



## **Vijay Prashad - The Cold War with China, Coups in Africa, Ukraine & BRICS**

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**Zain Raza (ZR):** Thank you for tuning in today and welcome back to another episode of The Source. I'm your host Zain Raza. And today I'll be talking to journalist and historian Vijay Prashad about global politics and the war in Ukraine. Vijay Prashad is the author of more than 30 books, some of them being "The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan and the fragility of U.S. Power" and "Washington Bullets: A history of the CIA, Coups and Assassinations." Vijay, welcome back to the show.

**Vijay Prashad (VP):** It's a pleasure to be with you!

**ZR:** I want to start this interview with China. Recent developments that may indicate that Europe, in particular Germany, is trying to take a more hawkish stance toward China despite being major trading partners. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen last week in a State of the Union address, accused China of unfair trade practices. She claimed that China has been distorting the European market by flooding it with state subsidised solar panels and electric vehicles, and announced that the EU Commission will launch an anti-subsidy investigation to look into this matter. Then the German foreign Minister, Annalena Baerbock, went on Fox News recently in which she stated while talking about the war on Ukraine and let me quote her here: "If Putin were to win this war, what sign would that be for other dictators in the world, like Xi, the Chinese president?" She later went on the tagesschau, Germany's primetime news channel, to justify her stance by stating that China is a one party communist system with massive human rights violations and a threat to other states such as the Philippines.

How do you evaluate these developments? Is Europe drifting away from China, and what significance does this have on global stability?

**VP:** Well, let's start with the foreign minister of Germany because her comment was the more general comment. And then we can get the Ursula von der Leyen and the more specific issue about subsidies. Okay? So let's go to the big picture.

I mean, what am I to say to the German foreign minister? I thought this was an extremely undiplomatic statement that she made to throw around a term like dictator. You know, it's not a word used lightly. Now I understand that Germany has its own uncomfortable history with dictators. And it has only partially reflected on its own ugly past and sometimes forgets that it has this history within it. You know, and then without actually acknowledging its own past, is pretty arrogant towards other countries. But having said that, let's bracket that out. Is China a dictatorship? Interesting question. There are 1.4 billion people in China. There are 95 million people who belong to the Communist Party. In my opinion, the Communist Party is an extremely diverse organisation. There are people with a variety of opinions. There are people who in fact are neoliberals who would want to have close relations with Germany and so on. There are people who are on the Maoist left who want to have a more aggressive stance, an anti-imperialist position and so on. I've travelled a lot in China, met a lot of people involved in Chinese politics one way or the other. It's a pretty thriving society and country. The other day I was reading on Facebook and Ingar Solty, who is a leading person in dealing in the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, wrote that he had made a long journey in China and he said, "We in Europe have to really reconsider the way we look at China in this one dimensional way." I thought that was a very interesting statement. I agree with Ingar Solty. He is close to the Die Linke. I hope very much that that view is there as even a minority position within the German political establishment. This kind of loose, undiplomatic statement saying Xi Jinping is a dictator when he's the leader of a party of 95 million people, that's a lot bigger of a political party than Mrs. Baerbock's party, frankly. You know, when she talks about whether there's a political settlement in the country of China, is there a political settlement in Germany? It strikes me, Zain, and I may be completely wrong in this, but it strikes me that in Germany, the elites are not listening to the people. I mean, the people, for instance, would like to see Germany move towards helping a peace agenda in Ukraine so that Germany can get back to having a half decent economy, not wanting to accelerate a conflict with China. Seems to me Annalena Baerbock is taking orders more from Washington, D.C. than from the German people. So let's talk about democracy and things like that in a serious way. After all, she made those comments on Fox News, not a reputable place to talk about these matters.

Now, the question of human rights violations. Okay, let's open a fair and frank discussion about human rights violations. Let's be honest and clear about these things. I don't think anybody is hiding anything. But then let's open the book on everything. Let's talk about the role of human rights violations that have gone unpunished in Afghanistan and in Iraq. The role of Germany in Afghanistan. Let's open that file. Let's talk in general then. I know that when I say things like this, people say, oh, you're a whataboutist? You don't want to face up to Xinjiang, You change the subject to Afghanistan? No, my friend, I'm not saying that. I'm talking to the German foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, who can easily open a file and say, look, you know, Germany wants to take the high moral ground on human rights. We want to be able to criticise China. So we are going to open the book on human rights violations of German troops in Afghanistan. As far as I know Germany has never opened an investigation on its role in human rights violations during the war on terror. Did any German

collude with moving Afghan citizens to Guantanamo? I don't think there's ever been an investigation. So I don't want to have a high official of the German government pretend to have the high moral ground on human rights until they clean up their own shop. This is called the Augean stables being cleaned up or if you're a Christian, this is called Jesus going into the temple and saying no shops inside the temple. First clean out your own temple Annalena Baerbock then start lecturing the world. That's as far as that is concerned.

When you bring up Mrs. Von der Leyen, this is a controversial person in many respects. But let's leave her own personal controversies aside. The question of state intervention in the economy is a curious one for a European to talk about. Let's talk about Airbus. Airbus is a European subsidised project and therefore has an enormous advantage over commercial aircraft around the world. Boeing in the United States is utterly state subsidised through arms purchases by the US government. There are different ways for the state to subsidise industry. In Europe agriculture is subsidised. You know, this is the reason why India, Brazil, South Africa started the IBSA grouping at Cancun, Mexico in 2002/2003 because of the state subsidy of European agriculture. Frankly, Mrs. Von der Leyen, everybody subsidises their economies. Every state intervenes. In Europe, for instance, the states intervene to build roads, to build ports, to build infrastructure that advantages industry. It is silly to say that China has got a state subsidy in the green sector. Every country in the world is subsidising the green sector. So this is a trivial ideological statement, it is not fact based Zain. That's the main point. Okay with Annalena Baerbock we can talk about whether Germany has a high moral ground to be critical of any country and with Mrs. Von der Leyen as far as the European Union is concerned, we can question whether she's talking facts or ideology. In my opinion, she is on a trip on ideology. It's a fact-free discussion.

**ZR:** Let us divert our attention to Ukraine and focus on the 78th United Nations General Assembly, in which the issue of Ukraine was a central issue. When it came to Ukraine, United States President Joe Biden stated in his speech and let me quote an excerpt here, quote: "But I ask you this. If we abandon the core principles of the United Nations Charter to appease an aggressor, can any member state in this body feel confident that they are protected? If we allow Ukraine to be carved up, is the independence of any nation secure?" Unquote.

Brazil's president, on the other hand, Lula da Silva, stated, and let me quote an excerpt here too quote, "We do not underestimate the difficulties of achieving peace, but no solution will be lasting if it is not based on dialog. I have reiterated that work needs to be done to create space for negotiations. A lot is invested in weapons and little in development" Unquote.

Given that the U.S. has spent €42 billion and Germany €17 billion since 2022 in supporting Ukraine, and also the fact that Ukraine has made territorial gains recently, for example, in the East in Bakhmut where it recaptured the village of Andriivka, and in the South in

Zaporizhzhya in Robotne, don't you think it is unwise now to settle for dialog and negotiations, as Brazil's President outlined at the UN?

**VP:** Well, it depends what we're talking about. In any battle and those who have covered battles, you know, if you've covered the war in Iraq or otherwise you know that it is very hard to talk about front lines and gains, sorry, not Iraq, Afghanistan. Iraq was a separate matter. Iraq was bombed so viciously by the United States that the Iraqi army decamped and became a guerrilla force. It wasn't a straightforward battle. It was a guerilla insurgency against the U.S. occupation. But in Afghanistan, when you tracked this valley, that valley, that road, this road and so on, it became clear that gains are hard to measure. Ukraine had announced a major counter-offensive. It was supposed to, in fact, beat the Russian army back to the Donbas and in fact, cross into the Donbas region. That has not happened. These are minor gains. The death toll is so dramatic of Ukrainian soldiers and Russian soldiers that anybody who talks about territorial gains has lost their mind. Ukraine is desperately trying to get weapons from anywhere around the world to resupply itself and so on. It's eager to get more NATO arms, for instance. There was a piece recently written about how Pakistan made a [arms] deal to get an IMF deal, which is a very bad deal. This is terrible negotiating by the Pakistani government. They got a terrible deal with the IMF and they apparently secretly sent weapons to Ukraine. All of this is going on at the same time as Biden and the Europeans are eager to continue to prosecute the war.

Now, it's clear that nobody can win this conflict, okay? Why do we know that? There's only two ways for this war to end. Number one, somebody wins. The West is just not going to allow the Russians to win. It's not going to happen. If there are any gains by the Russians, they're going to redouble supply of the Ukrainians and Ukrainians are going to die in large numbers not to make any territorial gains, but to prevent Russia from winning. And it's not even clear what Russia's winning means, because as far as the Russians have said that if they have control over the Donbas and a land corridor to Crimea, that's all that they're interested in. They are not interested in taking Kiev, but maybe they are interested in knocking out this government. I don't know what their actual war aims are but the West is not going to allow them to prevail. On the other side, Russia is not going to allow the West to prevail and they may escalate to nuclear. That is unimaginable. We don't want that. So, in fact, Zain, a reasonable, sane person would say nobody can win this conflict and I think Lula da Silva and others are reasonably sane people, unlike Biden, unlike, you know, the European heads of government who I think have lost their minds here. So nobody can win. Therefore, you have to have a diplomatic process. Well, what is the diplomatic process going to lead to? It's very, very clear that Ukraine is not going to be able to take back the Donbas region. You know, that was really mishandled by the Ukrainian government from the 2010s right up to the invasion by the Russians. It was superbly badly handled. I mean, they had a problem with the Russian minority. They handled it badly. They handled it in a Ukrainian nationalist way. I think they lost the Donbas. It's not going to come back unless they want to occupy it and hold it as a kind of occupied zone. I don't think they're going to be able to take Crimea. Crimea itself was

always a doubtful part of Ukraine. And because the Ukrainians keep shutting off the water to Crimea, it's unlikely the Russians are going to be able to accept that their land corridor will be given back, which includes quite a swath of Ukrainian territory. So I don't know what the diplomatic space for manoeuvre is. Does Zelenskyy believe that because the British and others are behind him 100%, that he can actually win? That's a delusion. And that delusion is preventing diplomacy. I very much agree with the African Union, with the Brazilians, with the Chinese, with the Indian proposals. I agree with all of them. They're all trying to say, come to the table, you can't win. Nobody can win this. You got to negotiate. And negotiation might mean that the Russians have to tolerate the government of Zelenskyy in Kiev. They're not going to be able to overthrow the government. And the Ukrainians are going to have to tolerate that they lost the Donbas and they might have to concede a land corridor to Crimea. If they want that land corridor back, they're going to have to make verifiable guarantees that they won't cut off water to the Crimea. The Russians had to build a bridge since 2014 to supply Crimea with water by tanker, a very expensive proposition. If the Ukrainians say, look, okay, give us back the land corridor and we will guarantee water. We'll make a verifiable agreement through the United Nations, whatever it is. Then maybe the Russians will accept it. But all of that is diplomacy. And right now, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the United States are all blocking diplomacy. And that, I think, is a concern.

**ZR:** In late August, the BRICS economic bloc concluded a historic three day summit in South Africa. BRICS, which includes Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, formed in 2009 and currently represents 40% of the world's population and 25% of global GDP. The group received over 40 applications and announced that 6 countries will join the group in 2024 that include Iran, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Egypt and Ethiopia. tagesschau, Germany's primetime news channel, mentioned the basic facts surrounding the BRICS meeting, but failed to mention the underlying reasons why this economic bloc came to existence and continues to grow 14 years later. Could you talk about the significance of the BRICS summit and also talk about the reasons on why it continues to expand?

**VP:** It's a good thing to ask the 23 countries why they wanted to join BRICS. Okay. Now, 6 countries have been added to the 5, and they include about 36% of the world's share of GDP, greater than the share of GDP of the G7 - effectively the NATO countries - and they [BRICS] include almost 50% of the world's population. I mean, next year, I can tell you it's most likely that Venezuela will join the BRICS, maybe Nigeria and so on. Indonesia, then you're going to have, you know, close to 50% of the world's share of GDP in the BRICS. And you're going to have much of the global South there well represented.

Let's just take one example of why countries wanted to join the BRICS. Let's take the example of the U.N. Security Council. Right now, there are 15 members of the U.N. Security Council, which is the principal body in the U.N.. 5 of these members who are in the Security Council have permanent seats. The other ten rotate. The five permanent seats are interesting. Russia, China. France, Britain and the United States. Now, what's missing here? There is no

African country with a permanent seat in the U.N.. There is no Latin American country with a permanent seat at the U.N.. India, which has the world's largest population, doesn't have a permanent seat at the U.N.. You have two minor European countries, Britain and France, and the United States. That means three non-NATO countries have permanent seats in the U.N., [Then you have] Russia and China. I'm just giving you this one example, Zain. For Brazil, which is the largest country in Latin America, not having a permanent seat at the U.N. when France, which is a petty insignificant, yesterday's country, Britain, yesterday's country, yesterday's countries have permanent seats in the U.N., but not even one African country. South Africa has been vying for this. Nigeria, you know, has the largest population in Ethiopia. I mean, what's going on in the world? These countries are angry. They are not being taken seriously. The BRICS is expanding partly for commercial reasons. Everybody knows you get into BRICS and you're going to have a nice connection with the Chinese economy and you get access to the BRICS Development Bank, all of that. There's a lot of good economic reasons to join, but let's not underestimate the political reasons. Now, Biden has said India should join [UN security council], get a permanent seat, but he openly, explicitly, said it's to its to dilute the power of Russia and China. I mean, India is not coming in to dilute the power. It might have a right wing government, but they are going to put their national interests first. India has shown that even a right wing government in this period is unwilling to subordinate itself fully to the United States. They wanted to put national interests first. This might mean collaborating with Russia. So, you know, the Biden administration is living in yesterday's world thinking India is going to come in with a permanent seat and it will vote with Britain, France, the United States. You know, four of them will be a solid bloc. Maybe Germany gets a seat. You know, there's something called the G-4. India, Brazil, Japan and Germany have vied for a seat in the U.N. permanent seat for decades, two decades now. I don't think Germany should get a seat, frankly, sorry to say neither. Japan. I mean, this is what, like the G-7 dominating the U.N. It's a terrible idea. This is going to be a serious contest inside the ranks of the upper admin of the U.N., partly, but it's also something for reasonable people to know about and discuss. In my opinion, next week's Tricontinental newsletter is going to call for Britain and France to relinquish their seats, their permanent seats, go back to being ordinary members of the U.N., give those permanent seats to a Latin American country and an African country. You know, maybe Brazil and Nigeria. But certainly you don't need two European countries, particularly given that there's no gap between the United States and these two countries. They vote together. They are a NATO bloc inside the U.N. Security Council. So, yeah, why do people want the BRICS expansion? Obviously for economic reasons, but also this is a good example of the disregard, you know, that the majority of the world's people feel from the NATO countries.

**ZR:** It seems that the Ukraine war has successfully divided the globe into two economic and military blocs like the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the US. But this time it's NATO versus BRICS. Where does the Non-Aligned Movement fit into all of this?

**VP:** See, firstly, it's interesting that just as in the Cold War, the BRICS states and let's just be specific here, okay? We're talking about China. None of the other countries really have the capacity to contest U.S. power. Russia, for instance, is a defensive country. It is defending its interests in Eastern Europe. Russia cannot militarily confront the West. Maybe, of course, [with] nuclear [power] which is a big issue, but, you know, it barely can contain its borders really. It's not a powerful military country. China can defend its borders. In that sense, it's a pretty powerful military. You know, they have aircraft carriers. They have all kinds of things. They may not be able to have a full scale war with the U.S. and my God, I hope we never get there.

Let's say it's appearing to be between China and the U.S. My own personal feelings, Zain, is that China doesn't want this conflict at all, like zero, does not want this conflict, and it wants to minimise any talk of a Cold War. It wants to minimise talk of the Chinese century. They're not interested in this. There is no Thucydides Trap. I think the CIA came up with this term Thucydides Trap to suggest that when one power is weakening and a new one is emerging, a big war breaks out. Well, the Chinese are like, Listen, guys, we don't want to become the main power, the single power. We don't think the world needs it. We need more collaboration and so on.

So I want to say to you that, yeah, it's true that these things are dividing up, but BRICS is not a bloc. BRICS is a project. It's a grouping of like minded or not so like minded countries that have economic interests and common political interests to some extent in common. But it's not a bloc. They are not going to operate together. I mean, look inside the new BRICS from first January [2024], you're going to have Iran and Saudi Arabia, okay? They're not going to have some security alliance. These countries have their own internal problems. So it's not a bloc in that sense. NATO is a bloc. It's in fact, a military security alliance with a constitution or a charter that says that if one person is attacked, everybody will attack the person who does so, right? BRICS is not a bloc, and the word bloc will confuse people. No, it's an economic formation and a political project. And so therefore, it's uneven to say NATO's versus BRICS, if you see what I mean? Yes, NATO has a military agenda, and a domination agenda. BRICS doesn't really. Interestingly, I'm waiting for a European country to apply formally to join BRICS. I'm waiting for that. Macron from France wanted to visit, have a big position in the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, but a European country hasn't actually applied to join BRICS. That would be really interesting.

**ZR:** Where does the Non-Aligned Movement fit into all of this geopolitics?

**VP:** Yeah, that's an important thing. So, you know, in 1961, there was a formal conference. The Non-Aligned Movement met in Belgrade, and there's a formal institutional structure called the Non-Aligned Movement the NAM. It meets every year. It is still meeting. There's a bloc inside an actual negotiating bloc, not a military bloc inside the UN called the G77, which just had a meeting, its annual meeting in Havana, Cuba. Cuba is the president of the G77. These are instruments of earlier nonaligned structure that have continued to exist. But we are

in a different phase now. This is not the Non-Aligned Movement of the sixties. In a way. I characterise this new nonalignment as a mood rather than an institutional formation. They're not going to establish, let's say, new negotiating structures. The G77 continues, the NAM continues. Will this be revived by the new mood? We already saw that in Havana this year. Already saw that the G77 was far more active than it had been previously, almost enthused by expanded BRICS and so on.

**ZR:** I would like to switch gears to Africa. There have been a series of military coups in West and Central Africa in recent years, 8, to be precise. The focus on the most recent examples include Burkina Faso in 2022, Nigeria and Gabon in 2023. If we watch the tagesschau, Germany's biggest primetime news channel, these groups are explained in very simple terms without much geopolitical and historical context. The Economic Community of West African states, also known as ECOWAS, that works together with countries from the West, on the other side is represented as the more progressive bloc and is supported whenever they threaten to take military action against African states that have experienced a military coup. Can you provide us more context of these recent coups and what is actually transpiring in this region?

**VP:** There's a number of things to say about this. The first is that we're talking about the old French colonies of Africa. You know, at one point, France had almost half of the African continent in its control. These are the old French colonies. Many of them won their independence between 1958 and 1961, but they won an independence in a constrained way. So, for instance, they all continue to use the French franc as the principal currency. All of them said that at least 50% of their foreign reserves would be held in the Bank of France, not in their own countries. The French continued to dominate these countries economically. Many of them were principal producers of raw materials. And French companies continued to dominate them. Niger, for instance, is a big producer of uranium. France continued to dominate the uranium mines in Niger, in Agadez, sorry in Arlit, from the 1960s till the present. So French dominion continued. There were always pushes and strains and tugs against France's role. But there was something that in a way broke the, you know, the straw that broke the camel's back. There were two events in 2011.

One was the way in which France militarily intervened in Côte d'Ivoire to intervene in an election result by stopping a president from taking office. France intervened militarily. This created a lot of anger in many parts of the formerly Francophone Africa, the so-called Francafrique. A lot of people were upset by what happened in Côte d'Ivoire, and it's not been forgotten. When you talk to political people across what had been French Africa, even in Gabon, you know, people said the intervention of France, they were unjustified, illegal, and so on, even though it was backed to some vague extent by the U.N..

Second event in 2011 took place in Libya when France led the way to destroy the Libyan state in NATO's war. These are two 2011 events, which were the straws that broke the camel's back. After the French invaded with the Americans, they bombed the living daylights out of



Libya. Many of the jihadis who France and the United States had brought from Syria and Turkey into Libya. These are people from the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group who had left Libya in the 1990s, gone into Afghanistan and so on, the West brought them back as the shock troops against Gaddafi. Many of these fellows went into southern Algeria, joined up with al-Qaeda groups, and then went south into Mali, into Burkina Faso, all the way into northern Nigeria. They made immense gains. France, then terrified by the Pandora's box that it had not only opened but built [as well] intervened through Operation Barkhane into Mali in 2013 and then into Burkina Faso and Niger 2015. There's an enormous U.S. military base in Agadez in Niger, the largest drone base in the world. So the West intervenes in this region, so-called, to confront the jihadi threat. But in fact, also it was to deal with the migrants who were going north into Europe. I mean, the Europeans built a border in the Sahel region, the French call it G5 Sahel with European Union funding. The European Union, in fact, funded the use of artificial intelligence surveillance technology in Niger, which is banned in Europe. You know, it's a real scandal, but things like that were being done.

Okay. Now, in this part of the world left political forces had been rather destroyed during the neoliberal period when the IMF came in and impoverished these countries. The left continued in trade unions, peasant organizations and so on. But in terms of party political dynamics, many of them had been defanged. People had been killed, sent into exile and not able to function. So when the political catastrophe of this post NATO war in Libya germinated, in many of these countries the only political force available for young, particularly men who were there in from rural areas and petty bourgeois background was the military. It was clear that there was going to be action. But it has to be said that a lot of young people have been taking the streets in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, Bamako, Mali, and in Timbuktu, north Mali. A lot of mass demonstrations of young people, but no political formation for them that could have acted against a French military occupation of their countries. So the military conducts these coups: 2 in Mali, 2 in Burkina Faso, 1 in Guinea, 1 in Niger and then now in Gabon. Gabon is slightly different. I'll come to that. So the military came to power and in all these countries, they quickly created a civilian administration. In all of them there's a civilian government as well. And interestingly, like Assimi Goita in Burkina Faso and Mali, they fashion themselves as the children of Thomas Sankara. They even dress and talk like him.

ECOWAS over the last 15 years or so [formed] an economic bloc. They've created this peacekeeping force. It's not really the origin of ECOWAS. And they have worked with the West in intervening here, there and everywhere. So when the coups took place, particularly in Niger, see Niger was the threat because Niger is the source of the French nuclear power industry. That's where the uranium comes from, [they also have a] large drone base [operated] by the Yanks. They [ECOWAS] said, we've got to stop this dynamic, these coups: Guinea, Burkina Faso, Mali, etc. Niger is the place we're going to have to draw the line. Can't happen. So there was a threat from ECOWAS troops to enter Niger. Now a couple of things happened. One, in Niger, there were mass demonstrations against [ECOWAS] military intervention. That means whoever intervenes is going to deal with a civil uprising on their hands.

Secondly, Mali and Burkina Faso made statements saying if you attack Niger, we will enter and we will attack you. And now they've in fact created a grouping called AES - the grouping of sahelian states - which is basically a security pact. They just signed this agreement. Okay. Then the generals from Nigeria, Ghana and all met in ECOWAS' military committee. Right after that the temperature went down. They basically said, I'm not putting my troops on the ground in Niger, and that was over.

Now, why ECOWAS? Why didn't France intervene directly? We know what's been going on in Mozambique. A couple of years ago, I've written a series of stories. I went to Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique, where TOTAL the French company and ExxonMobil have a big natural gas platform offshore. It's the poorest area of Mozambique. There was an uprising there against the French and U.S. natural gas platform, a big uprising. The Mozambique military couldn't put down the uprising. The police couldn't handle it. So the French made a deal with Rwanda's Paul Kagame to send Rwandan troops, thousands of them, into northern Cabo Delgado, where they used all kinds of methods. There's no oversight. I mean, I don't know what human rights [violations happened there]. Where is Madam Baerbock when it comes to Rwanda's intervention in Cabo Delgado? That was an illegal intervention. So in a way, France, United States, they want to "Rwandanise" these conflicts. They want African troops to deal with it. [In this case] ECOWAS in Niger instead of Rwanda's [army]. But the generals from Ghana, Nigeria, they were like, I don't think so. So we're in an interesting position.

Gabon is different. Gabon is a little bit like Haiti in that the Bongo family has ruled in Gabon for 60 plus years. Omar Bongo took power in the sixties. I mean, for 60 years they've been leeching that rich country and keeping it in abject poverty. This was an uprising against the Bongo family. This is not really an uprising against France per say. It's not as anti-French. This is against the Bongo family. The Bongo family is gone. Just as the Duvaliers were removed from Haiti. There's a new government, the opposition leader is now in power in Gabon. But it's unlikely that in Gabon this government is going to be able to set a good agenda. So it might radicalize things further. But there were protests in Benin recently, another former French colony. There's been stirrings of demonstrations in Sierra Leone, in Senegal and so on. I don't know what's going to happen, but certainly France, a mediocre country, is being booted out of Africa. I can say that much.

**ZR:** I want to close this interview with a very important day, September 11th, 2001. 22 years ago, the United States was attacked by terrorists and then [the US] unleashed the war on terror and the war in Iraq in 2003. Could you talk about 22 years later, how the war on terror shaped our globe and whether we have become more safer and democratic, as was stated as an objective [by the US] or the opposite has happened?

**VP:** Well, it's an interesting issue because in many ways it's the status quo. So the only thing that has been vanquished is Al-Qaeda as a force that is able to attack the United States. Al-Qaeda was a product in many ways of the U.S. intervention into Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Al-Qaeda was produced by the Central Intelligence Agency's covert and overt war against the Soviet entry into Afghanistan. So that was Al-Qaeda. In a way, this was a cleaning up exercise. Al-Qaeda then morphed when the United States entered Saudi Arabia to try to eject Saddam Hussein's forces from Kuwait in 1990-1991. It's then that Osama bin Laden, the sheikh of Al-Qaeda, gets angry with having U.S. troops in his native Saudi Arabia. So he then turns anti-U.S., goes to Sudan, then returns to Afghanistan, starts plotting these attacks in Yemen, in Tanzania and so on, and some in the U.S.. The attack on September 11th was a pretty extraordinary event, no doubt about that. Four planes hijacked, brought down buildings and so on in the U.S.. But at that time, the Taliban government in Afghanistan said to the U.S., we will hand over Al-Qaeda to you. But, you have to send bin Laden to a muslim country to be tried. You can't try him in the U.S.. In extradition negotiations, it is a pretty fair thing to say. They had conditions. They said we'll extradite him, but not to America. We'll extradite him to maybe Pakistan or to a muslim country, maybe Saudi Arabia. They [Saudi Arabia] would have executed him by the way. The U.S. should have taken the deal and sent him to Saudi Arabia. They would have executed him. But the U.S. stupidly didn't take the deal. And instead, after 20 years of war in Afghanistan, the Taliban is back. So there the status quo remains. Except Al-Qaeda isn't there. But Al-Qaeda trained generations of radical Islamists who are now wreaking havoc in Africa, as we talked about before, in northern Mali, in parts of southern Algeria, in Libya today. Derna, the town that has been devastated by floods, 95% destroyed, was the home of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group. When I visited Derna there were so many mosques in that city and the sheikhs there were pretty out there. They had different ideas of the world. It was pretty right wing in many ways. These were not heterodox Islamic traditions from Libya. This is all exported from the Gulf. Libya has a very great heterodox Islamic tradition, a lot of Sufism and so on. Not all of it good, but complicated tradition. These Al-Qaeda people have morphed all around the world. Guantanamo is still in existence. This war on terror strengthened the hands of a lot of nasty governments around the world and so on. But Zain, by and large, it's status quo, you know. All this war, all this suffering, all this death. And in the end, the Taliban is back in power. Pakistan is still going through chaos. Right? What's the progress? There's no good outcome. And therefore, liberals, especially in the West, need to really kind of go into their soul and think about their support for wars. Liberals backed that war, humanitarian intervention here, there and everywhere. Seriously? I mean, why is Somalia recovering today? What's recovering the Horn of Africa is not the war on terror, but in fact the Belt and Road initiative of the Chinese government that's actually creating the basis for some stability in the Horn of Africa. Liberals in the West need to reflect on this seriously. I mean, Mrs. Baerbock is saying Xi Jinping is a dictator, but I mean, the Chinese haven't attacked anybody and haven't destroyed any country. China has not destroyed any country. Now, people may say, well, it destroyed Tibet. If you think the Chinese have destroyed Tibet, go visit Tibet. Go ride the train in Tibet. They have built infrastructure there that the Lamas did not build for 300-400 years. When the Lamas were in power in Tibet, it was a ruthless feudal autocracy with the Lamas treating the Tibetan people as serfs. The situation is different now. Go visit it. I understand people have a sympathetic emotional attitude toward Tibetan Buddhism. But go

read up on the pre-1951 period in Tibet, and read up on the history of Tibetan communists who participated in trying to get rid of the Lamas monarchy. It's a monarchy. It's a king kind of a situation. The Potala Palace, such a remarkable place filled with riches. Meanwhile, people are clawing the ground to get food to eat. So let's have a straightforward, practical discussion about what is a better way to go. I don't think the war on terror brought any decent fruits, in many cases, status quo, in many cases great suffering and destruction. Iraq. Case in point.

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

**VP:** It's a pleasure, Zain. And take care of yourself. You keep getting hurt. Beware.

**ZR:** Thank you, Vijay. I'll make sure to take that into account. And thank you for tuning in today. If you're watching our channel, make sure to donate today, because we are a small, independent and nonprofit organisation, meaning we don't take any money from governments or corporations and don't even allow advertisement, all with the goal to provide you with information that is free from external influence. If you're watching our channel, make sure to also take into account that we are a very small team consisting of one full time employee and 5 mini jobbers. That is why we cannot provide you with content on a daily basis, especially German content, which takes time to translate, voiceover and correct. So if you donate to our channel, we will be able to employ one of our mini jobbers to a full time position and ensure that we can provide you with the content right after we do the interview. I'm your host Zain Raza. See you next time!

**END**