



Vijay Prashad - Julian Assange, Gaza, Ukraine & terrorist attack in Russia

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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 author, journalist and historian Vijay Prashad, which is the author of more than 30 books, some of them being *The Withdrawal: Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of US Power* and *Washington Bullets: A history of the CIA, Coups and Assassinations*. Vijay, welcome back.

Vijay Prashad (VP): Thanks a lot. Nice to be with you.

ZR: I want to begin this interview with the case of journalist and Wikileaks founder Julian Assange. Assange faces extradition to the United States for publishing confidential US documents in 2010 and 2011 on Wikileaks that exposed US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan. He then fled to the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he received asylum, but was arrested by the British authorities in 2019, and since then he has been held in the maximum security Belmarsh Prison, also known as UK's Guantanamo Bay. A few days ago, the UK High Court ruled that it will not extradite Assange until the US provides assurances that will include freedom of speech protections for Assange, as well as that he will not face a death penalty in the US. The court also stated that if these assurances are not met, Assange's legal team would be allowed to launch a new appeal. Can you comment on the recent court rulings and also talk about the significance of this case?

VP: Yeah, let's start with the ruling from the UK courts. You know, it's an interesting situation, because there's no evidence that the United States would provide any of those guarantees. There is no evidence. I mean, the United States hasn't done that kind of thing before. So it's unlikely that it would provide those guarantees. Now, what does this mean for Mr. Assange? Julian has been sitting for five years in a prison where he doesn't really have freedom of speech. You know, it's interesting, the British courts are saying to guarantee freedom of speech when he goes to the United States. But where has he had freedom of speech in the UK? You know, he's basically being kept incommunicado. You can't really have an interview with him and so on. The question of the death penalty is also interesting. These prisons are harsh and his health has deteriorated in Belmarsh and so on. What does it mean to talk about the death penalty in that context of such harsh imprisonment? So I think it's

interesting. This is a little game that's being played between the UK legal system and the US legal system. Mr. Assange could very well be released into house arrest, let's say, while this case was pending. Why the need to have him at a maximum security prison? You know, he has not hurt anybody. This is not an ex-murderer or a serial killer, a terrorist or anything like that. This man is a journalist, a publisher. Why hold him there? While is this legal tussle happening between the UK and the US? Why not allow him to be, you know, as he had been basically in the Ecuadorian embassy sitting there, without much freedom of movement?! Put on an ankle bracelet, for God's sake, and let him sit in any number of people's homes. They've opened their homes to him. So that's that. Then the question of his own role in this. You know, I've been a journalist for a very long time, and I was in touch with Julian Assange before he created Wikileaks. In fact, you know, we had communicated about what it would mean to set up a system such as he was interested in setting up where whistleblowers would with some security put their information in and so on. And in fact, you know, he and the team set up a pretty good system, you know, where a whistleblower could drop in information and then if it's in the public interest, journalists could write about that information, right? I mean, you can drop in information, but if it's not in the public interest, the publisher decides not to send it along. That's also possible, right? Somebody can put information that's harmful to an individual, but it is scurrilous, it is not really in the public interest.

Well, it's not Julian Assange that broke into the US Government State Department computers. It was Chelsea Manning. Who was a whistleblower who felt heartsick about what she had seen on that computer. He's the one who delivered the information. She broke the law, actually. She's the one who broke the law, but as a whistleblower and therefore was prosecuted and then pardoned by Barack Obama. She's the one who was prosecuted and pardoned. That's where the crime was committed, if that can be deemed a crime, right? Mr. Assange received the information as a publisher and a journalist and then shared their information with journalists, including myself. I wrote about a number of the cables at the time. So why go after Mr. Assange? What is the case against Julian? Nobody is even intimating that Julian broke into the State Department computers, he is being prosecuted and persecuted for publishing material that a whistleblower gave him. That's like, you know, the Washington Post, and its editors being put in prison for receiving the Pentagon Papers from Daniel Ellsberg. Daniel Ellsberg committed a crime, but as a whistleblower. And he passed the material to the Washington Post. But the Washington Post wasn't prosecuted. So this is a very interesting case where it's basically an attack on publishers. And what I find interesting about it is that all the major publications that published the material, The Guardian, The New York Times and so on, seem to have just dumped Julian Assange into a kind of purgatory. They are not saying, well, if he is going down, take me down with him. They are not there in solidarity for having done exactly what he did, which is publish the material from the US State Department. So that's a real crime, that the broader media hasn't come to his defense. And it is also a real crime that this continues without any consideration of the fact that he didn't commit a crime.

ZR: Let us switch gears here and focus on the international developments surrounding Israel and Gaza. On the 25th of March, the United Nations Security Council was able to pass a

resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. This resolution was able to pass, as the United States decided to abstain from the vote, breaking its pattern of vetoing resolutions on this matter since October 7th attacks of Hamas. This resolution calls for a ceasefire in Gaza for the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, as well as the release of all hostages held by Hamas. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office stated that it will not be sending a high level delegation to Washington, which was due to arrive this week, to have discussion on Israel's war plans. Furthermore, leading figures such as US President Joe Biden as well as Secretary of State Antony Blinken, have been quite vocal about Israel's impending military operation Rafah, calling it a red line. They have warned that this military operation could have a devastating impact on the circa 1.4 million people seeking refuge there, and that it could domestically escalate the humanitarian crisis and further isolate Israel internationally. Despite these warnings, Benjamin Netanyahu has openly defied the US by declaring that it will go ahead with its military operation Rafah, with or without the US. Israel has continued to bomb Rafah and just yesterday, according to Reuters, it killed dozens of people and in one airstrike alone, it killed eleven civilians that were from one single family. So far, Israel has killed 32,000 civilians and severely injured another 75,000, most of them being women and children. According to large parts of the German media, the US abstaining from voting at the UN Security Council, as well as the emphasis of the Rafah, a red line by the US shows us a significant break or substantial disagreement between the US and Israel. How do you evaluate these developments?

VP: Well, there's a number of things I think that are important to consider. First, there is a presidential election in the United States in November of this year. Mr. Biden is going to face off against Donald Trump. In the primary in order to become a candidate for the Democratic Party in the state of Michigan about 10,000 people voted uncommitted. This is the campaign that developed in Michigan, led by pro-Palestine activists. 10,000 people is a significant number that voted uncommitted. The message is sent. They are not willing to not only vote for Mr. Biden, but campaign for him. If a lot of the young activists, people who tend to go to the left, a lot of the young activists don't come out to campaign for Mr. Biden, he's going to have an arid electoral season. You know, people are just not going to be there knocking on doors and so on. So the first thing that's really troubling Mr. Biden is the fact that he's going to lose the election in November on the issue of Gaza. So there has been some vocal evidence that the United States trying its best to acquit this current will the United States, which is very upset with the Biden administration. And at an event where there was a protest, Mr. Biden said, have patience with them, they have a point. You know, they're trying desperately to triangulate between Tel Aviv and the US liberal left, which is really turning away from Biden. So that's, of course, reason why there's been this slight softening of tone, around the question of the genocide in Gaza, that is one.

Number two, it's very clear that the United States government has noticed a real shift of emphasis in the Global South. You know, most countries now in the South, are standing with Palestine. I mean, it was extremely embarrassing to watch German chancellor Olaf Scholz with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, when Mr. Scholz came in and said, Well, you know, let's not forget we stand with Israel and so on. And Anwar Ibrahim just said, what's

become of your humanity? I mean, do you have any moral compass? A very powerful statement, that little clip went viral. And I think the United States is cognizant of the fact that the Global South countries have turned against the West, the global north on the issue of Palestine. And they want to win back some of the countries on their side. I mean, what South Africa has done by taking Israel to the International Court of Justice and then, you know, having these new cases, Nicaragua, taking Germany for a dispute and so on. That has sent a message to the UN. So that's the second reason why there's a kind of softening of tone. The third thing I think that's important is that there's only so much that can be tolerated in a war. You know, you kill 32,000 civilians, you put enormous pressure on the Palestinian population in Gaza, and there's no endpoint, you know, where does it end? Like, are you going to kill them all? All the Palestinians push them into Egypt? What's the endpoint? What is this victory for the Israelis? And I think because the Israelis don't have a narrative of victory, they haven't thought through what victory actually means, apart from massacring all the Palestinians. I mean, this, I think, is now really the red flag in the United States. And people are thinking, Well, what is victory going to mean? Are they going to kill everybody? That cannot be sustained. And that's a third thing. But I don't want to exaggerate all this because at the same time, the United States continues to supply Israel with weaponry. Germany continues to supply Israel with weaponry, that hasn't stopped. There is a softening of tone for political reasons, but underneath everything, logistical support, military support, and to some extent, diplomatic support continues. By the way, after the United States voted to abstain from the ceasefire resolution, they did something very nasty. They started walking around saying it's a non-binding resolution. There is no such thing as a non-binding UN Security Council resolution. There is a non-binding statement. It's called a presidential statement. The president of the council, now this month it is Japan, can release a statement saying, we call for a ceasefire, that's non-binding. But a UN Security Council resolution is always binding. It was a bit of mischief to have high officials of the US government, John Kirby and others walk around saying, Well, you know, it's not important, it's non-binding. It's very much binding. And whether Israel at any point is going to acknowledge the severity of this resolution, that's another issue. But it's certainly binding, and it certainly comes from a political distress that the US government is facing.

ZR: Last week, Israel announced the largest Palestinian land seizure since the 1993 Oslo Accords. This seizure, or to be more accurate, annexation of land, will be roughly ten square kilometers in the West Bank. And according to the Israel based human rights group B'Tselem, more than 40% of the West Bank is under the control of Israeli settlers. Although the West has routinely criticised Israel's annexation of Palestinian land, stating that it undermines the two state solution, it has never backed it up with hard consequences such as sanctions. It has merely sanctioned specific settlers who commit violence, but has never sanctioned the overall settlement policy of Israel. When Russia, for example, annexed Crimea in 2014, the West not only invoked international law but also suspended Russia from the G8 and imposed wide ranging economic sanctions. Why do you think there is a double standard in how the West invokes international law and implements sanctions, if you compare it to Ukraine, to Palestine, and do you still believe a two state solution is still attainable at this juncture?

VP: It's been very interesting to watch. The Chinese, the Indian and other governments, affirm the question of the two state solution at this time. Why are they all talking about the two state solution? I think it is not the important thing to consider. They are basically mentioning the two state solution at this juncture, to make it very clear that they will not omit, they will not allow, they will not legalize an annexation of Gaza. The Israelis have talked about annexing Gaza. Gaza is one of the three components of the state of Palestine, the other two being the West Bank and East Jerusalem. So by talking about the two state solution now, I think these countries are merely saying we will not allow you to annex Gaza. I just want to put that out there as a parenthesis. I'll return to the two state solution in a minute. This annexation of land has taken place from the very beginning. In 1994 the Israelis and the Palestinians signed the Oslo Accords, which effectively said that the Palestinians would have to accept the state of Israel, but would in return get to have a state which would include the three parts of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza. And that freedom of movement for Palestinians between these three areas would be guaranteed. That was the Oslo Accord. And within the West Bank in particular, there was some question of which areas would be under whose security control. The Israelis claimed some areas which they said were defeated. That was the agreement. From day one, the Israelis violated one of the principles of Oslo, which is free movement between the three areas. They prevented free movement from the West Bank and East Jerusalem to and from Gaza, and they prevented effectively by checkpoints, free movement from the West Bank to East Jerusalem. And very quickly from very much in the beginning, settlements started coming up in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem and in Gaza. They began to just start taking the land. I mean, it was extraordinary, and criticism was muted. It was as if having signed the Oslo Accords, the Israeli government was allowed to violate it immediately. And it's not only that. Initially, many of these settlements were funded by private US money. In the United States people were raising money to basically build settlements in the West Bank, in Gaza, in East Jerusalem and get away with it. They were repatriating money or getting money from the United States for that. You guys come and did nothing. They didn't prevent it. They didn't mention it. Nothing. They allowed it to happen. And now you reach the point, where in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem, significant tracts of land have been annexed by the Israeli government by the military and have been annexed by private settlers. Now, the US government has sanctioned a few most extreme private settlers, but they haven't sanctioned the illegal settlements. You know, the International Court of Justice in 2002 received a complaint from South Africa. This is now 20 years ago about a wall that the Israelis were building around the West Bank, which would prevent free movement between the West Bank and East Jerusalem. That wall is called the apartheid wall. The ICJ gave a ruling criticizing that wall. You know, this is 20 years ago. So in a very clear and direct sense, the United States has been fully complicit in undermining the two state solution, fully complicit in undermining the two state solution.

Now, today, is there a possibility of a two state solution? Well, certainly, it's important to maintain that on the table so that tomorrow the Israelis don't annex Gaza. I think it's important there is a break. Beyond that is a two state solution viable? Very difficult. Was it viable even in 94? Unlikely. I think the Palestinians have to come up with a project. You know, it's not for me and you to decide whether a two state solution is a good idea or what's a

good idea. People there have to come up with their own project. What's very clear is the Israeli state is committed to a one state, and that's the one apartheid state where the Israeli state goes from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and has Palestinians as second class citizens; what you already have now within 1948 lines. That seems to be the Israeli project, a one state apartheid state project. What the Palestinians will have to fight for we will have to see. You know, I don't believe that a two state solution is totally viable. But again, this is not for us to decide, this is for them to decide. On the table, there's a lot of discussion going on; whether it's a one state, a one democratic state of all people who live between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, all the people, equal rights, you know, and so on. This would, of course, threaten the idea of the Jewish state, because you'd have, you know, almost equivalent populations. Now, is there a place for something called the Jewish state on the planet? Is it acceptable to have any state, you know, a muslim state, next to a Jewish state? Are these things acceptable? I tend to favor a Republican process, you know, where there are minority rights and so on, but not an nationalist state. This is the old European concept, which I think has really created too many wars over too long a time; the Church State Nexus as it were. I hope that that's not something that people find acceptable. You know, regardless of the crimes of the Holocaust, I don't think that the crimes of the Holocaust necessarily lead to an ethno-nationalist state. I think that itself is a bad idea. But again, that's for the people to work out politically.

ZR: Whenever the 24th of February approaches in Germany, the day that marks the second anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine that just passed, many reports and documentaries are released during the run up, reaching its peak on the 24th of February. German media outlets dedicate their airtime strongly focusing on the horrors of war that the Russian invasion unleashed. Not only do we see a rapid spike in frequency of such coverage, but also the quality is in-depth, providing a detailed, as well as emotional focus on the victims of war. On the other hand, whenever the 20th of March comes around every year, the day that the US invaded Iraq based on the life of weapons of mass destruction that killed almost eight to nine times the amount of people in contrast to the Ukraine war, with conservative estimates documenting around 300 to 350,000 civilians killed, we see no such coverage. Even though the war killed more civilians, had a major impact in the Middle East, was more brutal in nature, and even created the conditions for the refugee crisis that Europe has been still experiencing since 2015 until today, we rarely, if at all, are exposed to the quantitative and qualitative in-depth coverage that we are accustomed to Ukraine. In fact, Germany's leading daily news outlet called the Tagesschau did not even mention the Iraq war in its 8 p.m. prime time news segment on March 20th, let alone commemorate it. As someone who has written extensively on the Iraq war, can you talk about the discrepancy in media coverage and thereafter assess the legacy of this war?

VP: Well, I am very sorry to hear that the German media didn't cover the anniversary of the Iraq war. I was not aware of that. I'm very sorry about that because, in 2002, 2003, then Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, made some interesting statements about the war that was going to happen against Iraq. I mean, you know, the German government wasn't prepared to go along with it at the time. And I think it's a shame that the media today doesn't remember

that it doesn't commemorate that. I mean, Mr. Schroeder himself is alive and well. Why hasn't he made a public statement saying, Remember, in 2002, many European countries, including France, were not happy with this lead up to the war against the Iraqi people, an illegal war, because there was no UN resolution. Gerhard Schroeder, you know, I know he's been talking a little bit about Ukraine, and probably bemoaning the state of his own party, the Social Democratic Party, but where is he? Why isn't he reflecting all these years later on that ugly, ugly attack on Iraq, which, you know, in the end probably took over a million lives in excess, maybe more; including with the use of depleted uranium in Fallujah and Ramadi, 30,000 civilians killed in Mosul in the war against ISIS. I mean, where is the commemoration of that? Did Iraq really deserve that? The way in which "shock and awe" took out the entire infrastructure of the country, the power grid, water treatment plants, hospitals, you know, barbaric bombardment of that country, shown live on American TV and then broadcast into homes around the world. Grotesque. The attack on journalists and then, of course, you know, random war crimes, one of them revealed by Julian Assange, Wikileaks, thanks to Chelsea Manning. And that was a helicopter strike on civilians, including two journalists in New Baghdad City in 2007. The two journalists were killed, one of them carrying his camera, which the helicopter pilot suggested was a gun, and they just took them out. I mean, you know, where is that memory? You know, and it's so recent. It's incredible. You know, I covered that war. I have memories of places like New Baghdad City. Where is the reporting? And I'm actually – I'm sorry to say – I'm actually distressed at the German media. Again, for good reason, because of the government position in 2003, I'm surprised and horrified that there's no media that's willing to look back and say, My God, let's remember that, because it was ugly. But I assume that this is entirely propaganda, you know, which prevents the mention of that war, because right now the United States and Germans and others are at war in Ukraine. And I think, if they brought up the ugly war in Iraq, it might make people think about, Well, what's going on in Ukraine? Why is NATO involved in a conflict on the Russian border?

I mean, you know, one of the things that I thought a lot about, regarding war as territory. You know, Ukraine has to live next to Russia. That's its fate. That's where Ukraine exists. Ukraine can't go anywhere else. They have to make a deal with the Russians in the same way as the Iraqis and the Iranians for eight years fought an ugly war. Where then the German government provided the Iraqis with mustard gas to use against the Iranians. Eventually, they had to come to terms with the fact, Well, we're going to have to live next to them, you know, and we are neighbors and we share a kind of culture in a way, parts of Iraq shares culture with Iran and so on, got to live next to each other, got to come to terms with each other. And in a sense, this egging Ukraine to continue this war at great cost to the Ukrainian people, is a shame. And I think maybe you're right to put these two things together, that it's, you know, hesitation about the situation in Ukraine that prevents, even the best of the German media perhaps, from commemorating a war which large sections of the German public were against. And that's the war against the Iraqi people. And I would hazard now, larger and larger sections of the German public are against increasing support for the war in Ukraine. I think the inflation in Germany, the sense of desolation about the war will create a new majority. And I'm interested to see in Germany how the European elections go. And then eventually

the federal election will be very interesting to follow where the public is moving; deeply dissatisfied, I think, with a culture of war making.

ZR: On the 22nd of March, an Islamic State terror attack occurred at a concert venue near Moscow, killing around 143 people. The four gunmen, as well as seven others related to the attacks, were quickly caught and arrested by the Russian authorities and charged with terrorism. The Islamic State Khorasan Province ISKP, which is based in Afghanistan, took responsibility for these attacks. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that there were some traces to Kyiv. Specifically, he said that these terrorists were in contact with Ukraine and tried to use a corridor to flee that was being provided by Ukraine. No evidence, however, has been presented to back this version. In the wake of these attacks, European countries are raising their terror alarms and implementing policies to beef up security. For a long time, it seemed that Islamic terrorism was fading after the defeat of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. However, now it seems to come back. Can you provide an assessment of this resurgence?

VP: Well, it's not clear that the Islamic terrorism or right wing, Islamist terrorists are returning. It's not clear. I mean, this is one attack. There has been a long period of relative quiet, in a way. So let's go back to something interesting. Firstly, most of the men involved in the attack seem to come from Tajikistan. You know, I remember in western Syria, a number of people from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, from Xinjiang province in China and so on, had come as militants to fight with the various al-Qaida groups. At the time, they were mainly with al-Qaida and then some of them went to ISIS. So that was an incubator for a lot of these Central Asian, Islamist radicals, and including, as I said, from this Xinjiang province in China. There were Uyghur radicals there as well, the east Turkmenistan group and so on. So these groupings, don't forget, were squeezed by the Russian military intervention in 2015. Russia intervened in Syria militarily, to defend the government of Bashar al-Assad and to defend the Russian naval port in Tartus, Latakia. So there is a history of Russia directly confronting these Central Asian militants in Syria. So it's very plausible that this is a revenge attack for that. But my God, that's you know, nine years ago when Russia intervened in Syria, it's very possible this is related to that.

One of them seems to have had some Ukrainian papers. That's the basis upon which Mr. Putin made those statements. One of them had Ukrainian papers, and they seemed to be going off toward Ukraine. Hard to say, you know, it's very difficult, I've covered a number of these attacks and often the interrogation after the fact is extremely harsh, and it's very difficult to know whether the evidence provided by the attackers has any basis in reality. You know, don't forget that the interrogator also has a narrative in their mind when they go into the interrogation room. You know, that Russia is at war with Ukraine and you've got fellows who conducted an attack, you're going to ask them, Do you have any connection to Ukraine? Flap. Do you have a connection to Ukraine? Slap. Who knows what happened in the interrogation room and what people say. We have had a lot of experience since at least the 1990s of terror attacks of one kind or the other and then pretty interesting stories coming out. It's not impossible that some Ukrainian intelligence organization, you know, the SBU, Ukrainian

intelligence, not impossible, that Ukrainian intelligence found a bunch of Tajik militants who were really upset with Russia's intervention in Syria and decided to direct them to do this kind of attack. It's also not impossible that the United States picked up some chatter and then put out that warning. Not impossible, but I mean, it's really hard to see what exactly happened. You know, it's very hard to say. It's not like these seven or eleven men are going to be turned over to some independent authority or that some independent journalists are going to be interviewing. It's not going to happen. We're going to get the information we get from the Russian state. They are in the middle of a war with Ukraine and so on. There will be a way in which this story might fit the reality. We don't know what's going to happen. I mean, this is not the first attack of this kind in Russia. Mr. Putin, as the president has experienced this before, during the second war against the Chechnyans, which he prosecuted. There were a number of attacks in Moscow. Then even subsequent to that, there were a few attacks. This is not unusual. Russia itself has a problem with militancy because of the Dagestan, Chechnya crisis that developed during the time of Mr. Yeltsin. You may remember the First Chechen War was right after the fall of the Soviet Union. So it's not clear what exactly is happening here, but I don't put it past the SBU, the Ukrainian Intelligence fiddling around with loose strings, inside Russia or inside Syria. Who knows what happened, who knows whether US intelligence was involved, you know? These are all realities. We don't need to be conspiracy theorists here. It is a reality that intelligence services meddle in these sorts of things. You know, we have ample historical evidence of that. We just don't have evidence about this. And we may never have evidence about this.

ZR: The US has been one of the largest supporters of Ukraine since the war started. However, its support has been dwindling and it's been unable to pass a \$60 billion aid package to Ukraine due to domestic political reasons. Hence, Europe is stepping up. Last week, for example, European Union leaders came to a principle agreement to use the profits that were generated through the interest of the frozen assets of Russian state assets and hand them over to Ukraine. This would generate €3 billion and could be released to Ukraine by this summer. 90% would go to the military and 10% in reconstruction. In addition, at the 20th meeting of the Ukraine Defense Contact Group at Ramstein Air Base, Germany announced another €500 billion in military aid to Ukraine, including ammunition and armored vehicles. So far, Germany has allocated around €28 billion to support Ukraine. And the German chancellor has said many times that the support for Ukraine will be there for as long as it takes. Do you think Europe can sustain its support for Ukraine if the United States does not come around? And what do you think will the price be for Europe as well as for Ukraine?

VP: Well, good luck to Europe in supporting Ukraine at those levels. The United States trying to pass the government 60 billion, as you said, ended up with 300 million. They're not going to fund. Whether Biden wins the election in November or Trump, the US funding is going to decline. Good luck to Europe. Right now Germany has an emergency military budget. That's going to expire. German military spending is about 1.3% of GDP, 0.7% below the 2% threshold. Can Germany come to the 2% threshold? Only by cutting public spending. Social welfare spending, spending on health, spending on education, spending on infrastructure. In fact, it's very interesting that in the recent period, the European governments

have said that they would pressure the European Sovereignty Fund, and the European Investment Bank. The European Investment Bank was created in 2019. The purpose of the European Investment Bank was to increase investments in climate; in the climate transition and green technology and so on. No, now, they're being directed, European Investment Bank, European Sovereignty Fund to fund defense. So you're moving from climate to defense at the same time as the US government is putting pressure on China to say, don't export so many solar cells and things like that. You're putting too much capacity on the market. You're hurting US green technology companies. So, you're going to have Europe, which is moving the investment commitments to climate to defense at the same time as you are putting pressure on China not to export solar cells and so on to Europe, because the US wants to export it much more expensive. A choice is being made therefore, by the governments of – not only Olaf Scholz, but the Greens, who are in coalition. The Greens in Germany are therefore making a choice that they would prefer to use whatever investment money is available for defense rather than for green technology. That's incredible. That should be a scandal, in fact. And on the other side, they are willing to cut social benefits in order to go up to 2% of GDP. And I was very interested in a story that appeared in the mainstream press that suggested that if Germany got embroiled in a war, Germany only has the armaments to last two days – two days.

ZR: Yes, German military spending has been increasing on a year to year basis, and at the same time we are experiencing massive cuts in spending, whether it's in the social sector, environmental, infrastructure, it's basically all across the board. Do you think it's possible for Germany to return to an economic powerhouse? That export model that it used to have without having better relations with Russia?

VP: I mean, it's crazy. I'm sorry to put such a strong word on the table, but it's madness, you know? Let's just take the case of energy. Germany is energy deficient. You actually have two sources of energy that could keep you going. But they would mean a real challenge for Germany's self-image. One is you can go back to coal or wood, related to them. You got the Black Forest. There's a lot of energy in the Black Forest, you can start cutting the trees and burning them. That's one form of energy Germany has. The second is nuclear. The Greens can go back on their promise, which they've already done, to shutter the nuclear power plants and then restart them, open some more. Those are two, quote unquote, "indigenous sources of energy". I'm not talking about hydroelectric power, which is not such a big component. But these are two. Number three, you can get natural gas from Russia. You know, they pipe it in. You could build a pipeline that goes in the Baltic Sea. Oh, wait a minute. You already had one. It was called Nord Stream One and Nord Stream Two. They were blown up. But pipeline is a much cheaper and much more environmentally friendly form of moving high volumes of gas. Here's the insane idea. The United States gets gas out of shale fields in Canada and in parts of the US, right? Extremely dangerous for the environment. Pumping high pressure water to get the gas out of the shale field. Then they bring that gas in pipelines, down to New Orleans where they liquefy the gas, they make the gas into liquid, and then they put the liquid form of the gas on a tanker. And then they carry that liquid across the Atlantic Ocean. It arrives in Hamburg or somewhere at a terminal which will have to be built. You don't have enough

capacity yet. And then the liquid form of the gas is converted back into gas, and it's sent out into the homes. It's very expensive and it's terrible for the environment. And you've got people in Canada, saying, Please don't do this. You're creating mining tremors in the earth, releasing all kinds of toxic substances and dirtying our water supply. All of that, the complaint of people in Canada – that was, by the way, the big protest in the United States around the pipeline that was being built. So, Germany has choices to make, you've decided to have a hostile relationship with Russia, which could provide you with natural gas quite easily and instead you throw your chips in once again with the United States, where it's insane to get gas in that way and expensive. You're going to have to go and make an arrangement with Russia at some point. And the arrangement is going to have to give Russia security guarantees. Russia is actually, in my opinion, not an aggressive power, even though Russia invaded Ukraine. It is actually operating in a defensive way. The Russians, they've said many times, We want security guarantees. Why not give them a guarantee that offensive missiles will not go beyond the German border? You're not going to place offensive missiles in Ukraine or in Georgia or in Lithuania, Estonia, whatever. You know, why not give them a guarantee? The United States ripped up all the arms control treaties; the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty 2002, the Treaty on Intermediate Nuclear Missiles, 2019, the US unilaterally tore them up. This is creating anxiety in Moscow and in Beijing. Why not come up with a proper arms control regime, give security guarantees, you know, have a settlement in Ukraine, that's a pretty lasting settlement? You can already imagine what a settlement will look like and then go back to restarting. Let's say Nord Stream Three. And there it is, you'll have your price of energy going down – significantly. We have not only domestic or household consumption, but also industrial consumption, where the prices, if they are too high, make German goods absolutely priced out of the market.

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

VP: Thanks a lot.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. Please don't forget to join our alternative channels on Rumble, Telegram, as well as our podcast called Podbean. YouTube, which is owned by Google, can shadowban and censor us at any time. So we are asking all of our viewers to join us today and not if it's too late, because once we get shadowbanned or censored, we won't be able to reach you. You will be able to find the links to these platforms in the description of this video below. And if you're watching our videos regularly, make sure to support us with a standing order via Patreon, PayPal, or a bank account. If all of our 145,000 subscribers would just donate a few euros every month to us, we would be able to cover costs for the next four to five years. Our journalism's core principle is not to take any money from governments or corporations, hence we only depend on you to continue. Thank you for watching today. I'm your host, Zain Raza, and see you next time.

END

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