



Vijay Prashad - On The Edge of Geopolitical Madness

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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. Before we begin I would like to share with you an important announcement. In the month of August our production capacities will reduce as our team members are taking time off to spend with their families and children. In this month we will only produce one to two videos per week and in September when our team members are back we will be able to restore our production capacity to four to five videos a week. If you'd like to improve our production capacities and improve the quality of our journalism, you can donate today. On the screen, you will see a PayPal barcode appear now. If you scan it with your phone's camera, you can donate to us without any hassle. In the description below, you will also find information about our bank account as well as other donation platforms. Today, I'll be speaking with author and journalist Vijay Prashad. Vijay is the author of more than 30 books, one of them being: The Withdrawal; Iraq, Libya, Afghanistan, and the Fragility of US Power. Vijay, welcome back to the show.

Vijay Prashad (VP): Thanks. Thanks a lot.

ZR: Let us begin this interview with Iran and let me briefly summarize the developments for our viewers first. In late February, the United States and Israel launched a war of aggression against Iran. After roughly 40 days of intense fighting and failing to achieve regime change in Iran, Washington and Tehran eventually reached a Memorandum of Understanding in June. It provided for an end of hostilities, the lifting of US naval blockade, sanctions relief, the release of frozen Iranian assets, reconstruction and the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran. A 60-day negotiating process was also established towards a final agreement addressing Iran's uranium stockpile and enrichment program. But the framework quickly unraveled. Fighting emerged when commercial vessels began using US and Oman-backed routes close to the Omani coast without coordinating with Iran. Tehran regarded this as a violation of the agreement and attacked vessels using this route. Washington eventually retaliated, triggering another cycle of strikes that continued until the 29th of July. Iran has now returned with a broader and more firmly sequenced proposal. Tehran is demanding a comprehensive

ceasefire, covering Iran and its allies in Lebanon, Gaza, Yemen and Iraq, the complete withdrawal of US forces from the region and end to the blockade, compensation for war damages, sanctions relief and the release of Iranian frozen assets. Hormuz remains closed until these issues are fully resolved, while substantive nuclear negotiation would come afterwards. Washington has already come out and rejected key elements of these demands and Iran said this week that the mediation has produced absolutely no progress. Can you first assess the war for us and then explain what the shift from the June MOU to Iran's latest proposal signifies? Is Tehran adopting a maximalist negotiating process as much of the Western media suggests? Or has the war actually increased Iran's leverage over the US?

VP: Well, firstly, you're actually right to say that on February 28th, the United States and Israel launched a war of aggression. There was no reason for this war. There was no UN Security Council mandate. In that sense, it's a war of aggression and if you look back at history, wars of aggression, after particularly the Second World War, these were so serious. They were taken so seriously at Nuremberg and Tokyo that the people who initiated the war of aggression received the death penalty. They were killed. I mean, this is a very serious matter. The United States imposed this war on Iran. Iran did not want this war. The Strait of Hormuz prior to February 28th was completely open to traffic, there was no question of anybody exercising their right to their sovereign waters. But given that the United States launched an asymmetric war against Iran, Iran decided alongside Oman, I must say, because Oman felt betrayed by the United States. Oman had mediated between Iran and the US prior to February 28th, they'd in fact reached an agreement through the Omani diplomatic channel. But now Oman, feeling betrayed by the United States, went along with Iran and the two of them decided to exercise their right to their territorial waters and the way the Strait of Hormuz works is the waters are all either Iranian or Omani. There is no international water. So they said, well, okay, you're going to have a war of aggression on us. We're going to restrict the access to the Strait of Hormuz, which means oil tankers, fertilizers, all of that are going to be prevented from egress, from coming out.

And then the Iranians and Omanis said, well, we're going to charge a toll if you're to come through here in the future. If you've destroyed a very peaceful waterway, now we're going to charge a toll barrier. We're going to check to see who's coming in, there'll be surveillance of ships and so on. We'll keep a record of the shipping that goes through. Perhaps there was a record before, but now it will be an official record. All of this, the Iranians put on the table. And in the June 17th Interim Agreement, there was some sense that the United States was willing to go along, at least in the negotiation phase with what the Iranians had put on that table. Well, the US and Israel routinely since June 17th, which was not an agreement, it was an interim agreement, it was not a ceasefire completely because the United States continued to bomb Iran on a punctual basis. So the Iranians then said, well, if this is the case, we want the withdrawal of US troops from the region. We want security for the entire region, not just for Iran, and a proper deal with everybody in the region.

Now, very interesting, Zain, and I'll end with this, that in fact the United States lost control of the negotiation. That's what happened. It's not that Iran is asking for a maximalist demand.

They are merely saying that, look, we can't trust you. We don't trust you with an interim agreement or a ceasefire. We don't trust you, so we need guarantees. And for that, your troops need to leave the region, or we're going to keep hitting them in their bases. And as a consequence of that, as a consequence of Iran putting security on the table, Pakistan, which has played a very important role here, Pakistan, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia have created the Mecca agreement, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, where they've effectively created their own security buffer. And apparently, this was created with the foreknowledge of Iran. So it's not an anti-Iranian issue. They are also taking regional security in their own hands. They are keeping the United States out of it. And that's actually a lesson for us to take, that the Mecca agreement is a consequence of Iran's quest for regional security without the United States and Israel.

ZR: What do you make of the argument that if the United States simply maintained enough pressure, Iran could eventually be forced to make a compromise? Its economy, for example, has been severely weakened by years of sanctions and war. Inflation continues to erode living standards, and the country has already experienced significant domestic unrest this year. At the same time, US and Israeli attacks have damaged parts of Iran's ballistic missile production infrastructure and depleted an arsenal whose exact size remains unknown, but which can nevertheless be deemed to be negatively impacted. So what do you make of this argument?

VP: Yeah, I think that it's true that Iran has really taken a hit because this is the asymmetric war. But it's also true that there are countries in Asia that simply do not want Iran to fall. And the Iranian people themselves seem pretty strong. There's a large section that appears to fully back the negotiating position. I've talked to a number of Iranian journalists, academics and so on, and the general feeling is that there is a kind of dignity that is pushing the government; again, it's not a maximum demand, it is in fact you could almost say a minimum demand. They are saying we don't want our security to be threatened. And so it's not just the Iranian people, a large section behind the government, but also the Chinese, I don't think, want the Iranians to fall. The Pakistanis don't want the Iranians to fall, it's a very interesting confluence of interests here. The very fact that now you're seeing North Korean troops fighting in Ukraine on the Russian side, and you're seeing Russian military aid coming into Iran most likely, and at the same time, the Ukrainians providing interest to hit at the Iranian drone production facilities, because remember, Iran was supplying Russia with drones. I mean, these are now interlinked conflicts. And a lot of countries are taking an interest in what's happening so you can't actually look at the issue of Iran as if it's separate from what's happening in Ukraine, or what's happening in Germany, the so-called Rearm Europe. These are now getting interlinked and I would say people need to hesitate a little bit and be cautious that we don't enter into a genuine World War.

ZR: Talking about geopolitics and world war, what is the state of the global chessboard to borrow Zbigniew Brzezinski's term, the former national security advisor? I mean, for a while, it seemed like the West has been getting an upper hand with the fall of Bashar al-Assad in December, 2024, and then with the kidnapping of Maduro in Venezuela. And now we're seeing a sort of shift happening with Iran putting up a challenge and being supportive

vis-a-vis Russia and China. How do you think this conflict is manifesting? And are we seeing the downfall of the US empire in the West at the backhand, or is this a global stalemate?

VP: No, I think it's a very complicated period. Let's go one by one on this. It's absolutely true that in the case of Syria, Iran has lost a lot, the fact that it cannot easily resupply Hezbollah. The Israelis have gained a lot, they've really hammered Hezbollah. The assassination of Sayyid Hassan Nasrallah was a big ideological and political blow to Hezbollah. The overthrow of the government in Syria, the placement of a basically pliant Ahmad al-Sharra and the permanent seizure of the Golan plus because Israel has actually extended its Golan Heights, a region the Golan plus they are holding, they're holding large parts of Lebanon. It's a big game for Israel. Let's not minimize that. The Palestinians have a harder negotiating position because regional allies, Egypt, Jordan, these countries are completely mute. The Gulf Arab states are now focused on Iran. The Palestinian issue has been really thrown off the table. I mean, right now, the Israelis are, in fact, conducting an extermination in the West Bank. And it bears very little comment in the international press. Suddenly, in places like Europe, where people keep talking about human rights, there's absolute silence on what's happening in East Jerusalem, in the West Bank, and so on. There is a huge gain for Israel. And there's a huge gain for Israel in Latin America. Argentina has created something called the Isaac Accords, which is the Latin American version of the Abraham Accords. So far only Argentina and Israel are signatories, but very soon Colombia, Costa Rica, these countries will sign up. There are big gains being made by Israel and the United States in Latin America, let's not underestimate that. So the world is in flux. It's not that there's a stalemate or anything, it's in flux.

And the issue of Cuba, of Palestine, and therefore Israel, of Iran, of Ukraine, these are still the central issues. I mean, Europe is focused deeply on rearming in order to take on the Russians in a quixotic attempt to somehow defeat Russia's nuclear power. There's a lot of madness on the horizon. Philosophically, speaking philosophically we are on the edge of a kind of geopolitical madness, and people just are not able to sit back, see the big picture and say, wait a minute, let's blow the whistle on this and call peace. I just don't see any power trying to do that. I mean, the Chinese keep releasing these global governance statements. They talk about the need for more dialog and so on. But people don't seem to be listening to that, and the call to rearm and war is so loud. It's deafening. It's absolutely deafening and at great cost to people around the world, including where you are sitting in Germany is a kind of collapsing economy. In the service of what? Of building tanks? I mean what do they want to do? Fight World War Two again? I don't get it.

ZR: Let us zoom in onto Israel-Palestine as you mentioned. At the end of July, mainstream media reported that Hamas had accepted a US-backed 15-point framework calling for a disarmament of Hamas and a technocratic Palestinian administration in parallel with Israel withdrawal from Gaza. The process has since reached an impasse, Israel rejected this proposal and insists that Hamas must fully disarm before it withdraws, while Hamas demands the reverse. Israeli military operations continue in Gaza, as you mentioned while its confrontation with Iran has largely subsided. This comes amidst a devastating humanitarian

situation. In June, for example, a UN commission concluded that Israeli authority and security forces had deliberately targeted Palestinian children, resulting in genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza, as well as in the West Bank. According to the report, Israeli actions killed around 20,000 Palestinian children and injured more than 44,000 between October 2023 and October 2025. Another UN assessment last month found that 63% of surveyed households received less than six liters of drinking water per person per day, while 60% were exposed to sewage or human waste near ten meters of their shelter. Here in Germany, since the so-called ceasefire took effect in October 2025, my observation is that Gaza has largely disappeared from regular prime-time coverage. On programs such as the Tagesschau, the humanitarian situation is reported only once in a blue moon, while terms such as genocide, apartheid and ethnic cleansing are largely avoided or framed merely as accusations. Can you first comment on Gaza being covered by the corporate media and then assess the so-called peace plan and the dispute over Hamas' disarmament and Israel's withdrawal?

VP: Yeah, I mean, let's take the whole thing together, Zain, because to take Gaza by itself, I don't think is useful. I mean there are three sections of the occupied territory, the occupied territories of Palestine by Israel. That's Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Currently, the Israelis are suffocating all three of the territories, a large section of East Jerusalem already being taken over and, in fact, being used for embassies, for foreign governments. It's an absolute scandal that embassies are shifting on to occupied Palestinian territory. In the West Bank, settlements are increasing. Settler attacks on Palestinian villages are increasing as we speak. Two homes are besieged by settlers. The Israeli military is doing nothing to help the Palestinians within. They are under severe threat. Nothing is being allowed in and out. They are on the siege. And Gaza continues to be pummeled in one way or the other, I mean, there's just no basic services allowed and no rebuilding allowed. It's in stasis. Now, what's the issue with the 15-point plan? This is the real question. The real question is, Benjamin Netanyahu is asking for the impossible. He is basically asking the Palestinians, not just Hamas, but the entire Palestinian resistance to disarm; to basically surrender the weapons and lay themselves at the mercy of the Israelis. That's what he's asking them to do. And he's saying that effectively no Palestinian resistance group, you know, neither Hamas, Islamic Jihad, none of these groups, Popular Front, Democratic Front, even sections of Fatah are not permitted to be in any political role. So not only disarm, that is to say, surrender themselves, lay themselves at the mercy of the Israelis, but there'll be no negotiating partner. The Israelis and Americans will pick and choose who they want to talk to. This idea of technocracy is very dangerous because who's the technocrat? Who gets to pick who the technocrat is? This will be the Israelis and the United States. So that means complete disarmament. Complete disbandment of the politics of the Palestinians, completely laying themselves at Israeli mercy. Where is the evidence that Israel will be merciful? I mean, I'm just taking that word to the next level. Where is there evidence that is really merciful? There is no evidence. So Mr. Netanyahu's demand, which is total surrender, cannot be ever met by the Palestinians. The Palestinians don't trust the Israelis to be merciful. I mean, they have dignity. They are fighting for their rights established by international law. So why should they surrender? There's no reason to. So they are saying, let's move to the 15 point program now. Let's move to that 15 point plan.

Netanyahu saying, no, lay your swords and shield at my feet, only after you do that, then we can think about the 15 points. This is an absolutely intractable stalemate. There is no way forward. I mean, what the Israelis are saying is effectively impossible for the Palestinians to accept. What the Palestinians are saying is reasonable for the Israelis to accept, okay, you have organized political forces, we'll negotiate with you. You have basically relatively been defeated. You can keep your weapons. Nobody is firing, it is a ceasefire. You've been defeated, but now let's negotiate. Let's find a way forward. Let's try to get kids to school and so on. Nothing. The Israelis are saying nothing. Nothing. Do it. No schools, no nothing.

ZR: Israel is heading towards an election in October, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu remaining politically vulnerable and no clear governing majority emerging from recent polling. At the same time, a major contradiction within his coalition continues to deepen. After years of warfare, the Israeli military says it urgently needs thousands of additional soldiers while Netanyahu remains dependent on other Orthodox parties that demand that they receive protection from military constriction. Israel has also largely disappeared from the direct Iran war theater, while senior members of Netanyahu's government appear to prefer that the United States continue the fighting against Iran instead. Last month, for example, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said Israel had, quote, "no interest", unquote, in joining the current US-Iran confrontation, describing a situation in which the United States fights Iran while Israel remains outside the direct confrontation as the, quote, "best situation for Israel", unquote. Israel Defense Minister Israel Katz subsequently said that Israel wanted to attack Iran targets, but that Washington was preventing it from doing so, concerns of Iranian retaliation and the consequences for its global oil market. You already mentioned one contradiction. For example, as I understand it, Trump wants Israel and Gaza and Hamas to do a simultaneous approach. Hamas disarms while Israel withdraws. And then we can see a contradiction here as well where Israel wants the United States to stay engaged in its war because it sort of benefits Netanyahu politically and the entire establishment one could put it and you can see another contradiction within the Gaza situation, so how do you think this contradiction has come to fruition going forward?

VP: Yeah, I mean, firstly, I will say that Mr Netanyahu is a survivor politically, but let's forget about Mr Netanyahu. Right now, the most credible rival for the prime ministership is Gadi Eisenkot. Gadi Eisenkot was a general in the Israeli defense force. After October 7th of 2023, Gadi Eisenkot said that the issue of a Palestinian state is no longer relevant. I mean, his disagreement with Mr Netanyahu has to do with domestic things, corruption of Mr Netanyahu, he worries that polarization inside Israel is weakening the Israeli army's ability to complete its mission regarding the Palestinians. So he wants to unite the Israelis. So I don't think that the election is really going to offer a path forward for negotiations. Gadi Eisenkot is as much a zealot on this as Benjamin Netanyahu, as much as a zealot. His party, the Yashar party, right now has 24 Knesset seats. Netanyahu's party, the Likud, has 22 seats. So he already has more seats than Mr. Netanyahu in this Knessett but he doesn't have the kind of coalition, that Netanyahu is an amazing survivor, is able to put together. So it's either going to be Netanyahu again or it'll be Gadi Eisenkot. Naftali Bennett, who is the far right guy, further right than Netanyahu, who might challenge Mr. Netanyahu for the right wing, but I don't

think it matters to us. I don't care who becomes the Prime Minister of Israel. That's for the Israeli people. But whether it's Naftali Bennett, or Benjamin Netanyahu, or Gadi Eisenkot, there is no difference for the Palestinians. All three of them effectively believe that the question of a Palestinian state is, as Eisenkot put it, who's, quote unquote, "the most liberal of the three", is no longer relevant.

So what difference does this make for the Palestinian? It makes no difference at all. The Israeli left has become totally marginal. It doesn't have a role here and the Arab parties will have no role in any government's formation. I don't think so. Even if the Arab list, which will wait a few scenes, links up with Gadi Eisenkot, it's not going to have an impact on his politics because he is a zealot when it comes to these issues as much as Benjamin Netanyahu. So I don't see this election making a difference. There's no way to break the Gordian knot here. This idea that Hamas has to surrender, the whole resistance has to surrender, as a precondition is going to prevent – that's the Gordian knot. And so there's no advancement. Unfortunately, I'm quite pessimistic right now, unless there is severe external pressure, boycotts of Israel, complete ending certain trades to Israel, it is not going to work. But here's the problem. I just mentioned the Isaac Accords in Latin America. You have a right wing government, Abelardo de la Espriella, has taken power in Colombia. He's taken the seat that was held by Gustavo Petro. Petro took Colombia to the South African case against Israel. Petro stopped coal exports to Israel. De la Espriella is going to start it all, he has already signed a decree saying that Colombia agrees with Israel's holding of the Golan Heights, they've already reestablished relations, they're going to enter the Isaac Accords, I mean, I don't see the isolation of Israel happening, and therefore that external pressure playing an impact, but we need to actually build on that. We need to build on the pressure somehow.

ZR: What do you make of this contradiction though? Like it's Trump's peace plan, it is his board of peace that wants to have some big victory, and Gaza could be that for example, however Israel continues to reject that, on the other hand, Trump is now stuck between a heart and a rock place given that there's no way to cause regime change in Iran because of the economic cause and the upcoming midterms. However, Israel wants the war with Iran to continue. Do you think these contradictions are just superficial? Because as you've said, we've seen on the international level, the United States over and over again, whenever Israel is being held to account, undermining any accountability, whether it's the International Court of Justice, which Marco Rubio said will be undone brick by brick, or in any other form, whether it is Francesca Albanese, who has been sanctioned by the US; so do you think this is just superficial and the United States and Israel really don't have any contradictions, geopolitically speaking at least?

VP: I mean, look, there's no real contradiction, okay? This is exaggerated a lot. The US wants to have something settled here, Israel says no, these are disagreements. Disagreements are not necessarily contradictions. They are disagreeing on tactical matters. Strategically, there is an agreement. The United States government wants to smash Iran, wants to do regime change in Iran, bring the pseudo king back and the United States government wants to smash the Palestinians. Where's the contradiction? Israel agrees with the same strategy, same

outcome, and the same strategy, uses absolute force to have the same outcome. It's just that they're disagreeing on tactics. Tactically, the United State says, look, just let's calm down in Palestine for now, we've smashed them up, let's calm down, let's focus on Iran, let's give the Gulf Arabs a win, let the Qataris come back for reconstruction. But you see, the Israelis don't want any reconstruction in Gaza, so they block the Qataris. The Qataris are angry with the United States regarding Palestine and now they're angry with the US regarding Iran because Qatar is now saying maybe the US base should go. So the United States tactically would like Israel to back off a bit, focus the Gulf Arab attention there. But no, the Israelis are not giving the US a break, but that doesn't mean that there's any difference in the outcomes or the strategy. They agree.

ZR: Let us connect US foreign policy with its domestic politics. The Iran war is becoming increasingly costly for Washington, both economically and politically, just months before the midterm elections. By late July, the Pentagon estimated the direct military cost of the war at around \$37.5 billion, while higher energy prices have added further pressure on living costs. A writer's poll conducted from July 29 to August 3 found that only 16% of Democrats support continued military and economic assistance to Israel, while 57% opposed it. We're also seeing signs of shifts electorally. On August 4, Abdul El-Sayed won the Democratic Senate primary in Michigan, followed one week later by Peggy Flanagan in Minnesota. Both campaign on Medicare for All, tackling economic inequality and corporate influence, opposing the Iran war and ending or restricting US military aid to Israel. These developments follow Zohran Mamdani's victory in the New York mayoral election last November, where he campaigned on a similar combination of economic issues and opposition to US support for Israel. We have seen political surges around anti-war settlement and economic justice in the past, including during Barack Obama's rise and even in the Donald Trump campaign, advocating for peace, no more military intervention in the Middle East, and focusing on home. Do you see this as another version of the same reoccurring political trend? Or are we witnessing something fundamentally different this time?

VP: It's very hard for me to tell. I'm watching this from afar, just like you, and it's interesting to watch these victories by people who are calling themselves socialists, very openly. They're saying we are socialists. Very very interesting developments and I mean I hesitate to say this is going to be a national phenomena because all of the areas where the socialists are winning are also demographically very much suited to these candidates. These are urban areas where there's a large population of college educated people, there's also old working-class traditions that have not yet lost their connection to trade unions and so on. In Michigan and in Minnesota, there's a large population of migrants, of people from Islamic traditions, whether it's Somali communities or it's the Yemenis or the various Arab communities in Michigan. We're talking about very particular places. The United States is vast. We're not seeing socialists get elected in Arkansas or in New Mexico, not yet. These areas are still pretty conservative and pretty straightforward in their mega kind of politics. I think Trump is going to face another kind of problem in things like the data center protests, people are protesting, the water being taken away for data centers. I think the question of joblessness is still going to be an issue for the Trump people. They can come back maybe one more cycle and say this

has to do with migrants, but at some point it will wear thin. The argument that it's the migrant that's taking your job, it'll wear thin. But maybe one or two more election cycles, they could come back with that argument. I think it's possible.

So I think one should be cautious about reading too much into these election victories in New York, in Michigan, in Minnesota, in upper New York and so on, we should be conscious. But I think also optimistic, that if you get ten, 15, 20 of these socialists into the US Congress, that's the biggest, largest number of self-described socialists in the US legislature. They will have an impact. I mean, you know, whatever you think of Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez, and she has played right into the center and center right on many occasions, she still is self-identified as a person from the Democratic Socialist of America and is probably the most mainstream of these people in a way. And so I wouldn't you know say these are all the enemy. I mean I just think their entry into the legislature will complicate matters. Will it be able to sufficiently slow down the militarization and the use of military force? I don't really think so. I think the attempts at getting the US President to abide by the War Powers Act and so on have really not come to fruit. I mean, on Iran, they attempted to push the War Powers Act; it didn't really work out. But I am genuinely very optimistic about the fact of having this, let's say cohort enter the US Congress. And let's see what they'll do because we're in uncharted terrain here, right? I mean, it's not like there's ever been a group like this in the US congress.

ZR: I want to switch to another foreign policy issue, namely Venezuela. Earlier this year, we saw the kidnapping of Nicolas Maduro, and then, Delcy Rodríguez took over power. And then we saw slowly the opening or the announcement, at least, of the oil sector to foreign investors. And then when the recent earthquake hit, we saw the United States cooperating with the Venezuelan government by providing them with aid and support. I mean, do you think the Venezuelan government has abandoned the socialist ideals of the revolution that Hugo Chavez brought in and has capitulated the United States' private interests?

VP: Well, I mean, firstly, you know, we have to also understand that Venezuela was always a process, it was a journey, and there was always that kind of class struggle regarding its own politics and that class struggle has made itself manifest much clearer. You know there's a very large section of people who are in a way almost emancipated by Hugo Chavez's policies, policies followed by Nicolas Maduro, the missions for hunger, illiteracy, you know for housing and so on and that base that was created are the Chavista base. In a sense they became very politicized and aware of international events. You know, when Chavez, for instance, broke with Israel in 2009, this took on a mass character because for years afterwards at rallies, Chavista rallies, one would see Palestinian flags and so on, it had a mass character, these ideas of international solidarity and so on.

With the kidnapping of Nicolas Maduro, it is absolutely clear that the Chavista base has had its positions put on the back burner. Now this may be for practical reasons by the current government fearing a full-scale US attack. It could be for practical reasons, could be programmatic, could be that they in fact believe that it's a good idea to bring in foreign investment to the oil sector, maybe they believe it's a good idea to ally with the United States on certain issues. It's very hard to say because we are imputing motivations. The fact of the

matter is that they have taken a position that effectively sets the Chavista base aside on a lot of issues, particularly on the hydrocarbons law. That's the key one. And then this thing of opening up to Israel really does walk back on some of Hugo Chavez's positions. But again, I don't think it's clear yet what their motivations are. Is this merely a pragmatic thing, that they want to preserve what gains they made as much as possible and make some negotiations to appear as if they are willing to go forward with the US while they shore up the economy, etc? I don't know. Who has built the Trojan horse?! And who's inside it?! Is this a US Trojan horse or is this a Chavista Trojan Horse? I think it's a little unclear; and we shouldn't impute motivations. I know these people personally; I know Delcy Rodriguez, I've shared the stage with her, done a conversation with her and so on. I've met her brother Jorge Rodriguez, I know Diosdado Cabello, three of them are in charge. I don't really have a clear sense of their theory of what they're doing. Is it a betrayal of the Chavista base? I'm unwilling to say that because I think that maybe this is just a practical thing that they feel there's no other option right now and that at some point they'll be able to reverse course; this is a tactical retreat... I don't know that, because they are not also coming out and saying what they're doing. They're just doing things, they haven't given a speech saying, listen, people of Venezuela, this is why we had the Israelis in the country. This is why we allowed US helicopters to land here. This is why we have changed our laws on minerals and metals. I don't know.

ZR: Let's end the interview with something you already mentioned, namely Ukraine. According to the Institute for the Study of War, Russia has made a net territorial gain of only around 81 square kilometers in 2026 by late July. Ukraine, meanwhile, said in August that it had retaken around 745 square kilometers this year. At the same time, the dominant narrative in Western media is Ukraine's considerable success with long-range drone strikes deep inside Russian territory. In July, Ukraine drones reached the Omsk refinery, which is around 2,700 km from Ukrainian held territory, while the broader campaign has targeted naval bases, logistic facilities such as Wildberries, oil refineries and energy infrastructure across Russia. These strikes are also causing dangerous disruption, including regional fuel shortages. Meanwhile, Russia continues large-scale drone and ballistic missile strikes against Ukrainian cities and infrastructure. Germany is also undergoing a major militarization in the background. Its military expenditure has risen to around 124 billion euros in 2026, roughly double the 2022 level, while another 11.5 billion euros has been allocated for supporting Ukraine militarily. In August, the government also approved plans to significantly expand the powers of the BND, Germany's foreign intelligence service, including hacking, offensive cyber operations, and broader surveillance. At the same time, Berlin is pursuing major reforms to its social welfare system that includes cuts in pensions, healthcare, welfare, and the labor market. Firstly, do you believe Ukraine has changed the tide of war in its favor with these new technological capabilities? And secondly, do you believe Russia could strike a European NATO member in an attempt to establish deterrence against the country's expansion of Ukraine's long-range warfare that is hitting deeper and deeper within its own territory?

VP: I mean, I am genuinely very alarmed by the expansion of this conflict, very, very alarmed. I think that people in the Western part of Europe are not understanding the gravity of

what's happening. This Rearm Europe buildup, firstly, is absolutely economically a nightmare. You're going up to five, six percent of GDP for weapons; this is going to really drain from social welfare, from infrastructure, from net fixed capital. Your gross investment is going to decline. Places like Britain, the percentage of GDP that goes to industrialization is about eight percent or so, in China, it's 40%. I mean, you're in a catastrophic economic situation with this by itself. Then to provoke Russia, I think is very dangerous because I think for the Russians who it seems, are quite willing to sit down with the Ukrainians and maybe others to have a deal, it seems that they have indicated on several occasions, I heard Lavrov recently say again, that they are willing to close this conflict. As you say, the territorial gains are minimal. They are looking for security. That's what they keep saying, well, I don't understand why that's not provoking a peace agreement rather than anything. Russia doesn't seem to want to drive its tanks to Paris. If it can only make a small percentage gain in Ukraine, how is it going to come and attack Berlin? It's just not going to happen right now.

So in that sense to provoke Russia means that if Russia feels threatened, if there's mid-range nuclear weapons placed in the Baltic countries and so on, if it feels threatened, would it not fire a mid-range nuclear weapon into some part of the Western part of Europe? Why provoke this? Where is this going? The lack of, I think, seriousness of purpose on this strikes me as incredible. There's no leader in the Western Part of Europe, whether it's in the low countries of Scandinavia, France, Germany, they are all more belligerent than the other. That strikes me as very unfortunate. And I very much hope that in the remainder of this year, the last semester of this, September, October, before winter comes in, there's a real consideration, a pressure on Mr. Zelensky to close this. I mean, I think Boris Johnson and others inflamed the conflict. At a certain point, it could have closed. We know that now. And to continue to provoke this and to go beyond, let's say, the already terrible carnage in the battlefield is very dangerous. And I just don't get it, Zain, why Merz and others, so superficial in their understanding of world affairs, are not willing to take this seriously and say, let's shut it down now.

ZR: Vijay Prashad, author and historian, thank you so much for your time and insights. I hope to interview you soon again.

VP: Yeah, thanks a lot.

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 don't forget to donate to us. We don't take any money from corporations and governments, all with the goal of providing you with information that is free from any external influence. I thank you for tuning in and your support. I'm Zain Raza, see you next time.

END

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