putin has a degree of empathy for us, although he is very reluctant to express it because we've cheated on him so many times. I think we have zero empathy for Moscow. In fact, we have zero empathy for Paris, Berlin, anybody in the world. We are just intent on establishing our hegemony. And part of that establishment is to keep Europe out of Chinese hands. And Germany is not going to tolerate that ultimately. So we're going to make an enemy of Germany out of this, too, ultimately. I mean, the fact that the chancellor approved the Nord Stream 2 strike apparently is immaterial to this discussion because he was looking at, do I want American hegemony or Moscow's hegemony. Okay, I'll fly to the devil I know. I'll fly to the lesser devil. That's not going to work in the long term. So if we want to keep our relationship with Europe sound, we need to stop this maximum hegemony move, divorcing them from China. That's not economically feasible for them, especially Germany. So there are a lot of things we need to do here. We need to get our house straight.

**ZR:** You mentioned the Nord Stream pipeline. Seymour Hersh, the Pulitzer Prize winning journalist who has uncovered a lot of US cover ups and scandals in the past, wrote a piece on that which detailed how the US conducted the operation of bombing the Nord Stream pipeline.

**Seymour Hersh (SH):** What I've done is simply explain the obvious. It just was a story that was begging to be told. In late September of 2022, eight bombs were supposed to go off, six went off under the water near Bornholm Island in the Baltic Sea, in a rather shallow area. And they destroyed three of the four major pipelines, the Nord Stream 1 and 2. And so the meeting was convened to do the study of the problem. What are we going to do? Russia is going to go to war. This is three months before the war. It was the CIA, the National Security Agency, State Department, and the Treasury Department, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had a representation and this is a secret group. They were meeting in a very secret office. And I'm

writing this obviously from the inside. Do you want us to give you recommendations about what to do about stopping Russia that are reversible, more sanctions, economic pressure, we'd already been doing that. Or irreversible?! Irreversible, being kinetic: bomb, bomb, bang, bang. Well, it was clear very early...

**ZR:** In Germany, he's been widely discredited as somebody who has not been up to par in terms of credentials, in terms of what he's reported in the last 10- 20 years. He's also been called a conspiracy theorist or somebody who has Tom Clancy fantasies. How do you assess this article? Can he be trusted?

**LW:** Absolutely. I don't know if you saw Ray McGovern before the U.N. Security Council yesterday, but I was cheering Ray on. I was actually supposed to do that. And at the last minute they couldn't contact me. So Ray filled in, and I think he did a far better job than I could have done. Seymour is the man who broke My Lai, Seymour is a man who's rarely wrong, Seymour is a man who knows how to protect his sources. What we heard from the CIA, for example, that it was all poppycock, it was all bull\*\*\*\* and so forth is what we hear from the CIA every time something like this happens. I don't fault them. They lie for a professional reason. They are professional liars. They have to be. They're spies. But they're propagandists, their public affairs people are just as big a liars as any of their spies. So I think, Seymour- I'll let you in on a little secret here. Two weeks before Seymour published, I was asked a question. Who do you think did Nord Stream? I said, It's clear to me just from the strategic reality of it, we did it. We did it. Who else benefits? Certainly not Germany, certainly not NATO in general. Certainly not Putin. Who really benefits? We do. And then I said, I will bet you that hard hat team down in Florida, which nobody's ever heard of, but I have, because I was on a working group in the government that actually contemplated using them, did it. And someone had to be in the know in Europe in order to do it. Because look at the pipeline, look how it lies. Look where it lies. Look where it's shallow that it lies. Look who's coast and border it is on. So I said, I have no idea who, but someone and you can look at the map had to be complicit. And we did it. Period. You know, I'm guessing, but I'm guessing from experience and from professional experience in particular. And then Seymour comes out two weeks later with the article.

**ZR:** Let's take a step back, Russia's President Putin and US President Biden held major speeches recently. Biden stated that Russia will never win in Ukraine, whereas Putin blamed the West for the war in Ukraine and announced a suspension of the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, also known as START Treaty, that aimed to cap the number of strategic nuclear warheads that the United States and Russia can deploy. How do you view these developments? Are we headed to a nuclear confrontation?

**LW:** These are very, very bad developments, very dangerous developments. I said that, too, a few months ago. You may recall the analysis, I think I said that Putin now is going to get rid of START. You watch, the acrimony between Washington and Moscow is so bad now that he

will get rid of START. And we will be the prompters just as we got rid of the ABM Treaty, the Open Skies Treaty, the INF Treaty. We are the prompters to all of this. People don't even realize the Conventional Forces in Europe treaty is gone now. It's gone, too, because we didn't want to renew it. And that was an important treaty. It's linked to nuclear weapons. If you think about it for a moment, you do the conventional weapons so you don't have to use nuclear weapons. And so the two were in synchronicity, if you will. Dangerous world doing this. And we have, as with the situation in Ukraine, been largely responsible for it. It is preposterous that we would do this. I wrote an article recently wherein I said: "The greatest diplomatic failure of the United States in the 20th and 21st century is not anything any American even knows about. It is that in 1991 and 92, we, the Americans, were destroying Soviet nuclear weapons". We were doing it as fast as we possibly could. We came down on both sides from roughly 30 to 40,000 warheads for them to 30,000 or so warheads for us, down to around five or 6000, an unheard of accomplishment. Then we stopped and we were largely responsible for the stop. And then we started dismantling the treaties and then we started thinking about. And we're going to spend a \$1,000,000,000,000 plus over the next ten years building new weapons. We turned the whole thing around. That is the greatest diplomatic failure in the history of this republic. Historians will write about it if they are alive when they finally realize it. That's how dangerous this is.

**ZR:** Let us switch to China. Many analysts say that we are already in a cold war with China. We recently had the balloon incident with the US, which the US government states was a surveillance device while the Chinese claimed it was a metrological one. The US is expanding its presence in the South China Sea by establishing four additional military bases in the Philippines and both countries, the US and Philippines, would be holding the biggest war games in years, amid growing tensions with China. Germany is also visiting Latin America, Africa and Southeast Asia to grow its influence and diversify away from China. What is the West's role in the South China Sea? Are they trying to protect democracy and freedom in areas like Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and protect their allies or is there a bigger game at play which we are not seeing in political and media discourse?

**LW:** The game again is imperial hegemony. That's it. Whatever region you look into, the imperial hegemony. Look at the hypocrisy of Washington, if you will. 750 plus military installations, bases in the world. China has six. The rest of the world combined has less than 80. We have 750. Who's the empire? Who's the establisher of imperial hegemony? Who's the country that the rest of the world - and increasingly it is - should rail against for what it's doing?! We have that article I just told you about that I wrote. They asked me to prove that we have roughly just under a third of the world under some sort of direct or indirect sanction. I just cited them, the list of OFAC, the Office of Foreign Assets Control and the Secretary of the Treasury's office. I cited to them their list and their list is not all encompassing of the countries we have under sanction. It's incredible. Just China and Russia alone have almost 2 billion people. So we are just the most incredible imperial hegemon the world has seen since Rome. And we beat Rome cold because of the vastness of our empire as compared with the

times Rome was existing in. I don't know where we're going. I really don't. I do know that we're going to ruin if we don't stop this because we can't afford it. \$32 trillion is going to be our aggregate corporate, whatever you want to call it, debt, by 2030, according to the Congressional Budget Office. No one seems to care. No one cares at all. There will be no discretionary federal spending. It'll all be interest payments. We are going to begin to pay the equivalent of the defense budget on interest payments annually on our debt. This is extraordinary what we are doing. We are basically eating our republic on a 24 hour basis and we're camouflaging it with all this external activity around the world and a president who's as bellicose as, you know, Attila the Hun. I don't know where we're going. I can't tell any American any more where we're going except to a disaster.

**ZR:** China and the United States are largely intertwined economically, and some would say they are interdependent. How would this play out in terms of the interdependency that they have both countries economically? If the US continues to pursue encircling China within its own region.

**LW:** You know, these bases in the Philippines, this is our new technique. We did it in Norway. We fall in on existing Philippine bases and, you know, we still call them Philippine bases, but there really are bases or at least are partially ours, if not substantially ours. I would dare say that the bulk of the Philippine people don't agree with this. If you've seen Clark recently, for example, the old Clark Air Force Base, it really is integral now. It's very successful. The airport is beautiful, modern. This is going to impact that probably. And when that happens, the Filipinos will be a little bit more reluctant to welcome the United States back into their country. But in the meantime and I'm doing a thing with Australia next week where we're going to talk about, is Australia safer now because of the submarine deal, because of all the things that are happening with this current Australian government that look like they're linking up to the Empire? No, they aren't. What they're doing is making their own situation more perilous should something break out. They are also making themselves a nuclear target, par excellence. I wonder how many Australians out in the outback know that, but they are doing that. I asked the other day one person who seemed to be particularly ignorant about her own situation: "Do you know what the ballistic missile complexes in the United States are for? They're for sponges. They're to draw down all the enemy's missiles in order to take them out so that all those missiles will not go elsewhere. They'll go ten or 12 of each with MIRVs warheads on these fixed ballistic missiles of ours so that they can't be fired. Do you know what's going to happen in North Dakota and South Dakota and Montana? Do you people out there have any idea that you are a target? You are a target, that's all you are. And they look at me like, Oh, no, you don't really mean that, do you? Yes, I do. That's precisely our strategy, that everything - You are a sponge for multiple kilotons of nuclear explosions that are going to come in on you. Well, Australia, you want to be that, too?! That's kind of the thing we're doing today. It's nonsense. It's preposterous what we're doing. But our allies, such as they are, really have no choice because it's like the German chancellor. You know, you fly to the devil you know the best and you fly the devil you think is the least devil.

But unfortunately today, there's not a whole lot of difference if you want to talk about devilry. In fact, if you want to talk about democracy versus autocracy, which seems to be a meme now, a theme. Russia probably has more democracy than we do. Putin actually talks to his Duma. Putin is elected. I don't care what you say about the elections. You know, I could say lots about American elections, too. I could say something about the choice in American elections, too. The two people we get to choose from. Both are usually idiots. I could say all kinds of things about this. This is a preposterous metaphor for the world; autocracy versus democracy. There's more democracy in Iran than there is in Israel now. If you think about it for a moment, the theocracy is not in Tehran. The Iranian protestors have disavowed the theocracy, thoroughly disavowed it. There's no question about that. They haven't won yet, but they have thoroughly disavowed the theocracy. There's more theocracy in Jerusalem. Why are hundreds of thousands of Israelis protesting? And why doesn't the American media even carry that? I'll tell you why. Because the American media is bought off by AIPAC. So this whole situation is unbalanced, but it's not necessarily unbalanced towards autocracy. This is unbalanced toward democracy, such as it is. You know, Israel constantly claiming we're the only democracy in the Middle East. Bull\*\*\*\*. Look around. Are you a democracy? If you are, you're an apartheid democracy. And that seems to be a contradiction in terms. So all this propaganda just makes me sick. It makes me ill. You know, you want to say, Hey, Americans, how stupid can you be?

**ZR:** To my last question. Let's leave this interview on a positive note, even if that's possible. What policy should be pursued by the West, in your view, that it can actually avoid a Cold War? Or let me rephrase that could avoid this Cold War spiraling out of control with Russia and China?

**LW:** I think we need to go back to some very cogent thoughts that people had in the leadership in this country, particularly my boss, Colin Powell, at the beginning of the 90s and then right on into about 2004. And I don't include George W. Bush in there. But with vis a vis China, I do, George W Bush understood the vital nature of China's relationship with Wal-Mart and all that Wal-Mart signifies. So I have to give him credit for that. It was called strategic competition. It was called strategic competition. And it had no bombs or bullets in it. Of course on all sides that strategic competition and the diplomacy and the economic policy and financial policies associated with were backed up ultimately by military might, all around. But that wasn't the first priority or even the second priority. The first and second and third priorities were: Live together, compete together, may the best man win. That was the philosophy. And that philosophy was working. People say when Xi Jinping came along after Hu Jintao and just murdered that. That just tore it up. Bull\*\*\*, go and look at what Xi Jinping said, actually said at the party conference. Yes, he was a little bit tougher, but basically he is extending with some new flowers, if you will, the Xiaoping beginning. We will beat you. We will beat you at your own game. Watch us. And they are beating us in purchasing power. Parity, the only real measure of economic strength, they are already ahead of us. Let's go back to that. Are we afraid we can't win? I'm afraid that might be the reason. But I have enough



confidence in our businesses and our corporate structure and so forth, in their best guys, not their rape, pillage and plunder guys, that they can win. They can compete. And we can all have a piece of the pie, as it were. That's not the way we feel anymore. We want the whole pie.

**ZR:** Lawrence Wilkerson, a retired Army colonel and former Chief of Staff to Colin Powell. Thank you so much for your time today.

**LW:** Thank you for having me.

**ZR:** And thank you guys for tuning in today. Don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. Our videos are not getting recommended to new viewers like they used to a few years ago. So if you want our information to reach you, make sure to join us on Rumble and Telegram. And don't forget to donate. If you're gaining value by watching our news and analysis, then be sure to return that value with a small donation via PayPal, Patreon or bank account. I am your host Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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