Ukraine: Peace? The Missing Context — Scott Horton

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Zain Raza (ZR): Thank you for tuning in, I'm your host Zain Raza. Before we begin this interview, I would like to share with you the second update of our crowdfunding campaign that we started in the beginning of December with the goal of continuing our independent and nonprofit journalism in 2026. To provide you some context first, in last year's campaign we managed to raise 62,000€ thanks to 2,200 donors. And in this year's campaign, due to increased costs as well as a difficult economic environment, we are aiming to raise 80,000€ by January 9th. So let's get to the second update of our crowdfunding campaign. As of December 18th, we managed to raise 29,000€ thanks to 800 donors. Compared to last year, we managed to raise 22,000€ at this stage of our crowdfunding campaign. The campaign started off strong but has slowed down. With this amount, we'll be able to operate until June of next year. However, if we attain our target in full, we'll raise enough funds in order to

continue until next year's crowdfunding campaign. If just 5-10% of our 166,000 donors donate We recently launched our crowdfunding campaign so that we can continue our independent and non-profit journalism in 2026.5 to 10 € today, we'll be able to reach our target with ease. On the screen now you will see a PayPal QR code appear. If you take your cell phone now, scan that code with your camera, you'll be able to donate to us immediately. For more detailed information on our crowdfunding campaign, our past work, the challenges and costs that we face this year, as well as how you can participate in our campaign, you will find out in the description of this video below. I thank you for your support and your generosity.

Today I've been talking to Scott Horton, who is the editorial director of antiwar.com and the director of the Libertarian Institute. He's considered one of America's leading non-interventionist voices and has written several books, the latest being: *Provoked: How Washington started the new Cold War with Russia and Catastrophe in Ukraine*. Scott, welcome back to the show.

Scott Horton (SH): Thank you for having me. Good to be with you.

ZR: I want to begin with Ukraine and the intensive talks that took place this week in Berlin aimed at finding a path towards ending the war. Over the past weeks, US and Russia contacts have quietly resumed, and against this backtroph, US envoys met with Ukraine and European leaders in Berlin, with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz playing a leading role. The discussions focused on the US-backed peace framework, which was initially drafted as a 28-point plan and later revised to around 20 points following the consultations with European and Ukrainian partners. The Berlin talks did not result in a ceasefire or a signed peace agreement. Instead, they centered around the broader framework emphasizing security guarantees for Ukraine and continued Western sport. This includes the idea of a European-led multinational force with the United States potentially playing a monitoring or verification role. European leaders also stressed that territorial questions would only be addressed after credible security guarantees are in place. Moscow's response so far has been widely described in most Western media outlets, especially in Germany, as uncompromising. Russian officials, for example, have rejected any NATO country troops or from the European so-called Coalition of the Willing operating in Ukraine, dismissed territorial compromise and made clear that Russia is not interested in a temporary ceasefire. Instead, Moscow insists on a comprehensive political settlement that addresses what it calls root causes of the war. Given all this, how do you assess the outcome of the Berlin talks? Do you see the parties moving any closer to a negotiated agreement, or do these positions suggest they remain as far apart as ever?

SH: Yeah, I think as suggested in your question, it doesn't sound like they're getting much closer. Although I really have to give the Trump administration credit for trying this hard and staying at it. And I guess you have to imagine, right, that they're getting some kind of positive response in the conversations that it's worth continuing to try. I don't know just how stubborn or just how intransigent the Russians are being in the talks. And quite honestly, I'm spread way too thin these days, and I'm not up on all the latest reporting, and especially from all the

European papers about the leadership in the countries there. But in the way you describe it, I can't imagine the Russians signing on to a deal that says, yes, they'll agree to essentially write de facto NATO security guarantees for Ukraine first, and then we'll decide where the territorial lines are going to be drawn second, something like that. I mean, that sounds completely crazy. It sounds like they cooked that up over at the Kagan's Institute for the Study of War or something like that. Even as far as a comprehensive settlement, we know what up until now that has meant from the Russian point of view, and that is the Ukrainians lose and turn around and walk away from territory that they still stand on, but that Russia claims. Their position here has been, you know, they didn't say unconditional surrender, but they said these are the conditions. And those conditions have been that Russia now owns the entirety of these four oblasts, and then a permanent forswearance of any membership in the NATO alliance, or you'd have to imagine any de facto situation that amounts to the same thing, like they're talking about now, all these European and or American backed security guarantees for Ukraine. What sense does that make? We will not send soldiers in. I mean, we got deniable clandestine forces there in small numbers to help with targeting and whatever, but we don't have soldiers on the ground fighting there, at least beyond deniable numbers. Maybe you got SAS running around, you know, doing some missions or whatever. But overall, our governments are not sending our soldiers in there to fight for Ukraine now. But we got your back next time, though. We're not willing to do what it takes now. We're not willing to act as though they have a security guarantee from us already and help them defend their territory, and thank God for that, that would just mean war between NATO and the Russian Federation. I'm not advocating that, but I'm just saying our governments have demonstrated they're not willing to go to war with Russia over any part of Ukraine. S I guess I would turn it around and ask you. You're in Europe. Does anybody believe what these kooks say that the British are gonna what? Field an army anywhere in Ukraine to fight Russians now or ever? Same question for France, for Germany, for Poland. None of these countries are going to war for Ukraine. They were going to war for Ukraine, they'd be going to war for Ukraine right now, not later. So the whole thing to me sounds really like just sabotage or at best wishful thinking. But I guess I'll ask you about the politics in Europe and just how seriously anyone is taking these people's claims that they're going to field armies that we all know that they don't have.

ZR: I mean, if you ask me, I would say a large part of the population supports our government's drive to militarize on the premise that we have to have a strong army in order to scare off Russia from invading. And there is a segment of the population on the right and on the left that is critical and wants the etat with Russia. And so it's quite split, but with the economic conditions getting worse, people are looking for answers. But I think generally speaking, I get the feeling that people believe we need to stand up against Russia because Russia will move in after Ukraine towards attacking NATO partners. And there's a lot of fear, I would say that the media is playing, the political spectrum is playing in part in exacerbating this fear. And on this premise, a lot of militarization is taking place, and a lot of people are seeing – so for example, when Trump was trying to push Europe towards accepting the Russian position, a lot of media outlets here framed it as Trump and Putin being in cahoots. So, yeah, that would be my perspective if you want to comment on that.

SH: Yeah, well, I mean, it sounds like what you're saying is that they're militarizing and preparing for the eventuality of what they might have to do if Russia attacks Estonia, right? A NATO member. But you didn't really address my question, which was does anybody really believe that if the war ends now, that the next time Russia attacks Ukraine, that Poland, Germany, France, and Britain are gonna come running to their rescue and field land armies in there, I mean, these security guarantees – and look, I mean, this is the whole thing, it's quite bothersome, as I know you understand, they lied that the purpose of this war was just that Putin woke up on the wrong side of the bed one morning in a bad mood and decided he wanted to make himself a great czar and reconquer all of Eastern Europe, and he's just getting started here. I mean, that is the Saddam Hussein's sarin nerve gas of this war. It's just a bunch of crap. It's not true. What it was was one, a massive and horrible, ongoing, violent civil war in the country's east, backed by Western powers. And as we know from much later reporting with the CIA running the whole thing, New York Times has a giant thing from 23 about how the CIA was running that whole war for the Ukraine side the whole time. Right? Obama's people and all that. Just like in the accusations. And then secondly was the threat of NATO expansion and the de facto addition of Ukraine's military to our alliance and what they they have – it's on the tip of my tongue – they call the normalization, oh, it's some stupid word they have for making sure they're – I swear it's in my book a hundred times. Whatever.

ZR: Interoperality, inter-something.

SH: Interoperability. Thank you. Thank you. Interoperability, meaning they standardize their military to essentially along our lines. So their order of rank and command is the same. They adopt our communication systems and our command and control. And then more and more with the emphasis of swapping out their old Soviet-based military with a new NATO-based one. And so that even without the promise of the war guarantee explicitly under Article Five and NATO membership, that at least if NATO and Russia went to war, that Ukraine would be part of NATO then, and that their military would essentially fight as just another auxiliary army, just like the Hungarians and the Germans and the Poles all would be in the event of a major war between the NATO alliance and the Russian Federation there. And then as a major part of that was the threat, and the Russians had been absolutely explicitly opposed to this and against this and complained about this since at least 2007 – I'd have to check my book, but probably before that – and that is the very real potential that America would install these supposed defensive anti-ballistic missile systems, where these sparrow defensive missiles are launched from dual use missile launchers, the Mark 41 missile launchers that can host Tomahawk cruise missiles. And so they were saying, as Putin said repeatedly: Imagine these launchers hosted in Kharkiv, where they'd have a flight time to Moscow within ten minutes. These things can be tipped with H bombs. And of course, Trump tore up the Intermediate Nuclear Forces treaty, which would even make it legal to tip these things with H bombs at this point. And so he was saying, actually, instead of letting it go that far, we're gonna not, right? So that was what it was about. And I'm not saying it was justified, and I'm not saying that Putin was out of options. And I argue in the book against both of those. I'm not saying that, but I am saying those are very real security concerns. Stop jerking my chain about how,

oh, he just wants to be Joseph Stalin and a bunch of crap. And they had been explicit about all of this for years and years and years leading up to this.

And now they decided to draw their line and go ahead and really make their problem worse in the name of solving it by launching the war in 2022, or escalating the war to such a great degree in 2022. And again, I'm not saying I'm for that, but that was what it was really about. And so then what happens is here we are years later, and as we're discussing over there in European politics, none of these people can admit the reality of that. So they're all stuck on stupid. They're all stuck on essentially the lie that they told in the beginning as their alibi for why this wasn't their fault for their ham handed policies that had resulted in this horrible reaction, even as well predicted by leaders in the West for so long. And so now they have to, yeah, well, now that we know Putin just wants to reconquer all of Europe, come on, guys, we got to hold the line. And then, God dang, now, how are you supposed to negotiate an actual peace here? Where what we really need is for Ukraine's constitution and for a NATO and US signed treaty to say that, no, we're not going to bring them into NATO. They're not going to join our alliance. We're not going to station military equipment in their nation and all of that. Now, when Putin proposed his treaty in 2021, he even said: You got to move your missile launchers out of Romania and Poland too. Well, you know what? He was right that that was what Bill Clinton had promised in 1997, was that when we expand NATO, still we swear we're not going to put military forces in the new NATO countries in Eastern Europe. And then George W. Bush broke that promise. And Barack Obama and Donald Trump, they broke that promise. Trump probably never even heard of it. Bush and Obama sure knew what they were doing. But you know what? Like, that was probably in there just to be negotiated away. You know what I mean? Or maybe not, maybe not. But what they refused to do was sit down and negotiate that treaty in good faith. And they said there are certain topics in this treaty that are just completely off the table, such as, for example, and I quote numerous times in the book officials and the newspapers, all kind of in agreement that Putin is making insane irrational demands that prove that he's not even serious here. He's just building up a pretext for war. And you know how you can tell? He's saying crazy stuff like a deal that his predecessor Boris Yeltsin made with Bill Clinton in 1997 should still be a deal somehow. Isn't that crazy? As though 1997 was 1897. And we've been through two world wars and a cold war with communism and Bolshevik everything since then. Shock therapy and the rest. No. This is just in recent times. And it was a solemn assurance. Although, as I show in the book, they knew they were lying all the time. And Bill Clinton, as quoted by his friends, Bill Clinton mocked the Russians for believing them and said, "Ha ha ha ha, yeah, this is the deal until I wake up one morning and change my mind", he said. Speaking of waking up in the morning on the wrong side of the bed and changing your mind, that was Bill Clinton, his own words describing his own attitude about what that deal meant to the United States.

ZR: Let me put forward a critical perspective that you voiced about Trump's efforts that he's trying his best. And this sort of perspective is argued a lot in the independent leftist journalistic media networks. They argue that much of the current diplomacy around Ukraine, including the recent Berlin discussions, amounts to political theater rather than a genuine push for peace by Donald Trump. And the claim is that if Trump was truly determined to end

the war quickly, Washington would apply far more direct leverage than it has at its disposal. For example, by threatening to withdraw from NATO or cutting off complete intelligence support to Ukraine. After all, Europe still depends heavily on the United States for its security. Instead they suggest that this process serves an important domestic political function, particularly for Trump, by allowing to project an image of being focused on peace, which resonates strongly with significant segments of his MAGA base, which played a huge role in bringing him in power and which are skeptical of prolonged US wars. These critics also point to what they see as a contradiction, for example, the US military escalation in Venezuela, which we will discuss later in this interview. They further argue that the US military industrial complex is profiting heavily from the Ukraine war, as European partners are increasingly purchasing weapons directly from the US military industrial complex rather than receiving them as aid from US taxpayers. So what is your perspective? Do you think Donald Trump can be really trusted as a serious broker for peace?

SH: Well, look, I think the guy you're quoting there is sort of oversimplifying it. The question is not whether he's sincere in trying to reach a peace agreement here. The way he's framing it is: Is Trump willing to do anything to end the war? And obviously the answer to that is no, right? He's trying to end it on the best terms as far as he's willing to go. But one, he's not the best negotiator in the world, despite all the hype. And I would argue that he has not played his cards as best as he could have. But no, he's also not willing for political reasons in the United States to simply turn Ukraine over to Russia and just, as that guy put it, essentially, just side with Russia against Ukraine and Europe and just tell Ukraine you're beaten, you're whooped, and just take it. For political reasons in America, he might as well shoot himself in the head. That he can't do that, right? It would be, imagine if America had been not supporting Israel, but it'd been supporting the Palestinians, but just enough to keep them in the fight while they keep losing and losing and losing for a few years. And then we just say, Okay, good luck, pal, and then we just leave him high and dry for the Israelis to finish them off after we've helped build them up as a quote unquote "threat", enough for Israel to justify attacking them, right? That's what we've done to Ukraine here. That's what this guy is asking Trump to do to Ukraine. Now, if it's me, I'd call off all intervention anywhere in the world yesterday, and it's a hell of a price, but I'd be willing to pay it. But I'm just saying, Donald Trump, in this situation, and he helped, but it was especially Joe Biden who put Ukraine in this position, but it still is the United States of America's government that put Ukraine in this position, he is not going to simply say, I hereby suspend all support for you, no matter what, even if the Europeans are willing to pay for it. And I'm just going to watch you lose faster, and that'll end this war. He's not going to do that. What instead he's trying to do is he's trying to say to Putin, Listen, man, just end the war now, short of the total victory that you are surely bound to achieve here, not total, but whatever, on whatever terms that you can, and just call the war off as a favor to me, please. That's what he's trying to do. He doesn't really have any other major cards to play there.

Now, again, if it was me, I would not be engaging in any of this. But just as Donald Trump in this position, I think he made a mistake when he came in and really bad-mouthed Kiev and Zelensky the way he did, and treated them totally like trash and made it clear to them, I don't

have your back, so whatever you're gonna do, you better figure it out without me, pal. And while doing that, he essentially pushed Zelensky to sort of undermine Trump by turning to the Europeans and you know go around him, right? And he also gave away that card to play against Moscow. When he could have made it much more clear, he could have said, for example, Look, I actually like this Zelensky guy. And the more I think about it, the more I like supporting him against you, Russia, and making this hard for you. And you could win this war, but it's going to take you a hell of a long time and a hell of a high cost to do it at the expense of Ukraine with our support. So why don't you come to the table, pal? He could have used that as a stick. And instead he threw away his stick, where now all he has is a carrot. And his carrot is: I'll normalize relations with Russia. But as you know and I know, and everyone listening to this knows, and the guy who wrote that comment that you just quoted knows that Trump is the best guy on Russia in all of Washington, DC. No one in Washington agrees with him about this. No one at any think tank agrees with him about this. No one at the State Department agrees with him about this. So when it's not him and it's the next president, then unless that president runs and wins on let's get along with Russia somehow, if it's any other kook that the establishment would put in there, then the Russians have no reason to trust that any new normalization will last. And so it's not much of a carrot that Trump has to offer. And so he's not in a very strong position to end the war. Other than as the guy said there, yes, he could just totally side with Russia against Ukraine and just say, we don't give a damn what happens to you now. But he can't do that for obvious political reasons. That is just way too far.

And so it sucks because as I guess we must have talked about the last time and sort of underlying this whole conversation here is that Russia is winning the war slowly, and Ukraine is losing it slowly. And so the Russians are going to win, but they have not taken all the territory that they claim, not by a long shot. I mean, there's like a quarter, I think, almost a quarter, of Donetsk and fully a third of Zaprozia and Kherson each that are not under Russian control. But that is territory that they have claimed. And Ukrainians are losing and losing and losing every day. They haven't made progress of any real kind in two and a half years, two and a quarter years. But they don't want to just turn around and walk away from the ground they still stand on. I mean, they have a quarter of a million AWOL, you know, absent without leave, not defectors, but people who fled the field. But the regime and their conscripts for the most part are still holding the line, at least overall. And so they don't want to turn around and quit, before they're forced to, right? Before they just have no choice, their military's broken and they must surrender at bayonet point. And so I mean, quite honestly, again, like forget if only Ron Paul were here, or if I was the president or whatever, but imagine just any other president in this situation, after, again, as stipulated, America helped get Ukraine into this trap. It's a pretty bad look. And you know what? Like the government in Saigon and the government in Kabul, I mean, they were just sock puppet fake regimes. You know what I mean? Like, there were some Catholics in the South who supported the regime, whatever a very small number of people. It's the same thing in Kabul. There were small factions that were brought into the regime under American occupation there. But ultimately, those regimes were just vaporware, right? They just went away. I forgot the Somalis have a term for it, dilip something or something that means a government for a foreign purpose, right? In other

words, a sock puppet regime foisted on you by somebody from somewhere else. Well, that's not the case here, right? I mean, America did a regime change there, but it was a coup. It wasn't a total overthrow in a war, right? It was a coup. And the same regime, whether it was the current president or his predecessor, Poroshenko, the same overall Kiev regime has been firmly in constant power since 2014, and overall, it's the same governments since 1991, right? And so if America stops all support for them, they don't just evaporate and go away like the Ashraf Ghani regime, hop on a helicopter with a bunch of gold and flee. They hang in there for a while still until the Russian government finishes destroying them. And yes, it would be faster if America called off all support, but it would be the ugliest damn thing. It wouldn't be anything like what Richard Nixon called in Vietnam, the decent interval, where we leave and then everybody has a chance to look away. You know what I mean? Well, I guess it would be some of that, but it would be an absolute grind. No one would be able to look away, right? It would be an absolute horror show between the time that we completely abandon Ukraine and the time the Russians take Kiev, you know, and just politically, I think it'd be very difficult for them to do that. In Vietnam and in Afghanistan, ultimately they had no choice. I mean, Vietnam was longer ago, but look at Afghanistan. Why do they leave Afghanistan? Because the Taliban won the war and they lost the war. That's why. They had a ceasefire for a year and a half before the withdrawal. So you might have confused it. But what happened was, the Americans and their puppets across the country did not have a regime. The Afghan national government didn't really exist. It was the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from like 2011 on, right? Like the Taliban won. We lost. We had to go. And only after we lost did we go, right? And so I think the same kind of logic applies here, unfortunately.

ZR: Let's take a step back from the current developments and look at the broader historical context, which you've written extensively about in your book called *Provoked: How Washington Started the New Cold War with Russia and the Catastrophe in Ukraine*. When people look back, one of the most frequently discussed missed opportunities is the negotiations between Russia and Ukraine in March and April of 2022 in Istanbul, Turkey, right after the war broke out, which the mainstream media largely ignores whenever Ukrainian peace negotiations become a central focus. From your perspectives, what were the most significant windows of opportunities the West had to pursue peace in Ukraine? And which of the moments could have produced the best possible outcomes for Ukraine as compared to today? And also as just a side question, do you think the West has actually ever been interested in securing the best deal for Ukraine?

SH: There's a lot there. I mean, I guess I would say going back, as I show in the book, from the beginning of the arguments over whether to expand NATO or not in the 1990s, there were skeptics and hawks, who said: Boy, well, like the skeptics would have said, Oh, yeah, well, what about when it comes to Ukraine? You really gonna bring Ukraine into NATO? And what about all the ethnic Russians in the East? You think the Russians aren't gonna do anything about that? That conversation is going on in 1994, 1995, 1996 in this country, right? And on the hawks side, too, they would say: When it comes to the far eastern, far eastern European countries, like the Baltic states and especially Belarus and Ukraine, well, that'll be a whole other matter. We're gonna have to play those cards very carefully because of the

massive conflicts of interest there and all of that. The Russians have what is called by one author – I'm sorry, I never give him credit. Sorry. It's David D. Laitin. David D. Laitin has this book called *Identity Information*, and he calls all of these Russians that were sort of left behind, he calls them the beached diaspora, right? Like a beached whale or something like that, the Russian Empire, the Soviet, aka sort of kind of Russian Empire receded, and all these ethnic Russians were left behind in these other nation states like Estonia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and others. So then the question is, well, what happens to them? And so some of them came home back across the line. And then for those who stayed, then the question was, well, are their rights protected or are they under threat? Because if they're under threat, you're at least giving Moscow the excuse to intervene. I mean, that's what nation states are, right? Allegedly, they are our security forces. And so you give, and in fact, I quote in the book, the great Alexandr Solzhenitsyn, the great Soviet dissident. And he made the perfect analogy for – and I think you Europeans will understand this – he says: Imagine the American Empire fell and the USA lost everything west of the Mississippi River, and the southwestern United States went back to Mexico. But then they started outlawing Protestant churches and persecuting the Anglos, right? Well, then that would be a whole other problem. And what do you think Uncle Sam would do? What do you think Washington, DC. would do then? They would come and then intervene on the side of the whites of North Texas or whatever, if you take that analogy, right? So it's the same kind of thing here where we're at least creating that – there's a potential for that situation. And they knew that all along. And I make a special point in *Provoked* to show, never mind the critics. Although when I quote the critics, I don't quote like the greatest heroes like Ron Paul and Pat Buchanan that much, I quote very mainstream academic experts and members of the Council on Foreign Relations and State Department officials and all of these men themselves, and including, I think, probably the most famous American foreign policy grand strategists of the later 20th century and the early 21st century, Zbigniew Brzezinski and Henry Kissinger from the Council on Foreign Relations, both of them Rockefeller's men. Henry was Nelson Rockefeller's guy, and Zbigniew was David Rockefeller's guy, but they basically represent that centrist foreign policy consensus. And both of them were hawks on Russia and hawks on NATO expansion. I think Brzezinski was worse, because well, I don't know, they both were of Eastern European heritage, both of them very hawkish and both of them very much in favor of expanding NATO. And yet both of them proposed years before all this came to a head, that we need to have a special dispensation for Ukraine. We had a deal in the old Cold War with the Soviet commies that will treat Austria and Finland as neutral. And neither one was occupied by Soviet troops or NATO troops. Well, actually the Soviets did occupy Austria until the late 50s, but they finally withdrew and they allowed Austria to be independent. They were never forced to join the Warsaw Pact alliance with the Soviet Union, and they were treated as neutral. And so this became known as the Austria model. And all of these wonks from all of these think tanks, they all would say this. Again, Brzezinski and Kissinger among them, but also Ken Pollack, who is like a Brookings institution, Hillary Clinton type, who helped lie us into war with Iraq, helped consolidate liberal consensus for the war with Iraq back then. So he's like a liberal hawk, Hillary Clintonite type. And he said, Boy, in 2018, he had this whole proposal for a new security architecture for Far Eastern Europe, the Visegrad states and Far Eastern Europe and all of this, and one of the main things was we're going to go ahead and

forswear NATO membership for Ukraine. W. Bush made a terrible mistake in promising NATO membership to them back in 2008. Should have never done this, here are chances to fix it. And then so there were example after example like that throughout the time, European officials and American officials, State Department wonks, the diplomats stationed in the embassy in Moscow, all of these people, over the time, or not all of them, but many different ones over the time had warned that we have to figure out a special deal here along these lines. As I mentioned that Ken Pollack, when he put out his study, it was like a little monograph that he proposed all of this in 2018. That was at the height of the Russian gate hoax hysteria, right? Where anything like that that he is proposing would have been considered treason if Trump had taken it seriously. And so it was just dead in the water. Nobody wanted to hear it, you know, really unfortunate. But it goes to show that they all knew better. And they all knew that boy, this is going to be a bridge too far for the Russians. This is going to cause a massive reaction against them. Brzezinski had even in an interview with Voice of America Ukraine had scolded the Ukrainians, that if you guys can't forge a consensus that you want to do this inside the country, then how the hell are we supposed to bring you in? Well, yeah, good question. The WikiLeaks show that the State Department people knew public opinion in Ukraine is terribly divided on this. Their solution, let's launch a massive propaganda campaign to change everybody's mind instead of recognizing that boy, this is not gonna work. It's gonna cause a major problem here. Imagine well, forget the analogies, but so anyway, there's plenty of warning like that overall.

And by the way, I mentioned the Baltic states. They are right on Russia's border. But the history there, and it's much more complicated, I don't know, it used to be the Lithuanian Polish Kingdom Alliance and whatever like that, but the Baltic societies have been very different from Russian society for a long time. And wherever exactly you want to draw those lines, I don't know. I know there's a very Russian city in eastern Estonia, for example, and a heavy Russian population, I believe, in Lithuania as well. And so exactly where you draw those lines, I don't know, but like Lithuanians and Russians are different peoples with different histories and different, I think probably even the Lithuanians are Catholic. That's a stab in the dark there, I could be wrong about that, but they're very separate in a way that Ukraine had been a province of the Russian Empire for 300 years nonstop. And it's just literally true, I don't care, like whatever, everybody knows, everyone knows, hell, you're in the middle of Europe right now, you know, all these lines have been drawn and redrawn in battle a million times over the centuries and all of that. So what we now call Western Ukraine was eastern Poland up until just the Second World War. Galicia and Volhynia, they had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before that, and where what's now Nova Russia, which is the land we've been talking about, the Donbass, and then Nova Russia is Zaprozia and Kherson, and of course the Crimean Peninsula, that had all belonged to the Russians since the 1780s, the same time that the United States of America was first being formed in the aftermath of the revolution against Great Britain. For people who knew what they were talking about, including as I show in the book, senators debating this on the Senate floor in 1997, in fact, even Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was known as a hawk, who was very close to the neoconservative movement, said: Boy, we don't know what we're messing with with all these ancient ethnic conflicts over there, man. This is dangerous stuff. And was shouted down

by guess who? Senator Joe Biden, who knew better, right? And so the background to all of this is that they knew better all along. The Hawks did. The implementers of the policy did. I got all these quotes of Barack Obama: Sounds like a peacenik. Like he's not the commander in chief in charge of all these operations, right? Like, geez, I profoundly disagree with you, administration of mine. Well, what? But he does what they all say anyway, supposedly, you know. But then you listen to him talk about it. And for example, in an interview with Jeffrey Goldberg in the aftermath of the loss of Crimea and all that – and this is partially Jeffrey Goldberg paraphrasing him and partly direct quotes, but everybody can read it, and he got along with Goldberg just fine in good faith. It was their fifth or sixth sit-down long form interview together kind of situation. And he just says, Look, Jeffrey, Ukraine is a vital interest to Russia. It's not a vital interest of ours. Like, for example, they might well invade that place. Are we really willing to put our troops in there to fight them off? Of course not. And if anybody in Washington says they want to put American troops on the ground in eastern Ukraine to liberate the Donbass, then let's hear from them. Right, knowing that he would get nothing but silence, because that's crazy and completely stupid. And so he's saying: So what do you want me to do, Jeffrey? You want me to what? Just pour more weapons into Ukraine so that they escalate the civil war against Russia, which will only provoke the Russians into responding in kind and maybe in a much worse fashion. One more example, the Rand Corporation in 2019 put out this study. You may be familiar with it. It's very important, people should read this. This is a Pentagon sponsored think tank. They keep it out in California, so it's supposedly a little bit separate from the Washington consensus, but it's a very important think tank. And this study that they put out in 2019 is called *Extending Russia*. And what they mean by that is overextending Russia. And what they mean by that is provoking Russia into overextending itself. That's what that means. Extending Russia. It means we give them problems. We could, for example, station more troops in the Baltics. That would make them have to move more troops that way. We could try to do another coup d'etat in Belarus, which they did, in fact, in 2020, the very next year. We could, hey, tell me if this one sounds familiar, increase support for the jihadis in the Idlib province in Syria, causing new problems for Bashar al-Assad and Iran and Russia to have to come and help them more again. We could increase support for the government in Kiev, more military support for them. Now, here's the thing. They don't say sabotage, but they say we could intervene politically and with sanctions against the development of the Nord Stream pipeline between Russia and Germany, that we want to prevent them from having this potential peace pipeline that mitigates against violent conflict between them, right?

However, and I strongly urge you and your audience to read this thing, again, it's called *Extending Russia*. It's at Rand Corporation, 2019. And you'll note that every one of these major provocations that they recommend, they also have a disclaimer. It says in bold: Disclaimer. Don't do this. You'd be crazy to take our advice here because you know what's going to happen if you do? This and this and this, right? Al Qaeda could sack Damascus, right? Russia could invade Ukraine. You don't want to do that. You don't want to cause that. So whatever you do, don't take our advice. Signed eggheads at Rand Corporation, right? And then what did Biden do? Like he just went down the list and implemented the whole damn thing like his copy had all the disclaimers wiped out. And it just said, yeah, what we should

do is we just should go full bore at these guys. And then, like, what's the worst that could happen? Now, part of your specific question was about what could have been done, you know, I mean, you asked it in the broadest sense, but like right up leading up to the war, what could have been done is they could have negotiated the proposed Russian treaties in good faith. And they were basically the same treaty, one for NATO and one for the United States. And these were not ridiculous demands, poison pills, pretexts for war. They were not. And now there is such a thing as that. You might know the history of the Rambouillet Accord in 1999, where Madeleine Albright demanded in a secret annex B to the Rambouillet Accord, that Slobodan Milosevic allow NATO troops to go anywhere in Yugoslavia that they wanted, right up to and including the presidential palace or whatever it is, and with total immunity from the law and all of this stuff. That was written to be rejected so that Madeline Albright would have a pretext for war, right? And that's even according to Bill Clinton administration officials, and that's even according to Henry Kissinger, that that was a deliberate poison pill meant to destroy diplomacy and cause a war. That is not what was going on here. And I have that from experts like Chas Freeman, who I interviewed on my show, but also I have in the book quotes from Biden administration officials, the White House, talking to the New York Times and to the Washington Post, and told them both that, Yeah, no, these are reasonable proposals and a decent basis for potential discussion. But then they refused to treat them as such. And Anthony Blinken was a secretary of state, and the way he helped to outline the whole thing was that this is just a pretext that they don't mean it. They just want their historical territory back and they're drumming up these excuses. And since he put that on them, that meant that he didn't have to respond in good faith to them since he had already decided that they were not operating in good faith.

But the thing is, okay, well, since these were perfectly reasonable demands, again, where even Zbigniew Brzezinski said: We should back off this NATO membership for Ukraine stuff. Okay. We are talking about a reasonable demand where, and you can call it confirmation bias, but this was his project, okay? Even, and that's fair to say, even Brzezinski said, We need to back off of this. Well, then why can't you sit and negotiate that? But Derek Chollet, the State Department guy, going back to the Bill Clinton years and who worked for Biden at this time, he said in a podcast with War on the Rocks: We refuse to discuss NATO in any way with the Russians, other than to tell them. NATO is a defensive alliance. And so you have no reason to fear. And implicitly, if you still say that you're worried about it, well, then you're just lying. And I know that you're lying. And I know that you're not really worried about it, you're just pretending to be worried about it because I already told you it's a defensive alliance. And that had really been their posture for years. So that may very well have been what they had said there. But that's embellishing his statement a little bit there, but the point being that, as he put it, they just refused to discuss NATO at all. We're not going to do that. And then when it came to the missiles, they said, we're very worried that you're going to put these so-called defensive missiles, but with these dual-use launchers and without an inspections regime or whatever, you know, just right in Kharkiv, 200, 300 miles from Moscow. And they said, Oh, yeah, you know what? Yeah, no, we could talk about that. Joe Biden said to Putin in his call on December 30th, Oh yeah, no, we're not even gonna bring Ukraine into NATO, not any time in the near future. They're way too corrupt in their

economy and their political system to be brought into NATO. Nobody thinks that they could really be brought into NATO.

ZR: That was 2021, December 30th?

SH: December 30th, 2021, a month and a half before the war. And he said, and the missiles? Yeah, we could talk about the missiles, man. I'm not gonna put missiles in Kharkiv. Who the hell said I put missiles in Kharkiv? Not even the Rand Corporation said we ought to put missiles in Kharkiv. So as I put it in the book, okay, well, then call their bluff. You say this is all a pretext, they just want to steal Ukraine. They say, well, we're worried about NATO membership, we're worried about missiles in Kharkiv, and we're worried about the ongoing civil war in the Donbass, which we already have a peace deal dating back to 2015 that we've yet to implement, that Kiev and the West have yet to implement. So why not then call Putin's bluff? Go ahead and implement the peace deal that the Germans and the French negotiated, and that Barack Obama and the UN Security Council rubber stamped and was the official law of the world, the Minsk II deal, implement it then. You say you're not gonna put missiles in Kharkiv, which would be insane, then put it in writing. I mean, putting it in writing is still just signing a name on a piece of paper. But the Russians are declaring that they will settle for that, right? Give me a real ass promise on paper. Nope. You say you're not gonna bring Ukraine into NATO, not anytime in the next ten years at least, in the indefinite future, because it's one of the most corrupt countries in the world, right down there with Uganda, and the United States, I mean, then how can you bring them into into NATO? You can't. Well then why not just sign a treaty and say that? If even Brzezinski says, We don't have to do this, really. That you know what? We need to make Ukraine a bridge between East and West instead of having a fight over it. Then why can't you just do that? God dang it. And then the answer is because one, this is the worst version of Joe Biden who ever lived, and he's been absolutely horrible his entire life long. He's been in the Senate since the Nixon years, since 73, he was sworn into the US Senate, and he is just absolutely demented out of his mind here, incapable of thinking in anything but the most idiot kind of analogies about you know, Winston Churchill facing down Adolf Hitler and a bunch of crap. He'd just say that every time, anyone would ask him anything about Ukraine, he'd start talking about Hitler. He couldn't even talk about Ukraine. He's just out of his mind by that point. And his government was run by these absolute boobs. I don't know what to say about them. They're dunces, they're incompetent, idiots. Anthony Blinken and Jake Sullivan. These are not capable men. They're just the guys that got the job. And what they thought was the right thing to do here was just completely nuts. And in fact, oh God, forgive me my footnote, man, I swear I've got what Biden's got right now. I don't remember who quoted him, but someone quoted, maybe we can find this, someone quoted just recently, someone said that Jake Sullivan told him in December of 2021 that land wars in Europe are impossible. They're a thing of the past. In other words, from his point of view, the absolute maximum we have to deal with here from the Russians is a bluff. They don't mean it at all.

Now, I idiot, idiotically, and to my embarrassment still, thought that war could be avoided at that time. But it wasn't because I thought that Putin didn't mean it. Are you kidding me? No,

man. I got it wrong because I thought that Biden would have Ambassador Burns, who was then the CIA director, but who had been the ambassador to Moscow for 20 years or whatever, and had been the highest ranking guy going back decades to the Clinton – he served under Clinton, Bush, and Obama – and I thought that Biden would have Burns go and find a way out of this, settle this thing. No. That was what I got wrong; was that no, in fact, the White House preferred war. Now they warned the Russians, you better not do it. And I think they meant that. But they were not willing to negotiate to prevent the war. They were not willing to negotiate in good faith. They did not negotiate in good faith to prevent the war. They had two ways to prevent the war. One was warning them, you better not do it. And two was taking advantage of the opportunity, getting the war, baiting them into invading, and then dragging the war out as long as they possibly could and making the Russians leave in humiliation in a strategic defeat, like happened after the Afghan war in the 1980s, and they left with nothing in 1989.

And look, dude, it's my fault, like I was wrapping up my book about the Middle East at the time. It was the audio book, which took me like the whole year to do, and I was trying so hard to wrap it up in December of 2021. And I'm usually not the day-in, day out guy. I'm usually better at longer surveys of things from a few months ago and whatever, you know, kind of deal. And I just was not looking carefully enough at the Post, the Times and the Journal, as I should do every single morning, as we all should do – they're liars and their reporters are horrible – but this is who the government talks to. You have to read the Post, the Times, and the Journal, you have to. And I wasn't doing that. And if I had been, as I found later when I went back, if I had been, I would have found all of these citations of these guys saying, Yeah, we're going to do them like Afghanistan. It's going to be so great. And this was the phrase strategic defeat now, this came up again after the war. They went ahead and launched the war and then the war actually succeeded in bringing Kiev to the table, just like it was meant to do. And they were negotiating in Istanbul. And they didn't have a final deal, but they were working towards one. And they both wanted one at the time. And famously, and this is according to not just Ukrainian media, but officially pro-Kiev, pro-Western Ukrainian media, it's Ukrainska Pravda, which is supported by the National Endowment for Democracy, which is owned by Dragon Capital, which is a George Soros fund – these are the empire's guys – they are the ones who reported first, Boris Johnson came to town, the then prime minister of Britain and sabotaged the peace negotiations.

Now, I don't know if you know this, but this is a huge development. I don't know. It's pretty huge enough. You can read about it on antiwar.com today. We have an article by Brett Wilkins about it. You can go on Rumble. Everybody, here's your search terms Rumble, Vovan, and Lexus. Those are the Russian prank callers. You know those guys? Vovan and Lexus. And then Amanda Sloat. Amanda Sloat, S-L-O-A-T. She worked for Biden. She was the head of European policy on the National Security Council. Now, Vovan and Lexus are, I think they were, I don't know if they still are, they were like a morning radio show, I think, in Moscow or something. And what they have succeeded in doing numerous times is fooling American and other Western officials into admitting the truth to them, as they pretend to be Petro Poroshenko or Volodymyr Zelensky or whoever, somebody working for him. And then

they just spill their guts and say crazy things. Like they got George W. Bush to say: Oh, all those promises not to expand NATO. Well, that was James Baker. And he was the Secretary of State back during my father's presidency. And I mean, that was a long time ago. Which is, yeah, again, American promises, they got a shelf life, man. You better look out for that. And then he's also the one who had Poroshenko admit that they never meant to implement the Minsk II deal. They were just buying their time to build up their forces and other things like that. They've succeeded numerous times in getting American officials to make very embarrassing candid admissions about their policy here. Well, this time they got Amanda Sloat. And I caution you that the footage is edited. And you can tell, I mean, what the hell? You can't fake it. You know what I mean? So they make their edits very clear that, like, oh, all of a sudden the footage zooms in and zooms out and changes. So you can tell that there's a cut between the question and the answer, or even part of the answer and the other part of the answer. So you have to be careful about that, right? They don't release the whole unedited thing to examine. But you can watch a long version of it still. And the relevant parts here are unedited. And they really did get her to say that first, she says: It could have been negotiated, and we very well may have been able to avoid the conflict. But then later on, in the next paragraph, she says, I forget the words exactly, forgive me, but it's with much more certainty that the problem could have been solved in Istanbul. They could have ended the war and they would have – please forgive me, I forget the exact quote, but it's much more certainty on like, and then that loss of life would have been prevented, you know, that kind of thing. So she's admitting candidly that they refuse to negotiate in good faith to prevent the war. And she rationalizes it. She says: My position at the time was I was very reluctant to let Russia have a veto over whether Ukraine can join NATO or not, and whether they're allowed to have a sphere of influence. And we did not want to concede that to them. And then she says: But yeah, if we had, then that would have prevented the war. That is in fact what the war was about. They knew that at the time. They called you a liar and a pro-Russian propagandist if you said it. But that was the truth, and they knew it, that that was what it was about. And they could have avoided the war. And you know, I have too long of a treatment on this in the book, I guess, it just goes on, it's ridiculous, what they called the open door policy. Now, this was just some made up terminology, right? It's just jargon. It doesn't mean anything. It's just some bureaucrat came up with a phrase in 1999, and they all said, Oh, yeah, I like that; whatever. And then they act like it's the sacred law of the galaxy or something. That if any nation seeks to join the NATO military alliance, that is between that nation and the NATO military alliance only. And no third country's point of view can be taken into account, no matter what. And the way that they phrase this, of course, you can easily imagine the situation. Who here at the table thinks that Russia gets to have a veto over who's allowed to join our alliance? And of course, nobody raises their hand when you put it that way. And that's exactly her words: Well, we don't want to let Russia have a veto over what we do. And so this is such a sacred principle that they're willing to let hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians and Russians get killed over it and risk increasing the threat of nuclear war between NATO and the Russian Federation by whatever percentage over this so-called principle. When, as I said, the president of the United States himself said on December 30th, Vlad, we're not bringing them into NATO anyway. What's your big deal anyway? It's still a sacred principle that you can't tell us we can't, though. And right after the war broke out, and such a funny scene is all these

screaming banshee women baying for blood in the Washington press corps: Why aren't we sending more weapons? What can we do to escalate the war? They all cry. And then Ryan Grim, now at Dropsite News, he says to Ned Price, the State Department spokesman: Man, are we doing anything to try to negotiate a ceasefire to stop the fighting? And they all look at him like, you know, that meme of all the hot girls at the party looking at the guy like he farted or whatever, you know? And they all look at him like, why would you even say that? What a bummer you are. Ceasefire, stop the fighting, that's not fun. And then Ned Price, the State Department Spokesman, while he gets all philosophical, and he says: There are higher principles at stake here, Ryan. Such as that any nation may direct its gaze in whichever direction it wishes. What? The high sacred principle of nations directing their gaze somewhere meaning Ukraine wants to join the West, which is really a euphemism for America supporting some Ukrainians who want to join the West. And it does not matter how many of them have to die, if the Russian have made it clear, that no, we will kill them before we let them go off with you, then no, it is our highest sacred principles that we let the Russian kill them, while still trying to get off with them, even though they know that that is exactly what the hell is going to happen? Look from their point of view – you watch the interview with Amanda Sloat. Again, Rumble, Amanda Sloat, Vovan and Lexus, and watch her. There's no question of her heroism and sincerity and decency in this. She doesn't think that she's a moral monster. She doesn't blame herself for starting the war. She doesn't tell Volvan and Lexus, Jesus Christ, I have the hardest time sleeping at night over this. You know, we really fuck this up. She doesn't say that. She goes, Well, you know, I didn't think it would be a very good idea if Vladimir Putin just gets to do what he wants to. And these are the people who get to decide. This lady, she could just be the assistant manager at the grocery store, which no offense to assistant managers of grocery stores. They're decent people, but you don't just grab somebody in charge of the milk aisle and tell them that look, you get to decide what NATO's policy versus the Russian Federation is. But the reality is no one in Washington is any more special or capable than her either. You listen to Brzezinski carefully, he ain't that bright either. You know, he's good and dead now, but you know what I mean, back then. You read his books and then? He is clearly interested in American imperial policy. He has his strategies. But if this is the result, than he ain't that smart. And even reading his books, they are not that impressive. And it is the same for all of these guys. I think you would be profoundly unimpressed by Amanda Sloat and you will say to yourself, Oh, this is why there's a war in Ukraine right now. Oh, okay, wonderful. You know, DEI foreign policy, basically. Again, no, sorry, I take that back. Because it's not a sexist thing. And Blinken and Sullivan are at least as stupid as her, maybe dumber.

ZR: Scott Horton, we've unfortunately run out of time. Editorial Director of antiwar.com and Director of the Libertarian Institute, thank you so much, and I'll get in touch with you soon for another interview.

SH: Okay, great. Thank you.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like us to continue, then be sure to click on the subscribe button below. And

don't forget, we are still in our crowdfunding phase and have a long way to go until we reach our target. If we don't reach our target, we will unfortunately have to reduce our capacities for the next year or have to shut off at some point. So please check out the description of this video and find out how you can participate in our crowdfunding campaign. I'm your host Zain Raza. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. See you next time.

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