

## **New U.S. Politician Questions the Ukraine War: A Breakthrough?**

*This transcript may not be 100% accurate due to audio quality or other factors.*

**Glenn Greenwald (GG):** Next question is from The Decoder: "Do you have a theory about why the US and Europe are so hostile toward Russia? They have been hostile to Russia since the fall of the Soviet Union under both parties (e.g. NATO expansion, the 2014 coup, et cetera.) Trump is by no means the cause of the war, but given his admiration for Putin and dislike of Ukraine (related to his impeachment), I would have thought he would end the Ukraine war quickly by simply cutting off support, but he hasn't." I'll just tell you, sometimes I forget how much passion hatred for Russia invokes and produces in the West. On Wednesday, which I guess was yesterday, when people were breaking down and everybody's talking about the victory of these DSA candidates in New York, the focus was of course on their views of Israel, but then secondarily, their views of socialism, democratic socialism, and what that means. I noted, because I thought it was interesting, and I, as I said, encouraging, I referenced that earlier, that one of the three candidates that Mamdani endorsed who won, Darialeza Chevalier, actually explicitly opposed US funding of the war in Ukraine, and another Claire Valdez, though she didn't explicitly do it, and a lot of what she's saying is clearly implying it, talking about sending billions of dollars overseas to weapons manufacturers to fuel foreign wars that there's no reason to believe that that excludes Ukraine, and I expressed happiness about that because I have been amazed and frustrated that there has been total unanimity from the right-wing of the Democratic Party to the left-wing and everything in between from the start on the question of should we be sending hundreds of billions of dollars every year to the arms industry and weapons manufacturers to fuel the Azov battalion and other right-wing factions or just the war in Ukraine itself given how destructive it's been. It was so clear to me from the start that despite the propaganda bullshit the idea was never going to save Ukraine. The idea was always that we're going to destroy Ukraine as a tool for weakening and undermining Russia. And Ukraine has been destroyed. Ukraine is getting destroyed; population wise, demographically, the country itself. And I was amazed not that Democrats were in favour of wars. I've watched Democrats be in favour of wars my whole life. I was amazing that there's just no left-wing dissent any longer when it comes to foreign policy.

The left does not talk about things that for decades were the staple of left-wing critiques foreign policy, the CIA, the Pentagon, the NSA, foreign wars, NATO. When was the last time you heard AOC criticise the CIA or covert operations or coups or even wars? It's just not part of mainstream left-wing politics. And so to finally see a now prominent left-wing candidate who just basically won a seat in Congress, two of them really, the sceptical to critical of US financing the war in Ukraine, I just thought it was worth noting. I think like, hey, just remember, the two people who won that you're talking about, this is also part of what they've done and said. And the way that I phrased their view, I said they're opposed to US financing of the NATO war in Ukraine, made so many people so angry, like this kind of – there is still this faction, part of it is like this rump part of the left-liberal wing of the Democratic party still fixated on Russiagate, still believing that Russia is the root of all evil when it comes to interfering in America's democracy, that they elected Trump, like really still that part that just hates Russia so much and so by describing it as the NATO war in Ukraine, I understand that's a little bit of a tendentious way of phrasing it, but I did it on purpose because to me, that's what it is. Ukraine has always been a proxy war between Russia on the one hand and the US and NATO on the other. And Ukraine is the battlefield for it. But the rage it produced. And so there's that, and then there's also just, people who have come to venerate Ukraine as like this religious cause. I mean, I still, I remember so much like 2022, 2023, even into 2024, when I'd go around to the US, all bunch of liberal towns, how many Ukrainian flags I would see in people's yards, like bumper stickers. When I went to Europe in 2024, and again last year, I remember it being in Amsterdam with my kids, and we took one of those boats that you take on the river through Amsterdam and it was just like house after house had the Ukrainian flag hanging. I can almost see it more for Europe because there was at least like geographic proximity and a much like closer relationship to Russia and therefore kind of a more palpable sense, but to be in the United States and like some – where was it? I think it might have been some like little liberal town in Florida. It's a small town. It's like house after house about Ukraine; like it really has taken on this mystical, religious importance in a way that I think is much less about Ukraine and much more about Russia.

And so this question of why is there so much hatred toward Russia, you know, you go back to the end of the first term of the Obama administration, when Hillary Clinton was Secretary of State, when she ended up leaving and she wrote a book called *Hard Choices* – was it *Hard Decisions*? – *Hard Choices*? I'm pretty sure. And obviously she was generally favourable in her discussions about President Obama, but she was critical of him in several ways, and almost all of them related to Russia. She was very critical that he hadn't done more to confront Russia over its annexation of Crimea in 2014. She was angry that he had not done more to punish Assad for crossing those red lines that Obama had set. And she blamed Obama, what she viewed as Obama's fear of challenging Russia or confronting Russia. And in fact, that was Obama's rationale. Obama's rationale was: Syria is a vital interest to Russia because of the outposts in the Middle East. Why am I gonna go and risk a war with Russia over who governs Syria? And he had that view even more so when it came to Ukraine; like Ukraine is not a vital interest to the United States. We don't have any vital interests there. But Ukraine, of course, is a vital interest to Russia because it's right on its border. Like a very sensitive part of its border, the part of the border that was used twice to invade Russia in the

20th century and slaughter tens of millions of Russians. And I'm not gonna go to war with Russia over Crimea, which has been an intricate and very complex part of Russia and Ukraine and that whole region, but not of American history for our first centuries, that's not our vital interest. And Hillary Clinton was a fanatic about hating Russia. In fact, one of the reasons why Putin hated Hillary is because Hillary was openly and covertly using her position at the State Department to fund opposition groups against Putin in Russia. We were funding opposition groups; protest and agitating for instability in Russia, interfering in their country just a few years before we were all pretending we were so offended because they had interfered in our sacred democracy.

Now, part of why there's so much hatred toward Russia goes back to the Cold War, where still boomers and people of that age were indoctrinated. If you're like a boomer, 70 years old or older, and you work in the State Department or you work in the US government or some think tank, and you hear Russia or Moscow, your body reflexively thinks about the Soviet Union and you were taught for decades that that was the main enemy. And there's still very much residual sentiment along those lines. For people who didn't grow up in the Cold War, I think it's very difficult to realise. In fact, let me just tell you this quick story that I find so fascinating that really opened my eyes. I've told this story before, I think, maybe once or twice, I'm not sure. But in 2013, when I was working with Snowden, and he left Hong Kong, and the idea was he was going to go transit through Moscow, then onto Cuba, and then to South America to seek asylum, to obtain asylum and the Obama administration bullied the Cubans out of offering him a safe passage by telling them, we're working on this deal with you to lift the embargo on Cuba, but if you allow Snowden save passage politically, you can forget it, we're not gonna be able to. And that was when they withdrew their offer of safe passage to Snowden, trapping him inside the Moscow airport. And he stayed in the Moscow International Airport for six weeks, seven weeks, kind of in limbo. And the Americans were desperate to get him. I mean, the Americans were doing insane things to get Snowden.

[00:09:59] And I thought, I remember, I was so positive they were gonna strike a deal with Russia in order to get Snowden because the United States has a lot of things Russia wants. And my view was they're just gonna offer Russia enough so that Russia won't think it's worth protecting Snowden because look, we're gonna give you all this. I mean, there's a lot of Russian fugitives inside the United States that the Russian government wants. So they would say we're going to give you this guy, and this guy and this guy, but we're also gonna allow you to do this in Syria. Now, I mean imagine what the US could really offer if they really wanted to get Snowden, which they did. So I was sure the Russians and the Americans would just come to some agreement. The US would just lavish gifts. I mean, Snowden at the time was the number one enemy by far, along with Julian Assange of the US security state, and they were absolutely adamant and determined to get him no matter what. And I was just positive that they were gonna, while Snowden was trapped in the Moscow airport, get a deal. And they didn't. There was no deal. And the Russians ended up allowing Snowden into the country, gave him asylum, eventually gave him citizenship.

And I remember, I was really shocked. I mean, I was obviously worried and happy that they didn't reach a deal, but I couldn't understand why. And maybe two months or three months after Snowden was let into Russia, I went to Moscow. And I did a few events, spoke at a few of events. I mostly went to visit Snowden. We filmed the last scene of *CitizenFour* while he was in Moscow where (Laura) Poitras met me and we did that. But on my trip to Moscow, I raised that point. I said: I don't understand why the US and your government didn't reach an agreement. I'm sure they offered so many things. And what I heard from Russian officials, Russian media people, Russian kind of scholars, those types was the same thing. Everybody said, yes, the US did want Snowden. They did offer a lot. We negotiated, the Russians government negotiated. But the reason there wasn't a deal, they said it was actually twofold. One is that the idea that Russia gives refuge to Western dissidents, to whistleblowers, to leakers, to dissidents is very embedded in the Russian identity. It's like a very Russian thing to do. And obviously that goes back to the Cold War where huge numbers of, you know, communists who found themselves in trouble with Western governments or leakers or whistleblowers would seek refuge in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union would give them refuge and they would live out their lives there and not go to prison in the West. It just like became a part of what Russia does; gives refuge to Western dissidents. Very similar to how America gave refuge to Soviet dissidents as well. And one of the arguments that they gave me, one of things they explained was that had Putin given Snowden back, just handed Snowden back to the United States, huge numbers of Russians would have been angry and would have been like, this is a very un-Russian thing to do.

I know we're all taught that Putin is this totalitarian leader. He does what he wants. Nobody can dissent. This is all a caricature. He is an authoritarian for sure, no one doubts that. There's no liberal democracy in Russia. But even dictators have to care about public sentiment. And they said that that was one major reason. But the other much bigger reason that I heard was that, you know, Russia and the United States are major countries with the two largest nuclear stockpiles on the planet, massive militaries, huge military presence around the world, even after the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia is not as powerful, but still it's a very serious country. And you have these deep state institutions, for lack of a better term, permanent power factions in the intelligence world, in the defence world. And I heard over and over when I was in Russia asking this question that there's just too much hatred and animosity between the American and Russian institutions, the permanent power factions in Moscow and Washington, for them to have reached a deal, even if doing so is in the best interests of each. And so the hatred between America and Russia is so like it's in the DNA of both countries.

Even though where it originated, which is in the Soviet American capitalist communist competition no longer exists, because Russia is no longer a Soviet empire nor a communist country. It's like cultural. And I think it's much more apparent on the part of the United States than it is on the part of Russia. But it's both. And it is so interesting, I saw some liberal – I don't remember who – talking today about how the reason why there's more energy now in the Democratic Party to do things like debate foreign policy and about Israel and war and economic policy is because liberal politics is no longer being strangled by this idiotic Russiagate scandal, which really was the dominant political issue from 2016 to 2018 for at

least two full years. And I just remember thinking you know It's just so funny because this is how human beings and especially politics work, is people attach themselves to something and then it turns out to be laughably wrong or disastrous – kind of what we're talking about before with Tucker – and everyone wants to pretend that they weren't on board with it at the time. Like it's very hard to find people now who will admit that they were hardcore Russiagate because of how discredited and even laughable it's become. I remember though very well at the time that you could count basically on one hand, the number of people who were actually speaking out against the whole Russiagate concept who were in any way remotely associated with the left. It was a very lonely place to be. There were very few people willing to do that. And most of the people who did paid a price for it in the sense that we got in some way expelled from decent liberal and left-wing precincts precisely because Russiagate was the religion of American liberalism, and if you were heretical on it, then you were gonna be outcast. And that's why very, very few people were, even though most people pretend now that they never really took it seriously, either they did or they stayed silent. And one of my big concerns with Russiagate from the start was, of course, that it was a bullshit scandal with no real evidence, just CIA and FBI leaks, none of it made sense to me. So just journalistically or epistemologically, I found it objectionable, but mainly I could just see that it was feeding into the American bloodstream, this very intense virulent fear-mongering and hatred toward Russia, teaching, re-teaching Americans that the grave threat to the United States and it's our way of life is Moscow and the Kremlin, which I thought was not just absurd, but very dangerous. And so I think a lot of the hatred from Russia comes from all of these factors, this historical factor, this cultural factor. Russia is a more conservative society, so liberals naturally hate it. I don't know why they don't feel the same way about Ukraine and the Azov bataillon, which is far, far more so, but sometimes these things don't make sense, but I think that's a big part of it. But the anger and hatred of Russia, especially among liberals, but also among Republicans, most Republicans, despite Trump being a sceptic on this, also hate Russia, and also wanted the war in Ukraine funded. That's the reason why Trump hasn't been able to withdraw or separate the United States from it, because there's overwhelming massive bipartisan support for it and he hasn't been able to override the Republican belief that we ought to be funding Ukraine against Russia. It's just something that is very virulent. And it's not quite as prominent now. We don't talk about Russia as much as we did, certainly in 2017 and 2018. We don't talk about Ukraine as much as we did in 2022 or 2023. It's still very much in the bloodstream and it's still very much there. And it's sort of like a latent hatred that I think can be easily awakened. I saw that with my tweet yesterday. I was like, wow, I forgot how just intense and unrestrained and unhinged this like pro-Ukraine anti-Russian faction is, but that is very much still there and it's definitely shaping our foreign policy in all sorts of ways.

**END**

---

**Thank you for reading this transcript. Please don't forget to donate to support our independent and non-profit journalism:**

**BANKKONTO:**

Kontoinhaber: acTVism München e.V.  
Bank: GLS Bank  
IBAN: DE89430609678224073600  
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

**PAYPAL:**

E-Mail:  
PayPal@acTVism.org

**PATREON:**

<https://www.patreon.com/acTVism>

**BETTERPLACE:**

Link: [Click here](#)