

#1551 Making sense of the senseless war in Ukraine

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Intro 3-26-23

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left Podcast*, in which we shall take a look at the Russian invasion of Ukraine as the debate over continuing to support Ukraine heats up, an arrest warrant is issued for Vladimir Putin, and China makes a state visit to Moscow. Clips today are from *Democracy Now!*, *Gaslit Nation*, *The BradCast*, *NBC News*, the *PBS NewsHour*, and *Morning Joe*, with additional members only clips from *Democracy Now!*, *Gaslit Nation*, and the *Thom Hartmann Program*.

Biden in Ukraine Matt Duss, Medea Benjamin Debate U.S. Involvement, Hopes for Peace - Democracy Now! - Air Date 2-20-23

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: This is President Biden speaking in Kyiv before he left.

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN: Together, we've committed nearly 700 tanks and thousands of armored vehicles, 1,000 artillery systems, more than 2 million rounds of artillery ammunition, more than 50 advanced launch rocket systems, anti-ship and air defense systems, [00:01:00] all to defend Ukraine. And that doesn't count the other half a billion dollars we're going to be — we're announcing with you today and tomorrow that's going to be coming your way. And that's just the United States in this piece. And just today, that announcement includes artillery ammunition for HIMARS and howitzers, more Javelins, anti-armor systems, air surveillance radars, that will protect the Ukrainian people from aerial bombardments. Later this week, we will announce additional sanctions against elites and companies that are trying to evade sanctions and backfill Russia's war machine.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: That's President Biden speaking in a surprise trip to Kyiv this morning before heading on to Warsaw, Poland. We're also joined by Medea Benjamin, co-founder of CodePink. Medea, your response to President Biden's trip and to [00:02:00] the statement that he just made?

MEDEA BENJAMIN: Well, I feel like this is a propaganda move to shore up support for a senseless war that the American public are starting to realize has no end in sight except for more senseless waste of lives. We saw a new AP poll that showed that only 40% of the American people want to send more weapons to Ukraine. We see protests happening here in the United States, like the one that happened yesterday, bringing together a broad sector of people. And we see the protests happening all over Europe, a new coalition called Europe for Peace that is pushing their governments towards negotiations.

And we see just from the United States the opposite from Biden, saying we're sending more weapons. And, of course, Zelensky, every time the U.S. agrees to send a new weapon, like the tanks, then has another request, like the fighter [00:03:00] jets. And what is it going to be after that? Troops.

The American public, the public in Europe and the world community is saying, "We need to find an answer for this." That is why the top diplomat from China is on his way to Russia. They are about to announce a peace plan. The entire world is calling for a peace plan. We saw this with President Lula from Brazil, who met with Biden. Biden was pushing Brazil to send weapons to Ukraine. He said, "We don't want to join this war. We want to end this war."

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Matt Duss, your response to Medea Benjamin's comment that this is a senseless war?

MATT DUSS: I agree it's a senseless war. It's a senseless war that was launched by Russian President Vladimir Putin. I would agree that we all want to end this war. I think the people who want to end this war most of all are the Ukrainians. I think the question is: Under what conditions can we end this war in a way that's durable and that provides for continuing security, and [00:04:00] not simply a pause before we get to another round of even worse fighting? I think this has been the approach of the Biden administration thus far, is to get to a point where you have real negotiations that can produce a ceasefire — if not a peace agreement, an actual ceasefire that is enforceable and durable. And, you know, I certainly grant that there are very legitimate concerns and questions on the part of lots of people, including within the administration, about how long

this can go on, and continuing to seek opportunities for precisely the negotiations that I previously mentioned.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Matt, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky said he's ruling out trading territory for peace as part of any negotiated settlement with Putin. He made the comments in an interview with the BBC. Your response?

MATT DUSS: You know, I think, from Zelensky's perspective, it makes sense for him to say that. And I will [00:05:00] also recognize that as a matter of international law, all of Ukraine, including Crimea, is — this is part of Ukraine. Now, if we get to a point where there's a ceasefire that is possible and durable, in the absence of those kind of maximalist goals, I think that is something that we should look at seriously. I'm not proposing to negotiate on the behalf of the Ukrainians — no one should do that — but I do think we do have an interest in seeking, you know, an end to this war. And I think the administration is clear about that, even if they very carefully do not want to get ahead, at least publicly, of declarations from the Ukrainian president.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Medea Benjamin, if you could respond to what Matt says? And you talked about the antiwar protest yesterday in Washington, D.C. You were initially on the — scheduled to speak, but then you didn't speak. I was looking at a series of tweets between you and Ralph Nader, and he said, [00:06:00] "Why didn't you speak?" Can you explain what's happening within the antiwar movement? But first, respond to Matt.

MEDEA BENJAMIN: I think the U.S. has a history of trying to stop negotiations, especially the ones that were taking place in March, a month after the war began, and the West decided that they didn't want Zelensky to make an agreement with Russia. I think that the sending — constant sending of weapons is saying to Zelensky, "You don't have to negotiate. We are behind you 100%." The U.S., what it should be doing is talking to the Russians. Biden, instead of making a symbolic appearance in Kyiv, should make a meeting with Putin, and they should talk about how to end this war.

The issue of yesterday's march, a rally and then a march to the White House, it was fascinating, Amy. I've never been [00:07:00] at an antiwar rally like that. My organization, CodePink, didn't want me to speak there, because they didn't like a number of the speakers and their positions on other issues. But when have we ever had an antiwar march that brought together Ron Paul, Tulsi Gabbard, Jill Stein, Dennis Kucinich, people from very different political perspectives? And there is another march coming up on March 18th, which a different set of

groups is putting together. I think we have to be at every antiwar march. And I'm also excited that on Tuesday we're having a lobby day in Congress, inviting people of all political persuasions to come meet us in the Rayburn Building and go to the offices of every member of the Armed Services Committee in Congress to say, "Enough weapons. Stop sending weapons. Start negotiating. Stop escalating. Start [00:08:00] negotiating." This is the message I think now that more and more American people want us to take to Congress, which has done nothing but supply billions and billions of weapons to keep this war going, when there is no winning on the battlefield.

And I think that's an important thing to say to you, Matt Duss, because there is no winning on the battlefield. If you agree to that, then why do we keep fueling this war?

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Matt, your response?

MATT DUSS: Sure. I mean, first, I would just quickly, you know, reference something Medea just said about the United States stopping negotiations. She referenced talks that were happening in March and in April. And I think it's — I would encourage viewers to look closely into that, because I think that's a very, very incomplete and, frankly, inaccurate rendition of what actually happened in that situation, in those negotiations between the Ukrainians and the Russians.

You know, with regard to ending the war, as I said, I want this war to end. Ukrainians certainly want this war to end. [00:09:00] I think acknowledging that there can be no victory on the battlefield, even if one does acknowledge that, there is still an argument for continuing to support the Ukrainians for creating the best possible situation on the battlefield that they can, to come into negotiations from the strongest possible position. That has been, I think, the Biden administration's approach. That has been the approach of our European allies. That does not preclude eventual negotiations, when those negotiations become possible.

I would note also that the Biden administration has been talking to the Russians at various levels, even if we're not seeing phone calls between President Biden and President Putin. There's been numerous reports of contacts at various levels between United States officials and their counterparts to identify when negotiations are appropriate and can achieve something. But, as yet, Vladimir Putin is the one who has given no indication that he is ready for that. And I think that's very important to recognize.

Russias Total War on Ukraine One Year Later - Gaslit Nation - Air Date 2-22-23

Andrea Chalupa: President Biden [00:10:00] became the first president since George W. Bush's visit in 2008 to go to Ukraine. This was a very big deal. Biden, as vice president, had visited the country many times, including addressing the leaders in the parliament, and he's always had a soft spot for Ukraine. He's always been very strong on Ukraine. And there was wonderful video images of Zelensky and Biden walking arm in arm in the center of Kyiv next to the gold domed churches, paying tribute to the fallen soldiers, and all of this while air raid sirens were going off, the air raid sirens that Ukrainians are so used to living with.

The Kremlin was given notice that the president of the United States was headed to Ukraine. The Kremlin was given advanced notice. And of course the Kremlin did not waste an opportunity. They made a big show by launching enough of a threat nearby, I believe over in Belarus, that the air raid siren system was triggered during Biden's visit. And that was of all, of course, deliberate. So [00:11:00] Biden just stayed for a short while. And in his historic visit, which would mean so much to that country, Biden was given a plaque for himself on the Street [*sic*] of the Brave in Ukraine. He's going to go down in history as, like, a hero of Ukraine. Why? Because as one young Ukrainian in Kyev recently told me, Ukrainians are so used to fighting alone, they're so used to being left alone and abandoned by the rest of the world. That's part of the history of the Holodomor, as you see in my film, *Mr. Jones*. They're used to being sold out and all the great empires turning their backs on Ukraine and making money with Russia while Russia slaughters millions and so on. Any help at all is always a big surprise to Ukrainians, who are used to self-reliance. They even have a big reformist political party called Self Reliance.

Self-reliance is a proud cultural movement among the Ukrainian grassroots groups. So all the aid that the US and other countries have been giving Ukraine is [00:12:00] tremendous. It's very meaningful. And the Ukrainians are very grateful. At the same time, the U.S., led by global allies, the NATO countries and the NATO allies, led by the US, are also seen as—by all staunch defenders of Ukraine and democracy worldwide, not just Ukrainians, but there is growing concern—that the aid that Ukraine is getting to defend itself from existential threat and an actual genocide is a drip, drip, drip of aid, that there's just too much deliberation, too much consensus-building, too much handwringing over what the Kremlin will think and do and say, that the rest of the world is letting Russia get away with slaughtering civilians, getting away with terrorizing

civilians, lobbying missiles deliberately into apartment buildings and hospitals and schools and churches, and hundreds of cultural sites destroyed across country and so on.

It's a genocide. It's a genocide that we're witnessing, a deliberate genocide, and they're not going to stop until the Russians are stopped. So the whole argument is, for [00:13:00] the love of God, stop the slow walking of aid, get Ukraine everything it needs now to defend itself. If you're not going to have boots on the ground, if you're not gonna send NATO troops there, if you're not going to do a no-fly zone, then give Ukraine everything it possibly needs to close its skies. Get the tanks there now. There was a promise of hundreds of tanks, but when you look at the fine print and the details, Oh, nope, sorry, not as many tanks as we promised because of this and this and this reason. Oh, you're gonna get them eventually, maybe by the end of the summer, maybe some in May.

So it's all kind of a mess in terms of getting the urgently needed aid there in time to make any difference and that really serves the Kremlin's interest. What now needs to happen to kind of speed things up is get all the tanks there so Ukraine can defend itself, but also get planes. Get the jets there. Get Ukraine... Look at me, I'm like a military expert now... get the F-15s that Ukraine needs in order to close its own damn skies. So if you're [00:14:00] not going to give Ukraine a no-fly zone, as the Kurds got... when Saddam Hussein was trying to commit genocide against the Kurds, there was an international movement that was organized to give the Kurds a no-fly zone to try to stop a genocide there. If you're not gonna do that for the Ukrainians, then give them tanks. Give them planes.

Don't tell the Kremlin that you're going to slow walk aid—as you're openly doing. Don't tell the Kremlin that you're gonna wring your hands over their bombastic nuclear threats that are self-destructive by the Kremlin at the end of the day. Don't project to the Kremlin that you're holding yourselves back. Show a united front, a united sign of strength saying, “Everything's on the table. We're getting Ukraine everything it needs immediately. We're getting them the jets, we're getting them the tanks. We're getting them everything they need to 100% close their skies so not a single missile can go through.” Because if you do not end this now, it's going to drag on. And [00:15:00] no Medea Benjamin and the CodePink Movement and Seymour Hersh and the others, there's no giving up land for peace. There's no human sacrifice for peace, because it doesn't exist.

Sarah Kendzior: Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa: You tried it with Hitler, with the Munich Pact. Hitler annexed parts of Czechoslovakia and Chamberlain was like, “Ah, let him have it.” [laughs] “We’ll do a big peace deal. Hitler will promise he’s not gonna go any further.” And everyone was so relieved by the Munich Pact. And then what does Hitler do? He then invades Poland with his friend Stalin and then we have World War II. So if you wanna stop this bubbling World War III energy that we’re around right now, you gotta learn from the mistakes that led to the last war, World War II, which is appeasement. You have to show strength, you have to show solidarity. You have to militarily defeat Russia in Ukraine and you have to recognize the fact that Ukrainians are doing the fighting and the dying and [00:16:00] being maimed for us, for the rest of the world.

Sarah Kendzior: Mmhmm. <affirmative>

Andrea Chalupa: They’re the human sacrifice. And all they’re asking for is that we don’t leave any of them behind a new Iron Curtain, because do you wanna live in a concentration camp? Do you wanna have your media freedom, your press freedom, your freedom of thought, your freedom of language, your freedom of movement? Do you wanna protect your children from being kidnapped and taken to Russia and put up for adoption, as thousands—thousands—of Ukrainian children have been kidnapped and put up for adoption in Russia? Do you wanna have your children trafficked? Do you wanna have your family raped? That is what is happening to the people left under Russian occupation. If you don’t want that for your family, then don’t force it on Ukrainians. There is no land for peace. That is a Chamberlain tragedy that did not work the first time and catapulted us down the path of a world war.

We’re not doing that again. We’re going to defeat Russia in Ukraine. That is the only [00:17:00] option Russia has given us.

Unwinnable War Calls Grow for Negotiated End to Ukraine War - Democracy Now! - Air Date 3-2-23

VLADISLAV ZUBOK: I would call it untimely thoughts, because the moment my article was published, President Zelensky of Ukraine declared in the U.S. Congress his desire for a complete victory. So, I should say in advance that my proposal was not to impose any negotiations in any way, because it is manifestly unfeasible. I’m very skeptical, even more today than back in December, that any sides are ready for negotiations. My idea was to map out

how would it look after Russia has to accept its defeat, and how to make it a more palatable solution for some parts of the Russian elites that want to switch from this attitude of aggression, aggression and imperialism, to a different, more pragmatic approach to the West.

So, I went through several obvious [00:18:00] aspects of possible maps. First of all, continue to help Ukraine, of course, to achieve military gains, but also indicate on a political level to Russian elites and Russian populace that this war is unwinnable for them, and they — the longer the war continues, there will be a greater danger of another collapse, just as what happened to the Soviet Union 30 years ago.

The second part of this map is to offer some possible carrots, up to negotiations, up to tradeoffs, to return Russia, after it accepts its defeat and withdraws its forces from Ukraine, into the international economic, financial and political space. In political sense, I wrote that we need to offer the return of legitimacy to certain individuals and certain groups of Russian elites as a trade-off for them accepting a defeat. [00:19:00] In the economic field, there should be some talk about the conditions for removing sanctions, because we know from the Cold War that — and, actually, from the history of World War I, after Germany accepted an armistice, it was still subject to very humiliating and painful blockade by the Allies. So, there should be some discussion: What will the Russians gain economically if they accept *status quo ante* and agree to talk with Ukraine on the damage control. And financially, there's an issue, of course, of frozen assets and compensation to Ukraine.

All we hear from some supporters of Ukraine and Ukrainians themselves is about sticks and punishment. We don't hear anything about carrots, which is understandable. We are in the midst of brutal war, while Russians committed so many atrocities. But without certain carrots, at least addressed for the postwar period, we [00:20:00] risk repeating the dangerous path after World War I.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Professor Zubok, that *Foreign Affairs* piece, I mean speaking of — you just mentioned that the war may be unwinnable for Russia, but you begin the *Foreign Affairs* piece by citing comments by General Mark Milley, the chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He said that the probability of a complete Ukrainian military victory was not high; nevertheless, he said President Biden wanted Ukraine to decide whether to negotiate with Russia. Let's go to his comments. He made these comments in November.

GEN. MARK MILLEY: The military task of militarily kicking the Russians physically out of Ukraine is a very difficult task. And it's not going to happen in

the next couple of weeks, unless the Russian army completely collapses, which is unlikely. So, in terms of probability, the probability of a Ukrainian [00:21:00] military victory, defined as kicking the Russians out of all of Ukraine, to include what they define or what they claim as Crimea — the probability of that happening anytime soon is not high. ... The Russian military is really hurting bad. So, you want to negotiate at a time when you're at your strength and your opponent is at weakness. And it's possible, maybe, that there will be a political solution.

NERMEEN SHAIKH: So, Professor Zubok, those were comments that General Mark Milley made in November. Your response to what he said, and especially this comment that he made about negotiating from a position of strength? How do you assess the situation now? And what prospects do you see for any talks between Ukraine and Russia?

VLADISLAV ZUBOK: Well, we have three months when neither side made any breakthrough after the spectacular liberation of parts of the Ukrainian territory by the Ukrainian [00:22:00] army. So, more and more people, including Fareed Zakaria on CNN, begin to talk about a stalemate, which is what was the starting point of my piece in December. But, yeah, I'm not a military expert, and war is a highly volatile thing. So, I think Ukrainians disagree with Milley. And they are more confident than Milley in their own capacities to inflict a humiliating military defeat and even forcing Russians out of Crimea. They have their, you know, secret plan. They have various stratagems for that, which I'm not aware of. But we may have surprises.

But what I want to stress, Milley is a good authority, because he went through several wars where you achieved military goals but you don't achieve political goals. The War in Iraq showed that. The War in Afghanistan showed that. So, in a sense, to add to his argument about the [00:23:00] military — the definite military defeat, complete military defeat of Russia is unlikely, I would add a political factor. As long as Putin and his entourage continues to view this war as a war about heritage and a war of defeat, or a defeat of Ukraine or defeat of Russia, which equals, in his mind, to the demise of Russia — so, until then, we have an intractable political dilemma. There is no political counterplay to this, no political alternative that the West offers to Putin. There were a few words by Biden. Recently he said in Warsaw, "This was not a war against the Russian people," and all that. But, you know, it needs to be more loud and more pronounced and more specific, I would say, so that parts of Russian elites and parts of populace would see, "Wait a minute, it's not about a dilemma whether we win or perish; it's a [00:24:00] senseless war, and we'd better end it soon." So, you know, the West must come up with something more politically specific

to address Russian territorial insecurity and Russian concerns — which is not easy.

You know, the third part of my article is about selling peace. There's so many people who accuse me of appeasing Putin, which was not my intention, who blame me for offering a ramp-off for Russia, which was not my intention. My intention was to avoid the aftermath of the war, which would be dangerous both for Russia, with nuclear weapons in Russia, and for its neighbors and for the architecture of European peace in general.

Nuclear weapon policy analyst Stephen Schwartz on Putin's suspension of nuclear weapons treaty - The BradCast - Air Date 2-22-23

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: Let's start with exactly, just in general terms; what New Start did or does, and how Putin's declaration now changes that or doesn't change that as you see it in real world terms.

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ: Fundamentally New Start provides [00:25:00] stability and predictability for both the United States and Russia. It builds on, as you mentioned, previous arms control agreements. All of which, with the exception of the INF treaty, have dealt with strategic or long range nuclear weapons. We've never had a treaty that has focused on short range or tactical nuclear weapons because neither side, but especially Russia, has been interested in having the other poke into the vagaries of its nuclear arsenal.

Those have always been unregulated, but strategically we've got a long tracker record going back about 50 years or so. What the treaty did fundamentally was set an upper limit of 1,550 warheads, deployed warheads, for each side.

It's strange that the announcement yesterday, there is no provision in the treaty, unlike for extending it by five years. There's no provision for suspending the treaty, [00:26:00] you're either in it or you're not. Like any other international treaty, any treaty party can say, "You know what? This isn't in our national interest anymore, we are going to leave." In the terms of the treaty say that you can do that. You have to give six months notice, and at the end of six months you're formally out of the treaty.

Suspension is a wily way of Putin trying to get what he wants; which is, I think, frankly just an extension of what he's been doing over the last year. This is a nuclear threat by another name. It's an effort to frighten the publics, the United States, NATO, and Ukraine into letting him basically blackmail those countries into doing whatever he wants with Ukraine.

So he's got this bludgeon, and it's really the only tool that he has right now. He's waving it around and threatening to use it. Now he's threatening to... well not threatening... he said he's not gonna comply with certain parts of the treaty unless, [00:27:00] and until his demands are satisfied. There is no legal basis for what he's doing.

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: It's really troubling because; one of the reasons that we constantly hear from folks in this country, and frankly it's both folks on the far right and on the supposed far left, for objecting to the US support of Ukraine is because Russia a nuclear arsenal.

Putin has in fact done a quite a bit of nuclear saber rattling during this invasion. The notion that he's got nuclear weapons, if we continue to oppose him it could turn into a nuclear war. That seems to me like a signal to Kim Jong-Un, "Hey, in North Korea you can go ahead and invade South Korea if you want, nobody's gonna fight you because you've got nuclear weapons."

It seems to me, on its face, to be absurd. That said, how unusual, how dangerous do you view Putin's various threats to [00:28:00] use nuclear weapons to be? How seriously should we take it? How seriously do you take those concerns?

STEPHEN SCHWARTZ: I'll answer that, but I want to go back to the context of when you asked that question. Even during the Cold War when we and the Soviet Union, back then, had many thousands more nuclear weapons than we do now; we did... we were very careful obviously, certainly there were problems like the Cuban Missile Crisis, the closest we ever came to nuclear war and other incidents. We did not sit back and say, "You've got nuclear weapons, we are not going to get involved with you in any way, shape, or form." Neither did the Soviet Union; we traipsed around each other, we fought proxy wars, but we didn't say, "We can't do anything because you might annihilate us." That was never the deal.

I don't think that would... that doesn't make sense then that we would do that today. How seriously should we take Putin? I think we should be concerned that he [00:29:00] is saying these things. I don't think it's likely that he's going to follow through. Why? Because if he does, he knows that he risks, not only; the

destruction of his regime, but the end of his life, and everything that he has worked for. I wouldn't say that he is irrational, he's clearly made some serious mistakes with regard to the prosecution of this war, we can debate why that happened

I think he's acting in a way that he thinks, and that's the important qualifier here, that he thinks is rational. That he's doing what he thinks is important for his own power, his own legacy, and to the extent that he believes that, the future legacy of Russia. So I don't think he's gonna do anything that would cause all of that to come crashing down around him.

That being said, he certainly has the capacity to use one or more nuclear weapons, and to ratchet up the threat making is done. So [00:30:00] do we, so we don't want to do anything that would directly increase the level of tension that we already have, and I think the Biden administration and NATO have been very careful.

They have not said, "We're not gonna do anything because we're petrified of you." They said, "We're gonna do some things because we think it's important for the future of democracy." We've got certain lines that we're not going to cross, we're not gonna send US troops into Ukraine, for example. We're not gonna send certain weapon systems. We're also not gonna put our nuclear forces on alert, and we're not gonna make our own nuclear threats. So if you look at every time Putin has done one of these things, the United States doesn't dismiss it and doesn't panic. They walk down the middle, and I think that's exactly the right approach here.

We need to show that nuclear weapons are fundamentally useless, not just for prosecuting a war, but also for blackmail. We need to isolate Putin in that regard, and we need to end this war as [00:31:00] quickly as possible, it's not gonna be easy at all. We've gotta do that otherwise the future world that we're gonna live in, brought to you by nuclear coercion, is gonna be far worse than anything we dealt with during the Cold War.

BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST: Brought to you by nuclear coercion.

Arrest warrant issued for Putin for forced deportation of Ukrainian children - NBC News - Air Date 3-17-23

LESTER HOLT - HOST, NBC NEWS: What is, at least for this moment, a mostly symbolic act, an arrest warrant was issued today for Russian President Vladimir Putin, now formally charged by the International Criminal Court for war crimes in Ukraine. The court alleges Putin bears individual responsibility for the unlawful transfer of children from occupied areas of Ukraine to Russia.

While there is little expectation of Putin ending up in custody anytime soon, the charges were nonetheless welcomed by Ukraine's President Zelensky, who thanked the court for its willingness to really bring those who are guilty to justice. Tonight, Putin's spokesman dismissed the warrant, saying, "We do not recognize this court".[00:32:00]

Erin McLaughlin reports from Kyiv.

ERIN MCLAUGHLIN - REPORTER, NBC NEWS: Tonight, Russian President Vladimir Putin now wanted for alleged war crimes. The International Criminal Court issuing an arrest warrant alleging Putin oversaw the forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia, forbidden under international law, adding there are reasonable grounds to believe that Putin bears individual, criminal responsibility.

Tonight, Ukraine's President Zelensky hailing the move against what he calls "state evil", which he says starts with Putin. The ICC also issuing an arrest warrant for Russia's Children's Rights Commissioner, Maria Lvova-Belova, seen here as unaccompanied Ukrainian children are loaded onto a bus for Russia.

According to the Associated Press, Ukraine's Prosecutor General says, more than 16,000 Ukrainian children were forcibly deported from occupied areas, noting the real figure could be much higher.

Chinese president visits Putin in Russia as the countries increase cooperation - PBS Newshour - Air Date 3-20-23

GEOFF BENNETT - HOST, PBS NEWSHOUR: Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Moscow today for a three day state visit to Russia. [00:33:00] Relations between the two countries have grown closer over the past year as China's imports of Russian oil have increased and both countries seek to undercut the U.S. on the world stage. Nick Shiffrin has the story

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: They call each other "dear old friends", and in their 40th meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping labeled Russian president, Vladimir Putin, his "partner in war and peace".

TRANSLATOR PRES XI JINPING: China attaches great importance to China-Russia relations, because we are each other's biggest neighboring countries as well as strategic partners.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: The two men share authoritarian recipes for power and a mutual desire to upend U.S. influence. China remains one of the biggest buyers of Russian energy.

Chinese companies are providing Russia with parts essential to maintain Russian weapons. The two countries conduct joint military exercise. And since the [00:34:00] war in Ukraine began, China has neither endorsed nor condemned it. Beijing's new peace plan calls for upholding Ukraine's sovereignty, but not for Russian troops to withdraw, an approach Putin endorsed today.

TRANSLATOR PRES PUTIN: We know that you proceed from the principles of justice and observance of the fundamental provisions of international law, of indivisible security for all countries.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: This weekend, Putin also visited Russian-occupied Crimea, including what Russian media described as a children's center, one day after Putin became an indicted war criminal for allegedly overseeing the forced deportation of Ukrainian children.

In part because of those war crimes, Putin and Russia are increasingly isolated. But today's visit came with an endorsement from the leader of the world's second largest economy and military.

TRANSLATOR PRES XI JINPING: Thanks to your strong leadership, Russia has achieved significant success in reaching prosperity and wellbeing of the country. I'm sure that the people of Russia will [00:35:00] support you in your best effort.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: Beijing casts Xi as a peacemaker and he's expected to speak with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky following his trip to Moscow.

So what is driving the increased level of cooperation between Russia and China? For that, we turn to Sasha Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, who joins us from Geneva. Sasha Gabuev, welcome to *NewsHour*. Thanks very much. Firstly, how important is it for Putin to get this visit from Xi?

SASHA GABUEV: It is very important because China, over the course of the last 12+ months, has turned into a major supporter of Russia. It's the major market for Russian hydrocarbons and the major source of cash for Putin's war chest. It's the major source of imports, including dual use imports and civilian chips that enable Putin's war economy going. When China stands next to you or behind, you can say that you are not [00:36:00] isolated.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: So I want to drill down into what China's sending to Russia. But first let's get the other side. Uh, how does Xi Jinping see the importance of the relationship between Beijing and Moscow right now?

SASHA GABUEV: I think with Xi Jinping the relationship with Russia was always important. Russia is an important source of raw materials, and Russia is the only like-minded authoritarian state on the UN Security Council among permanent members. But what also colors his perspective now is this view that the U.S.-China relationship is going off the cliff. It's continued confrontation that gets worse, and here Russia as a junior partner is a very valuable asset.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: And that is the case, especially as President Biden sees the world, or at least paints the world, uh, in terms of democracy versus authoritarianism. Right?

SASHA GABUEV: That's absolutely right. That's the depiction that helps to bring Russia and China closer together, particularly since both are quite obsessed about what they see [in] the U.S. [00:37:00] democracy promotion effort. Both Xi Jinping and Putin see themselves vulnerable at home, and they definitely want to join hands to push back against U.S. hegemony.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: Senior U.S. officials are particularly worried about right now, if China were to decide to send weapons openly to Russia. But how do you see China already supporting Russia's war in Ukraine?

SASHA GABUEV: I think that providing cash by opening its market for Russian hydrocarbons is very important because soldiers need to be paid and all

of the military procurements also need to be covered. But also China provides the civilian ships and also some of the components of Russian arms like Raiders and surface-to-air missiles and many other, uh, arms and Russian weapons that are used on the battlefield in Ukraine.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: As I mentioned before, Beijing portrays Xi Jinping as a peacemaker in this visit, as part of a diplomatic effort to try and end the war in [00:38:00] Ukraine. How much of this visit is really about that effort?

SASHA GABUEV: Right now, the mood in Kyev and in Moscow is 'give war a chance'. China perfectly gets it. And for Beijing, its diplomatic effort is just more a tool to push back against Western criticism that is leaning too much in support of Vladimir Putin's war, and at the same time it provides justification for Xi Jinping to go to Moscow to engage Putin on a state visit. But that needs to be coupled with outreach to President Zelensky, which will also happen, but in a separate phone call rather than a full fledged visit.

NICK SCHIFRIN - REPORTER, PBS NEWSHOUR: And finally, we expect a joint statement out of this trip from both leaders. What should we be looking out for?

SASHA GABUEV: The language might be a little bit guarded, but it cannot, uh, mask that the relationship is getting deeper, it's increasingly asymmetric, the terms are dictated by China, and that the primary target that they have in [00:39:00] mind as their opponent are the United States of America.

There will be some documents that are the underwater part of the iceberg. For example, decisions to sell secretive Russian military technology like surface-to-air systems S-500, or the most advanced Russian fighter jets to China, that both Moscow and Beijing feel is not the right time to publicize them given the war and the negative optic. But it's okay to start implementing them and go public about that months from now and maybe even years from now.

Russia will 'lose on the global stage' even if Ukraine gets its territory back - Morning Joe - Air Date 3-20-23

MIKA BRZEZINSKI - CO-HOST, MORNING JOE: And after months of delays, both Turkey and Hungary say they are committed to approving Finland's

bid for NATO membership. On Friday, both countries announced their support removing the biggest barrier for Finland to join the alliance. Meanwhile, despite policy changes, Turkey and Hungary say a decision on Sweden's bid for membership will have to wait. Finland and Sweden sent applications to [00:40:00] join NATO nearly a year ago, ending their policies of neutrality and military non-alignment in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Joining us now, president and founder of the Eurasia Group and GZERO Media, Ian Bremmer.

JOE SCARBOROUGH - CO-HOST, MORNING JOE: Ian, let's start with the news, uh, about Finland becoming a member of NATO. How important is that, uh, for NATO? Uh, and how much of a thorn in Vladimir Putin's side will that be?

IAN BREMMER: It's significant. Uh, I think it's an 800 kilometer border between, uh, Finland and Russia itself. It's very well defended. The Finns spend, uh, well over 2% of GDP on their defense, unlike some other NATO countries. Of course, this is the exact opposite of what Putin was trying to accomplish when he invaded Ukraine. It was pushing back NATO, it wasn't getting more countries in. So, I mean, very clearly the fact that the Turks and the Hungarians, the two outliers, um, in NATO that have been dragging their feet are now fully on board. And Finland is more important from a security perspective than the Swedes are Nothing personal, [00:41:00] Swedes. Uh, that is, uh, not a happy piece of backdrop news for Putin today.

JOE SCARBOROUGH - CO-HOST, MORNING JOE: Keeping in mind what, uh, one of my law professors told me in a jurisprudence class: You have to be able to separate out what is from what ought to be. And I understand when people are talking about a possible deal at the end of this Ukrainian war, uh, in the West, certainly, they want to talk about what ought to be. But from all the people you talk to day in, day out in your position, uh, what does a settlement look like if we have, let's say, another six months to a year to 18 months of stalemate?

IAN BREMMER: Um, uh, well first I don't think we see a settlement. I think the question is whether or not both forces are exhausted and therefore not able to take more territory, either back, if you're the Ukrainians or from Ukraine, if you're the Russians. That's not a settlement. Uh, so I mean, I think that you could end up with something that [00:42:00] feels like a frozen conflict, where the Russians have a little less territory than they're occupying today after the Ukrainian counter-offensive over the coming weeks, which is expected, which I suspect will allow them to take some more territory because the artillery and

ammunition issue that they've been complaining about for a long time looks to have been quietly resolved. So, they should be able to hit back, um, against Russia in relatively short order. But there's no negotiation that's going to lead to a peace.

And what that means is irrespective of how much of Ukrainian territory the Ukrainians can get back, Russia is not going to be treated like a normal country again. Uh, again, the fact that we're talking about war crimes, that Putin would be arrested if he were to travel to any of the 123 countries that are members of the International Criminal Court. That means that he and his regime are perceived as dead enders. They have nowhere to go but backed into a corner. And of course, in that environment, the willingness to continue to [00:43:00] fight is very high. Uh, the willingness to continue to repress their own people under any circumstances is incredibly high. That's the concern, is that Ukraine, whether or not the Ukraine gets back most or all of their territory, Russia will lose on the global stage in the same way that they've just lost on Finnish NATO membership, they are going to lose in terms of their diplomatic relations, their security relations, and their economic relations with every advanced industrial democracy in the world. And of course, that's exactly the opposite of what Putin wanted, the same Putin who said that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest humiliation for the 20th century.

JOE SCARBOROUGH - CO-HOST, MORNING JOE: So, Ian, you had an insight on Vladimir Putin, who's been obviously very hard to read over the last year and several months. I'm curious, you had said earlier that he was seeming more confident than he has been in a long time. Uh, what do you put that down to? Does he think he can outlast the West, grind down the Ukrainians?
[00:44:00]

IAN BREMMER: Uh, I think there are two big points here. One is the fact that Xi Jinping is making a three day state visit to come and see him. Just a few months ago, September, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Xi Jinping was pressuring Putin, and Putin was forced to admit that the Chinese have concerns. This feels like a much better alignment between the United, between China and Russia, and in part that comes after these unprecedented, hard-line statements that Xi Jinping has made directly against the United States just a couple of weeks ago. So, that's part of it.

Secondly, of course, uh, Putin is also getting the news from the United States, the fact that increasingly Trump and others on the Republican side that are running for the presidency, um, are wavering in their level of support for Ukraine, are saying this war, this potentially is a World War III threat. The fact

that he thinks that the Americans are becoming much more divided matters a lot to Russia's ability to outlast NATO in this war.

Unwinnable War Calls Grow for Negotiated End to Ukraine War Part 2 - Democracy Now! - Air Date 3-2-23

NERMEEN SHAIKH: Wolfgang [00:45:00] Sporrer, you were involved in the Minsk talks from the outset. Could you talk a little bit — give us some background of this war? You were involved, as I said from 2014, with the Russian annexation of Crimea, as a member of the OSCE's Special Monitoring Mission.

WOLFGANG SPORRER: The talks that took place in Minsk were there to implement the package of measures that was concluded in March of 2015. This, in essence, meant there were security provisions, and there were political provisions. Political provisions were, in essence, about giving more rights to the people living beyond the contact land. Whereas the political [00:46:00] provisions were about also transforming the state of Ukraine, for making it into a more decentralized society, etc. The security provisions, however, were about getting a ceasefire. Both parts of these provisions were never fulfilled, because the Russian Federation really never showed a big interest in fulfilling the security provisions of the Minsk agreements. Ukraine never really felt a big intention, in my opinion, to fulfill the political provisions of the Minsk agreements.

I think it is a mistake to believe that these Minsk agreements, just because they did not lead to full implementation, were actually a complete failure, because they were not. This is where we can learn, potentially, some things for the situation today. [00:47:00] The Minsk agreements did not solve the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, they did not. They did bring about certain humanitarian positive steps. They brought about temporary ceasefires. They brought about disengagement zones around the humanitarian facilities. They brought about the reconstruction of critical infrastructure. They brought about humanitarian steps. They did a second thing, and this is; they kept a minimum of trust between the sides, between the Russians and the Ukraine — between the Russian Federation and Ukraine, because they were simply meeting every two weeks. They had a real possibility to voice their concerns, to talk to each other, to talk to each other officially, but also to talk to each other outside of the official settings. Which is something that brings a [00:48:00] minimum of trust.

Therefore, my proposal was to somehow try to get to proper negotiations — to real political negotiations, of a ceasefire in the current conflict via first really small steps. That means: Why can Russia and Ukraine not find a forum, an internationally mediated forum? Where they will talk about exactly humanitarian protection zones, about a disengagement around the atomic power plant in Zaporizhzhia, about small potential ceasefires for the beginning of school, for the harvest, for the sowing of the fields. This would bring about these exact same advantages, namely humanitarian advantages. Every life saved is a big step in the right [00:49:00] direction. Secondly, the ground could be prepared to establish some kind of little, small trust, which has been completely lost by now by both — by the sides. Thirdly, such a forum where the sides would meet and be in a position to interact on a permanent basis. With neutral mediation, with other countries such as the West as observers, would probably also have a deescalatory effect. This would probably and likely have the effect of preventing escalation that may otherwise take place. This is what we can maybe take from the failed Minsk negotiations, forward into some kind of segue into negotiations, how they could start now.

AMY GOODMAN - HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!: Wolfgang Sporrer, take that a step further. Where [00:50:00] do you see these kind of mini or prenegotiations taking place? And what countries do you see mediating that negotiation? Today you have the image of Lavrov and Blinken shaking hands. At the same time you have the U.S. increasing tension with China, sending over \$600 million in weapons to Taiwan. You have Putin and Xi Jinping's alliance. Where do you see this happening?

WOLFGANG SPORRER: The location is, I think, of secondary importance. By now, I can see Istanbul. Let us not forget that Istanbul is the place where, right now, Russian and Ukrainian officials are sitting together on the daily — on a daily basis. Negotiating in the context of the Black Sea European [00:51:00] Grain — Black Sea Grain Initiative. Istanbul as a location would be, I think, a good one.

More important is the question: Who could play the role of a mediator? I hear on many occasions that people think about personalities like Brazilian President Lula. We just heard in your news that potentially Indian Prime Minister Modi. I am a little bit skeptical of this. As I would not be surprised if either Ukraine or Russia actually rejects — would reject these countries as a mediator, because they do not actually — they would probably not assign that amount of impartiality to these countries. It is my guess at the moment. However, I think organizations such as the United Nations, or the [00:52:00] OSCE (the Organization for Security and Cooperation), would be ideally suited, because

they are neutral by definition. That means the U.N. or the OSCE could basically give a coat, could give the role or a coat of mediator, to an eminent personality that enjoys the trust by both Russia and Ukraine. Such personalities still do exist.

The setting would be — this would be under the auspices of the United Nations or the OSCE, taking place in Istanbul or in a comparable city. With the Ukraine and Russia as the main participants, but — which is important, particularly for the deescalatory function of this facility — with the West, the United [00:53:00] States, the European Union, China, India and Turkey as observers of this process. They are to facilitate when they can. They are to work with their allies when they can and when needed.

Now, the question is: Why should the sides to the conflict, at this point in time, be ready to engage in something like this? Let me just underline, participating in such negotiations does not cost the sides anything. It does not mean a change in the position in the field. It does not mean giving up any type of political or military position that you have held so far. So this would be negotiations that could be entered into at zero cost for the sides, but with potentially great benefit. Therefore, they should also be entered into with no [00:54:00] preconditions. I think it would be the duty of the West, on the one side, and of China and India, on the other side; to convince both Russia and Ukraine, to inform them constructively, that participation in such negotiations would be deemed as highly welcome.

Russias Total War on Ukraine One Year Later Part 2 - Gaslit Nation - Air Date 2-22- 23

Andrea Chalupa: In the years leading up to Putin's invasion of Ukraine, and certainly accelerating during... what year is it now?, let's see, the invasion started in 2014 and we're now in the year 2023, so it's been nine years. We're at the nine-year mark of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. And during that time, the cult of Stalin has been accelerating out of Russia. Just recently, a bust of Stalin went up in Russia just feet away from a memorial to victims of Stalin's terror. In your opinion, why do you think Stalin has come back under Putin and what do you think [00:55:00] that means for Russian society, that's suffered as well under Putin, just like so many groups of people? Because obviously Stalin committed several genocides and mass murdered some of the best and brightest across Russian society, and now they're forced essentially to worship him in a way with this resurrection of the cult of Stalin. Why is Stalin back? What does

that mean? And what does that mean for Russian society moving forward in terms of how they confront their own pain and trauma and make sense of their own Russian identity in the world?

YANA PRYMACHENKO: Thank you very much for this question because I have particular interest in this topic. And actually, yes, there are these myths about Stalin as a hero, Stalin as a very good manager of the Soviet Union. And we were also interested in why it's revived, the resurrection of this cult of Stalin. And actually the answer is very simple: because Russia still uses these Soviet myths [00:56:00] about great patriotic war. They deny the idea of World War II. They still believe that the war started in 1941, not in 193—

Andrea Chalupa: '39.

YANA PRYMACHENKO: Yeah, exactly.

Andrea Chalupa: 1939 September, being the time Hitler invaded Poland and two weeks later, the Soviets invaded and the Soviets and the Nazis held joint military parades and conquered Poland.

YANA PRYMACHENKO: Yes, that's the period when actually Soviets and Nazis were allies until 1941. The problem is that in 1949, it was like a very big celebration, the 70-year anniversary of Stalin. And during this celebration, they published a very big and political biography of Stalin. And actually the problem is that this myth of Great Patriotic War and Stalin's biography just intertwined so closely that when you revive the myth of the Great Patriotic War—and we know [00:57:00] that since 2005, Russia revived this Soviet myth of Great Patriotic War—you also revive the cult of Stalin because they're two things together. So, the idea of Stalin as a very great commander, one who is actually a victor of World War II, or in the Soviet Union, the Great Patriotic War, it was created in 1949 in particular in this biography.

So, there are two myths which are just intertwined; the myth of the Great Patriotic War and the cult of Stalin. Because actually the cult of Stalin, it started before World War II but it revived and Stalin became like a god in Soviet culture. It was in 1949. So when Russia started to revive this myth of the Great Patriotic War, they also started to revive the myth of Stalin, the cult of Stalin. And this is a very bad thing for Russian society. They couldn't cope with their [00:58:00] trauma. And a very big problem is in 2021, the Memorial Society was closed in Russia. This was the only organization which actually dealt with the Great Terror, with Stalin's crimes, with Soviet crimes. And this organization

was closed in 2021. So it's like a complete revival, renaissance of this cult of Stalin in Russia.

And the other problem is that in the communist pantheon, Stalin was like a God. And when he died during [inaudible], they created another cult: the cult of Great Victory, which is also dangerous. So now they're just trying to revive this idea and actually Putin wants to become a new Stalin. So that's why they revived this cult. And he also needs this kind of great victory, or like Stalin this Great Patriotic War, and in such a way [00:59:00] he wants to become another Stalin, another God in the opinion of Russian people. So it's a very dangerous thing actually, because when you deal with memory, with public policy, with memory politics, it could be very dangerous. Because we see that now this war in Ukraine... well, Russian society supports this war in Ukraine, like 70%. And that's a very big problem. That's actually the consequence of the revival of this Great Patriotic War and the cult of Stalin.

Andrea Chalupa: Both of which, as you point out, predate Putin. And I think the big headline of what you're saying is incredibly important, which is this cult of personality around Stalin and this cult of personality of the Great Victory, of the Great Patriotic War, which took on a religious fervor back in 1949, which went on for generations and it ramped up a lot, it accelerated under Putin, [01:00:00] this all points to the fact that Putin is a product of Russia. Putin is continuing on a larger psychology, a larger embedded culture of Russia. He's not an architect driving this. He's more going back in time to the good old days in his mind and so many others who support him, because as we keep pointing out on the show, and as you know, dictators need a base of supporters. Dictators do rely on supporters.

YANA PRYMACHENKO: Yes, exactly.

Andrea Chalupa: There's no dictatorship without some support. And so it's important for people to know that Putin is a product of Russia and why it's important for us to accept that is because even after he dies—and there's been all sorts of rumors for years that he's sick and so on, and he is getting up there in age—but even after he goes, there's going to be someone else to carry on the good old days, the religious fervor of the [01:01:00] Patriotic War and Stalin.

**Veteran War Correspondent Phil Ittner
LIVE from Kiev, Ukraine - Thom
Hartmann Program - Air Date**

PHIL ITTNER: What's really looming above everyone's heads is the idea that there are literally hundreds of thousands of Russian conscript soldiers who probably were not very well trained, but their sheer numbers are significant that are ready to launch an offensive. We do anticipate somewhere between three to 500,000 - the higher end estimates we heard from the Ukrainian defense industry. The Russians themselves are saying 300,000 just crashing on Ukrainian positions out in the east. This is going to be a very difficult year.

THOM HARTMANN - HOST, THOM HARTMANN PROGRAM: This is the wall of meat strategy.

PHIL ITTNER: It is Russian military doctrine, is to soften things up with artillery. Then just throw one of the resources that they definitely have, which is lives [01:02:00] at a position. The Ukrainians are preparing for that, and they will inflict massive casualties on the Russians.

Are the numbers such that the Russians will overwhelm those positions? That's a sincere concern here in Ukraine. Having said that, I have to reiterate, I have to make the point that; I have traveled in many different cities in Ukraine, since the beginning of this war, and many of these cities are now fortresses.

Absolutely everything has got sandbags, everything's got taint traps, people are prepared. If they're called upon, they're prepared to fight. Even with the hundreds of thousands of conscripts, who basically are just given an AK 47, this is how you shoot it now go, they're not gonna be able to take the cities.

They will be bogged down in places like Kharkiv. If they want to go for Odessa, they'll be bogged down there. [01:03:00] If they want to go and cross the river at Dnipropetrovsk or Dnipro, they will be bogged down there. It is highly unlikely, in my estimation, that they will be able to make a proper assault on the capitol.

That's really until they take the capitol, they're not gonna be able to take Ukraine. They could try a faint from Belarus and come in from the, basically charged down, southeastern-ly direction. They're still gonna have massive problems there.

The entire society in Ukraine is mobilized, and even with the hundreds of thousands that they expect to see coming, they won't be able to take territory in any kind of Blitzkrieg swift fashion. What it does mean is that a lot of Russian soldiers are gonna die, and a lot of Russian, and a lot of Ukrainian soldiers, and Ukrainian civilians are going to die.

2023, I will warn your audience, is going to be [01:04:00] a graphically disturbing year. They're doing this in an effort to make us split. They're doing this to make divisions within society, within the NATO alliance. All these things break apart because it's going to be distressing to watch, and there will be very vocal calls to finish this war no matter what.

While I sympathize with that, that is what the Russian intention is. Then once they can slice off a little bit of Ukraine, and maybe come to some sort of short negotiation, in 10 or 20 years time they'll just keep coming.

So the feeling here, the general sentiment amongst Ukrainians is, "we want this war to end, God knows we want this war to end." Nobody wants this war in more than the people in this country, but it can't be won with Russia having seen to gain an advantage because they will just come back.

Final comments on the debate on the left about the future of the war in Ukraine

JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT: We've just heard clips today; starting with Democracy Now [01:05:00] hosting a debate over our continued support of the war in Ukraine, which both sides recognize as senseless. Gaslit Nation came down much more forcefully in support of maintaining aid to Ukraine. While comparing the situation to the lead up to World War II. Democracy Now looked more deeply at some negotiation strategies to bring the war to an end.

The BradCast discussed the nuclear threat from Russia in the wake of Putin, suspending the new start treaty. NBC News reported on the arrest warrant for Putin issued by the International Criminal Court. The PBS NewsHour reported on the Chinese president's state visit to Moscow, and Morning Joe discussed the growing NATO alliance and the waning support for Ukraine among Republicans.

That's what everybody heard, but members also heard bonus clips from Democracy Now diving more into the details of peace negotiations. Gaslit Nation explained Putin as a product of his context, and the Tom Hartmann Program spoke with a veteran journalist who described what could [01:06:00] be the next major phase of the war.

To hear that, and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to your new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive; sign up to support the show

at bestoftheleft.com/support, or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

Now I have a few thoughts about the war from the perspective of someone who had their political awakening opposing the Iraq war. I imagine that a lot of the left right now is probably feeling a bit of cognitive dissonance in reaction to the war in Ukraine. We've been so opposed to so many military actions, for so many years, that it is very uncomfortable to find ourselves on the side of helping to perpetuate a war.

When we approached this topic, producer Erin, who did the research for the show today, and I talked through what it was we were looking for, what she was coming across [01:07:00] in her initial research. I really wanted to understand the anti-war, the anti-intervention left perspective from people like Madea Benjamin of Code Pink, who was Madea Benjamin from Code Pink 20 years ago during the Iraq War, and I heard from her a lot.

In addition to the left perspective on continuing to support Ukraine with money and weapons to help perpetuate the war, you heard some of that debate right at the top of the show today. If I had to summarize what we heard, including what was in the show, but also a bunch of stuff that didn't make the cut, this is what I would say;

The anti intervention left represented today by Madea Benjamin, who are prioritizing negotiating for peace, they are big on the context of the war looking backward. While the pro support of Ukraine left is big on the context of the war looking [01:08:00] forward. Now as longtime listeners know, I am a huge fan of context. It's basically my favorite thing.

In fact, I encourage anyone to go back and check out the first episode we posted about the invasion on March 4th of last year. It's number 1474 entitled Invasion of Ukraine: Some Context. The historical context of the war is super important to understand. Now a year later, I'm really disappointed that the messaging of the anti intervention left is still almost exclusively looking backward, to the point where it's beginning to sound like what about-ism.

Arguments about what we should do going forward often turn back to the role of NATO in provoking Russia, or the stance of the US on peace negotiations. I can't help but think; yeah I know, but why are your [01:09:00] arguments better for the future? Not how well can you criticize the US, NATO, or the West in general. I need answers about the future.

Focusing on NATO, the West, the US, or even just platitudes about peace being obviously better than war when arguing to negotiate a ceasefire, seems to be giving historical context. Which it is, but it's also obfuscating the context that we need about the future. What I never heard was any reasonable projection from the anti intervention left, much less the right obviously, about why the situation would likely be better 10 years from now if we were to follow their prescription for the war.

On the other hand, those maintaining their support of Ukraine are basing their arguments almost exclusively on the context of the [01:10:00] future impacts of this war, the dire consequences of allowing a "might makes right" strategy from Russia to prevail. Personally, I would love to hear a really solid anti intervention argument, steeped in thoughtful analysis of the likely outcomes of their proposed actions.

Like I said, I'm almost reflexively anti-war. It's a reaction forged in decades of American military misadventures of choice. Usually based on lies, ignorance, hubris, or all three. I would love for the most logical choice to be to oppose support for the war. I'd be much more comfortable in that position, but I need for that argument to be based on enough context for me to really sink my teeth into it.

Context of both the past and the future. The anti internationalists need to make a case that includes a positive vision of the future [01:11:00] in the medium and long-term, if those arguments are even there to be made. I don't personally know what they would be, and they may not exist, which would be a good excuse for not having been able to come up with any in the past year.

I would be open to them as soon as I heard them. Until then, I can't help but maintain a position of supporting Ukraine in their fight, while always being on the lookout for diplomatic ways to convince Russia to stop the invasion. The one point from the show that I would reiterate and emphasize is the caution about replaying the wake of World War I, when a defeated Germany was subjected to punitive punishment, at least in their perspective. That helped build enough national resentment to pave the way for Hitler.

What we are seeing in Putin today is a similar phenomenon playing itself out in the wake of the embarrassing collapse of the Soviet [01:12:00] Union, which is bad enough. Now, no good would come from Russia coming away from this invasion with a victory. Nor would it be in anyone's long-term interest to make the Russian people feel embarrassed enough in defeat that they would turn into a worse version of themselves, even more akin to pre-World War II Germany.

When it comes to negotiations, I think the world needs to be ready to not get a cathartic total victory over Russia, in which they are thoroughly punished for their actions in Ukraine.

Though it would feel just and right in the moment, and the short term, taking the context of the future into account makes for a very different calculation. That is going to be it for today.

As always, keep your comments coming in. I would love to hear your thoughts on this, or anything else. You can leave a voicemail or send us a text message to 2029993991, or keep it old school by emailing me to [01:13:00] Jay@bestoftheleft.com. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Dion Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show, and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to our Transcriptionist Trio; Ken, Brian and La Wendy for their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting.

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My name is Jay, and this has been the Best of the Left podcast coming to you twice weekly thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from bestoftheleft.com.