



SPECIAL EPISODE: Reality Check on Ukraine with Jill Stein & Dimitri Lascaris

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in today for a special episode on The Source. I'm your host, Zain Raza and today, I'll be having an in-depth and contextual discussion with two guests on the war in Ukraine and the larger context. Joining us is journalist and lawyer Dimitri Lascaris, who ran for the Green Party leadership in Canada in 2020, finishing second and activist and physician Jill Stein, who was the Green Party presidential candidate in 2012 and 2016. This panel was organised by plebity.org, a free speech advocacy group. They are hosting many interesting interviews with guests such as Noam Chomsky and many more. So check out the link in the description for more videos with them. Dimitri, Jill, thank you so much for your time today.

Jill Stein (JS): Great to be here.

Dimitri Lascaris (DL): Honoured to be here and honoured to be with Jill Stein.

JS: Well, I'll say the same about Dimitri Lascaris.

ZR: I want to begin this interview with a very simple and basic question: How should we understand the war in Ukraine? Jill, let's start with you.

JS: To my mind, the war in Ukraine is really a microcosm of this crisis of militarism that we face in the United States and really around the world where so much of our resources are going into the military and so much money is concentrated into that industry. And it's very much an expression of what Dwight Eisenhower warned at the end of his presidency that a military industrial complex would be taking over. And that's a critical problem that we face here in this country in particular. But more broadly, I think the war in Ukraine is a danger to

the people of the United States, the people of Ukraine above all, the people of Europe and really around the world because of its global implications and its progression towards nuclear conflict. So this is a danger to us all, and it's also impoverishing us all, destabilising the economy and so on. So it's really a crisis of enormous magnitude that's very much related to all the other problems that we are struggling with to meet our needs, our critical unmet human needs for food. You know, the crisis of hunger has really skyrocketed with the disruptions and the inflation triggered by the war. Whether you're looking at the crisis of the climate, whether you are looking at the crises of health care and housing and our ability to pay for human needs, it's really a massive, ubiquitous crisis. And all of that really compels us to fix this and to prioritise a cease fire and negotiations as soon as humanly possible.

ZR: Dimitri, go ahead.

DL: More I would emphasise that it's astonishing how little we have heeded the extraordinary warning of President Eisenhower at the end of his tenure as President of United States. Not only did the American people fail to heed the warning, but we of the West, all peoples of the West, we are now all hostage to the military industrial complex. It has become a cancer of Western society. And I'm going to put a somewhat more geopolitical spin on this. I believe that tragically for the Ukrainian people, their country is the frontline in a battle between those who want to perpetuate an era of US government, global hegemony. And at the end of the day, I think the US government today is effectively controlled by a very wealthy elite, a Western based elite. And on the other hand, you have rising countries; socioeconomically, economically, militarily rising countries like China, Russia and India, who no longer are prepared to be servants at the table of a US hegemon, and they demand to be respected as equal players. And there are a lot of people in the global South, as we've seen, who support this movement towards a multi-polar world. You know, I'm in the middle of a speaking tour about the Ukraine war, and I emphasise the fact that almost nobody in Africa has chosen to sanction Russia or send arms to Ukraine. Almost nobody in Latin America has chosen to do either of those things. Almost nobody in Asia has chosen to do either of those things. And that's because they're fed up with Western hegemony and Western arrogance, I think. And again, I can't stress enough that it's the Ukrainian people, first and foremost, who are the victims of this world historical struggle that we're witnessing today.

ZR: One of the shocking, if not fascinating developments that resulted from this war is that anyone in Germany and I presume it's the same in Canada and the US that questions NATO's narrative is immediately seen by political and media establishment as promoting Russian or Putin propaganda or talking points. You both have been labelled as such as well, given your perspective. Can you share with us your experience, why you think this tactic is employed? Dimitri, why don't you start?

DL: I think it's directly related to the nature of the struggle we're witnessing. From the perspective of the perpetuation of US power, Western hegemony, this is existential. They

realised that. The gig is up. That era is over. We're on the verge of being terminated by rising states in the East and in the Global South. And they are determined they're hell bent to stop this from happening. They want to maintain firmly in control. And because the stakes are so high, they've unleashed a wave of unprecedented McCarthyism upon those of us who question the wisdom of this war and the true motives of Western governments. I think that it's really just emblematic of how important they view this struggle to maintain their power. And we in the West, we have to continue, those of us— there are many of us. The other day, I drew up a list of all the people like Dr. Stein, Noam Chomsky, Jeffrey Sachs, John Mearsheimer and so forth, eminent experts in their fields who are saying effectively what we're saying. And if you look carefully at those who are being excluded from the mainstream discussion, the peace activists, the dissenters, it's quite a formidable group of intellectuals and, you know, we have to find a way to get their message out to the people.

ZR: Dimitri, can you share with us an experience that you might have had personally in Canada, where you were also labelled as a Russian propagandist or something like that of a sort?

DL: As you and I have discussed, Zain, I was recently in Russia and I went to Crimea. In the middle of the trip I was contacted by a reporter, a Ukraine based reporter of the National Post, which is the flagship newspaper of Canada's largest newspaper publisher, Postmedia. Postmedia, by the way, is even though it's Canadian, nominally, it's controlled by a pro-Trump hedge fund based in Connecticut. And he wanted to interview me on my reasons for going to Russia. I insisted as a condition of him interviewing me, that I'd be permitted to record the conversation and that he'd give me his consent to publish the recording because I anticipated a hit piece and that's what I got. On the front page of the National Post on a Monday morning they announced that I had gone to Russia to whitewash Vladimir Putin's crimes. But I fortunately had the recording, I published it on my website and I think that told the real story of the conversation that I had with him.

ZR: Jill, talk about any similar experience that you might have had. You've been quite critical about the Westerners' role in Ukraine. Have you faced any lash back? Can you share with us your experience and also why you think that this tactic is employed?

JS: I was in Moscow in 2015 actually to participate in a conference sponsored by RT, but it was an international conference and an opportunity to talk to media from all over the world. And the focus was very much on the name of the conference; actually, it was frenemies, you know, and it was a really interesting and frank discussion about the ways in which our various countries of Russia and Western Europe and the US, how are we friends and how are we competitors and how are we enemies? And, you know, it was fascinating discussion, but for me, the reason to be there was to really put forward the three fundamentals of what was about to become my presidential campaign, which was the essential, urgent, dire necessity for a global Green New Deal, for a peace offensive in the Middle East and for nuclear

disarmament and a nuclear weapons ban. And, you know, as John Kennedy said, we must not negotiate out of fear and we must not fear to negotiate. And I was there to enhance that dialogue. And in fact, going way back as sort of my first political experience in a way, as a medical student, I was very involved with Physicians for Social Responsibility and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, and it was all about citizen to citizen contact across borders to decompress the incredible dangers of the Cold War. This was back in the early seventies, late sixties, early seventies, you know. So I was very familiar with the concept of citizen to citizen contact across borders and how profound that could be, because that's where a lot of the momentum for some of the very critical nuclear treaties was established. So that was part of what was motivating me to go there again and to help promote that dialogue and person to person contact. And the press said nothing about this trip to Moscow until I got the nomination. And then suddenly, you know, this picture, which was sort of cut a little bit and it made it look like there was a very small, intimate dinner party going on, which wasn't the case at all. In fact, those who spoke Russian never spoke a word of English. You know, I mean, it was a complete sort of narrative that was concocted around this and then a story about my being there to make deals, cut deals; outright false information, saying that my trip had been sponsored by Russia. You know, in fact, we had not taken a penny in money; very mindful that we did not want to create any apparent conflicts of interest and so on as we were entering into the campaign. And you can't take foreign money when you're running a political campaign anyhow. So it was just a massive smear campaign that was unleashed at that point, which leads me to a kind of a higher order point here about McCarthyism, which is that it's not only, you know, militarism and censorship, it's also political repression. And militarism in itself to my mind, is very much a part of an increasingly sort of proto fascist government organisation where money and power is extremely concentrated into the hands of very few. You know, sort of a rapacious oligarchy is rolling out in virtually every dimension of our lives. It's not only the crisis of militarism, it's a crisis of crushing inequality and climate collapse. And it's really a crisis in virtually all dimensions of our democracy, including the assault really, on our First Amendment rights, including our rights to free speech, a free press and the right of protest, as well as not the First Amendment strictly, that is the right to privacy. You know, all of those are really under assault right now. And they kind of converge in a way which is unbelievably dangerous. So my experience as a political person, it's sort of indivisible, the way in which we are silenced. And look at what's happening to the Uhuru African Socialist Party in the US right now, where they are really being set up and framed and at risk for being incarcerated for 15 years, mainly for being themselves. You know, that these different dimensions are all converging into political repression as well as censorship and propaganda, which is the flipside of the abuse of our First Amendment rights. And so it's just so important that we continue to speak out because it's like, you know, they're saying first they came for the socialists or the gypsies, you know, but I was not a gypsy or a socialist, so I said nothing. And then pretty soon there is no one. So it's really important for us to stand up. So it's not to create an impression of hopelessness. To my mind, there is more uprising and fightback going on now than I ever have experienced really in my life. And that list of luminaries that I think you rattled off at

the start there, Zain, you know, of people who are standing up right now and who are incredible – you know, Jeffrey Sachs, it's unbelievable the kind of what he is saying and his complete fearlessness. And I think we all need to be inspired by that. Courage is contagious. And, you know, we need to keep carrying that forward. If you look at polls, people are not happy with the political establishment right now, nor with that mainstream media that's conducting this insane propaganda campaign on our own citizens and censorship as well as social media. You know, people are furious. And in the US, it's a, what shall we say, the scorn and disdain for mainstream media is off the charts. And it's really the lead among whatever it was, 30 or 40 modern nations that were all polled about a year back. So it's hard times, that's for sure. But all the makings of transformative change are here now. And we need to just, you know, keep our eyes on the prize and keep going.

ZR: I want to dig deeper into this environment that I talked about, where people are being labelled left, right and centre for being Russian propagandists, etc. For my organisation, it is essential to remain independent, critical and avoid falling into Western or even Russian propaganda, as I believe all governments carry out some form of deception to achieve their political goals, always cloaking it behind the greater good for society. On the internet you get this feel or vibe that this war in Ukraine is sort of a football game. One side is cheering for the other instead of talking about the real human lives that are at stake here and potentially nuclear war that could get triggered if this war goes on. We've been very focussed on being critical of the US and its allies. I want to look at this from a different angle now. How do you differentiate between authentic and independent criticism and Russian propaganda? Dimitri, why don't you start?

DL: Look at the historical record. You know, I don't take anything that anybody involved in this conflict has to say at face value. Whether it's the Russian government, the Canadian government, my own government, the United States government, Ukraine. And I want to just say something in particular about Ukraine. You know, Joseph Borell, effectively the foreign minister of the EU, said recently that if the EU stopped arming Ukraine, it would fall within a matter of days. And then the German defence minister, Boris Pistorius, a couple of days later went even further and said, if we stop arming Ukraine, it will disappear tomorrow. Now, let's think about that. I'm a lawyer and I think about this in terms of motive, what kind of motives this creates. If you're a government, the Ukrainian government, and you are entirely dependent for your very existence upon external support of foreign governments, you're going to do everything you can because your lives depend upon it to inflame public opinion against your enemy. So the Ukrainian government and any government in the Ukrainian government's position would have this very same incentive. They have an incentive to inflame public opinion in the West against Russia. So even in the case of Ukraine, we treat their claims in the media as being effectively sacrosanct when in fact they have a powerful incentive to mislead us about what's actually happening in this war. With whichever source of information we're talking about we tested against the historical record. So I'll give a simple example. We're told by the Russian government there was a coup in Ukraine in 2014. I don't

take those claims at face value. What I do is, I do things like I listen to the recording of Victoria Nuland, a senior State Department official, and Geoffrey Pyatt, the former ambassador to Ukraine, in which Ms. Nuland chooses the next prime minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk. And I just ask people to think about this for a moment. Imagine that the facts were inverted and this was not a conversation between them, but it was a conversation between the foreign minister of Russia, Sergey Lavrov, and the Russian ambassador to the United States in 2016 when Trump was contesting the election against Clinton. And you heard Lavrov say, as Nuland said, Trump is the guy. Would anybody, if that recording came to light, doubt for one second that the Russian Federation had at a bare minimum, aggressively meddled in the internal affairs of the United States and more plausibly orchestrated or helped to orchestrate a coup? But when the United States government does it in Ukraine, even though the evidence is staring us in the face, we deny there was a coup altogether. And even George Friedman, the former CEO of Stratfor, which is closely tied, of course, to the US military industrial complex in a 2014 interview with Kommersant, said that this was the most blatant coup in history. So I don't trust Vladimir Putin or any leader to tell me the truth. I look at the historical record and it seems pretty damn clear to me that there was a coup in Ukraine in 2014 and the US government had a lot to do with it.

ZR: Jill, how do you differentiate for yourself between authentic, independent criticism and Russian propaganda?

JS: You know, like Dimitri, I take nothing at face value, and I am mindful of one of the famous quotes of Mike Pompeo as –what was his position? I think he was Secretary of state at the time, and this was in a public conference at one of the Texas University branches. And he basically said, you know, that our motto – he had been head of the CIA – our motto is: we do not lie, cheat and steal. And then he went on to say, well, actually we lie, cheat and steal. We have whole courses in it. Ha ha ha. You know, which got lots of laughs. But it was remarkable. It's probably the truest thing he has ever said. And he's not just speaking for the security services of the United States. I mean, this is what security services and press operations for all governments do. And we have to assume that they are all lying until proven otherwise. And what I find most helpful for myself is to simply hear both sides. Hear on both sides of the story and take a look at their evidence and just the nature of the story. And you can smell a rat when it's a rat. Not always, but much of the time. And what's so critical in my view, is not that we have to spend, you know, for everyday people, it's hard to get the time to do the research, but just hearing all sides, which is why the heavy hand of censorship is so intense right now, because the war machine does not want you to hear the other side, because simply to hear the other side undermines war propaganda. So, you know, I would just really encourage people to seek out the points of view that are being censored and red-labelled. And it's very important. There's that censorship organisation supposedly private – what is it called? I don't remember the name offhand, but it's attaching a red label to organisations like Consortium News for example, or MintPress and just trying to get them out of the way by sort of decertifying them and giving them the Scarlet letter. And it's just so important to hear

what they're saying and then think about it and then you begin to educate yourself. And, you know, it's like when the war in Iraq started and there was all the mania about weapons of mass destruction and, you know, public opinion really turned just as time went on and people were able to re-examine the arguments and the war was not going the way that the war mongers said it would, which is certainly happening in Ukraine. Truth will be out. If a discussion is allowed, truth is going to come out as well as, you know, the consequences of the war. And this just off the charts military spending is also really hitting home and public opinion is really shifting in a big way. So just by allowing democracy to take place and for a democratic discussion and debate to be held is going to continue to propel public opinion in a higher direction.

ZR: Another criticism that independent media networks or experts or just yourself receive is that we only criticise the West and never Russia. Do you think it is essential that we criticise all sides when it comes to a war and conflict and in this case Russia, in order to meet the standards of fairness? How do you view this criticism? Jill, let's start with you.

JS: I think it's really important that things be put in perspective. But yes, all parties need to be held accountable. The responsible, you know, commentators that I've heard, whether you're talking about Noam Chomsky or Chris Hedges or Jeffrey Sachs, for example, they always acknowledged, to my ear, that Russia is not above criticism and is not above blame, if you want to frame it that way. But they're trying to put the blame and responsibility in perspective. So if I can use my own words here and how I try to wrap this up so that people grasp that, yes, Russia's invasion or special operation, whatever you want to call it, Russian's assault on the eastern provinces of Ukraine and then beyond the eastern provinces is arguably illegal and it's murderous. A lot of people are dying because of this. On the other hand, this conflict did not begin in February of 2022, and that was simply the latest phase of what had begun in 2014 after the US supported coup, with lots of arms flowing in and training for the Ukrainians. We are to blame two here, by the way. That you had this conflict unleashed in which some 14,000 people had been killed in the eastern provinces, and that was like if you date the war or the conflict beginning as 2014. But arguably, you can go back much further to the late nineties when NATO began to move east in violation of the promise that was made to Gorbachev, that NATO was not going to move one inch to the east. And on that basis, Germany had been rearmed and reunited and so on. So that was a violation. But you can go back before then as well. The US has been expressing basically its military doctrine of full spectrum dominance, which is really an outright declaration of war against all countries who dare to be economic or military competitors with the United States. And that policy has been restated many times, certainly since 1991. But there are predecessors to it as well. Or you can look at the end of the Second World War, when the CIA brought Ukrainian Nazis back to the US and instigated a program of basically sabotage against Russians from within Ukraine and perhaps beyond Ukraine, too, I don't recall. But this is documented in official US documents that were part of an effort to hold Nazis accountable after the Second World War. And as part of this effort, which was funded and instigated by Congress – the historical record was

published and this material was held back because it was so just like shocking and jaw dropping that the CIA was collaborating with Ukrainian Nazis, brought them here to give them safe harbour and from an office in New York City were running sabotage in Ukraine against Russians. So how is that not a part of this ongoing conflict, call it a war or an irregular war, whatever you want to call it. But there are very deep roots here. And while it's abhorrent that Russian troops and air offences and so on are killing people in Ukraine, and they are and all war is to be condemned and abhorred, and all war is illegal and murderous, all war. But the war being conducted here by Russia is a very small piece of a much larger war which has clearly been instigated and propelled forward by the US for decades. Because while people are being killed in Ukraine, you know, the number of deaths that have resulted from the US so-called war on terror, post 9/11, is now estimated to be somewhere around five or 6 million, from that war alone. And then you have all the other wars, 68 regime change interventions since the Second World War, you know, from Vietnam to Chile to, you know, all over the place. But we have blood on our hands. We have just an ocean of blood on our hands. And Martin Luther King summarised it well when he said that my government is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world today, and that was in the 1960s. And it's even worse now. And it is wrong, in my view, to try to extract the conflict in Ukraine post 2022 and ignore this much larger mountain of murder taking place propelled by the United States and instigated over and over again by the United States. According to the Congressional Research Service, US military forces have actually conducted 351, I believe it is, military interventions in other countries in the past three decades alone. This is the problem. We are not going to solve this problem and its dire consequences for our economies around the world and for our survival and the actual physical danger of war and the progression to nuclear conflict, which should be front and centre in everyone's mind right now. Strictly focusing on the latest chapter of this latest conflict in which the US is engaged completely ignores the crisis that we should all feel like we are in the target hairs of – Ukraine above all – but all of us are in the target hairs and we need to fix this.

ZR: Dimitri, how do you view this? Do we have to criticise all sides in order to meet the standards of fairness?

DL: So I hear that argument a lot, Zain. And like Dr. Stein, I have so much to say about it. I don't even know where to begin. But let me try by pointing out, first of all, that I've written dozens of articles about this war. I've done dozens of interviews about this war. The very first one that I did, the very first article I wrote, which you can find on my website, is called "The Art of Peace requires us to see the World through the Eyes of our Enemy". The first part of that article is me approaching the justification given for the invasion through the eyes of a lawyer and examining the legality, as I see it, under international law of the Russian military intervention in February of last year. And the conclusion that I came to was that it was likely a violation of the United Nations Charter. And like all war, as Dr. Stein said, it should be condemned. I condemn all war unequivocally, and I did that. Now, it's true that I also, in that article, spent quite a bit of time talking about some of the things that Dr. Stein just talked

about, the history of the conflict and the provocations, the endless decades long provocations of the Russian government and the Soviet government. And, you know, I did that for two reasons. First of all, I don't know how you can solve a problem without, first of all, identifying the causes of the problem. And secondly, even within our own justice system, you know, somebody commits a crime, they're convicted. You've heard probably, laypersons have heard of something called victim impact statements. If you know anything about the criminal justice system, the accused, the guilty parties, friends, relatives can come forward and testify about things that were happening in that person's life, which precipitated criminal behaviour and so forth. Courts take this into account in determining what the appropriate response is of the criminal justice system to the crime. So this is not new to Western society, to Western legal systems. This is fundamental to our legal system. Are there extenuating circumstances? And that's one thing that we I think it behoves us to do. But looking more broadly at this whole question and I wrote another article which I titled perhaps un-diplomatically "Awahataboutist Response to the useful Idiots of the Anglo-American Empire". I'm sorry to have to say this, but the people out there on the left in the progressive community who are running around focusing their ire upon the Russian Federation and the Chinese government, all the official enemies of the United States are giving ammunition to the imperialists and the regime change scam artists who have taken over our society and our politics. When our voices on the left are directed at the official enemies of the United States, we are exploited and manipulated by the imperialists to pursue their agenda. What do they do? They look at us and they say, Look at these leftists out there criticising the Russian Federation. Surely everything that we're doing to undermine it, it's government, must be justified. Well, I refused to make myself a useful idiot of the Anglo American Empire, number one. Number two, my goal as a journalist and as a public commentator, I think, is to talk about the things that are not being spoken about in the mainstream discourse. I'm trying to reintroduce some balance into the conversation. We hear about the evils of the Russian government and the Chinese government non-stop. We have been bombarded relentlessly with toxicity about the Russian government and the Chinese government and other official enemies of the West. We're not told about extenuating circumstances. For example, why do over 80% of the Russians, according to Levada, support Vladimir Putin? Well, take a look at World Bank statistics. Look at the unemployment rate. Look at the poverty rate. Look at the longevity of Russians over the last 20 years and compare the way Russians lived and the conditions under which they lived in the 1990s under Boris Yeltsin to where they are today. There are objective reasons for that support. Yes, there's propaganda. That is a factor. But the Russians who lived through the nineties and the horrors of that era and the kleptocracy of that era look quite fondly upon the rule of Vladimir Putin, because things improved dramatically for them, the vast majority of them. These are things that are not being said in the Western media and it behoves us to see them. And the last thing I want to say is and this is something that Noam Chomsky has said far more eloquently than I ever could. You know, this government here in Canada purports to speak in my name. The Russian government doesn't purport to speak in my name. I'm responsible for my government. I get to vote here. I have a right to contribute to political parties here, and my government is complicit in some of the worst crimes going

on in the world today and in a policy towards the Ukraine war that threatens the future of our children. I don't think that, you know, the Russian government gives a damn about what I have to say. But maybe, just maybe, I can have a positive impact on what my own government is doing.

ZR: Not just in your name, but also with your taxes... So therefore, I would like to divert the conversation to another area where our names and taxes are being used. The increased militarisation that we are seeing in the West. For example, Germany established a €100 billion fund to boost its military, whereas French President Macron has called for a European Union air defence system to protect us from a Russian attack. We also saw one of the largest air exercises in NATO's history under German leadership that involved 10,000 military personnel, 250 aircraft from 25 countries. This scenario simulated military exercise where Germany got attacked from the east and invoked Article five to call for its assistance. Furthermore, NATO's Secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg, recently met with German Chancellor after this exercise and said, let me quote him here: "From my own experience as a politician, as a minister of finance and Prime minister, I know that it's never easy to increase defence spending because if you spend more on defence, it's something less, there's less for health care, for education, for all important things. But the reality is that when we live in a more dangerous world, we just have to pay the price or invest in more defence. Because without peace and security, all of the things we are striving for, such as climate change, prosperity, we would not be able to address them if we don't ensure peace and security." Dimitri, How do you assess the statement by Jens Stoltenberg? Should peace and security receive more priority than social spending?

DL: Well, I contested the premise of the question. We're not enhancing our peace and security by military spending. We're undermining our peace and security. You know, every time we develop a new weapons system, every time we place missiles closer and closer to Russia, potentially nuclear tipped missiles, we're creating a danger for our society. We are creating a potential for a nuclear holocaust, the ultimate catastrophe befalling humanity. And so, in fact, we're not making ourselves more secure by this military spending. We're making ourselves less secure. We're creating hostility, tension, and distrust. And secondly, fundamentally, I don't know how anybody with a straight face and I have to say this about the German Green Party, even though I am a Green, a lifelong Green, that these policies, which the German Green Party are supporting, are consistent with the core values of the Green Party. Those core values include sustainability. And we know just how destructive to the environment the military industrial complex is and non-violence. Non-violence is at the heart of who we are as Greens and the beauty of those core values of the Green Party is that they enhance our security, not only our prosperity, not only our humanity, but our security. We need to dial down the military spending to make our world a safer place, not ratcheted up.

ZR: Jill, would you like to address that? Is peace and security more important than social spending?

JS: Yeah, I likewise reject the premise here that we're talking about security and peace. You know, weapons do not create peace. Weapons create more war. And this policy of \$115 billion and counting, spent poured into Ukraine, the majority of which is funding weapons and military training. The notion that that is making things more peaceful, I mean, this is just pouring gasoline on a fire which is already exploding and threatens to engulf us all. The nuclear risks here cannot be overstated. There is a misconception – I just want to say a word about that, which is that there's a misconception that a nuclear war would be over there, you know, and nuclear wars don't happen over there. The explosion might, but the consequences, which is where, you know, the real danger and destruction is that you unleash nuclear winter and it doesn't take much to do that. And public education so badly needs to happen around this because you have our mis-leaders. I don't want to call them leaders, I'll call them mis-leaders who are recklessly playing a game of nuclear chicken here and discounting the potential to trigger, you know, an exchange of so-called tactical nuclear weapons. Well, tactical nuclear weapons include weapons up to the size and far beyond actually, the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings, which killed hundreds of thousands of people in one fell swoop. And it only takes an exchange of about 100 or so of those tactical level nuclear weapons to trigger a really massive nuclear winter that could kill off, approaching a billion people and then go beyond that quickly. And the problem is, once you begin with nuclear exchanges, it's very hard to stop the slippery slope. And you've just ratcheted up the conflict into the nuclear zone. And the way that nuclear weapons are targeted these days, it's believed there's a lot of secrecy surrounding that, but it's believed by experts who follow this stuff, and I'm quoting actually from an article, a report by International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, who are people who've been following this stuff for decades. According to their analysis, cities now, major cities are typically targeted with the equivalent of like 20 megatons worth of explosive. And that's not from a single bomb, but it's from a couple of them. And cities are now targeted by several missiles and several bombs. That alone hitting one city at the current level of firepower would be enough to kill off something like 2 billion people. Almost half the world's population would die from the nuclear winter. And nuclear winter is when debris gets kicked up, it goes up into the upper atmosphere, the temperature that is reached like within a millionth of a second is millions of degrees, like as hot as the sun for miles surrounding the area of explosion. I mean, people need to know the details of what happens here because it will really put fear and loathing into – and bring it into focus about how urgently we need to shut down this whole system that is driving us recklessly towards that. And you have things like public service announcements in New York City that say in the event of a nuclear explosion, go inside, you know, change your clothes, wash off and stay inside until someone contacts you. And that may be a while because your health care providers may all be dead. They're just like these ludicrous statements. It's like duck and cover back in the fifties in the sixties, which I grew up in. And it makes about as much sense. And the fact that our policymakers, our leaders actually believe this stuff is just mind boggling. I mean, I think we're all in the target hairs here. And basically we need to really shut down this process that we're all being swept up in right now, which is extremely

dangerous to us all.

ZR: Let me make a few counterarguments to this nuclear catastrophe that is voiced by independent experts, such as you both. So in the mainstream media, it is usually argued that, number one, Russia will never use a nuclear bomb or anything of that sort, because even though it's threatening the whole world that it may do so, it would never. Because it would be the very first country to be affected by a change of direction in the wind and be suffering from radioactive waste. That's the first argument. And the second argument that is made is, look, when we were sending defensive weapons, people were warning us that this could lead to a nuclear confrontation, nothing happened. Then we started sending just basic offensive weapons and nothing happened. And then advanced weapons and now we can send fighter jets because Russia doesn't react to all of this. And there's much more room for flexibility. So how do you address these two arguments that are voiced strongly in the German media? Dimitri, let's start with you.

DL: Well, first of all, Russia doesn't have to use the nukes close to its border. It might drop one on Washington. They might drop one in London. It might drop one in Paris. So I don't know that we should take any solace whatsoever from the idea that some of the nuclear fallout might drift back to Russia. Now, having said that, I don't think the Russian government has any desire at all to use nuclear weapons. But they've said very clearly that if they feel that this state is existentially threatened, that they will do that. And I think if you look at the behaviour of the Russian government over the years, it does not generally bluff. It was not bluffing when it said Ukraine's entry into NATO was a red line. I think that has been proven in abundance. It was not bluffing when it said that it wouldn't allow the government of Bashar al Assad in Syria to be overthrown by jihadists who were supported by the West and by its proxies in the Middle East. And we saw how that played out. And the idea that the Russian government hasn't responded to these constant escalations, I think, is just basically nonsense. It most certainly has. So let's take an example of the attack on the Kerch Bridge, which joins mainland Russia in Crimea and was a major piece of infrastructural development following the annexation of Crimea in 2014 that Russia undertook. The Russian government said this was a red line and it would escalate. Well, guess what it did. After it was attacked, it began to systematically destroy the Ukrainian power system almost immediately. And there will be escalations now, we're talking about US military equipment being used by people who have been identified, even in the Western media, as Russian neo-Nazis who've aligned themselves with the Ukrainian government to attack the region of Belgorod. What is the Russian government doing in response to that? It said this was a red line. If you use American weapons to attack our territory. Its positioning, apparently, Wagner and Akhmat military forces and commandos in the Belgorod region to enter into Ukraine and create a buffer zone. Actually attacking Ukrainian forces in the north and pushing them back from the Belgorod region, which obviously would entail, and they have the capacity to pull this mission off, which obviously would entail Ukraine losing even more of its territory and suffering far more casualties. So Russia has consistently responded with escalation to our escalations, but it

hasn't yet responded with the ultimate escalation. I'm not willing to play Russian roulette with the future of our children, and neither should any sane person.

ZR: Jill, would you like to respond?

JS: Yes, I agree with everything Dimitri said. Another case in point here is the behaviour of the United States when the tables were turned. Remember, we have nuclear bombs in the air that were basically ready to drop, that were sort of recirculating in position when we discovered that Russian nuclear missiles were in Cuba. So we went into an immediate launch for nuclear war. So we did it. And what makes us think that Russia would not do it when we've already done it ourselves. And I just heard yesterday that China is working with Cuba on a mutual military training facility in Cuba. I mean, I haven't heard yet what the US response is to this, but you can imagine that plenty of sparks are going to fly and the US is going to go ballistic about this and will stop at nothing to ward it off. So it's just laughable. The US, how are they anything but a bully in the schoolyard when they're just demonstrating such utterly blatant hypocrisy. We can do this, but you can't. You won't. You won't even imagine that you would do it. I mean, our leadership is so corrupt and degenerate and brainless and clueless that, what can I say? You know, this is just evidence that this rapacious oligarchy has kind of lost its mind. And that's why I am a political animal, because I've learned in my struggles over the years that you don't solve these things by just narrowly targeting the issue itself. It's really important to address the power structure that enables this kind of Russian roulette to be played with all of our lives. It's absolutely unacceptable. And we have to say no to it and fight for a larger transition and, in my view, fight in concert with other struggles for peace and justice. Because divided, we are conquered. But unified, we are an unstoppable force.

ZR: I want to switch gears again and move to some recent military developments taking place in Ukraine. According to British intelligence sources, Ukraine's counteroffensive is progressing very slowly and there's high casualties on both sides, Russia and Ukraine. Despite all of the military aid and equipment that Ukraine is receiving from the Western nations. Ukraine claims it has reconquered several villages, whereas Russia claims to have thwarted large scale Ukraine counteroffensive. Dimitri, how do you see this counteroffensive playing out? Will Ukraine be able to take over its lost territories and drive the Russian army out.

DL: Let me preface my answer by pointing out that I'm not a military expert, so whatever I have to say should be assessed with that background. But every indication that I've seen and I spend far more time than is good for my health trying to follow the course of this war is that this offensive is a massive failure and a suicide mission, frankly. The villages that have been taken, as I understand, and it's a very small number of them are tiny. They're in the Gray Zone and they were already abandoned in anticipation of the offensive. And this has to be like the most predictable offensive in the history of offensives. You know, Western powers have been

telling us for months, for months that there was going to be an offensive. And they told us essentially what the target was. The target was to sever the land bridge that Russia has to Crimea in the south eastern part of the country. And sure enough, that's what they did. And the Russians, as it has been widely reported, spent six months preparing for this offensive. And there are extraordinarily effective, powerful trench works and fortifications and tank traps and minefields in the very area where this offensive is being pursued right now. And Russia has trained, it is mobilised, it's brought into the battle hundreds of thousands of additional soldiers. And I think the most shocking thing arguably about this whole war was that in the lead up to this offensive, there were articles coming out, I believe one in Politico, which said that the success of this offensive would determine Joe Biden's legacy. Whether his reputation as someone who was so invested in this war would be saved, vindicated or ruined. That's what this offensive is actually being conducted for, the reputation of Joe Biden, not for the well-being of the Ukrainian people. As far as I can tell, as a non-military expert, the sensible thing to do with those military assets that have been gifted to the Ukrainian government is to put them in defensive positions and prevent any further advances by Russian forces. Rather than thrown against this brick wall of Russian resistance, at which point Ukraine will be so weak that it will no longer be able to resist a further advance all the way to the Dnieper river. And the last thing I want to say about this is this nonsense we're being told that all of this weaponry is designed to strengthen the negotiating position of the Ukrainian government. Well, first of all, there's no indication that the West in its proxy in Ukraine has any desire to negotiate at all. But secondly, its negotiating position is getting weaker by the day. It lost Bakhmut. It was the bloodiest, most costly battle of the war to date, and it completely lost that battle. Russia now and Volodymyr Zelensky himself said that if Russia took Bakhmut, the way was open to Slavyansk and Kramatorsk, the last two remaining major communities in the Donbass. So let's be clear here. Let's be real. The offensive actions of the Ukrainian government are weakening its negotiating position. They are military suicide. There's no military logic to them. And they're being done simply to try to vindicate the depraved policies of the Biden administration and its Western supporters.

ZR: Jill, how do you view the recent offensive that is going on? Do you think Ukraine has any chance of driving out the Russian army?

JS: Absolutely not. And I agree with everything that Dimitri just said. I don't have a lot to add to that, except kind of the perspective from inside the US that this is part of the public relations campaign in anticipation of the 2024 presidential election, which is kind of a zombie election. And Biden is being propped up as someone who must be protected from debates who cannot be trusted to put a sentence together, let alone defend his foreign policy. And the fact that the Democratic Party is rallying around him and just mindlessly pursuing this election strategy just reflects, again on how really degenerate our ruling structure is. The Democrats who have long pretended to be the lesser evil are leading the charge into war, nuclear war, censorship, have betrayed labour, have abandoned their promises on the climate and on health care, for example. So it's just another indication of what a shambles our

political system is in, which has been hijacked by not only the war profiteers, but every other major industry, powerful economic force out there. It has really become a laughingstock increasingly, once you are outside of the echo chamber of the political establishment. Our political system is a laughingstock among its own people. And a very encouraging poll I saw the other day, which is completely unprecedented. Not only have people been shedding their political affiliations over the course of many years, but now, you know, to where those who identify as independents are a substantial majority, but a recent poll done by The Economist and yougov.com showed that now those who say they would seriously consider voting outside of the duopoly, the corporate parties of war and Wall Street, that's now at 45%, those who say they would not consider such a thing is now down to 25%. So the tables are really turning. We're in a very dynamic political moment right now. And it's in the words of Alice Walker, the biggest way people give up power is by not knowing we have it to start with. There's a lot of political power out there right now, which is kind of looking for a vehicle to attach to. And whether you're fighting on the war or you're fighting for a more transformative change to put power back in the hands of people and out of the hands of rapacious oligarchs, it's a time to just really stand up and and persevere and not take their propaganda at face value and to know really what a joke. You think it's a joke and guess what? Most other people do, too.

ZR: Russian President Putin was recently visiting the African continent, and at the African Union conference he stated that he is open for negotiations as long as the security interests of all actors are taken into account. Some argue, though, that it is impossible at this point politically to offer negotiations because the price that Ukraine has paid from all the atrocities and even on the Russian side, the price that their soldiers have paid, it is politically impossible for Russia or Ukraine to come to a consensus and have some sort of negotiated settlement. Dimitri, do you think this sort of position is true?

DL: First of all, when people are dying by the hundreds of thousands and the future of humanity is being probed by a potential nuclear exchange between these military behemoths I think at a bare minimum, we have an obligation to try. You know, we have an obligation and this is just what any sane, rational person would do given the stakes. You would sit down at the table and see where the discussion leads. But amazingly, the depraved lunatics and I couldn't agree more with Jill's comments on the absolutely appalling level of leadership we're seeing in the West today. I mean, the lunatics have taken over the asylum. I'm sorry. And these people won't even sit down at the table and have a discussion with Vladimir Putin. There was a discussion that took place that reportedly, very early on after the invasion, where it was mediated, as I recall, by the Turkish government and also the Israeli government was involved. And they came very close, according to many reports, to striking a deal which would not have involved, as I understand it, the ceding of those four oblast in south eastern Ukraine to Russia. And what happened, according to Naftali Bennett the US and British government, stopped it. Boris Johnson has been widely reported by those who actually want to know the truth, flew off to Kiev while these negotiations were happening, and he's reported

by the Ukrainian media to have told Zelensky that if he did a deal, it would not be supported by the West and that if he didn't do a deal, they would arm him to the teeth and give them the means necessary to defeat the Russian Federation, which is, of course, a pipe dream. So we actually came close to a peace deal which could have been done, I believe, on better terms than would be available to the government of Ukraine now. But why wouldn't we at least sit down and try? All wars involve horrific violence, atrocities, yet all wars eventually come to an end. Somehow people sit at the table, even in South Africa where, you know, the black population, the indigenous population was subjected to apartheid for decades, a brutal, monstrous apartheid system, they managed to negotiate with their enemies, sit down and move on and create a relatively prosperous and democratic country without continuing any bloodshed, without even achieving bloodshed on a massive scale. Even in that context, they were able to sit down at the table with their mortal enemies and negotiate a peace. We can do that here. It behoves us to try, and it is the height of irresponsibility that our governments won't even try.

ZR: Jill, in your view, is it possible politically to still hammer out a deal given the price that both countries have paid?

JS: Well, the key word there is politically. And I would say, this, again, is a symptom of our degenerate, lunatic political system. And I think our leaders may be speaking for themselves when they say it's just not possible to negotiate peace. And that's another reason why, you know, to put it bluntly, the bums need to be thrown out. Because if the interests of everyday people and our current generations, let alone our future generations, is to count it all, they are the ones whose will should be implemented here, not those who profit from their investments in the war industry and the weapons industry. And the weapons industry is famous for its \$2.5 billion worth of, I think, lobbying expenses in the past ten years, something like that. But, you know, they throw a lot of money into this, which goes especially to the heads of committees that control these budgets. And so they have enormous vested interest in continuing to prop up the system. So, of course, they're not going, who was it? I forget the name of the novelist who said, you can't teach a man something when his livelihood depends on not knowing it. And that's kind of like the fog that these so-called, I would call, the mis-leaders are operating in. So they may be incapable, but we the people are not. And if that reasoning held true that because you're losing, you can never negotiate, there would never be an end to any war. And to my mind the possibilities here are transformed. The minute everyday people begin to understand that we are all in the crosshairs here. This is not a conflict somewhere else, because the reality of nuclear weapons and nuclear winter, all wars now, especially those between superpowers, are effectively global and they are happening in your backyard. And they could just blow you to smithereens here and starve you to death in a moment. That's really where we are. And once people realise this is us we're talking about, it's not those poor Ukrainians or those foolish Russians, every one of us is at stake here and then suddenly the whole ball of wax changes when people realise that we are all victims of – we're already victims right now, just in terms of the two thirds of our budget that is basically

being spent on either militarism abroad or it's contamination here at home in terms of our security agencies and the Department of Homeland Security and the FBI and all that and the Department of [In]Justice, the amount of money that's drained so that we are not keeping children out of poverty. We're throwing huge numbers of people off of basic food stamps, you know. We're not renewing emergency housing protections and eviction moratoriums and things like that. None of that. This facade of a debt ceiling proposal was really just an austerity, a vehicle for austerity. There was nothing. It was all about raising the spending for the military and cutting it effectively when you consider the costs of inflation. Expenses on human needs are being cut substantially across the board and then specific programs that are being defunded as well. While you know the military is going crazy, this is not about constraining the debt. It's really about funnelling our tax dollars into the hands of the war profiteers and putting our lives on the firing line while we're at it. And as people begin to understand the actual stakes of this emergency that we are in, the discussion is really going to change in a big way.

ZR: I want to finish this interview with something we talked about off camera, about the activities that are happening in your political lives. Jill, you mentioned Cornel West joining the Green Party. And Dimitri, you mentioned you're on a speaking tour. Let's start with Jill. Talk about Cornel West joining the Green Party and running for president and what this means and what is your role in all of this?

JS: So Cornel West had launched a presidential campaign not that long ago. It seems like years, but it was like a week and a half ago something like that, two weeks at most. He launched his presidential campaign initially with the People's Party. And I think, you know, he hasn't really had a lot of political experience, a lot of policy experience and a lot of organising experience, but not really within the conventional forms of political combat and didn't realise how much basically he needed a party that could actually get him on the ballot while still supporting an agenda for peace and justice outside of the in his words, "seeking to break the back of the duopoly". Just break the duopoly, it's over and it's time to really challenge it. So he began to understand why the Greens just had an enormous, benefit to offer in terms of our experience actually doing ballot access, having a fair number of ballot lines, almost half the number that we need to start with and so on. So he announced very suddenly, well, I should say, after some of us Greens talk to each other and saw an interview in particular on Democracy Now, where he was kind of blindsided by some of these practical considerations, I called Chris Hedges and Chris agreed. And, Chris has kind of been an advisor to Cornel all along, and we all talked on the phone the following day along with Ajamu Baraka, who was my running mate in 2016. And, you know, it really didn't take convincing. It was like there is a practical option here that can really elevate this campaign to the level of competition and visibility and credibility that this needs. This is really that transformative moment that we have been building towards. And for someone of Cornel's stature and eloquence to come forward as a spokesperson, really as a leader for this transformation is just like amazing. And I keep saying to myself, wow, am I dreaming? Has

this really happened? So I'm very involved in kind of the acute rush right now to fully transition that campaign. It takes weeks, months to develop the infrastructure for the campaign and so we are really on fast forward right now to develop an alternative infrastructure. But meanwhile, Cornel just keeps going because he's on autopilot. He's a really powerful voice and he's been covered by the media all over the place. People are flocking to his website. You know, we have about 250 volunteers right now just in the last few days just to do ballot access, you know, and thousands of volunteers who are signing up. And the URL for that is cornelwest24.com. And I'd say, join the team.

ZR: Thanks, Jill. Dimitri, talk about your tour that you're making, the speaking tour you were talking about.

DL: I want to say, first of all, that I think that Dr. West's emergence as a nominee for the Green Party is the most exciting thing to happen in Western politics in the last six or seven years. I really have to go back to when Jill and Ajamu ran, you know, I was very inspired by that campaign. Dr. West is an extraordinary candidate. It's not just the American people who would benefit tremendously from him making a strong run. Everybody in the West would benefit. Everybody in the world would benefit from a strong run by Cornel West, who has been nominated as the Green Party candidate. I can't vote in the United States. I'm not a US citizen. I can't contribute politically. But I'm more than happy to give my time and energy to the Cornel West campaign, as should we all. Here north of the border when I returned from Russia recently, peace groups around the country and principally the Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War, arguably the leading peace group in Canada, they put together a national speaking tour about the Ukraine war, and it focuses on the concept of citizen diplomacy and what I learned in my trip to Russia and how we might find peace and a way out of this terrible mess we're in. I started the tour in my hometown of London, Ontario, two nights ago. I'm here in Hamilton today, that's where I spoke last night. And I'll be in Toronto tomorrow. And I'll be in nine more Canadian cities between now and early July, including Vancouver, Victoria, Regina, Winnipeg, Montreal, Ottawa, Halifax and Fredericton. And so far we've had a really great turnout. The level of enthusiasm I've seen has really been inspiring and moving and makes me feel that this is more than worth it. We also had 25 people show up last night who were very strong supporters of the Ukrainian government and they wanted to make themselves heard and they did. But we actually had a respectful conversation and I welcome that. I think it's important to have this dialogue. So if you're in Canada, you have the opportunity to attend one of these events. I encourage you to come out whether or not you agree with what I've had to say.

ZR: Dimitri Lascaris, Jill Stein, it was a pleasure to have you both on the show. Thank you so much for your time today.

JS: It's been an honour. Thank you.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. An important announcement. We are currently on our summer break. Not a lot of videos will be coming out for the next 2 to 3 weeks, as you must have noticed. So please bear with us because as soon as the summer's over, we will be picking up on producing 3 to 4 videos every week. And if you're watching this video, make sure to subscribe to our alternative channels on Rumble and Telegram. YouTube, which is owned by Google, has a long history of shadow banning and censoring our content. So we are asking all our viewers as a precaution to join us on these alternative channels. And if you want us to continue with our independent and non-profit journalism, make sure to donate via Patreon, PayPal or our bank account. I am your host Zain Raza, see you guys next time.

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