



Vijay Prashad - The War in Ukraine & 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 author, journalist and historian Vijay Prashad. Vijay Prashad is the author of more than 30 books, some of them being "The Withdrawal, Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the fragility of US Power" and "Washington Bullets". Vijay and I already had a contextual discussion on the war in Ukraine, so in case you missed that, be sure to click on the link in the description below. In this segment we will be focusing on the recent developments surrounding the war in Ukraine and China. Vijay, thank you so much for your time again.

Vijay Prashad (VP): It's great to be with you and I hope you heal from your injuries soon. Terrible to get hurt.

ZR: Thanks a lot Vijay. Let's begin this interview with China. Many analysts state that we are already in a cold war with China. Before we get into the recent developments, could you provide some historical context of the relationship between the West, in particular the US and China, and how it evolved over time?

VP: Really interesting story there, because the United States had a pretty close intimate relationship with China in the 19th century. And I'm sorry to go back this far, but it's important, I think. In the 19th century, people in the United States made a lot of money in the opium trade. For instance, the Forbes family, the Astor family and so on, were part of the British driven opium trade. You have to remember that the Chinese fought twice against the British, telling them that we don't want you to sell opium. The British won both Opium Wars and imposed what the Chinese call a century of humiliation. The United States was very much part of it. US traders made a lot of money implying opium to the Chinese. The Chinese, as a people, have never forgotten this. In the late 19th into the 20th century, a large number of

US missionaries went to China, including pretty decent people who started to take an interest in developments in China. And they were pretty horrified by the impact of the pushing of opium on the Chinese people, of feudalism and so on. And they observed the rise of the left within China. Many of the most important chroniclers in English of the Chinese Revolution were people from the United States, like Edgar Snow, for instance. Later, William Hinton. Edgar Snow's book "Red Star over China" is an absolute classic. He interviewed Mao and so on.

After the Chinese Revolution in 1949, the US government was very distressed by what had happened. Why? Because the US government had fully backed the Guomindang, including to the point they were allowing or perhaps encouraging the Guomindang to get involved in Southeast Asia. The development of the drug trade in Southeast Asia has very much to do – the so-called Golden Triangle – very much to do with the US intelligence services presence there, inclusive with the Guomindang. So they were distressed by the victory of the Communist Party of China. Nothing they could do about it. The Guomindang fled to Taiwan, where they essentially created a dictatorship that lasted till the 1980s. So the United States, from 1949 till the 1970s, had a very adverse position against China.

In the 1970s, Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger pretty smartly decided to take advantage of the disagreements between the Soviet Union and China, the so-called Sino-Soviet dispute. And Nixon then goes to China. You see, the United States were interested then in somehow getting the Chinese to stop allowing supplies to go into Vietnam. They were fighting a brutal war against the Vietnamese people and they wanted China to back them. That's the reason why Nixon goes to China. In fact, the Chinese didn't stop their support of the Vietnamese, even though they cut a deal with the US one way or the other. From the 1970s, in fact, until pretty recently, the Chinese had normal diplomatic relations with the United States. In fact, in the late 1970s, the US government backed the fact that Beijing was the main representative of China, which is why Beijing then gets the United Nations seat at the Security Council, and also the United States accepts that there's One China and that Taiwan is a part of China. This is their... right, to the present. This is, in fact, stated US policy.

But at the same time, the right wing inside the United States, very anti-communist, anti-China pushed forward a view called the Taiwan Act. In the late 1970s, as the US said, there's One China, Beijing is the capital. This section of the political class made an emphasis to use Taiwan as a kind of pawn on the side of China to keep poking this thorn. So that was maintained. But by and large, relations were pretty good. You see, to be clear what happens now, this so-called new Cold War has a lot to do with the Chinese reforms of 1978. What China did in 1978 was they said, Look, we need to upgrade our technology. We need to improve our basic understanding of how to produce goods and services. And so they allowed foreign capital in. But they made a deal. They said, Look, you can come in and this is particularly after 1991, you can come into the country, but you have to show us the tech, you have to show us the science and so on. And these firms, hungry for high quality Chinese

labor, because of the Chinese revolution, well-fed, strong people, not getting sick, like in South Asia, workers, forever getting जुकाम [zukām], getting sick because they haven't eaten enough. Nutrition rates are low. Health care systems are poor and so on. China is the opposite.

So these firms rushed in and they said, Here's the tech, here's the science. You can have a look at it. What happened is after the 90s, China developed its own science and tech. In fact, in many areas, China has more sophisticated science and tech than in the West, in robotics, in 5G, in some forms of nanotechnology, certainly in areas of green technology and so on. So China actually put pressure on important parts of the US economy, especially in the science and high tech field, actually challenged them directly because, look, if you're living in Zambia, on the African continent, you want to buy a phone, you're going to buy a Chinese phone. Why? A Chinese smartphone is as good as an Apple smartphone, but it's 1/10 the price. Why would you spend so much money buying an Apple phone, which, by the way, is made in China because Apple takes enormous profits from its phones. You much rather buy a Huawei phone.

The United States found that this was a direct, almost existential threat to their high tech sector. Rather than compete economically, try to make cheaper phones, better phones, better robotics, better this better that, the United States put a pressure campaign which begins with Obama and then deepens with Trump, a trade war against China. Trying to get China by force, in a way to retreat its economic advancements. China refused and continued and then decided they're going to have markets in different parts of the world, the Belt and Road and so on, those initiatives. Well, China refused to buckle under the trade war. So then the US intensified. And now we have much more of a kind of military build up by the United States to kind of intimidate Beijing, to retreat in its economic advancements.

By the way, using extra economic force for economic gain is basically the textbook definition of imperialism. Here's the US government acting as an imperialist power against China. But to be honest with you, and I think people outside China need to understand this: the Chinese aren't threatening anybody. Well, that's not true. The Chinese are threatening somebody. They're threatening the barons of high tech in the United States. They're threatening the shareholders of Apple, the big bondholders and so on. They are certainly threatened. The rest of the world should welcome the return of China, which had been a major power before 1820, before the British forced the Chinese into subordination through the selling of opium and so on.

ZR: You mentioned the US using military force. Earlier this year, the US and Philippines reached an agreement in which the US will station four additional military bases in the Philippines. The US has now built an arc around China, stretching from South Korea and Japan in the North to Australia in the South. Beginning of April, the US and Philippines held the largest ever joint military drills, involving 17,600 troops, including 12,000 from the US.

Furthermore, beginning April, Politico reported that the French President Macron, upon returning from his three day trip to China, stated and let me quote him here, quote "Europe must reduce its dependency on the United States and avoid getting dragged into a confrontation between China and the US over Taiwan". Last week the Group of Seven, also known as G-7, that includes Canada, Japan, the US, as well as European countries such as France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, recently met in Japan and demanded that China stop its aggressive power ambitions in the South China Sea. In the final communique, they stated and let me quote them here, "we remind China of the need to uphold the purposes and principles of the UN charter and abstain from threats, coercion, intimidation or the use of force", unquote. Europe seems to be in a contradictory position. On the one hand, it is aligned with US policy to curb so-called "Chinese aggression", but on the other hand, it recognizes the importance of its economic ties with China, as well as its dependency on the US. How do you assess US relations with China developing in the future given the situation with Taiwan? And how will this impact Europe's stance with China?

VP: It's a great question. Let's take them sequentially. First, US relations with China regarding the question of Taiwan. Now, look, the United States, as I said, from the late 1970s, found that the question of Taiwan was a very useful way to keep poking at Beijing. That, as I said, when the Chinese revolution took place in 1949, the Guomindang, the rump elements of the Guomindang and most of them fled to Taiwan. Some went into Southeast Asia, some just surrendered and lived in China itself. Those who came to Taiwan, which is an island, a large island off the coast of China, those who came to Taiwan set up a military dictatorship which lasted until the 1980s. Pretty brutal military dictatorship fully backed by the United States government. These are old friends of the US from the days of the Japanese War and so on. The US supported the Guomindang and they became a crucial ally of the United States, also a place inclusive of South Korea, where US capital and Japanese capital went in and developed Taiwan into a major place, a platform for the production of the digital kind of economic goods. I'll come back to that in a minute.

Now, the question is that, of course, after the 1970s, the US accepted that Taiwan is a part of China, but kept this ambiguity to use Taiwan in a particular way to harass China, constantly bring it up and suggesting that Taiwan is not part of China, even though US policy stated, by the way, just to repeat, that there is only One China and Beijing is the capital. It's not like the United States itself doesn't have some of these problems. There is a sovereignty movement in Hawaii, which was also captured by the United States by force. There's a movement in Puerto Rico for independence, which the US captured by force. It's not like the United States doesn't have a history of having seizures of territory and then claiming it as their own. In this case, the Chinese say Taiwan has historical links with China, the same language, same people, and many of them fled there after 1949. There was an indigenous Taiwanese population oppressed by the arriving Guomindang, just to be very clear.

Okay. So the US has this contradictory position, but on the other side, a lot of Japanese

capital, US capital, German capital, later capital from China comes to develop Taiwan. And Taiwan becomes one of the world hubs for the production of semiconductors. These tiny bits of transistor that have been shrinking smaller and smaller so that they're smaller than, they are literally smaller than the width of a piece of paper. These semiconductors are crucial. A phone has billions of transistors in it, you know, billions. I'm not exaggerating, 10 billion transistors in your average smartphone, each of them tiny. These are largely made and manufactured in places like Taiwan. So as Taiwan is breaking with China through this US pressure campaign, which is actually hurting the Taiwanese economy, because Taiwan sells a lot of these transistors and semiconductors to China. The chips, microchips are sold to China. So there's an anxiety here because if you stop being able to source semiconductors from Taiwan into Chinese companies, China continues to produce some of the most important things for the whole world, well, you're going to have major problems in the global economy. You already have inflation. You're going to have escalating inflation. Plus, Taiwan's economy is already suffering. So there are contradictions.

The Taiwanese government is now not clear that this is a good pathway. In fact, the party that rules Taiwan is taking a fully pro-US position. But the old Guomindang, which is the opposition, is now seeking in the presidential election later this year to contest the ruling party. The leader of the Guomindang went to China when the leader of the country, on the far right, went to the United States. The Guomindang leader goes to China and says, Look, we want to settle the matter with China. We don't want escalation. So if Guomindang comes back to power in the presidential election, this is going to change the framework for US policy. I must say that even the Philippines, where these bases have reopened, are caught on the horns of a dilemma between its own economic abilities and its fealty to the United States. Australia has in its recent defense strategy review said that they're going to spend \$300 billion enhancing their military. By the way, much of that is going to be spent paying the British and paying the US to build submarines and so on for the Australians and for the British in the US. Australia is basically going to pay for the national interests of the United States and the UK rather than the national interest of its own government. It's super nuts. It's hard to explain this to people without laughing.

The second part of your question, the first was about the question of Taiwan; Where is this going to go? Well, it's going to run aground in a series of contradictions. US policy cannot sustain itself; short of the US escalating to war. It just can't sustain itself. Even Taiwan is going to find this a ridiculous policy because they can't sustain themselves. Economically it is not realistic. But the US might accelerate the war and then all the contradictions are closed, Zain. So I don't want to minimize that. But I think the policy is going to run aground on the contradictions. And even the United States, they either have to back off from this or they're going to go to war. And the second option is not acceptable for the world. Not acceptable.

So the second question you asked is about Europe. What can one say, Zain? I mean, you are sitting in Germany where the absolute gymnastics of the German Green Party are hilarious

for us to see. This is a party that emerged talking about the climate and the importance of the environment and protecting the Black Forest. I remember when the German Green Party emerged and we are talking the 1980s now, when voting in both parts of Germany a green movement developed. Inclusive in the German Democratic Republic, people were talking about green policies and so on. The Green Party in Germany was so arrogant, I'm sorry to say, lecturing the world about the environment and climate and so on. Now caught on the horns of their own dilemma, namely the Ukraine war, the pressure campaign against China, what are the Greens going to do? They are going to restart nuclear power plants. They are going to effectively, perhaps, import coal. I don't know it exactly, or they import energy from coal, not necessarily coal itself. I mean, I don't know. The next thing we're going to hear is the Greens are going to say, Let's do controlled cutting of the Black Forest. I don't actually know where they're going, but the greens are a good example – I'm not picking on them – of, in a way, Europe's dilemma in one way.

Because Europe's dilemma, and I think French President Emmanuel Macron is a great example of this, Europe's dilemma is how to deal with the United States. It's not how to deal with China or Russia, because in a way, Europe is going to have to import energy from Russia. There's no other option. Russian energy is much cheaper than Norwegian energy. You can import as much energy as you want from Norway, Zain, it is expensive. Norwegian energy is not cheap. Russian energy was coming cheap. But anyway, the point is: you're going to have to import energy from Russia. Whatever happens, it's much cheaper. It's infinitely cheaper than importing liquefied natural gas from the Gulf of Mexico, from US oil companies, much cheaper. And then Chinese capital and tech is right there. Look where the coronavirus was supposed to have started. Hubei province, the capital, Wuhan. There are so many German companies in that province, you'd be surprised how many small machine tools companies are based in Wuhan, how many larger factories are based in Wuhan and so on. German manufacturing, a lot of it is in China. So the link to China is integral, but European politics is not... It's out of step with European economic development. And so politically, Europe is kind of standing beside the United States again, surrendering Europe's own national interest to the service of US national interest. And that's a decision the European people must make.

Why did I say Macron? Emmanuel Macron of France, a good example? Macron has been publicly speaking on both sides. He went to China and he said, Look, we need you guys. We need Chinese investments. We need China to engage in climate change and so on. And then he returns to France and he says, We are standing only with the United States. Look, you should be able to stand with everybody, frankly. No country is being asked to make a choice. The US might ask countries to make a choice, but the Chinese are certainly not. The issue is, you can't say to the Chinese, we want to engage you economically and then stand with the US and say we want to really screw the Chinese militarily. At least in France, this contradiction is a little resolved, Zain, because remember, France had sold Australia submarines and the Australians under pressure from the UK and the United States, broke the deal with the French

and said we'll buy UK, US submarines. The French were very upset by this. The US - UK national interest trumps the French just like this. And so Macron had a little clarity I think, maybe that was a wake up call. Don't get too comfortable in the US bed because when they need to, they push you off the bed. It's not guaranteed that you're going to sleep the whole night there. So be careful.

European leaders, by and large, in my opinion, Zain: gutless. They are gutless. Olaf Scholz, chancellor of Germany? Gutless. He is not able to speak the truth to his people. He's not able to come out there and say, Look, we have a dilemma. We're going to have to resolve it and we don't want to accept the US position on imposing a war on China or continuing the war in Ukraine. We're going to become partners for peace. We're going to talk to the Chinese and go together to Moscow and say, Can we settle this issue? We're going to turn our backs on the US, this is not going to happen. Why? Olaf Scholz, supposedly a man of social democracy, Germany, great tradition of social democracy. I don't see it, Zain. I just don't see it. Looks to me like it's 1914 again and the Social Democrats have decided to vote for war.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and move to recent developments surrounding the war in Ukraine. NATO general secretary, Jens Stoltenberg, recently visited Ukraine. Speaking alongside Ukrainian President Zelensky in Kiev, he said, and let me quote him here, "Ukraine's rightful place is in the Euro-Atlantic family. Ukraine's rightful place is in NATO", unquote. Finland recently joined NATO and it is expected that Sweden will also join sometime in the future. And now it appears with these statements that Ukraine will also do at some point. When you look at these developments and look at the long term strategic picture, regardless of who wins the war, don't you think that Russia's war to essentially demilitarize Ukraine backfired and Putin miscalculated? NATO has only grown stronger and [more] united.

VP: That's interesting. I think in the first few months after Russian troops entered Ukraine, it's true that there were kind of gathering forces, NATO. European countries that had begun to drift away from US policy making, buying lots of energy from Russia, making economic deals with China, looking elsewhere in the world for leadership. In fact even, good god, looking to themselves for leadership. It's a stunning business. It's true that in the first few months in... it's true that NATO was strengthened. And in fact, two more Scandinavian countries entered NATO. All of that, all of that is true. But over time, again, these contradictions have begun to strike quite hard.

Let's take these things one by one. Stoltenberg said a couple of things. One, he said, Ukraine's rightful place is in the Euro-Atlantic community. Really? Ukraine borders Russia. It's going to continue to border Russia. You can't cut Ukraine out of the soil and move it to the United States. It can't be moved to Canada. It's not going to be able to be moved to Brussels. Ukraine is going to remain where it is. It has to actually come to terms with the fact that it neighbors Poland, it neighbors Russia, it neighbors Belarus, it neighbors, other countries in Eastern

Europe. That's actually where it is. So to think that Kiev is like Paris-Kiev, whatever, Berlin-Kiev, that's the axis. Without imagining, it's also Kiev-Minsk and Kiev-Moscow and, for God sake, maybe Kiev-Beijing and Kiev-Pretoria. Ukraine is not part of this or that. It should not be seen like that. That's a camp mentality. That's the mentality of the Cold War. That there is the camp of the West in the camp of the Soviets. That's just not the correct way. Ukraine must be allowed to develop its own independent orientation. That's what the West tried to stop about 15 years ago. When Ukraine started to have closer ties with the... let's go back to 1991 when the Soviet Union collapsed and the Ukraine, SSR, a very important part of the Soviet Union, broke away and created its own country. At that time, the West courted Ukraine heavily and the Russian leadership, pro-Western at the time, thought it was okay. But over time it became clear to the Ukrainian ruling groups that their real economic benefit would come with Russia. Let's just say a lot of them were kleptocrats and corrupt. But still they look eastward to build the economic ties and some of that translated into political ties. That worried the West. The West tried to move Ukraine, Georgia, these countries into a Western orientation. That was a mistake. Why can't we allow countries to have a balanced foreign policy? Some Western outlook is fine, but also relations with Russia, relations with other countries. The West tried to impose on Ukraine that they could not relate to Russia. In fact, if you look closely at the record, it's not the Russians who were saying Ukraine is ours. It was the West who was saying Ukraine is ours. And that was the behavior of the United States government in 2014. That was the express behavior. So, the first thing to look at then is this idea that Ukraine belongs to the Euro-Atlantic. That is a terrible attitude. Ukraine belongs to Ukraine. It's in a neighborhood. It has to relate to everybody around it. So Mr. Stoltenberg actually has a kind of colonial attitude towards Ukraine. That's one.

Secondly, Ukraine, a part of NATO. At the moment he made that statement, Viktor Orban of Hungary made a tweet where he said essentially, Wow, yikes, or something like that. You know, really? Because, I mean, the Hungarians are surprised by this statement. Ukraine had made under Zelensky an application to join, but many countries in NATO were not comfortable with the Ukraine entering because they understand, they don't want to actually... Many NATO members don't want a frontal war with Russia. They just don't want it. They're not interested in it, inclusive of the Baltic states. They don't want to have an escalated conflict. Think about Latvia, Estonia, these countries, small countries bordering Russia, they have to have relations with Russia. They can't, again, lift up Latvia and move it to London. It's not going to happen. They have to live there. So this very reckless statement by Jens Stoltenberg, where his own members have come on the record, including France, that Ukraine can't enter NATO. It's on the record by leading people in Europe saying, It's just not going to happen. Jens Stoltenberg I think was irresponsible in making that comment. I very much want to emphasize that this is an act of irresponsibility by a high statesman of a military alliance to have made a casual remark like that. It's irresponsible.

ZR: One of the first points of China's peace proposal for Ukraine was a call to abandon the Cold War mentality. Let me read directly from the text: "The security of a country should not

be pursued at the expense of others. The security of a region should not be achieved by strengthening or expanding military blocs. The legitimate security interests and concerns of all countries must be taken seriously and addressed properly". Do you think, given Jens Stoltenberg's statement of reaffirming Ukraine's future in NATO, that the Chinese peace plan or any peace plan for that matter that takes into account Russian security interest is essentially void? If yes, what activities remain?

VP: It's a very good question. Okay. And in a way, Zain, I can't answer this. For this question to be answered, you actually need a free press in Europe. You need to have a reporter such as yourself asking this to Jens Stoltenberg. You need this question to be asked to Olaf Scholz. You need this question to be asked to Rishi Sunak and so on. They need to answer this question. I mean, I'm going to give you an answer which is not adequate, because what I would say is: It's important for all countries that are in a conflict, all belligerents, to feel like they walk away from a conflict with whatever security issues they have satisfied one way or the other. It's a boilerplate. It's what the UN Secretary General would say. I can't answer your question because what am I supposed to say? Mr. Stoltenberg, please take back your statement because it's an aggressive statement and makes it difficult to advance a peace process unless and this is crucial, unless Mr. Stoltenberg was given permission to make a maximalist statement like this so that backroom negotiations which are taking place allow for a minimal or less maximal negotiated settlement. That could be, I don't know. I don't know what's happening behind the scenes. What I do know is that we don't have evidence right now that the West is talking to the Russians about a peace agreement. We know that the Brazilians have been there. Celso Amorim, the closest adviser to President Lula of Brazil, was in Moscow. We know that high Chinese officials have been to Moscow. We know that those conversations are happening. And Mr. Lula, President Lula actually represents a strand of opinion across the Global South on these issues. So I think in a way, he has a lot of legitimacy to be talking to all sides. But I don't think the West is at the table now. Are they not at the table for electoral reasons, petty political reasons of their own? It's likely. It's useful for Rishi Sunak of Britain, who's struggling with cascading strikes, a labor movement that's unstoppable, he's struggling with that. Maybe it's easier to say, Look, I'm involved in the Ukraine dispute. Look, let's not have some petty internal division and so on. Mr. Macron, dealing with an insurrection in his country around pension reform. Before him, also, to some extent, it's worth continuing this... But in fact, it's not because it's true that the Ukraine war has created inflationary pressures in that country, and that's increasing the protests. So, when will – and I'm going to say and repeat what I said earlier – when will European leaders grow a backbone and stand up to the United States? So, I can't answer your question. All I can say is, you are asking the wrong person, ask Olaf Scholz, and ask Olaf Scholz whether he ever had a backbone. And B), if he did, where did he leave it?

ZR: Let us move to another recent development. In mid-April, the FBI arrested a 20 year old airforce guardsman who was responsible for one of the most significant US government leaks in recent history. The leaks were reported in the German mainstream media, but the facts that

were quite critical of the prevailing narrative surrounding Ukraine were not highlighted sufficiently. Notable leaks included the US government's understanding that Ukraine has little chance of defeating Russia and that the fighting in the Donbas region is heading into a stalemate. It also included how US intelligence agencies have deeply penetrated the Russian military, obtaining vital information of Russian war operational plans, and it exposes how 97 special forces from NATO countries, including from the US, are active inside Ukraine. Another document reveals how the US has been spying on President Zelensky, fearing Ukraine might start striking Russian territory if Washington provides it with long range missiles. Can you talk about the significance of these leaks?

VP: So this is really interesting. The first thing to point out is that the young man, Mr. Teixeira, is very different from Edward Snowden, from Chelsea Manning and so on. Chelsea Manning, was a brave, brave young woman who found things on her computer when she worked for the US military, that were horrifying and she decided to leak those to the WikiLeaks organization, which then brought it to the world. Edward Snowden was a contractor with the National Security Agency of the United States. He saw things on his computer that horrified him. He decided to take it to Glenn Greenwald and others. These people were motivated by a moral conundrum. This young man in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, at Otis Air Force Base was not motivated, it seems, by politics. He was in a Discord server with about 20 odd people. He was bragging to them about what he was doing. They didn't believe him. So he said, Okay, see what I can see? And then that went out. It looks like this was not a political leak as such. It demonstrates the fragility of secret information in our times with the digital world and so on. So it is important to say that because initially there was some discussion about this being a hack job by the Russians. There were some statements about this all being faked, but turns out the story is much more dull. Or maybe it's interesting to some people. It's not really a political thing, it was not a hack job and so on. It's important to say that Zain, because he sort of revealed random information. This was like whatever he got his hands on. If you want to have a look at it, it's not that he was specifically looking for something horrifying to reveal, which is why what he revealed has a kind of not only haphazard quality, some of it is banal.

Okay, let's look at the two pieces, which are significant. Number one, yes, it reveals that US military intelligence and others are pretty convinced that the war is a stalemate. Now, that's interesting. If they know it's a stalemate at the start of this year, we are now approaching the end of April, entering May, this means that several months have gone by of people dying in Ukraine. The US, which has been the principal organizer of backing for Mr. Zelensky, if the United States accepted five, six months ago that this war is at a stalemate, it's pretty damning that they didn't then move to insisting on peace negotiations. Because, see if you are at a stalemate and you believe nobody can win without an escalation to much greater hostilities, then it's a good opportunity to say, let's pursue for peace. Okay, we're not going to move further. The lines are drawn. But the US seems not to be moved by its own assessment. That seems cruel to me. It's cruel against the Ukrainian people. So that's the first point of the

revelations. When you look at battle plans and things, those things change overnight. They're not that interesting. What's interesting is the assessment of stalemate. In my opinion, it demonstrates callousness or cruelty, really.

The second thing which was revealed, which is interesting, we've known for many years that the US government spies on its allies. After all, Edward Snowden's revelations created a little bit of a hubbub in Germany because you remember that it revealed that the United States government was spying on Angela Merkel. I mean, you couldn't have a closer ally than Angela Merkel. The problem with Mrs. Merkel was that she was a little bit of an independent thinker. Unlike Olaf Scholz, I mean, I must say Angela Merkel was to the right of Olaf Scholz, but she was definitely a more independent thinker than Mr. Scholz. He's much more a puppy dog of the Atlantic Alliance. And she was much more in that sense of a credible figure.

Nonetheless, the US government felt the need to spy on her. So we already knew that the US spies on its allies. But here, the spying on South Korea, Israel and so on was stunning. They were worried about South Korea. I mean, South Korea, which has an enormous US military presence. What were they worried about? They are very interested. Why are allies, not other countries in the world, but allies not more fully supporting the US position on Ukraine? Why aren't they sending weapons to Ukraine and so on? That's why they were spying on the South Koreans. And I don't blame them for spying on the South Koreans and others, because it must be a moment of great anxiety in Washington that even their closest allies are not accepting the theory that they are following this war in Ukraine. Take a look at India, for instance, very close to the United States government, not interested in the US position on the war in Ukraine. Take a look at Chile. The Chilean government, centrist government of Gabriel Boric supports the US position on Ukraine and so on, won't send weapons. Why? I'm sure the US government is curious. And so when you're curious, you spy on people. Say, what are the conversations? What are the actual discussions? So I was interested in that, Zain. They actually wanted a hotline into the inner discussions of the South Koreans. Those were the two revelations I found interesting. Again, nothing really that earth shattering because we already knew from public statements that the US government had come to terms with the fact that there's a stalemate. And therefore, that's why they are making the push for more weapons for Ukraine. If there was no stalemate, they wouldn't be making such a big push. So that was pretty well known. And the second thing we've known for a long time, the US government spies on its allies. It was merely just the character of the spying that was interesting. They were worried about, again, the weapons sales. The key thing now is that why are people around the world not following the US narrative on the war in Ukraine? This is puzzling to Washington. It's puzzling to Washington, Zain, because Washington is out of touch with the realities in the world.

ZR: Commentators such as yourself, and correct me if I'm wrong, argue that diplomacy and negotiations are the only way forward in the war in Ukraine. I would like to make some

counterarguments that are usually voiced here by Western politicians and the mainstream media. One of the arguments, most notably voiced by the German chancellor Olaf Scholz, and let me quote him here, "wanting peace does not mean submitting to a bigger neighbor. If Ukraine stops defending themselves, it will not mean peace but the end of Ukraine", unquote. How would you respond to this sort of argument?

VP: Okay. Firstly, all wars end in negotiation. You know, yes, there can be what looks to be like complete defeat. And we have some examples. The Second World War, for instance, ended in the complete defeat of the Nazi armies. But now look at it this way. Germany, which is a relatively small country, was faced with the military forces of everybody. If the Italians basically hadn't been defeated by the entry of the allied armies up the length of Italy – and by the way, my grandfather fought in Italy. So in all the films, you always see people from Britain and so on doing the fighting, but there were lots of troops from Africa and Asia that were brought, colonial troops. My grandfather fought valiantly up the Italian landmass. I have relatives who fought in the East Asian sectors and so on. So, the defeat, well, Germany was isolated by the fact that all the other major powers were on the other side. The Soviets fought enormously bravely to defeat Germany on the eastern front. So that's a good example of a complete destruction of a military force. But even there, it ended with a negotiation, the Nuremberg [trials]. But there was a negotiation.

Most wars don't end with such a destruction of a military force. Especially in the last 50 years, you'd be hard pressed to find an example of a complete crushing of a military force. Iraq, for instance. The United States in 2003 thought that it's all over. Remember, mission accomplished. But the Iraqi army hadn't been destroyed. The Iraqi army became a resistance force. And in fact, then the United States had to leave in a negotiated goodbye, because they just couldn't face the pressure. Some of those Army members then joined Al Qaeda and whatever, but a lot of the army fought as a non-religious force against the US. I remember seeing all that in Iraq. There was no complete defeat. You got to end with a negotiation. There is no other way. That's one.

Secondly, the idea that you can't negotiate with Russia or with Putin is a ridiculous argument. Because countries negotiate with all kinds of people. Okay. It's a ridiculous, ludicrous argument. I don't take Mr. Trump seriously, for instance. Mr. Trump was the president of the United States, and he had all these people, the German chancellors, the British, they all gave Mr. Trump immense respect and they negotiated with him. Even though, by the way, Mr. Trump, routinely broke agreements. So they say, Well, you can't trust Putin, he is going to break an agreement. It was not the Iranians who broke the agreement with the P-5, the group of five countries. I mean, not just countries, but also regional grouping, UN, EU and so on. It was not Iran that walked away from the nuclear deal. It was Trump who broke the agreement. So then you should say the United States is a party one should not negotiate with. You know, the US signed a number of agreements which they refused to ratify, including the Rome Treaty, to set up the International Criminal Court. They've never ratified it. They don't belong

to it, you know. So people who say, Well, Putin is not trustworthy, it's a ridiculous argument. Because firstly, Putin is not one person, it's a big government. It's a very large country. There are all kinds of forces there. If you say that you can't negotiate with somebody, you have a manichean view of the world, you know, the manichean in the ancient world. So everything in black and white, you know, there's no nuance. It was good and evil. That's ridiculous.

We're now talking about Western Europe. Okay. After the defeat of Nazism in Germany, why is it that the Western Europeans and the United States were quite happy to allow former Nazis to help form the Bundesrepublik's intelligence service? Don't forget, the Bundesrepublik's, the Federal Republic of Germany's intelligence department was staffed by a lot of former Nazis. Well, you negotiated with the Nazis there. If you can negotiate with former Nazis, many of them war criminals – it's all in the record. I'm not making things up from thin air. This is all on record. If you can negotiate with former Nazis in the 1940s, why can't you negotiate with Mr. Putin? You know, for God's sake. What's going on here? You negotiate with all kinds of people. So, I mean, countries in the world negotiate with the United States. You can negotiate with anybody. So I find these arguments to be self-serving and to some extent, and I want to put this on the table, there is a little bit of residual anti Slavic racism that operates. It's there. It's been there in a country like Germany, Hitler picked up on this anti Slavic racism in order to say we're going to go out there and defeat the Slavs and create the "Lebensraum". That these are inferior people and so on, the Poles, onward. The Poles, and then the Slavs, we are going to defeat them all. I mean, some of this attitude is this sort of anti-Islamic attitude. Europe has been marinated for centuries in racism. It doesn't go away just with some classes against prejudice. People have to look in the mirror, you know? I mean, they have to understand that after hundreds of years of French and German warfare, hundreds of years, you still negotiate with each other. You hold each other's hands. If the French and the Germans bitterly fought war after war with each other and can now be friendly, why can't you negotiate with people just on the other side of the caucuses and so on?

ZR: Another argument that is usually brought forward by inter-governmental organizations such as the EU, G7, and even NATO is that they readily cite Russia as violating international law and order, and that diplomacy that takes into account territorial concessions will only incentivize as well as send false signals to other authoritative states that they can invade any country whenever they want without facing repercussions. And it is therefore vital that the West takes the moral stance of sanctioning and punishing these states that deviate from international law. How do you respond to this sort of argument?

VP: In 1991, the United States attacked Iraq and then continued a brutal sanctions policy that killed at least half a million children. This is a number accepted by the US government. And then in 2003, the United States government started an illegal war, a war of aggression against the Iraqi people. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, a year later in 2004, told the BBC: "This war is illegal". Millions of people died. At least a million, if not maybe 2 million people died in that war, that the US prosecuted an illegal war. Not one US official was brought to any

kind of justice, not one person. Many people lied to take the world to war. There were millions of people, myself included, on the street, saying this is an illegal war. You can't go to war against Iraq. And yet they did and there were no repercussions. So I cannot take high officials in countries like Germany seriously, which fully backed that war, fully backed that war. Okay, you can say that Schröder, the government, the Social Democrats at the time said this is not a good idea. But the Germans didn't break with the United States. Germany didn't say, If you're going to go to war in Iraq, we are pulling out from the war in Afghanistan because you are moving US troops to Iraq and you're leaving us vulnerable in Afghanistan. Germany didn't make the United States pay any cost for that illegal war. So I can't take seriously people who say that if you negotiate now with Russia, you'll incentivize people to do this. You know what incentivizes people to attack?! It was the United States government policy which has opened the door and said that, Look, we don't care about international law or anything like that.

I mean, when the US went and bombed Panama in 1989, where were the sanctimonious statements coming from the Europeans and so on? This argument has no longer any merit because this argument is made by people who never made the argument to sanction the United States. And by the way, it's not just the United States. When Britain went to war against Argentina over the Malvinas Islands, which basically border or are just off the coast of Argentina, what the British call the Falklands, where was the criticism on that? That was also a war of aggression. Where was the criticism on that? You know, when French troops entered into the Sahel region and killed civilians in Mali, Burkina Faso, and so on, where was the criticism? I haven't heard anything from anybody about any of that. So this is not, for me, a credible discussion. I know that sensitive people in a country like Germany were critical of the US drone program, which was effectively firing an illegal assassination campaign in northern Pakistan. That was an illegal campaign, complete impunity. The seizure of bin Laden was an illegal seizure. None of the high minded jurists who come from the great tradition of Grotius, none of them made any kind of public declaration, saying that this is outrageous. So I can't take these people seriously. In fact, I don't want to incentivize them to believe that they have moral superiority.

ZR: I want to look at another topic that has completely faded away from the mainstream media. No comparative analysis is done on this, but we are staying on top of it despite its huge importance. In February, world renowned Pulitzer Prize investigative journalist Seymour Hersh released an article based on an anonymous source that detailed how the US bombed the Nord Stream pipeline. A few weeks later, The New York Times also released an article based on anonymous US intelligence sources that claim 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 British or American citizens. Following the New York Times article, the German media, led by Die Zeit and Der Spiegel, conducted their own independent investigations and more or less came to the same conclusion that the perpetrators may be a rogue pro-Ukrainian group that is not

affiliated with the Ukrainian government or some Russian anti Putin group. There's even talk about this by senior officials in Germany that it may possibly 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? Which one do you find to be credible?

VP: I don't know. I mean, I really don't know. Frankly, I read at least two of the stories you mentioned, Hersh and The New York Times. I haven't read the Spiegel story. I don't know who's telling the truth. And that's the point, isn't it? I mean, isn't it necessary for something so egregious to occasion a serious, credible investigation. I mean, okay, forget the United Nations for a minute. Germany, a pretty serious country, has a great history of philosophy in international law and so on. Pretty serious traditions going back to a long time, university tradition from the near ancient time, you know, Heidelberg and Göttingen and so on, I mean, I respect these places. Deep intellectual commitment to inquiry. Forget everybody else. Why doesn't the German government ask the governments of the countries that surround the place where the attack took place? Perhaps ask the Swedish and others to get involved. Despite accusations of the involvement of intelligence services, I would like to see them – even if it's a useless inquiry – I would like to see them actually empanel an inquiry. How come they are not interested in an inquiry? That itself to me is stunning. Like, okay, do a whitewash, put together a bunch of jurists, turn over some material to them, give us some bogus report. That's basically the Spiegel or whatever, some report saying it's actually the Russians or ... They're not bothered, that to me is the most important thing.

Why should I come on your show and say, Well, I believe this or that? The point isn't belief. The point isn't belief or credibility. In fact, even in Seymour's story, there are lots of unanswered questions, lots of things that are open for investigation and debate. I don't know the answer. Of course, Seymour Hersh's story was fascinating, but I don't know if it's true. He is relying on a couple of sources and so on. Let's assume they're credible. Fascinating story. Maybe it was done by some right wing Ukrainian group. But let's be frank, to bomb an undersea pipeline that deep under the water requires some immense state sponsor. 20 nutcases from a Discord server can leak information, we already know that. But 20 nutcases can't go scuba diving so deep and put a bomb... And I mean, I just don't think this is anything but a state operation. If it were a Russian operation to be frank with you, I think there would be some intelligence leaked to think that this is what happened. The people saying it's a Russian operation, haven't given us a narrative. It's just a speculation. Could be a false flag. In the case of Hersh, he put a narrative together. I haven't seen anything beyond that. So what I would say is that what's surprising to me is the lack of an investigation. It shows that they don't want to see or to tell us what happened. That to me is the pretty stunning thing, it's like, come on, this is Germany. Germany investigates everything. I mean there's an obsession with bureaucracy in the German tradition. Germany investigates everything. How come they're not investigating this? Fascinating. The foreign minister should answer this. And I saw her press conference in China. Extremely weak answers, not a very interesting person. The Scholz

government really is not impressive. And here's the opportunity for the German minister to stand up and say, I think it's a good idea, for the sake of not allowing conspiracy theories to dominate the debate, we need to have a credible official investigation. But what happens is you don't have a credible official investigation, you're going to leave this all to conspiracy theories. And that's very wrong. In the modern age, we should not allow irrational thinking to flourish. You require credibility and something of this scale, a terrorist act of this scale, whoever did it, at least the facts must come out. And nobody is seemingly looking at them right now.

ZR: Vijay Prashad, historian, author and journalist, thank you so much for your time today.

VP: My pleasure. Thanks a lot.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. Don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, can shadowban or censor us at any time. So we are asking all of our viewers as a precaution to join us on these alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. And if you're watching our video regularly, make sure to donate because there is an entire team working behind the scenes with camera, light, audio, in the case of a German videos, translating, voice-over, correction. If you want us to continue providing you with independent and nonprofit news and analysis, make sure to donate today. I'm your host Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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