



Journalist Dimitri Lascaris in Russia - Nord Stream, Bakhmut Battle & Arrest Warrant for Putin

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza and, before we start this segment, I would like to inform our viewers and supporters that I tore my Achilles tendon a few weeks ago and now I cannot walk and I'm on crutches. This will affect our capacity to produce videos regularly for the next six to eight weeks. So we apologize to all our viewers in advance. Today, I'll be talking to Dimitri Lascaris, who is currently in Russia, trying to gain a perspective from there. Dimitri Lascaris is an independent journalist and lawyer. As a lawyer, he focuses on human rights, class actions and international law. Dimitri also ran for the Green Party leadership in Canada in 2020, finishing second. Dimitri, thank you so much for your time today.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Thank you, Zain. And I wish you a very speedy recovery.

ZR: Thank you. Let's start this interview with your trip to Russia. You're currently there trying to get another perspective, talking to the people there. Could you tell us a little bit about your motivations for this trip, your activities, the challenges you're facing, and the goals that you would like to achieve?

DL: Well, I've never been to this country before. It's a vast and complex country with which my country is at war. And my country is acting in concert with all the other NATO states collectively having enough nuclear weapons to destroy the world many times over, as does Russia. So the stakes could not be higher in this war. There seems to be absolutely no appetite in the West for engaging in a dialogue with the Russians, particularly those who support their

government. I think this is extremely dangerous. It's the height of folly that we wouldn't at least talk to each other. And so being someone who's had no personal experience of Russia, I thought there was never a better time for me to come here and to talk to people. And I want to focus not exclusively, but primarily on the people you don't hear from in the West. We hear from all the people who criticize the Putin government, we almost never hear from people who actually support the government. The polls indicate that they are a substantial majority. So I didn't come here to agree with them. I didn't come here to lecture them. I came here to listen and hopefully to find ways to educate my fellow citizens in the West about Russia and also to create a dialog.

ZR: So talk about the spectrum of people that you've talked to there and the impressions and experiences that you've gained so far.

DL: Well, I've been here four or five days, and I've only been in Moscow. I've probably walked a good 60 kilometers. I do about ten kilometers a day. I'm trying to see as much as I can. But I haven't been outside of Moscow. And other than taking the train from the airport to the center of Moscow, I haven't even seen the outskirts of Moscow. So I want to qualify everything I'm going to say just by noting that obviously there's a lot more to this country than central Moscow. But first of all, there's no indication whatsoever that I can see of an economic crisis. Absolutely none. In fact, I've been paying careful attention trying to identify homeless people. There are a few homeless people. But compared to what I'm accustomed to seeing in Canada and I'm talking about any major city in Canada, the level of homelessness I've seen is very, very low. You go into the shops, the grocery stores, the shelves are full. People seem to be able to buy. They seem to be able to lead a decent quality of life. So from an economic perspective, there is no, at least on the surface, no evidence of an economic crisis. Secondly, I'm surprised by the fact that there aren't overt signs of a sort of patriotism and nationalistic fervor. So I was telling that the other day, a story to a friend of mine, which was quite odd. You know, I spent part of my time in Greece and I have a little house up on a mountain. And the last time I was in Greece and I was driving up the mountain, it's about three kilometers, I saw maybe four Z's carved into the mountainside of different places. And this is obviously the sign that the Russian military is using in Ukraine. So that was in Greece. I've seen only one in the entirety of Moscow. I haven't seen any flag waving. I haven't seen any marches for or against the war. The mood, it's not festive. It seems somber. I have the sense that people are worried. Obviously, they're concerned, their country is at war against the whole of NATO. It would be abnormal if they weren't worried. And I think they're paying very careful attention. But signs of nationalistic fervor just aren't there. Now, when I get into private conversations, that's been the most interesting part. And actually prior to leaving Canada for Russia, I reached out to the embassy, the Russian embassy in Ottawa, Canada's capital, and the ambassador to Canada was kind enough to give me 45 minutes of his time and he set up a number of meetings for me here in Moscow. One of the meetings that I had was with two individuals from the Foreign Ministry of Russia. I spent two and a half hours, actually. They gave me a little tour of the rather large and impressive facilities. But mostly we

talked about the war. And, you know, I tried to focus the conversation on what it would take for this war to end. And, you know, they pointed me to a statement made by, I think it's the Foreign Policy Committee chair in the Duma, about the basic requirements or outlines of a peace deal. You know, we can get into that some more, but that was an interesting conversation. So they've obviously thought in the Foreign Ministry in the Russian government about what a peace deal they could live with would look like. And for my mind, you know, you don't start a negotiation by telling people your bottom line. That's an opening bid and if that's what they're saying in the first instance, I imagine they're willing to compromise. And I just can't imagine why we wouldn't sit down and see how much compromise they're willing to engage in. So that was my meeting with the Foreign Ministry. I spoke today at the Valdai Club, which is kind of the Russian equivalent of Davos, obviously, minus all the Western elite, because they've blackballed Russia. And I was speaking on a panel with somebody from the Foreign Ministry who's an expert in economic matters. Another economist, a third economist from Canada by the name of Radhika Desai. And we were talking about de-dollarization and how the non-Western world is making concerted efforts to eliminate the dependence upon the US dollar as the global reserve currency. That was a very interesting discussion. I had also the benefit of having been guided around Moscow for my first two days by a gentleman who is a Russian, lives in Moscow, but he did a doctorate at Oxford University. Interestingly, in Spanish literature. He was referred to me by a Canadian professor. And we spent about, you know, he was partly a guide, but partly also an interlocutor. And I just peppered him with questions for two straight days. And the sum total of those interactions that I've had with people thus far is that they do have a somewhat critical attitude towards the way that the Russian government has handled this, but it's not what you might think. The criticism is that the Russian government has been far too timid. That's what I've heard thus far. And they're worried that the Russian government is going to compromise too much. And one sentiment I've heard quite a bit is that the government should have acted in 2014. It shouldn't have waited because at that point in time it was clear what was going to happen. I'm just sort of summarizing for you what they told me. It's not necessarily what I think, but they feel that it was clear at that point in time that the circumstances were going to become extremely difficult for Russian speakers in Ukraine and that the Ukrainian government was serious about entry into NATO. And at that point, the Ukrainian military was quite weak. And so there's a bit of dissatisfaction, shall we say, about the fact that the Russian government didn't act sooner. There's concern that it's not going to act forcefully enough. I've seen no signs of opposition to the war. I'm sure they're out there. I have no doubt they are, but they're not visible. And sorry for the long winded answer, but that's kind of the summary of what I've seen thus far. And I'm going to be here for another three weeks and I hope to spend at least ten days in Crimea.

ZR: Very interesting. We'll be in touch with you regarding any developments. Regarding the peace outline, we'll touch on that later in this interview. I would like to take a step back and talk about other issues surrounding the war in Ukraine. In February, world renowned Pulitzer Prize investigative journalist Seymour Hersh released an article based on anonymous sources

- or multiple anonymous sources we don't know that yet - that detailed how the US bombed the Nord Stream pipeline. A few weeks later, The New York Times released an article based on anonymous US intelligence sources that claimed a rogue group used a yacht from Rostock to bomb the Nord Stream pipeline. They even found traces of explosive material, as well as fake IDs on the yacht. They ruled out any involvement of any British or American citizens. Following The New York Times, the German media led by the site, Der SPIEGEL, conducted their own investigations and more or less came to the same conclusion that the perpetrators may be a rogue Ukrainian group that is not affiliated with the Ukraine government or some Russian anti-Putin group. There's even talk by senior officials in Germany that it may be a false flag operation intended to blame Ukraine with the intention to damage its relations with the West. How do you evaluate the story of Seymour Hersh versus the story of the mainstream media?

DL: Well, look, I'm going to quote a paragraph from another article that Sy Hersh published just today. As a matter of fact, I read it two hours ago. I subscribed to his website. I don't know if you've seen it, Zain, but he consulted - and it doesn't sound like he reached out to someone. It sounds like someone within the intelligence community came to him and went through the claims that were published by The New York Times and the German media following Sy Hersh's initial bombshell report in some detail and just made absolute mincemeat out of them. So, for example, well, I want to read to you first of all, the last paragraph of this piece, and I'm going to quote to you the expert, what he told Sy Hersh, quote, "In the world of professional analysts and operators, everyone will universally and correctly conclude from your story. That the devilish CIA concocted a counter op that is on its face so ridiculous and childish that the real purpose was to reinforce the truth." So I just want to pause that for those who don't have the benefit of seeing the words in front of them. What this intelligence expert, this anonymous official is telling Sy Hersh in his latest article is that this story about the Andromeda, the sailing vessel, is so ridiculous that the people who concocted it at the CIA probably wanted the public to disbelieve it so that they would understand that Sy Hersh, his initial story is in fact true and that the Biden administration blew up the Nord Stream pipeline. And, you know, I could spend some time going through this article. I don't feel comfortable doing that because this is a paid subscription that I don't really want to sort of read it to you. But I commend you, if you can access Sy Hersh's latest report, the detailed analysis of the Andromeda, I'm going to call it the Andromeda Hoax, because it's that ridiculous. And also, I want to say that The Washington Post put out a story today, I think it was today or yesterday in which it's now saying, because, of course, this thing is so fantastical, the story, that they have to supplement it somehow. So The Washington Post is now also saying there appears to be another boat, because the idea that this one sailing vessel managed to pull this off is so ridiculous. So now they've come up with this idea that there was some other boat out there. And in the course of doing that, The Washington Post basically points the finger at everybody in Europe. Everybody in Europe is a culprit. But the one party that's not a culprit in The Washington Post story that just came out is the Biden administration. Even though Biden vowed that he was going to bring an end to Nord Stream

if Russia invaded Ukraine. He's the most obvious suspect. And The Washington Post is treating him as a non suspect. And the most entertaining part of The Washington Post story is an unnamed European diplomat, who said, you know, we just don't talk about Nord Stream. And Nord Stream is like, you know, the family member who died and his body is lying on the floor and nobody wants to acknowledge it. I mean, if that doesn't tell you all you need to know about the reality of the situation, I think you need a dose of a "come to Jesus", because it's palpably obvious that this story is false and and it's been planted by the CIA; I believe, for the purpose of distracting attention from what the Biden administration has done.

ZR: Let's look at other developments surrounding the war in Ukraine, most notably the battlefield. The battle for the city of Bakhmut between Russia and Ukraine is still ongoing and is one of the bloodiest yet. According to the US and Ukraine the battle is far from over and Russia is paying a very high price. And the Wagner Group's reports of victory are either propaganda or disinformation. John Kirby, spokesman for the US National Security Council, recently stated that Ukraine's have not abandoned the city and that an additional aid package to Ukraine would come soon. What is your assessment of the situation? Will Ukraine be able to reverse the momentum in Bakhmut, especially now that German Leopard 2 tanks are operational and more weapons like Polish MiG 29 fighter jets are coming in the future?

DL: Well, I don't believe that the Russian forces have taken complete control of the city. I don't understand that to be the claim. The claim that I saw, the most recent claim within the last 24 hours, I believe came from Prigozhin himself, the head of the Wagner, is that the Wagner now controls 85% of the city. And he's candidly said over and over again that the Ukrainians have shown no sign of retreat and that they are fiercely resisting the Wagner advance. And he was even candid enough to say that Wagner has been battered. That's the word that he used. Prigozhin, whatever you may think about him, tends to be, you know, a straight shooter and doesn't really engage in much hyperbole. And one of the things that he claimed, backed up by photographic evidence, is that the Wagner has now seized the administrative building in the center of Bakhmut. There are photographs with the Wagner flag. The building has been absolutely decimated, but it seems quite clear that they have, as he put it, taken legal control. You know, from his perspective, Prigozhin, if you have the administrative heart of the city under your control, then you legally control it. So I think the Wagner has been advancing steadily for weeks. And it's very clear that the position of the Ukrainian forces, despite their courageous tenacity, is extremely precarious in Bakhmut. You know, in terms of a counter offensive there, I think they've essentially tried to launch a counteroffensive some weeks ago. You know, the Ukrainian military, upon the orders of Zelensky, inserted thousands upon thousands of additional troops into that theater of war for the purpose of preventing the Wagner onslaught. That slowed it down for sure, and it's made it more bloody, but that's not prevented the Wagner from continuing to advance. You know, I can't imagine, Zain, that, you know, a few dozen tanks and a few dozen MiG 29's are going to change the outcome of the battle in Bakhmut. And I've seen a report that, in fact, Zelensky was told by the countries that are providing that weaponry that they don't want it used in

Bakhmut. They want it used in the offensive, the same offensive they've been talking about for months, which apparently they're going to launch in the south and not in Bakhmut. So I think the writing is on the wall in terms of Bakhmut, and I think it's all really going to come down to what happens in that offensive. If they do not manage to break the land bridge that Russia has established to Crimea in that offensive - and by the way, Zelensky said precisely this in a recent interview, I believe it was with The New York Times - if they lose Bakhmut and that offensive is not successful, there's going to be immense pressure on him to do a peace deal.

ZR: You already mentioned that you had conversations about the outline of a peace deal. Talk more about that and whether you think that's even realistic in terms of the Ukrainian government accepting the outlines that you've heard from the Russian perspective.

DL: Well, as I mentioned, I believe it was the chair of the Foreign Policy Committee of the Duma - I might have that wrong - who outlined in some detail what the Russian government would accept. And it was reiterated to me when I went to the Foreign Ministry. So this seems to be the official position of the Russian government. The first element is acknowledgment that the four oblasts that have been annexed by Russia are now part of the sovereign Russian territory. And one of the questions I put to this official from the Foreign Ministry was, Well, the Russian forces don't control all of those oblast right now. So, for example, in Donetsk, in the Donetsk People's Republic, the cities of Kramatorsk and Slavyansk, they're still under Ukrainian control. And of course, in the Kherson oblast, which Russia annexed, they retreated from Kherson City. So I asked him, does this mean, you know, is the Russian government saying it would only want to retain what it controls or is it saying that it would want to have sovereignty over the administrative boundaries of these areas? And he made it quite clear that it was the latter. So that's a challenging element of all of this. That would mean that Ukraine would have to give up territory that it currently controls, not just the territory that it no longer controls. He said that Ukraine would have to be demilitarized, Ukraine would have to commit not to enter into a military alliance with NATO, not to station foreign military forces on its border. It would have to renounce aspirations to the recovery of Crimea. And something would have to be done about the problem of neo-nazism. What exactly would the Russian government demand in that regard? I mean, as I may have mentioned to you a couple of times, Zain, that's a serious issue in Ukraine. The Ukrainian parliament declared a national holiday in honor of the Nazi collaborator and anti-Semite, Stepan Bandera. So this is not Russian disinformation. This is a serious problem. I think that's something that if these belligerents ever get to the negotiating table, that's going to be a difficult problem for them to work out. And the last thing they said is that there would have to be guarantees that Russian speakers would not be second class citizens in Ukraine. So they would have to have their language rights restored to them and effectively all minorities, this would not be, by the way, confined to Russian speakers, but there would have to be language rights guaranteed for all of the minorities of what remains of Ukraine. So those were the outlines of the deal. As I said, I believe this is an opening bid. I think that probably the

Russian government, if it thought it was dealing with a serious negotiating partner, would make significant compromises from that proposal. And there's only one way to find out, and that's to sit down at the table and have a discussion.

ZR: I would like to make some counter arguments against diplomacy, and I'm not talking about you quoting these outlines, because that's from the Russian government, I'm more focused on countering the arguments that you make for diplomacy and finding a peaceful settlement. One of the arguments that is made and is heard in the mainstream media by politicians or Western commentators is that Russia does not want to negotiate. They're interested in taking over as much territory as possible. Because if they were interested, they would have made a substantial offer themselves. What do you make of this argument?

DL: I think it utterly disregards what's happened within the past year. The Russians before the special military operation, or as we call it in the West invasion began, they put to the United States and the Western European powers a draft treaty for a new security architecture in Europe, which would have involved the withdrawal of certain nuclear forces in the westerly direction in Europe and further away from the Russian border, which frankly is not something that's reasonable from the perspective of Russia. But it's something that all of Europe should want. We shouldn't want, no one living in Europe should want to have nuclear forces facing off against each other in the eastern part of the continent. That's just a recipe for disaster. And what did the Biden administration say? We're not interested. We're not interested in even negotiating this with you. You know, the same thing on the question of NATO membership for Ukraine, even though the Western powers and this is historically documented, assured Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastward, it did repeatedly. And when finally Putin said this is the last straw, Ukraine is a red line for us, again Biden said, We're not willing to negotiate. Then what happened when the special military operation began? The first thing that happened was within six weeks the parties sat down at the table, the Zelensky government and the Putin government, and they actually were on the verge with Turkish mediation of striking a peace deal. And what happened? And by the way, I don't believe, based on the reports I've read, that that would have required Ukraine to give up those four oblasts. The primary focus of that peace deal was Crimea and NATO membership. And they were on the verge of doing a deal and Boris Johnson got on the plane and they flew to Kiev and this was reported at the time by the Ukrainian media, the Ukrainian media, that he said, We will not support that deal. We will not give you security guarantees and you're on your own if you do that deal with the Russians. However, if you don't do the deal, we will give you all the weapons you need in order to defeat Russia. And at that point, the negotiations collapsed. And the last thing I'll say is that, you know, since then, there actually have been successful negotiations on a very limited question. There have been repeated deals to exchange prisoners of war. And the most significant successful negotiation was the grain deal, again mediated by Turkey, which allowed very large quantities of grain to be shipped out of Odessa to export destinations. So I think that the evidence has demonstrated that negotiation with the Russian government is possible. But, Zain, you know, when you're

dealing with the possibility of a nuclear holocaust, you have an obligation to try, repeatedly, and do your best. And if at the end of the day, your efforts failed, at least, you know, you acted in good conscience. We've not even tried. We've made no serious effort on our side to have a negotiation with the Russians.

ZR: Another argument that is made is that it's too late to negotiate as Russia has caused so much debt and suffering on civilians and committed unspeakable war crimes such as attacking residential complexes as well as civilian energy infrastructure. It is politically impossible for Ukrainian President Zelensky to now make a U-turn and pursue negotiations, and some may even argue that the same is politically impossible for Putin now, because unless he gains all the territory on the eastern part of Ukraine. What do you make of this argument that it's impossible now to start a negotiation given the political configurations in Ukraine and Russia?

DL: I readily acknowledge that it's become much more difficult than it was. Now, I cannot imagine that the Russian government, after its military has sacrificed tens of thousands of soldiers, is willing to give up control of the territory it now controls. Whether that's right or wrong, it's simply the reality. And I think that probably the Putin government would be overthrown if he withdrew his forces from Ukraine at this stage. So, you know, undoubtedly it's difficult. And on the Ukrainian side, of course, the sacrifices that the Ukrainian people have made, which have been enormous, have undoubtedly complicated the position of Vladimir Zelensky in terms of negotiating a peace deal. But with respect to the question of war crimes, you know, we actually don't know whether many of these allegations are justified. There have been allegations on both sides, by the way. The Russians have repeatedly accused the Ukrainian government of committing war crimes, for example, of shelling Donetsk, killing civilians. I've seen myself dozens and dozens of photographs and videos of Donetsk with civilians, what appeared to be civilians lying on the ground, dead or wounded. So I think there's significant evidence to support the claim that both sides have committed war crimes. I think that the jury is out however, we have not had a full prosecution. And I think that this is an inevitable feature of war because war makes monsters out of men. And I don't know of a single war where there hasn't been war crimes committed. People thinking that our side didn't commit war crimes in the Second World War, they need to educate themselves. The firebombing of Dresden was a terrible war crime. The nuking of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, two of the worst war crimes ever committed. And even before the American forces did that, they basically laid waste to all of Tokyo. They firebombed it until there was almost nothing left standing. So this is the nature of war. And nonetheless, wars do come to an end. This one will have to come to an end. And as bad as it seems now, it can get a lot worse. It could get much, much worse; even if we manage to avoid a nuclear exchange. At this stage, you know, western Ukraine has been mostly unscathed. If this expands into western Ukraine, the level of suffering is going to go up exponentially. So I don't have any illusions, Zain, about the difficulty of negotiating a peace deal. But I think it's absolutely imperative that we try.

ZR: Let us look at the bigger developments that are happening around this war. Finland which shares a 1300 kilometer border with Russia, has now officially become part of NATO. It took less than a year for Finland to become part of this alliance. There's a new prime minister now in Finland, but according to the former Finnish prime minister Sanna Marin, who was in favor of joining this alliance, she stated that NATO had not expressed any interest in placing nuclear weapons or permanent bases in Finland. According to Germany's leading prime time news network called the Tagesschau, they state and let me quote them here, quote, "Finland has well-trained armed forces, state of the art combat aircraft, tanks and artillery pieces. The country thus makes an important contribution to deterrence", unquote. How do you view these developments? Should Russia really fear NATO given that it has expressed no interest in placing military bases or nuclear weapons and is acting purely as a defensive shield?

DL: Look, I'm not aware and if somebody can prove me wrong, I welcome them to try. But I am not aware of the Russian government prior to the decision of the Finnish government to enter NATO, saying anything that was belligerent towards Finland. I'm not aware of a single threat of military force being used against Finland being uttered by the Russian government up until that point in time. There are very, very specific reasons why the government of Russia intervened in Ukraine, which simply do not apply to Finland. You know, there was the overthrow of the democratically elected president, Yanukovich, who was friendly to Russia back in 2014. There was the civil war. There was the burning alive of dozens of pro-Russian activists in Odessa in 2014. There was the rise of neo-nazism in Ukraine. There was the bombardment of Donetsk, thousands of civilians being killed in the Donbass, on both sides. And there was the promise that, you know, NATO wouldn't expand eastward. All of this came together and brought about this horrible war. There's really no reason to think that the Russian government was minded to send its military into Finland prior to - and I don't think it is minded to do that now - but certainly prior to Finland joining NATO. Now that Finland has joined NATO it may actually be viewed as a threat by the Russian government. It really depends, I think, on this stage of what Finland does. I think I saw a poll today which suggested that the Finnish people are more or less evenly divided on the question of whether or not they want permanent American military bases in Finland. I think it would be extremely unwise for them to put military bases of NATO member countries and particularly the American military in Finland, extremely unwise. They've got the Article five guarantee under the NATO treaty. I don't think they even needed it, frankly, to be secure from a Russian invasion. But now that they have that, that's all they need. On the other hand, if they start bringing in American military forces, and particularly if the Americans bring in missiles and missile launchers, which could be used to deliver nuclear tipped weapons into Russia, then it's a whole different ball game and things could turn ugly really, really fast. So I think the Finnish government would be well advised to tread very carefully at this stage.

ZR: Talk about placing nuclear weapons, Russia recently announced that it would place tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus around borders with NATO countries. Vice president in charge of coordinating external affairs of the EU, Josep Borrell stated in response, and I'm quoting him here, quote, "Belarus hosting Russian nuclear weapons would mean an irresponsible escalation and threat to European security. Belarus can stop it. It is their choice. The EU stands ready to respond with further sanctions", unquote. Western commentators and politicians are of the opinion that Putin's threat of nuclear weapons is the only move left for him to advance his agenda as he's failing on the battlefield. In your view, why is Russia escalating the situation and leading humanity closer to a nuclear war?

DL: Well, there was a lot in there that I disagree with what you just said. First of all, Russia is winning this war. So the idea that this move was made, you know, the stationing of nuclear weapons in Belarus, because Russia has no cards left to play, is a fantasy, Zain. I mean, Russia has taken one town after another since it withdrew from Kherson. The Ukrainian forces have not recovered since that time a single town or village or city along the battle line, not one. Russia's taken probably 15 or 20 of them. It is on the verge of taking Bakhmut in the biggest battle of the war. So it didn't need to send nuclear weapons into Belarus in order to, you know, because as sort of a desperate measure. I wish that it hadn't done that. I think putting nuclear weapons into any country, I think we should be doing everything we can to abolish the nuclear arsenals of this world. But I don't understand how Europeans who've accepted the stationing of US nuclear forces on their soil have any business lecturing the Russian government or the Belarus government about the sovereign decision - they have the right. If the Europeans have the right, the Germans, you know, the Italians, I believe, have nuclear weapons, and they're not their own, they have accepted nuclear forces being stationed there from the United States. Why doesn't Belarus have that right? Why is what Belarus did any more destabilizing than what Europe has been doing for decades? You know, we need all of us to give our heads a shake and withdraw these nuclear forces as quickly as possible from all of these countries. We should have a weapons free Europe, the entirety of Europe, not a single nuke that would be in the interests of all of Europe. And until the Europeans show a serious desire to do something like that, and until the Biden administration, which has pulled out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, pulled out of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty, pulled out of the nuclear deal with Iran until it shows a serious intent to pursue nuclear disarmament, I don't think anybody has any business lecturing the Russians or the Belarussians about this decision, as regrettable as it is.

ZR: To my last question, on March 17th, the International Criminal Court issued an arrest warrant against Russian President Putin. He's amongst other issues allegedly responsible for the war crime of unlawful deportation of children from Ukraine. Last month also marked the 20th anniversary of the US war of aggression in Iraq, which killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. That war also included [extraordinary] rendition and a global torture program, as well as the detention of people, including teenagers as young as 14 at Guantanamo Bay. In addition, the US war on terror included the drone program which killed thousands of people,

most of them being civilians. As a lawyer who focuses on international law, how do you assess the ICC actions against Russia compared to the US? And what does this say about our international legal system?

DL: A basic principle of any justice system is universality. And that means that the law is applied without discrimination to all wrongdoers. With equal vigor. With due process, but with equal vigor. And the ICC, with this indictment, has proven itself to be completely and thoroughly politicized. And in my opinion and I've said this very loudly and repeatedly over the last several weeks, it is now a thoroughly discredited institution. You cannot have confidence in the administration of justice when the primary enforcer of the law has conferred de facto immunity on admitted war crimes, admitted war crimes in the West and only pursues alleged war criminals who are deemed by the United States government to be official enemies or who come from developed countries in Africa, the Middle East. It's absolutely ludicrous that for 20 years George Bush has been walking around a free man. Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld up until the time that he passed away, You know, Barack Obama in 2007, when he was running to be the president of the United States, admitted that waterboarding is torture. He admitted it. And US government documents at that point in time had left no doubt that the United States government had engaged in waterboarding extensively, not just in Guantanamo Bay, but at black sites around the world. These are clear, unequivocal war crimes. Israel has been committing war crimes for decades. The settlements in the West Bank are a slam dunk war crime. And we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that these settlements are being facilitated and authorized and supported in every conceivable way at the highest levels of the Israeli government. Not one Israeli official has been indicted. So how can anybody say that this is a truly impartial enforcer of the law, the International Criminal Court? In my opinion, the whole thing should just be abolished and we should start all over again. Because if you have an institution that's purporting to be an enforcer of the law, but in fact it's just a political tool of some super power, then you're discrediting the law. International law has been discredited by the International Criminal Court. I am so sorry to say this. I used to be an admirer of that court. I think it was a wonderful concept, but it has completely lost its credibility.

ZR: Dimitri Lascaris, independent journalist and lawyer, thank you so much for your time today.

DL: Thank you, Zain. Again, I wish you a very quick recovery.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. Don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. Youtube can shadowban or censor us at any time in the future, so as a precaution, be sure to join these channels on Rumble and Telegram. And please, if you're watching this video, don't forget to donate. There's an entire team working behind the scenes from video, audio, camera, in the case of our German videos, translation, correction,

voiceover that is working relentlessly to provide you continuously with independent and nonprofit news and analysis. I'm your host, Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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