



## Breaking Down the Tucker-Putin Interview

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**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** But obviously this is an extremely important interview. The first interview by a Western journalist with the Russian leader since the West basically went to war with Russia through Ukraine. Now the West is not really at war with Russia in any legal or constitutional sense. But the reality is that what the United States is doing is a proxy war to weaken Russia. That's what even its defenders now admitted to is its objective. So here's the first excerpt that we found extremely illuminating. We'll show it to you and then have a few comments on it.

**Vladimir Putin (VP):** The second point is a very important one, I want you as an American citizen and your viewers to hear about this as well. The former Russian leadership assumed that the Soviet Union had ceased to exist, and therefore there were no longer any ideological dividing lines. Russia even agreed voluntarily and proactively to the collapse of the Soviet Union, and believed that this would be understood by the so-called civilised West as an invitation for cooperation and association. That is what Russia was expecting, both from the United States and this so-called collective West as a whole. There were smart people, including in Germany, Egon Bahr, a major politician of the Social Democratic Party, who insisted in his personal conversations with the Soviet leadership on the brink of the collapse of the Soviet Union, that they knew security systems should be established in Europe. Help should be given to unify Germany, but a new system should be also established to include the United States, Canada, Russia and other Central European countries. But NATO needs not to expand; that's what he said. If NATO expands, everything would be just the same as during the Cold War, only closer to Russia's borders. That's all. He was a wise old man, but no one listened to him. In fact, he got angry once. If, he said, you don't listen to me, I'm never setting my foot in Moscow again.

**GG:** So that is a critical part of history that people have often emphasised, including in the West. It's well-documented that what he's describing there is exactly what happened. When the Soviet Union disbanded Russia said, we're no longer going to be a communist country. We're giving up communism. That's what he said. There's no ideological divide anymore between us and the West. And the one thing Russia said when they disbanded, when they

agreed to the reunification of Germany, which, if you know Russian history was an extraordinary concession for the Russians to make, given that Germany, a united Germany, had twice during the 20th century attacked Russia and killed tens of millions of its citizens, including obviously in the Second World War where the Soviet Union, played a major role, and lost 50 million of its citizens in fighting off the Nazis along with the United States, the British. But the idea was in the view of the Russians, and Putin was around for that then, he was close to Boris Yeltsin and then became the Russian leader in 2000, not long after the Cold War ended and the Soviet Union collapsed, was: Look, we're no longer a communist country. We no longer have an ideological war with you. We're a mercantilist country now. We're a capitalist country, just like you. So there's no reason for us to repeat the Cold War anymore. And the one thing we want, that you will agree to and as he said, a lot of Germans were saying this as well, is that there's no reason for NATO now to expand up to the Russian border. Because, as he said, if the West expands eastward beyond Germany, which they promised they would not do, not one inch beyond Germany, not one inch to the east, and then immediately in the Bush administration, they became obsessed with expanding NATO.

In fact, the US ambassador to NATO was a person named Victoria Nuland in the Bush administration. And they were talking about expanding it through to Ukraine and did expand it, and then it expanded more. The Clinton administration even talked about expanding it, but it really happened in the Bush administration, through the Obama administration. An expansion of NATO up to the Russian border, including openly talking about Ukraine was the red line that the Russians always said would mean that the Cold War would be rejuvenated. Why do you need the NATO alliance against us anymore? We're not your enemy anymore. We're not your ideological enemy. We're not communists. We are a capitalist society. We want to be part of your institutions, your economic institutions, even your military institutions; that you're about to hear that it has been reported before and Putin confirms that he talked to Bill Clinton about the possibility that Russia could join NATO. Because they had common enemies like in the Middle East, and they were threatened by Muslim terrorism. So we're going to show you that in a minute. But a lot of people believe, and obviously Putin is one of them, that when the West decided that it needed NATO, even though there was no more Soviet Union, and that it would now just replace the Soviet Union with Russia as the enemy, that was when the Russians realised that their hope for cooperation with the West would evaporate. And instead they started getting besieged by a military alliance that had only previously existed as part of the Cold War to target the Soviet Union. All right, let's listen to the next segment.

**VP:** ...tricked us. I don't mean you personally when I say you, of course. I'm talking about the United States. The promise was that NATO would not expand eastward. But it happened five times. There were five waves of expansion. We tolerated all that. We were trying to persuade them. We were saying, Please don't. We are as bourgeois now as you are. We are a market economy and there's no Communist Party power. Let's negotiate. Moreover, I have also said this publicly before. There was a moment when a certain rift started growing between us. Before that, Yeltsin came to the United States. Remember, he spoke in Congress and said the good words: God bless America. Everything he said were signals: Let us in. Remember the

developments in Yugoslavia? Before that Yeltsin was lavished with praise. As soon as the developments in Yugoslavia started, he raised his voice in support of Serbs. And we couldn't but raise our voices for Serbs in their defence. I understand that there were complex processes underway there, I do. But Russia could not help raising its voice in support of Serbs, because Serbs are also a special and close to us nation, with Orthodox culture and so on. It's a nation that has suffered so much for generations. Well, regardless, what is important is that Yeltsin expressed his support. What did the United States do in violation of international law and the UN charter? It started bombing Belgrade. It was the United States that led the genie out of the bottle. Moreover, when Russia protested and expressed its resentment, what was said was, the UN charter and international law have become obsolete. Now everyone involves international law, but at that time they started saying that everything was outdated. Everything had to be changed. Indeed, some things need to be changed as the balance of power has changed. It's true, but not in this manner. Yeltsin was immediately dragged through the mud, accused of alcoholism, of understanding nothing, of knowing nothing. He understood everything, I assure you. Well, I became president in 2000. I thought, okay, the Yugoslav issue is over, but we should try to restore relations. Let's reopen the door that Russia had tried to go through. And moreover, I said it publicly. I can reiterate. I had a meeting here in the Kremlin with the outgoing president, Bill Clinton, right here in the next room. I said to him, I asked him: Bill, do you think if Russia asked to join NATO, do you think it would happen? Suddenly he said, You know, it's interesting, I think so. But in the evening when we met for dinner, he said, You know, I've talked to my team. No, no, it's not possible now. You can ask him. I think he will watch our interview. He'll confirm it.

**GG:** I mean that history is also well known, that Boris Yeltsin was beloved by the Americans. He was celebrated in Time Magazine when he was elected, as having been elected with the help of American political operatives. We interfered in Russia's election because we wanted Boris Yeltsin to win. He came to Congress. He was given a standing ovation. Russia was considered an ally of the United States. And during the Clinton administration when they began bombing the long time historical and religious ally of Russia, the Serbs in Belgrade, the Russians objected. And what also happened besides the United States basically saying, these international law concepts about not invading other countries, not bombing other countries unless they attack you, these are all outdated, we don't believe in these rules anymore, only to now invoke them when it suits them. What also happened was the United States in the West took the position that Kosovo, which had always been part of Serbia as part of Yugoslavia, ought to be separated from Serbia and declared an independent state because the people of Kosovo had a different culture and a different language and didn't want to be part of Serbia. And Putin warned at the time publicly that this was an extremely dangerous precedent, because all throughout Europe there are all sorts of states that have been cobbled together of people with different languages and different histories and allegiances and cultures. Obviously that was true in Georgia, where those two provinces that broke away had far more allegiance to Russia than to the state of Georgia. They were Russian speaking. They wanted Russian passports. It's true in even places like Belgium, where half the country speaks one language, half the country speaks the other. It is true in Ukraine, obviously, which had been in a civil war since the US aided coup, as he'll explain in 2014,

when the part of eastern Ukraine, that speaks Russian, that identifies as Russian, that was always culturally Russian, that is far closer to Moscow than it is to Kiev, especially once there was a coup – I'm describing Ukraine, I might have said something else, but I'm talking about Ukraine, where the western part of Ukraine is filled with Russian speaking nationals who are religiously and historically and culturally far closer to Russia than they are to Ukraine, which is why there's been a civil war for eight years, ever since that coup in 2014. Because the people in those Russian speaking provinces in the eastern part of Ukraine, that Russia now controls and occupies, feels a different sentiment about Kiev, just like people of Kosovo didn't want to be part of Serbia. And Putin said that was the precedent you set, and that's the precedent we're now using, both in Georgia and in Ukraine, the one that separated Kosovo from Serbia. And that was an example where NATO, a defensive alliance, started bombing Yugoslavia started bombing Serbia, even though obviously Serbia never posed any threat at all to NATO or to the West. And that also created these fault lines where the Russians were put on one side and the West on the other. All right, let's listen to the next segment.

**VP:** It was a colossal mistake. Surely it was a political leadership miscalculation. They should have seen what it would evolve into. So in 2008, the doors of NATO were opened for Ukraine. In 2014, there was a coup. They started persecuting those who did not accept the coup. And it was indeed a coup. They created the threat to Crimea, which we had to take under our protection. They launched the war in Donbas in 2014 with the use of aircraft and artillery against civilians. This is when it all started. There's a video of aircraft attacking Donetsk from above. They launched a large-scale military operation. Then another one. When they failed, they started to prepare the next one. All this against the background of military development of this territory and opening of NATO's doors. How could we not express concern over what was happening from our side? This would have been culpable negligence. That's what it would have been. It's just that the US political leadership pushed this to the line we could not cross, because doing so could have ruined Russia itself. Besides, we could not leave our brothers in faith, in fact, just part of Russian people in the face of this war machine.

**Tucker Carlson (TC):** So that was eight years before the current conflict started. So what was the trigger?

**GG:** Probably the central propagandistic lie of the United States in the West about this war in Ukraine has been that this war began in February of 2022, when the Russians sent a large number of its soldiers into Ukraine. The reality is there has been a war in Ukraine since 2014. A war between the eastern provinces right over the Russian border, that are Russian speaking and Russian allied, and the government in Kiev that was installed with the help of the United States. We've shown you the videos of John McCain and Chris Murphy and others going over and saying, We support what you're doing and trying to remove the elected president before the constitutional end of his term in 2015. And you've all heard the audio of Victoria Nuland speaking to the US ambassador to Ukraine planning who the government would be instead. And there has been a civil war right over the other side of the Russian border involving

citizens of Ukraine who feel an allegiance to Russia and who Russia feels an allegiance to as well for deep historical and linguistic and cultural and religious reasons. And that war has been going for a long time and that has been going on since 2014. And then you had all kinds of US provocations of continuing to talk about opening NATO to Ukraine, which put NATO right on the other side of that border. Attacking and oppressing the people of eastern Ukraine. That is the conflict. If you want to actually understand the conflict instead of US government and media propaganda about the conflict, this is the conflict that you have to understand from the Russian perspective. Of course, they're going to feel threatened when right on the most sensitive part of their border there is a US installed government bombing people who consider themselves Russian. And that's a threat to their security, and it's a threat to what they believe their obligation is. But whatever else is true, the war did not start in 2022, it escalated in 2022. It began in 2014 with the overthrow of the constitutional elected government, the annexation of Crimea, and the decision by the government in Kiev to start attacking the people of eastern Ukraine and to align themselves with neo-Nazi groups of the kind that now compose the largest and most devoted segment of the Ukrainian fighting force, with pictures of Nazi collaborators and SS collaborators on their wall. He talks about how the Canadian parliament had Zelensky there and Justin Trudeau, and they stood and gave a standing ovation to a Ukrainian-Canadian hero of World War two who fought against Russia and it turned out he was a member of the SS, the Nazi SS. Which is not surprising in any way. All right, let's show the next clip.

**VP:** Oh, I'm afraid, I'm afraid. Please don't. What is there to talk about?

**TC:** Do you think NATO is worried about this becoming a global war or a nuclear conflict?

**VP:** At least that's what they're talking about. And they're trying to intimidate their own population with an imaginary Russian threat. This is an obvious fact. And thinking people, not philistines, but thinking people, analysts, those who are engaged in real politics, just smart people understand perfectly well that this is a fake. they're trying to fuel the Russian threat.

**TC:** The threat I think you're referring to is a Russian invasion of Poland, Latvia, an expansionist behaviour. Can you imagine a scenario where you send Russian troops to Poland?

**VP:** Only in one case if Poland attacks Russia. Why? Because we have no interest in Poland, Latvia or anywhere else. Why would we do that? We simply don't have any interest. It's just threat mongering.

**TC:** Well, the argument, I know you know this, is that, well, he invaded Ukraine. He has territorial aims across the continent. And you're saying unequivocally you don't.

**VP:** It is absolutely out of the question. You just don't have to be any kind of analyst, it goes against common sense to get involved in some kind of a global war. And a global war will bring all humanity to the brink of destruction. It's obvious. There are certainly means of

deterrence. They have been scaring everyone...

**GG:** All right, so take that for what it's worth. That's Putin absolutely denying what the US and its media have been claiming and the West has been claiming for two years now that his real intention is to go conquer all of NATO, to start a world war, to go and invade Poland, to go and invade Latvia, to go and invade, I guess, Hungary and then Germany and France, knowing that that would provoke a world war between nuclear powers. And he's saying, that's obviously insane. Why would I ever do that? You can believe the US media about what they claim is that he's a Nazi figure. And then if we don't stop him in Ukraine, we're going to have to fight him in Poland. Or you can listen to what he said about what his true intentions are and decide what you believe there. That's the benefit of this interview, is that you don't just get to hear about Putin, you get to hear from him.

All right. Let me just for a couple of these last excerpts just read the transcript. Here is Putin explaining an important part of history about what happened with Yanukovich, which was the 2014 coup. So here's what he says, quote: "The US told us, calm Yanukovich down and we will calm the opposition. Let the situation unfold. In the scenario of a political settlement. We said, all right, agreed, let's do it this way. As the Americans requested, Yanukovich did use neither the armed forces nor the police. Yet the armed opposition committed a coup in Kiev. What is that supposed to mean? Who do you think you are? I wanted to ask the US leadership". And then Tucker said: "With the backing of whom?" And Putin said: "With the backing of the CIA, of course, the organisation you wanted to join back in the day, as I understand. We should thank God they didn't let you in." Now, there were a few instances where Putin used information that he obviously had about Tucker. I mean, it's not like a dossier, but he has private information. It's well known that Tucker actually did apply to the CIA at the start of his career. His father was a journalist with the US press office, I believe, the part of the government that does information for Europe and the like. And Tucker wanted to go join the CIA, and he applied and got rejected. And so when Tucker said, who is it that actually engineered the overthrow of the Ukrainian government, he said, oh, it was the CIA that organisation that you wanted to join and they didn't let you in. And we should be thankful that they did not. So he did that a couple of times with Tucker reminding him of his past and of his history to sort of put him in check, but it's an interesting part of history that the US government was basically trying to say, we don't want a coup of Yanukovich, tell Yanukovich to be calm. We'll tell the opposition to be calm. But it was the CIA that undercut that narrative and instead engineered the coup in 2014.

All right. Here's the next excerpt. Here is Putin saying the following, quote: "When I was in the US at the invitation of Bush senior, it is even easier to learn from someone I'm going to tell you about. I was told it was very interesting. I said, quote, 'Just imagine if we could settle such a global strategic security challenge together'. The world will change. We'll probably have disputes, probably economic and even political ones. But we could drastically change the situation in the world.' And he, Bush senior said: 'Yes' and ask, 'Are you serious?' And I said, 'Of course'. 'We need to think about it.' I said, 'Go ahead, please.' Then Secretary of Defence Gates, former Director of CIA and Secretary of State Rice came in here in this

cabinet, right here at this table. They sat on this table. Me, the Foreign Minister, the Russian Defence Minister on that side. And they said to me, yes, we have thought about it. We agree. I said, 'Thank God, great.' 'But with some exceptions'." And then Tucker asked this question: "So twice now you've described US presidents making decisions and then being undercut by their agency heads. So it sounds like you're describing a system" – meaning the one of the United States – "that is not run by the people who are elected, in you're telling." And Putin said, "That's right, that's right". And Putin has been dealing with the American government since 2000. I think it's very important to note as well, that if you go back and look at what American presidents have said about Putin – Bill Clinton said he's a very calculating and rational actor who can be trusted. George Bush said he met with Putin, I looked the man in the eyes and into his soul, and I saw a good person. Obama constantly talked about the ridiculousness of treating Russia like an enemy, and said how important it was that the US and Russia partner on common goals. Trump, of course, wanted to have peace with Russia. He ran on that platform. He was called the Russian agent for it. And then the Biden administration gets in after feeding the Democrats having been on six years of anti-Russian hatred because they blame Putin for the 2016 election. They still think Hillary was the rightful winner and they only were at a loss because of Putin.

And now suddenly Putin is the Nazi. Putin is Hitler. Putin is this grave threat that nobody can trust, the epitome of evil. Everything that the government never said about Putin, the opposite of what they said about him for 20 years, they turned on a dime when it suited their interest and got the entire media to think that Vladimir Putin was Hitler, when every American president prior to him was saying he was nothing of the kind. Think about how potent propaganda is that they can just rewrite history in an instant and get huge numbers of Americans to believe them. And what Putin is saying there is like, look, I've dealt with American presidents and they don't really have the power. They say they want to do things, but then the agencies, the CIA, the Pentagon, the State Department say, you're not going to do that. And they don't. There's a permanent deep state that does not allow the elected president to do what they want. So here's the next passage. Tucker says: "Who blew up Nord Stream?" And Putin says: "You for sure". And Tucker said: "I was busy that day. I did not blow up Nord Stream. Thank you though". And Putin said: "You personally may have an alibi, but the CIA has no such alibi". And Tucker says: "Did you have evidence that NATO or the CIA did it?" I don't know why we don't have Putin's response, but what Putin basically says is we haven't released evidence. So you can take that for what it's worth. He's asserting it was the CIA who blew up Nord Stream II. Of course, that was Seymour Hersh's reporting. And when pressed on what the evidence is, he said, there's things we can't release. So take that with the grain of salt. But it's certainly consistent with Seymour Hersh's reporting. And at this point, who do you think blew up the Nord Stream pipeline? Who got damaged by that? The Germans and the Russians. Do you think the Russians blew up their own pipeline? And if it was the Ukrainians, do you think they would have done it without the Americans, their main patron and sponsor, that they don't do anything without?! There were a lot of other very interesting parts of this interview, including Putin describing how close he and Zelensky were, how close he and the Ukrainians were to a peace agreement. He said that was why they pulled out of Kiev, and then the Americans and the British came in and put a stop to that

peace deal, which has also been reported in many cases, including by the former Israeli president, Naftali Bennett, and many others. And he really talks a lot about the US Russia relationship.

And as I said, Tucker devoted the last 10 to 15 minutes of the interview confronting Putin about the imprisonment of this Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich, who's imprisoned in Russia on charges of espionage. And he basically appealed to Putin in multiple ways, imploring him to release him, saying he's a 30 year old kid and no one thinks he's actually a spy, even if he violated some of your laws. He's not somebody who belongs in a Russian prison. He should be allowed to come home. Why would you not let him come home?! Vehemently arguing with Putin's justification for keeping him in prison, saying that we all know that he's just a hostage for you to get Russians back. Tucker confronted Putin in a way that no American journalist would ever have the chance to confront Joe Biden. Imagine an American journalist going to an interview with Joe Biden and spending 10 or 15 minutes of the interview demanding that Julian Assange be released. It's inconceivable. So they were all mocking Tucker beforehand as some kind of Russian asset and I think he did more to extract meaningful information – and I don't suggest you should believe everything Putin says, you should not. He's the president of a country involved in a war. Every country in war emits propaganda. You should treat those claims with scepticism, want to see evidence for it? But there's a lot of what he said that is well substantiated that we've talked about before here, that we've reported. And of course, it all gets called Russian disinformation because it's adversarial to the US government. So I really recommend that you watch this interview, if for no other reason than clearly power centers in the West do not want you to see it to the point that they're thinking about making it criminal and illegal. But if you're going to think about whether you support a war against a foreign country, I think it's very important to hear from the leader of that country, explain their perspective that is much different than the one you're going to get if you're a citizen of the West where they tried to ban RT, they tried to ban Sputnik, and they even tried to make interviews with Vladimir Putin criminal.

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