



COL. Wilkerson on Venezuela and America's Empire Crisis

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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. Today I'll be talking to Lawrence Wilkerson about a number of geopolitical issues with a focus on Venezuela. Lawrence Wilkerson is a retired army colonel who served in the US military for 31 years. His last position of government was Chief of Staff for then Secretary of State Colin Powell from 2002 to 2005. He is now a senior fellow at the Institute for Responsible Statecraft. Lawrence, welcome back to the show.

LW: Good to be with you, Zain, and to be, as it were, in Germany.

ZR: Welcome to Germany. So since mid-2025, the United States have sharply escalated pressure on Venezuela under the stated premise of combating narco-terrorism. This began with an expanded US naval and air presence in the Caribbean, including the deployment of the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier strike group off Venezuela's coast, US strikes on alleged drug

smuggling speedboats in the Caribbean, and the seizure of Venezuelan oil shipments at sea. In early January, this escalation culminated in a special US military operation inside Venezuela involving airstrikes and a raid in Caracas that resulted in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, who were flown to the United States and now face federal charges in a New York court for drug smuggling in Venezuela, which he vehemently denies. Venezuelan authorities report dozens of Venezuelans security personnel were killed, while Cuba has confirmed that more than 30 Cuban military and security personnel were killed.

Vice-President Delcy Rodríguez of Venezuela subsequently assumed power in Caracas. In the days that followed, the United States seized additional oil tankers, including a Russian-linked vessel, prompting strong condemnation from Moscow, which accused Washington of illegal seizures and warned of serious consequences. President Trump then stated that the United States would run Venezuela during a transitional period, including selling an estimated 30 to 50 million barrels of Venezuelan oil with revenues placed under US control, a plan US senior officials described as part of stabilization and transition effort. Given your experience inside the US national security apparatus, how do you assess the current US intervention in Venezuela? And can you also talk about the geopolitical context of this intervention, as well as the risk that it now poses to global security?

LW: That's an enormous question stretching all the way across the tactical, operational, strategic, and policy implications. Let me start at the bottom and sort of try to work up with some excursions off base, if you will. First of all, the exercise itself, the operation itself, while being touted as a demonstration, and no one is better at this than Donald Trump, of the extraordinary nature of the US military after 25 years of abject failure of that military in everywhere from Libya to Iraq to Afghanistan to Somalia, you name it, is really not what we should be looking at at all because it was a Snatch Operation more or less tailored on Operation Just Cause, which you'll recall was conducted over the Christmas holidays literally some years ago and was called by pundits the largest no-knock drug bust in history. Well, there's a lot in that aphorism saying whatever a lot in there because that's what it was. We got the narco terrorists, supposedly narco terrorists, you might be interested in knowing that the United States drug enforcement agency website does not in any way, fashion or form indicate that Maduro is actually a narco terrorist. In fact, it signals out a lot more people in South America and doesn't even really go to Nicolás Maduro with regard to drugs, even though they accompanied, apparently, the Snatch Operation. So that's the first thing; it's framed very, very imperfectly as a military operation and more or less as a military protected Snatch Operation under an indictment issued in New York, which in itself is questionable. Open parentheses here and make a statement that Hernández, from Honduras, who is a convicted drug felon, and was supposed to be in jail and was exonerated and sent home by Donald Trump, by the DEA and other standards, legal and otherwise in this country, is far more guilty of what Trump has accused Maduro of. So factor that in. What are we doing? Move on up a level and look at what we have done in terms of what I would call the broad sweep and tapestry of modern relations, the international community, if you will, what Fred Hoffman called the relations of nations; I kind of like that phrase. We have taken what was a momentum from the worst possible conflagration the world's ever seen that includes the Genghis Khan, that includes the Moguls, that includes the Mongols, because they didn't have so many people to

kill. In terms of casualties, we've taken that humongous human exchange of military might, World War II, 100 million plus casualties. And what we did afterwards to prevent that from ever happening again, actions taken by men like Dwight Eisenhower, who was very much versed in what had happened, actions taken like those around him who themselves might not have been a soldier or a sailor or whatever in that great conflagration, but nonetheless understood what we'd done. Not least of which was the product we produced at the end of it, the product to damn humanity forever, nuclear weapons. We have taken the momentum that that conflict built up and caused to happen for better than half a century, called international law, called the Geneva Conventions, called all the things that came out of the Nuremberg Tribunals, for example, and destroyed it. We have destroyed it! So we have taken the progress that humankind has made for 5,000 years, and particularly the progress it made since that great conflagration in World War II, and denied it, destroyed it, and done away with it. We the empire, the American empire, have done that. This is just a manifestation of that, and please look for more. Look for Greenland, look for perhaps Canada, look for Cuba, look for a number of excursions that now have been aided and abetted and they're coming about by this precedent. This isn't the end, and even the president has made everyone very clear on that, this isn't the end. So going from the very essence of the tactical operation, which now let's come back to the bottom again, did not accomplish its purpose. Maduro is in a New York courtroom. Okay? He has pled innocent. And I don't even go through the history of how we got to that indictment. Bob Barr is at the center of it from the very beginning with Operation Just Cause. He is at center of that again in 2016 when Donald Trump issued to Mike Pompeo, then the director of the CIA, a presidential finding to overthrow Maduro, he's at the edge of the legal aspirations in this entire process and they are fraught with problems. I wouldn't be all that surprised if we had a judge with some courage and a court with some courage that this is tossed out before we're through with it. Then what do we do when we're standing there? Now I assure you, I think, I assure myself Trump will make sure that doesn't happen, however he has to do it. There'll be some assassinations or there'll be Miriam Adelson offering money or whatever, because he'll make sure that doesn't happen. What I'm saying is it's not an airtight legal case, even.

And let's examine the other possibilities here, too, with regard to it. What you have done in Venezuela is left the power structure completely intact. There is no damage to that power structure. And the Vice President, Rodríguez, has made that fairly clear and taken over without too many hiccups. I would dare say right now there's more support for her, politically speaking, in Venezuela than there is for any other aspect of the political apparatus. And you've also left some very deadly people in charge, as it were, underneath her. People far more deadly than Nicolás Maduro. He was just the face of it. These are people who are interested in doing exactly what has been done in Venezuela and Colombia and other countries like that for years and years. They've got they're called DGO's, they are dictators and waiting, they're really vengeful people and they live for money and they live for destruction. We've left them in charge and they in most instances are in charge of portions of the military or the other state security address. So what have we done really? We've done nothing in terms of the ability of Venezuela to continue what it was doing, however nefarious the activities might have been; I don't think they were drugs, but there are other things that

are nefarious about it. And there's nothing we can do about it, except invade, which is the ultimate thing that I would make a point about. And that is that the only way you change a regime in some way that's effective with regard to that regime's activities is to get them out, get them out entirely. Fast forward, backward really to Iraq and Afghanistan and ask yourself if that works. It doesn't seem to have a very good track record. It certainly doesn't with the empire anyway. So where are we now? We're perched on the end of a spear that we have crafted and are hurling at the international community, particularly in our own hemisphere, but really at China and Russia and others, too, because look at the precedent we just set. Where is, for example, Taiwan vis-a-vis China? Isn't it in the same proximity Greenland is to us? Isn't Donald Trump talking about, and I have no doubt he will do it, taking from Denmark Greenland? He prefers to pay them, but even if he pays them, the assertions he's made about Greenland apply to Xi Jinping and Taiwan, doubly so because Taiwan is allied with the United States and is a very distinct national security threat, which Donald Trump keeps describing, Venezuela has, to China. So we've set that precedent, too. I haven't even exhausted the things we've unlocked. We've unlocked so many disastrous potentialities in the world that I think we will regret this move and the world will regret this move. It already is, I think if you really parse it. Just think about what is Denmark going to do if Trump moves on Greenland? What are they going to do? They're a NATO ally. What in the world are they gonna do? They're not gonna do anything militarily. They can't, not against us at that proximity. There's no way. So what have we just done? We put the nail, complete nail, utter nail, ten penny nail, in the coffin already existing of NATO. And what are we doing to Europe when we do that? What's this business gonna be like with Europe after we do that to Denmark? Probably one of the most innocuous countries in Europe in all genuine purposes. This is insane, Zain, and as I said, I haven't exhausted the possibilities here. It's insane. The one that worries me the most, though, is the geopolitical global discarding of every evolution towards positive international relations that we started with World War II's in and were perfecting through the years, however we violated them from time to time. Nonetheless, there was a rules-based order. Now, in the last years since 9/11, it's more and more like US rules than world rules, but nonetheless, there was an order. We destroyed it. We've completely destroyed it, so what do we replace it with? Chaos? Anarchy? That's what Donald Trump looks like to me.

ZR: You mentioned the rules-based order and international law. At the recent UN Security Council meeting, China and Russia strongly criticized the US, stating that it violated international law, whereas the US countered, stating it was a law enforcement operation against an illegitimate criminal leader responsible for both drug trafficking and terrorism. Europe has avoided any harsh condemnation of the US thus far. For example, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz and the Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul recently stated that classifying the legality of the US military operation in Venezuela is a complex issue and requires a more thorough analysis. What is notable is exactly what you said; for example, when it comes to Ukraine, Germany is quite vocal and cites the value-based and rule-based international order. But when it came to this operation, Germany continues to remain opaque. In your view, in particular, can you talk about Germany's reaction or lack thereof and what does it reveal?

LW: I think that's one of the lesser implications, but I don't mean that to denigrate it or to say it's not important, is what we're seeing with European leaders, particularly Starmer, not so much Macron, but I am waiting for his blast, and particularly with Merz, and that is that they don't know where to go now. They simply have no idea where to take their foreign policy and where to take their security policy, because on the one hand I think they're becoming more and more seized of the reality that NATO is finished, on the other hand, they're very, very frightened about what follows NATO being finished. Is it going to be a reasoned, led by perhaps Germany and France – I won't even include England in that because they're so feckless right now that I'm not sure I'd want them in a triumvirate, but is it going to be a duopoly, if you will? Is it going to be Germany and France, Paris and Berlin that lead Europe into this post-NATO world with some kind of reasonable security arrangement that I think almost has to, I would say per force, include Russia. It must include Russia, I don't know how you do that at this point, I wouldn't want their challenge, it's gonna take time for Ukraine to fade away, if it ever will, but it has to be in order to ensure some kind of security integrity that is absolutely necessary for Europe. We saw that in '90 and '91 and we were headed towards that and then Bill Clinton – and I keep coming back to this, I cannot blame William Jefferson Clinton enough. I've gone back and looked carefully at both of his administrations, the first one being virtually chaos and the second one being: Oh, my first administration was chaos, so I better do some different things in my second administration. And those different things were not good. They were not good. Bill Clinton started much of what we're into right now. And unfortunately, we had president after president who just reinforced it with George W. Bush, of course, having his own reinforcement mechanism, 9/11, which gave him justification, he thought, to do a lot of things that deepened our peril and deepened our departure from previous mores and previous actions. So we've had a series of presidents who just simply don't understand the world. Chris Hedges has a piece this morning – I just finished it – he leads it with a quotation from Barbara Tuchman. She says, "The bellicose frivolity of senile empires sort of led to World War I." Well, I would say that's a good thing to be describing what we're in today, Chris, except we're not really talking about the bellicose frivolity of empires. We're talking about the bellicose idiocy of one empire, the United States of America. Now I'm sure, you know, I didn't get a chance to do anything but skim Chris's article, but I'm sure he's going to put Russia in there, he's gonna put China in there. I don't know how, but I lay all the blame right now at the feet of the American Empire. And I lay it there in a historical sense, it's the only one disappearing. The only one disappearing. If you want to consider China an empire, I'd go along to a certain extent, it is an economic empire, there's no question its preponderant economic power in the world now. It's replaced us in almost every category. That's part of our angst. That's part of Donald Trump's problem, is he knows that. If you saw the meeting with Xi Jinping and how Xi Jinping treated him, you know, he went there essentially to ask Xi Jinping to pick up notes again, and not to discard anymore. And Xi Jinping told him to go to hell. You watch that presser, Xi Jinping by his body language and everything else is telling Donald Trump to go to hell. So he didn't get any success there. But the empire that's errant in the world right now, the empire that is doing the damage. The empire that is going to perhaps even lead the world into a Holocaust is the American empire. It's not the Chinese, it's not the Russian, it's not some other concoction like the BRICS or whatever. There's only one really true imperial entity on the earth right now

and acting like an imperial entity in its worst stages. And that's America. So the problem's not the frivolity of leaders around the world. It's the frivolity and dementia of the leader of the American empire. But importantly, using that Turkish coin phrase, the deep state, that's what's really doing. And who is the deep state? Well, it's becoming more and more clear just who these people are. They're people like Friedrich Merz, who came from one of the archdeacons of this deep state. You know who I'm talking about, the Davos crowd, the globalists, Colonel Douglas Macgregor calls them, neoconservatives, I'd put them right in there too, but these are the people who, like the Rothschilds of old, surveying the Battle of Waterloo and playing the close-run thing that it was to make a fortune and shift their flags, are doing today, with regard to us. And frankly, they haven't quite made up their mind yet as to whose soil, if you will, they don't always have to be physically located, but they're trying to make up their minds. As is Bibi Netanyahu right now, as to whether or not to toss their flags to the East and rip them out of the West. So that's the real power behind everything right now. And as I said, Merz comes from that group. So Germany is in peril, just from the fact that it has a guy who is part and parcel of that apparatus as its chancellor. How can you do this to yourself, you wanna ask. And I'm sure the AFD has that question every day. You know more about the AFD than I do. I don't know what their prospects are, but I do see that they might be the new power in Germany eventually. And I think that's one of the problems that both Macron and Merz and Starmer have, and that is their publics don't support them. And how long will it take until those publics react, if there's any democracy left, and throw them out? And what replaces them?! I think that's the huge question. And for me, having studied Germany for years and years, especially pre World War I, World War I, World War II, and the aftermath and getting very close to Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, Helmut Kohl, Jim Baker, all the people whom Powell was dealing with first as National Security Advisor of Ron Reagan, when it all started, and then as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and then as Secretary of State, as we watched Bill Clinton and others begin to ruin what we had started to do. My feelings about Germany are strong. And when Bush talked about Schroeder, go F himself, you know, and Powell had to hold Joschka Fischer's hand, literally, to keep the US-German relationship alive and well because Bush didn't want anything to do with it, I got very close to what I thought was the real Germany in the 21st century. And now I see it gone to hell. Gone to hell, I think, because of what we've done to it. And my big question right now, and if I had time, I would do some research on this, I think the United States had a lot to do with destroying Germany. I think it wanted to. I think Germany was its principal competitor in Europe. It saw how successful Germany was becoming in things like automobiles and so forth. And it said, enough. And so we did what we did to the pipeline, and then we got them really hot for the Ukraine war. We got Merz in there. Well, of course, the previous one wasn't much better. And we essentially have helped to destroy Germany's economy. Two birds for one stone, if we got Russia, now we're getting Germany in the process. This is painful for me to watch, painful for me to watch. I'm sure for a German or for someone living in Germany, it's painful to watch too.

ZR: The Tagesschau aired a segment on January 4th, and the Tagesschau is one of the largest primetime news programs that is watched by millions of people at 8 p.m, and they focus on the legitimacy of these actions in Venezuela, citing democratic minority leader of the Senate,

Chuck Schumer, who stated that Congress should have been notified as civilian and military infrastructure was targeted in Venezuela and such attacks break US law. Do the Democrats have any legitimacy in making such claims? And why do you think Germany's largest media outlet would provide them a voice?

LW: They do, but let me tell you that I think it's mostly feckless, and one of the most feckless ones of them all is Senator Chuck Schumer. When you parse it really closely, you'll find that Schumer is not much better than the other people on the other side of the aisle, the so-called Republicans, the so-called Trumpsters, MAGA, and whatever. And you're going to watch as this operation gains 60%, let's say, approval by the American people, which it is rapidly heading towards, because it's the kind of thing Americans like, right out, it's Tom Cruise. It's right out of... They don't understand that we didn't accomplish a damn thing. Maduro is in New York, but that is not the essence of the problem. The essence of the problem, supposedly, is Venezuela, and the essence or the reason we did it is 300 billion barrels of oil, and it is highly questionable that without further military action we're going to get our hands on much of that oil. So it's a moot point in many respects as to whether it was successful, but as the American people will go to 60 % on their approval, watch the Democrats. They'll quit their criticism, they'll be right in there with what happened, they will find their own legal reasons for justifying it and so forth. One of things the Empire has proven, really since 9/11, is first of all we have no regard for the law, our own law or international law. But second we can craft some really specious legal theories nonetheless and some of the ones we've crafted of late are just totally a joke in terms of not just international law but domestic law. But watch the supine Congress. Both parties with individual exceptions like Tom Massie of Kentucky, like Ro Khanna of California, you will see some exceptions, but they're no way near the majority, watch the supine Congress continue to go along with Donald Trump. Whether it's the prosecution of Maduro in New York, or whether it's another war, or taking Greenland, or taking Cuba. How hard would it be to take Cuba? Oh, let me enlighten your listeners here; not very hard to take it. How hard do you think it would be to hold it with roughly ten million people, many of them young men, and access to weapons and Russia and China and everybody else supplying them? It might not be that easy a thing to hold on to Cuba once you had it. You might not want it after you had it. We don't have a good track record, Zain, at doing things like occupying countries, staying there for a period of time and accomplishing positive purposes. We have a lousy tracker. Would it be the same in Greenland? I don't know that there are enough people there to actually contest us in Greenland, and I don't think the Danes would mount an operation to take Greenland back. But this is pure power exerting itself much the same way Thucydides tells us the Athenians did once they got to the peak of their empire and just did anything they wanted to because they had the power as the Melian dialog so aptly demonstrates. Why are you killing all these women and children? Because we have the power and because you don't. That's our rule right now. We have thrust ourselves back in the past and annihilated everything we created from that past forward to try and attenuate these sorts of things, which human beings do to one another every now and then, particularly when they gather in empires. And on the face of the earth today, the only empire that really is an empire is the United States of America. And we're abusing it as the empires in the past have done majorly.

ZR: I mean the irony of it all is that Venezuela was not even mentioned during the election campaign by Donald Trump. It was always about peace, it was always about America First and stopping foreign interventions. And as you've mentioned, a number of nations have been mentioned by Donald Trump, for example regarding Colombia he said, quote, "Operation Colombia sounds good to me", unquote. About Cuba he stated, quote, "Looks like it's ready to fall", unquote. And he also warned Mexico to, quote, "get their act together", unquote. And as you have mentioned, there's growing concern about Greenland, which Trump continues to justify on national security, based on the Monroe Doctrine. And now we are also listening from Donald Trump that the US will attack Iran if Iran doesn't stop killing its own people and repressing the protesters. How serious should these statements be taken and can the United States effectively have the capacity and apparatus to simultaneously conduct regime change operations, wars and attacks on all of these fronts while its economy continues to shrink. I mean the economy in terms of the common people, the average people, I'm not talking about the 1%. Do you think it's even possible domestically, given how much support Trump has right now to do all of this?

LW: The scary thing about it is that the answer to your question is for the lesser targets like Cuba, like Greenland, yes, absolutely. And do I think he's going to do it? Yes, absolutely, both Cuba and Greenland. When it comes to Greenland it wouldn't be very difficult at all. You just send a battalion, that's probably about all you need to do and notify Denmark that Greenland was yours now. See what that does to finishing off the NATO alliance and even possibly the transatlantic link. And you didn't even mention Canada. Trump covets Canada. He covets it majorly. And look at what's just been done by the leadership in Canada. They are changing their economic approach to the world almost 100%. And that's going to truly damage the economy of the United States in ways that the American people simply don't understand. The two biggest trading partners of the US are Canada and Mexico. And he has now caused Canada to say: You will no longer be a trading partner of Canada. That's going to be incredibly difficult for us to adjust to. It's not going to be that difficult for Canada because guess who? Canada has to replace us. China. And I guarantee you China will fall right into that void. So he's created an enormous problem there. And were he to do anything in Mexico, it would be the end of the United States for all kinds of reasons, but the most prominent one would be, we would get stuck in Mexico for a hundred years and we wouldn't accomplish a thing. I go back to the Mexican War, which Grant even, a captain in the war as I recall, Grant excoriated the government for the Mexican War, saying it in his memoirs that it was an illegal war. And what happened when we got to Mexico City, when we got there and we were into the country to the point where we could take it, our general there said: You don't want it, Mr. President. You will have nothing but insurgency forever and ever and ever. And we just took Texas and a few other places, California, and we left. So you don't want that, but this is the kind of thing he's courting. This is the kind of thing he's looking at. I don't think many of his more braggadocio remarks will be things that he goes to, but who knows as he becomes more and more demented. I think dementia is a main, main consideration we should be looking at with this president right now. But what flowed into the dementia? Let's examine that. It's not just Laura Loomer. An Intel that makes no sense at all. And by the way, Laura Loomer was a big reason we went to Venezuela in the first place, because she was feeding the intel, getting

it from Machado, getting it from [inaudible], getting from Berntsen and others who were in Venezuela, making tons of money and sending this intel up about what a great narco trafficker Maduro was. If you look at that from the perspective of where Trump is going to go next, what he's going to do next, you have to just say to yourself, well, I know he's going somewhere, I hope he goes to Greenland and he doesn't go to Mexico or Canada or one of the more formidable targets. That's a forlorn thing to have to say, but that's what you hope for because you know he's gone somewhere.

Now let me follow up with the most powerful some of all. Bibi Netanyahu at Mar-o-Lago convinced Donald Trump that it was utterly, politically, and statewise existential for Israel to finish off Iran. And Donald Trump said: Okay. And Bibi Netanyahu said: You will be with me, right? And Donalds Trump, having just been reinforced by the millions from Miriam Adelson said yes. So that's the next truly fraught with problems, regime change operation, is Iran. And I'll say right now, I think it's going to take Israel down, certainly as a Jewish state in the Levant. It'll have no future as a Jewish state in the Levant. And it's probably going to really, really begin to unravel the imperial nature of the empire in a significant way. Because let's examine it for a second. It's going to coincide with what is a clear disaster in Gaza right now, clear disaster. The Israelis are still murdering people every day. There is no peace there, none whatsoever. These people who are coming in, Indonesians or whomever, are gonna come into an active conflict. If you look at what Netanyahu wants to do in Iran and you look at how it would have to be done, you have to conclude that at the end of the day, and it will be the end of the day for Israel, he will go nuclear. So that's a whole new dimension to this business of regime change in Iran. And if I were the Iranians, I would be feverishly right now working on my own nuclear weapon, my own counter to Israel's nuclear weapon because I think 60, 70% possibility Netanyahu will wind up using a nuclear weapon on Iran or more than one weapon. So that's how fraught with possible danger that is. Put it all in the general economic situation that the United States finds itself in right now. One trillion dollar interest payments every year now on our gargantuan 40 trillion dollar debt. Soon to be two trillion every year. You're talking about the defense budget at a trillion plus and the interest payments on our debt being two trillion dollars and therefore all of the federal discretionary spending in the budget period, nothing else. Which is why Mike Johnson and everyone else are trying to get rid of Medicare, trying to getting rid of Medicaid, trying get rid of Social Security, trying take every entitlement program on the books down to gain that money so that they can continue to do what they want to do, that they're doing right now. That's not going to work because you still got to have people that will help you, will buy your debt in order to help you get through this period where you're paying so much money and you're going to default because we're going default. There's no question in my mind we're gonna default. Xi Jinping said he wasn't going to buy. Japan is not buying now. Japan has its own economic problems with the new prime minister. The economic situation right now is probably as big a disaster looming ahead of the empire as is Donald Trump's further machinations. So we have this two prong problem. We have this imperial president doing things he shouldn't be doing that are even deepening further economic peril, and we have the economic peril. I don't see how we get out of this, Zain, I don't. And the old aphorism about when the US catches cold, the world sneezes, even though 60% of the world now is lined up against us, very much so lined up

against us economically, security wise, and everything, I think they're still gonna catch a cold. And that cold might accompany the use of nuclear weapons on a much wider basis. As I've said before, as this empire goes down and it is clear to all the supine Congress, the crazy President and the moronic Supreme Court, when it's clear to all and to the American people in majority, we'll use nuclear weapons, too.

ZR: Let us now talk about Ukraine, and it says so much that we have not even said a word about this war, that there are so many problems in the world that one of the largest, most dangerous wars that are happening is not even being mentioned in this interview. So let's talk about Ukraine. The UK, France, and Ukraine just signed a letter of intent, a sort of a joint statement to make multinational troops provide security guarantees for Ukraine, and what they call by multinational troops actually means troops from the Coalition of the Willing, and they will provide Ukraine with air, sea, and land protection, which the US will supposedly monitor. Germany has avoided being part of this and said it could imagine being stationed in neighboring countries, but not directly in Ukraine. Can you comment on this and whether you think Moscow would accept troops from the coalition of the willing stationed in Ukraine?

LW: First of all, that's the first sane statement Merz has made, partially anyway.

ZR: He's not completely ruled it out yet. He's saying they could....

LW: He will, he will, I think. If for no other reason than the military leadership is going to tell him to rule the house. Let's look at why we haven't talked about Ukraine. It's over. It's done. Russia has won. Now, your point, though, is well taken. What is Europe going to do about that? Is it going to let it be over? Is it gonna let it be done? Is it going to pick up the chess pieces off the board and put the pawns back up and reset the king and the queen and say, new day, new game? Is it gonna allow Putin this victory, however mitigated it might be, allow him this victory? I don't know. That's a huge question. It's a huge question. In some respects, if there's any positive aspect to Trump's actions, vis-a-vis any theater that needs to end its warring, it's Ukraine because Russia may be so perplexed over this leader in Washington now that it accepts some of the things that it can reverse in the future or it can handle in the present in order to get it settled in the sense that it could be settled. I wouldn't blame Putin for that. He's been circumspect, he's been very wise throughout this thing, so I wouldn't blame him for that, despite what Medvedev said about nuclear weapons and all the rest of this garbage. Medvedev is his attack dog anyway. The one or two things that still linger, though, that I'm truly worried about, concerned about, is one, Putin's reaction to the attempt to kill him, which is still in the works, it is coming, I think I agree with the people now who think it's going to be inside Ukraine and it's going to against NATO assets inside Ukraine. For example, MI6, CIA, Mossad and others who might be assembled in a place where he could take them all out at once or something else like that. I don't think it will be in a NATO country because that invokes Article V and that turns everything around on itself. So I don't think he'll want to do that. But once that's done, and once probably he's finished off maybe even Odessa, although you never finish off Odessa, that's one of the crime capitals of the world, I think he'll be content and we might be able to get a settlement. And it might include some of these things that you mentioned. I don't think it'll include them as, in his

face, as they're suggesting they'll be negotiable. But I think we could get an end. And Europe could help with that if they would just seek that in rather than trying to make it even more difficult for Putin to arrive at it. I don't know how that's going to play out, but it will be a part of the warp and woof of the further machinations of the empire. And as those machinations become more significantly damaging of the world structure, the more Europe will find itself in a pickle, having more or less become vassals of that empire in order to sort themselves out, it will become more and more clear that they need not to be vassals of that Empire, particularly if we do things like take Greenland from a NATO member. So this Ukraine conflict is fraught with issues that don't even involve the actual fighting on the ground now. And I hope that those are of such an important dimension that they cause the fighting on the ground to, at least, end. I don't know if that will happen. That would take some smarts on both sides, Russian and US and NATO, Europe, but it could. And that would be a minor positive development. And I don't use minor, but guardedly there because I think the bigger things are brewing right now. And the biggest one is regime change in Tehran.

ZR: Lawrence Wilkerson will leave it here, retired army colonel and defense analyst, thank you so much for your time and insights today.

LW: Thank you Zain, take care.

ZR: And thank you for tuning in today. If you like the journalism that we undertook in this video and would like to follow us going forward, then make sure to click on the subscribe button below. And also don't forget to participate in our crowdfunding campaign. Only a few days are left and if we don't reach our target, we won't be able to continue with our journalism this year. To remain independent, we don't take any money from corporations or governments, and we don't even allow advertisements. Hence, we only depend on you, our viewers, to continue our independent and uncompromising journalism. I thank you for your support and for tuning in. I'm your host, Zain Raza. See you next time.

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