

Gaslit Nation
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Christopher Steele and Ivanka

Sarah Kendzior: I'm Sarah Kendzior, the author of the bestselling essay collection, *The View From Flyover Country*, and the upcoming book, *Hiding in Plain Sight*.

Andrea Chalupa: I'm Andrea Chalupa, a filmmaker and journalist and the writer and producer of the upcoming journalistic thriller, *Mr. Jones*.

Sarah Kendzior: This is Gaslit Nation, a podcast covering corruption in the Trump Administration and rising autocracy around the world. We are an independent podcast supported by our listeners. We encourage you to sign up for our Patreon to keep the show going and to get extra episodes and bonus features.

Sarah Kendzior: This morning we had a big announcement from the House Democrats who said that after a little over a month of hearings, they're introducing two articles of impeachment, abuse of power and obstruction of Congress. We don't know yet what specific offenses will be outlined within these articles, but it's already notable that the House has omitted one of the most anticipated articles, obstruction of justice, the case for which was clearly made by the Mueller Report. They are leaving out that article as Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov visits the White House today.

Sarah Kendzior: In case you don't recall, Lavrov last visited the White House in May 2017 right after Trump fired James Comey in an act that constituted obstruction of justice. Trump fired Comey because Comey was investigating Trump's relationship with Russia, a fact Trump confessed to on Lester Holt's TV show. Immediately after the firing, Trump proceeded to celebrate with Lavrov and former ambassador, Sergey Kislyak, who was a part of the 2016 election plot and who was also visiting that week. There has never been accountability for that crime. There was never even an attempt to bring accountability for a multitude of other crimes, including abuse of migrants at the border, abuse of the pardon power, and so on, as we have outlined on our many previous shows about impeachment.

Sarah Kendzior: We have always been frustrated here at Gaslit Nation by the limited scope of the current impeachment hearings and by the refusal to spell out that the 2019 Ukraine shakedown is merely an extension of the 2016 Russian election heist. The Democrats know this or at least some of them do, like Adam Schiff, who admits that our elections are not safe from foreign interference. He admitted this again today, just as he admitted it in an impassioned speech in March 2019 in which he cried out, "It's not okay," and implored Congress to do something about corruption and conspiracy against the United States and the loss of our Constitutional integrity. But Congress did not act.

Sarah Kendzior: The Democrats dithered while the Trump Crime Family consolidated power. While it's good that Schiff spoke out today in such a forthright manner, and

while impeaching now is obviously better than not impeaching at all, I cannot emphasize enough the danger that we have been put in with so much wasted time. The Trump crime cult did not waste that time. They used it to pack courts, purge agencies, create propaganda narratives, target private citizens, form stronger relationships with other autocratic regimes, and exploit every Democratic weakness and flaw, including the Democratic donor classes' blind trust in institutions and their refusal to think of the American people first.

Sarah Kendzior: This is a very sad day for our country, not just for the damage that has been done, but for how much of it was predictable and therefore somewhat preventable. So those are my thoughts on the early impeachment articles. What are your thoughts, Andrea?

Andrea Chalupa: I think Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats are doing a great job on impeachment.

Sarah Kendzior: Are you serious?

Andrea Chalupa: Actually, yeah. I'm dead serious.

Sarah Kendzior: How, how, how?

Andrea Chalupa: I'm here to talk about it.

Sarah Kendzior: All right. You go for it.

Andrea Chalupa: I'm here to talk about it. Yeah, no, I think in terms of history books, any of the guests we've had to talk about impeachment can write the book on here's just a book, a volume of books on all the impeachable offenses committed by Donald Trump and his family. That exists. That's without question that they deliberately are limiting the scope of impeachment. As I've said before on this show, that's a deliberate strategy because what they're doing is speaking the enemy's language. The enemy's language, at least historically, including in recent years, including under Obama, the enemy's language was always Republicans were united, overwhelmingly united, with Democrats in their support for Ukraine.

Andrea Chalupa: In fact, it was even a Republican, a Republican delegate I believe that alerted the press, alerted whoever would listen that Trump's campaign was meddling with support, watering down support for Ukraine during the Republican Convention. There's a soft spot for Ukraine among conservatives in America. We live in a deeply conservative country. That's just a fact. Look at the idiots on cable news. All the rich white men who are the mouthpiece being broadcast into American homes, attacking Elizabeth Warren relentlessly, even trusted press lumping Elizabeth Warren's entire salary over I don't even know how many years or decades, as one example, attacking her, trying to make her look establishment and so forth.

Andrea Chalupa: We are up against a very entrenched, shameless enemy in the form of white patriarchy in America. One thing that white patriarchy, at least historically has prided itself on, is being a strong chest-thumping supporter of democracy in Ukraine. So really, I see what Nancy Pelosi is doing as a smart, calculated move that is relying on a tried and true strategy that has advanced civil rights in America, which is speaking the enemy's language. The Civil Rights Movement even did this. Rosa Parks was not the first who fought to keep her seat on a bus. There was a young girl who did the same thing who ended up becoming pregnant. She was 15 years old. The Civil Rights Movement calculated and said, "We cannot make her the poster child of our movement."

Andrea Chalupa: Rosa Parks was a much better poster voice, so to speak, much more important symbol of the movement than the other person would have been. That was a calculated move by the Civil Rights Movement. So here, I think Nancy Pelosi and the Democrats are doing a strategic strike and I think it's working.

Sarah Kendzior: How is it working if all of the Republicans are just reiterating the propaganda narrative that Ukraine had interfered in the election and that Russia did not and that they've just been backing up Trump's points. Are you talking about Republican citizens or Republicans who actually hold elected office?

Andrea Chalupa: Well, Republicans outing themselves, like Ted Cruz basically spouting Kremlin talking points, they just look like bigger and bigger idiots. They're coming out of the closet and doing what we've been saying all along, that they're part of the crime, that they're complicit in this. They're being pushed further to the edge of their clownish behavior and that's great. The optics on that are ridiculous. On top of that, you have the polls moving in the direction of supporting impeachment. The more they do, the more ridiculous behavior they do that's outlandish and trying to really get in line here with their Kremlin orders or their talking points, the more ridiculous they become. It's really great TV.

Andrea Chalupa: If you get to a point in your country where Chuck Todd is finally doing his job on national television by calling you out for being a big Kremlin patsy, that shows that this strategy is working.

Sarah Kendzior: I'm just not sure because impeachment is not something that should be decided by poll groups or cable news or focus groups or anything like that. As we both mentioned multiple times, there are a lot of Constitutional violations that this administration has met. If he's not impeached for them, then that sets a precedent for years to come, assuming we're lucky enough for the Trump crime family to vacate the White House. One thing that concerns me, and I'm curious about your thoughts on this, is that these impeachment articles are announced today as we are seeing openly the administration moving in line with Kremlin actions and Kremlin operatives, like Lavrov who has visited right now.

Sarah Kendzior: In reality, there doesn't seem to be any concern from the White House about these articles, possibly because they're limited in scope, possibly because they're not digging deep into the roots of this crisis, which is Trump's ties with

the Russian Mafia, with money laundering, with the issues that were outlined to some extent in the Mueller Report. They're basically doing the exact same things that they've done in 2017. They're doing the same things that they've been doing in the lead-up to the 2016 election. It was good that Schiff and others pointed that out, that our elections are in danger.

Sarah Kendzior: But I'm just not sure strategically what rushing this to such an extent accomplishes because I'm not quite sure that the American public does grasp the severity of the crisis. I think they certainly were starting to because of these hearings, because of testimony from people, like Fiona Hill, who are able to convince even morons like Chuck Todd, as you mentioned, of this propaganda-

Andrea Chalupa: That's a victory.

Sarah Kendzior: ... narrative taking hold. It is a victory. It's very important. I think the more that they had done that, the better we would be in as a country because, in the end, this isn't about Trump or Pelosi or about any of these officials. It's about the American people. It's about us. It's about citizens being educated about what their government is doing before they go into an election and vote for somebody. It's about them knowing that the election will have integrity, that it will be free and fair. There's absolutely no guarantee of that at this time.

Sarah Kendzior: So I don't know. I think they should have moved much earlier. It would have always been an uphill battle. That's what happens when a Mafia syndicate inhabits the White House. It's not like it would have been easy, but I think it would have been more feasible and certain obstacles may have been avoided.

Andrea Chalupa: One thing they absolutely have to do, which comes into play here, and I wish they would do this, is essentially take a Gaslit Nation approach to the impeachment hearings. Basically turn their impeachment hearings into a television marathon of Gaslit Nation coverage, and that is talking about all the factors, all of our weaknesses, all of our corruption that the Kremlin successfully weaponized against us. So use this opportunity of Ukraine to bring in experts and talk about how blood money lobbying works in countries like Ukraine. But that's the thing, is if they do that then they're going to be dragging in their own consultants-

Sarah Kendzior: Exactly.

Andrea Chalupa: ... like Todd, and others who are still active for the opposition.

Sarah Kendzior: Go for it. Go for it. I applaud this. I think you're right.

Andrea Chalupa: Yes, exactly.

Sarah Kendzior: I think it all needs to be dragged out in the open.

Andrea Chalupa: So look. If Sarah and Andrea were eating bonbons and wearing designer shoes with Nancy Pelosi and drinking a lot of really amazing Chianti, this is what we should advise her, okay? Maureen Dowd can just be a clinger-on staring at us through the window, not being invited in.

Sarah Kendzior: I want to do this wearing the same dress I wore to your baby shower, that camouflage thing with the sweatshirt. I just want this image in everyone's mind. But anyway, go on. We're now living the high life with the Pelosis.

Andrea Chalupa: I'll take a shower that day. I'll brush my hair. It'll be amazing.

Sarah Kendzior: We're going to go all out for San Francisco Nancy.

Andrea Chalupa: So go Nancy. We're having a Gaslit Nation slumber party with Nancy Pelosi and this is what we're saying, "Girl, listen. You've got to hold these impeachment hearings until November 1st, all right? November 1, 2020. Keep the impeachment hearings going until November 1, 2020 and then you pass it to the Senate and let them fumble the ball. But don't even tell them. Don't even tell them when you're giving it to them." You know what I mean? Just be like, "We need to hear from one more witness on how dark money works in politics. We need to hear from one more witness on how if you don't have a strong rule of law in a country on how the Kremlin takes advantage of that and weakens your state and your national security."

Andrea Chalupa: "We need to hear from one more witness on how political parties are co-opted by Kremlin aggression and how golden handcuffs work and how money's hidden abroad and so forth." That is what they should do. They should turn this into an entire televised marathon on how our own corruption was used against us successfully.

Sarah Kendzior: Exactly. No, I think that that is absolutely the way to go. It's beneficial for the country too.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah. I want to say, and everything I'm saying is what Biden, if Biden is the candidate, because that could still happen, if Biden is the candidate that's the exact point that Biden as VP said to Ukrainians, to their government when he spoke to the Ukrainian Rada, the Ukrainian Parliament. Biden said to them, "Listen. You need to clean up your corruption because the Kremlin is using your corruption against you." So if you keep the impeachment hearings going along that theme as long as possible, you're going to expose and get into the root of Trump-proofing and Putin-proofing our country.

Andrea Chalupa: The reason why Democrats, of course, don't want to do that is because they're benefiting not to the same extent as Republicans, but they are benefiting from the same system to an extent. But my point is that things have gone so off the rails in this country. The Trump crime family is leaving an actual casualty count. Countless people, their lives have been destroyed by the Trump family and just

the existential threat of how they're furthering these policies that are just making the climate crisis even worse and so forth. So we need to have a reckoning now as a nation. Every single one of us has to change so President Trump or President Ivanka Trump can never ever happen.

Sarah Kendzior: One more thing, what we're putting out there isn't a fringe opinion, this idea that we should continue investigating, continue holding hearings in the House and not immediately pass these articles to the Senate. John Dean, for example, has said the same thing because the goal should be transparency. The goal should be rooting out corruption. The goal should be preserving election integrity. It should be delivering the truth, the full truth, to the American public because they deserve it. You deserve the truth. Don't settle for crumbs.

Sarah Kendzior: There's this mentality now because the public has been relentlessly abused by the Trump Administration and, to some extent, to a much lesser extent but still, by the Democrats who have played down a lot of these atrocities, who have refused to follow through on investigations, who have been apathetic to a lot of human suffering, particularly that of migrant children on the border and other crimes against humanity. People are exhausted. People are battered down. When that mentality sets in, a lot of bad things happen. You see cults emerge, personality cults. You see savior syndrome emerge where you're just waiting for someone to swoop in and rescue you.

Sarah Kendzior: You also see a mentality of settling, of setting for less than you deserve. But don't settle. Settle the score. That is what we need to do as a country. All right. You want to talk about Manafort?

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah. I always want to talk about Manafort.

Sarah Kendzior: I will sum up briefly what happened yesterday, big day. There are certain topics that we always come back to on this show and one of the main ones is crying machine, Paul Manafort, and not just because he is obsessed with Andrea's sister who is Alexandra Chalupa, for the bro journalists listening to the program. Manafort is at the heart of the Kremlin's hijacking of American democracy and we urge you to listen to the earliest Gaslit Nation episodes from 2018 when we discuss our mutual horror back in 2016 that Manafort was selected as Trump's campaign manager. This is part of what drew Andrea and I together. I know. It's very romantic.

Sarah Kendzior: Monday was a significant day because what we have long asserted on Gaslit Nation was confirmed by the new report by the inspector general for the DOJ, which is that Manafort was under FBI investigation not only in July 2016 as has been publicly stated, but before he became Trump's campaign manager in the spring of 2016. This is not surprising, as Manafort's dirty deeds date back decades. But it does yet again raise the question of why the FBI allowed a compromised money launderer to run a campaign for Trump, who is himself a Mafia and Kremlin associate, thus enabling both of them access to classified

intelligence and a road to executive power that puts the very sovereignty of our country in jeopardy. Andrea, what are your thoughts on that?

Andrea Chalupa: All of this was in the public domain. I just don't understand why the FBI ... Where was James Comey's press conference on the fact that the FBI was investigating Donald Trump's campaign chairman for money laundering and tax evasion. Why was he going after Hillary Clinton, who smartly had her own private server because the United States government was getting deeply hacked by authoritarian regimes like China and Russia, which was a major national security breach? So Hillary Clinton was vindicated with her private server and yet James Comey with his documented misogyny called her out on this and yet refused to inform the American public that a Kremlin operative who was under investigation for money laundering, tax evasion, was managing the campaign of a man that was getting closer and closer to winning the White House.

Andrea Chalupa: The ridiculous thing is just all of this news that's been coming out since we've launched the show. We are demanding with every episode of Gaslit Nation that there needs to be an investigation of how American intelligence agencies let it get to this point in the first place because if you were relying on the American people to save the day at the ballot box in 2016, then why did you not take into account that there was a sweeping psyops campaign being waged against the American people when all of this was going on?

Andrea Chalupa: You had in the Brexit vote, for instance, Brexit was the warning shot that the Kremlin fired. The Kremlin had 150,000 Twitter accounts driving the Brexit vote, helping tip the scales in that corrupted Brexit vote. Look at what was going on in the US. You had militarized propaganda from Cambridge Analytica and, on top of that, Manafort's partner, Rick Gates, he brought in a psy-ops organization. This was all going on when American intelligence agencies apparently thought that the American voters would save the day and they didn't have to do anything. They could just succumb to their own misogyny and arrogance, thinking that they could just attack Hillary Clinton relentlessly and try to humiliate her during 2016.

Andrea Chalupa: Meanwhile, right in front of their faces in plain sight, to promote Sarah's book ahead of its launch, you had this massive sweeping Kremlin operation that was relying on new technologies, like militarized propaganda across all social media channels that American companies launched. This is a massive intelligence failure. If we somehow avoid a deepening of this existential threat of where we are now with a Democrat winning the White House in 2020, that Democratic president, that administration must, must, must order an investigation into how US intelligence agencies failed so badly against Manafort's and Putin's operation to bring their asset to power in 2016, stealing this election, and subverting our democracy.

Sarah Kendzior: Yes, absolutely. It's frustrating to me that within the candidates and all of the debates and discussions around this race, we're not seeing discussion of this in forthright terms. I think Warren is the closest when she talks about corruption

and when she talks about kleptocracy and our relationships with other authoritarian states who are not only hostile to their own people, but who have hijacked our own democracy and pose a danger in that respect. If we're not going to get hearings on this, which apparently some of the Democrats don't want to do. I think some do want to do that, so hopefully votes still go in that direction.

Sarah Kendzior: But if we're not going to get hearings, we need debate. We need answers. We need to remove this untouchability of the intelligence community. It is clear that there are fractures within it. It's clear that there is an enormous fracture within the FBI in 2016 where you saw experts on the Russian Mafia, people like Lisa Page, doing their job, trying to save this country and immediately are purged after. And then you have operators like Comey talking out of both sides of their mouth. And then you have what appears like a contingent linked to Rudy Giuliani, who are helping move this along, helping Trump ascend to power through illicit means.

Sarah Kendzior: And then if you look at that historically, you see a number of former FBI directors, including Louis Freeh and William Sessions, who went on to represent the Russian Mafia and the main Russian mobster to whom they're connected is Semion Mogilevich, whose name pops up over and over again. He is linked to the criminal Maxwell family, Ghislaine Maxwell, who was Epstein's partner. There is a network here. There is, as I've said a billion times, a transnational crime syndicate. It has not only infiltrated and influenced our own government, but other governments around the world, as you just said with Brexit.

Sarah Kendzior: People just keep beating around the bush with this. I think some of it is they're frightened. I think many people are threatened. I think it's incredibly overwhelming and confusing. Believe me, I have sympathy for everybody trying to tackle it because we have on this show and also independently for years. There is so much. I do have a book coming out in April 2020 called *Hiding in Plain Sight*. It is a sliver of what is out there. It's an overview of the last 40 years. But honestly, we need an encyclopedia of crime. We need books that show up once a month dealing with each participant. That is the extent of this network and the magnitude of their crimes.

Sarah Kendzior: Imagine if you had an entire book just about Manafort and all the shit he got up in over the last 40 years. It's immense. It is very frustrating. Of course it's frustrating, as you just said before, that this was in the public domain, that your sister was the canary in the coal mine, going out and telling everybody, "Hey, Paul Manafort is the Kremlin operative and a Mafia associate, perhaps he shouldn't be running a presidential campaign," and instead was targeted herself and not protected and dismissed. This is just an ongoing pattern. While honestly, I was frustrated back in 2016 that so few seemed to be catching on to this. But it was new. It was an unprecedented crisis for our country.

Sarah Kendzior: But it is three years later. We have had hearings. We have had expert testimony. We've even had people from the inside, people like Michael Cohen who were

involved in the crime, come out and tell everybody, "Yeah, guys. It's the Mafia. You know what else? Trump's not going to step down in 2020, so maybe get prepared for that." You don't hear forthright discussion about this almost anywhere. You get maybe a few soundbites. That just does an enormous disservice to the American public because, again, this is about the public. This is not about institutions and this is not about individuals, at least in terms of preserving their greatness. You need to earn the people's trust. So put up or step down.

Andrea Chalupa: If you're wondering how we got to this point, how Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner are the de facto president of the United States, how this assembly of autocrats are consolidating their power and basically trying to live above any accountability from Erdogan to Putin and so forth, we got here because, simply put, savior syndrome. If things are really that bad, somebody must be doing something about it. A really great case study that should have warned us that it could have gotten this bad with a Russian Mafia asset in the White House is the story of Harry Markopolos, a forensic accountant who tried to warn anyone who would listen that Bernie Madoff, one of the wizards of Wall Street, one of the most powerful men on Wall Street was a giant Ponzi scheme.

Andrea Chalupa: No one would take Harry Markopolos seriously. He was somebody that was incredibly passionate, very much in the weeds in pulling together all this information. He had all this damning information and the numbers don't add up and Bernie Madoff's a Ponzi scheme. But to say Bernie Madoff is a Ponzi scheme is to say that Donald Trump is a Russia Mafia asset. In 2016, people thought that you were crazy. People thought that you're a conspiracy theorist. This is just another cautionary tale that if Bernie Madoff is really a Ponzi scheme, certainly somebody somewhere would be doing something about it. Certainly the FCC or the US government or somebody would step in and stop this.

Andrea Chalupa: It shouldn't be on little Harry Markopolos, a father of three and just a forensic accountant. It shouldn't all be on him to stop one of the greatest Ponzi schemes in human history. No. So, that's what this comes down to, is the world is being destroyed because everyone just assumes that somebody else is saving it.

Sarah Kendzior: That's why Andrea and I are always encouraging you, stand up for yourselves, stand up for each other. As Andrea always says, find your community. Build an activist movement. No one is coming. There isn't going to be a magical fix. Even if by some miracle, say Trump is impeached and he is removed. You're still dealing with the GOP, the packing of the courts, the entrenched corruption, the purging of agencies, the gutting of institutions that we need, like the State Department. You're still dealing with the Kremlin. You're dealing with Saudi Arabia. You're dealing with this transnational crime network.

Sarah Kendzior: These are enormous problems. And then add on top of those, income and equality, hoarding of wealth by elites, job loss, all the social ills that we live with every day and that we shouldn't have to. If you need motivation, look at kids. Look at the world that they've grown up in. Look at how they see this as just

normal daily life. To some extent, I'm kind of glad that kids don't have this savior syndrome. I'm glad that when I talk to children, not just mine, I'm not trying to warp my own children. But honestly, when I talk to kids, they see a lot of issues more clearly.

Sarah Kendzior: They see climate change more clearly. They see that Trump is a lunatic more clearly. They're not saying he's going to pivot. They're not saying there must be a secret plan. They're like, "Holy shit. That guys obviously nuts. At the least, he's not in his right mind." So my hope for the future, to some degree, lies on people adopting the clarity of mind that you'll find in a child or a teenager, who isn't sentimental, who doesn't have false expectations, and who often isn't afraid because they don't know enough to be afraid. But it is our job as adults to protect these kids, to protect the future. The future is an endangered commodity and it's up to us to try to preserve it. That's why we bother with this.

Sarah Kendzior: We don't bother with this show or all the things we do because we think all hope is lost and that we are doomed. It is the opposite. We are persevering and we're persisting in our oftentimes annoying to some people commitment to bringing the truth to the public and to digging deep into everybody's corruption, into everybody's sins against this country, and trying to make them right because you can't fix problems that you won't expose.

Andrea Chalupa: In lead up to Christopher Steele and the IG report that just came out, I want to walk through just to hit home for everybody the public domain richness of Paul Manafort's crimes. They were just out there for anybody to write about, yell about. I just want to walk through just a bit of a timeline and then we'll go into the big Christopher Steele news and his interesting relationship with Ivanka Trump. The revolution Ukraine begins at the end of November in peaceful demonstrations that then turn violent when government riot police start beating up protesters.

Andrea Chalupa: In early December, I tweeted about Paul Manafort. This is December 2013, my first tweet about Manafort and that he's a Republican operative that was advising Viktor Yanukovich. That's significant because this just underlines that this was in the public domain. My sister's being hounded by Republicans relentlessly. They're terrorizing her. They're trying to equate her as we always say that she's some deep state operative. How the hell did she know that Paul Manafort was such a bad guy? Well, look at my tweet from December 2013. That was Paul Manafort's Wikipedia page that I tweeted out. That's how my sister knew.

Andrea Chalupa: She came into this to try to alert everyone that Putin's Darth Vader was running Donald Trump's campaign. Her hair was on fire telling anybody that would listen, including Republicans. Putin's operative in Ukraine was paid a 10-million-dollar-a-year contract starting in 2006 to further the Kremlin's interest in Ukraine and the West in business and media. So this was a pretty big deal when he came over. It was stunning to see just how unprepared American media were at the time and the FBI just didn't bother to say anything. Yanukovich fled

Ukraine in February 2014. He was overthrown in a rare popular uprising that was successful.

Andrea Chalupa: Ukraine invited the FBI in to investigate to find the 10s of billions of dollars that Yanukovich and his family stole from the Ukrainian people. If you're investigating Yanukovich, you're investigating the people around him, including Manafort who was a longtime consultant who worked for a decade or so. Yanukovich built himself a Versailles McMansion complete with a private zoo, a massive car collection, a golf course, sprawling marble halls, paid for with stolen tax dollars. The investigative journalist who helped expose his lavish lifestyle, as well as the lifestyle of some of his cronies, she was ran off the road one night at the end of December and beaten and left for dead.

Andrea Chalupa: Her face was so swollen, you couldn't recognize her any more. That is what Manafort aided. He was an instrument of Kremlin aggression, spreading the Kremlin's corruption by helping consolidate its power, whether it was in Ukraine or in the United States through Trump and his friends. So Manafort also represents the fact that the Kremlin clearly thinks that Russia is allowed to influence the domestic affairs of other countries, but no one else can, only Russia. If you dare to do that in Russia, for instance, they're going to retaliate. They're now calling any bloggers or journalists that have been paid by companies based abroad as foreign agents.

Andrea Chalupa: In his meeting with President Zelensky of Ukraine in Paris this week, Putin told Zelensky he needs to change his constitution. That's how brazen Putin is. Zelensky, of course, laughed, trolling Putin. So Russia gets to go in and dictate and meddle and attack other countries' democracies, but if Western states stand united against human rights abuses in Russia by, for instance, passing the Magnitsky Act, that's outrageous. It was enough for Hillary Clinton to express support for protests against Putin stealing the 2012 election in Russia for Putin to hold a grudge against her.

Andrea Chalupa: So Putin can meddle. No one else can do anything that he deems meddling, including supporting a strong, independent media and anti-corruption reformers. This is all significant because when IG report came out saying that intelligence agencies had every right to investigate Russia's influence on the 2016 election and its connections to the Trump campaign, Trump fires back by projecting what it was he actually was doing at the time with his quote, "This was an overthrow of government. This was an attempted overthrow and a lot of people were in on it and they got caught. They got caught red-handed." Trump literally sounds here like he's describing the Mueller Report or other stuff that's coming on the impeachment inquiry.

Andrea Chalupa: What Trump just said is what Manafort was paid tens of millions of dollars to do by Oleg Deripaska, an oligarch that's close to Putin. What is really troubling is that AG Barr, who is Tom Hagen, he's the Mafia consigliere for the Trump Crime Family and the worst of the Republican establishment has been for decades. Barr came out attacking the IG report and then his little white supremacist-

looking henchman, Durham, broke protocol by attacking it as well. What they're doing is they're intimidating all the good people left, all the strong patriots left across our intelligence agencies, basically telling them, "If you dare to hold the Trump crime family accountable in any way, if you dare to leak, if you dare to begin any investigation even based on incredible intelligence, if you dare to follow up with any information provided you by any foreign intelligence service of our allies from Australia to Ukraine and so forth, if you dare to do that we will come after you."

Andrea Chalupa: Understand that we have this massive intimidation that's going on in plain sight by the attorney general, who's really a Mafia lawyer, and by his henchman. If you go back to that Lisa Page interview that was incredibly powerful in the Daily Beast by Molly Jong-Fast, Lisa Page laments what has happened to her beloved DOJ. Well, what happened to your beloved DOJ is what happens in a lot of wannabe authoritarian states with these wannabe autocrats at the helm. The institutions get purged and it happens very, very quickly. Institutions are only as strong as the people in them. If you purge those good people and fill them with lackeys, the rule of law suffers. Democracy suffers. That's where we are now.

Sarah Kendzior: Speaking of the inspector general report, should we discuss the new revelation about Christopher Steele, which threw me for a loop?

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, and his pen pal, Ivanka Trump.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. Christopher Steele is best known for writing the "Steele Dossier," the documents that were leaked to BuzzFeed in January 2017, which referenced the infamous alleged pee tape. We have now learned that Christopher Steele has had a relationship with Ivanka Trump nearly a decade before he was hired by Republicans who are working with Fusion GPS to examine the Trump campaign. Just a little recap of Steele's findings, when Steele was doing that research for Fusion GPS, which was eventually used by the Democrats, he was horrified by what he found, especially his primary contention that Trump had been cultivated as a Kremlin asset since at least 2011.

Sarah Kendzior: Steele spoke anonymously with David Corn of Mother Jones who wrote an article that came out on Halloween 2016. That article was published-

Andrea Chalupa: That is how we met. That is how you and I met.

Sarah Kendzior: It's true. That is the night that Andrea and I first interacted because I went out trick or treating with my kids, came back, and my timeline looked like a John le Carré novel. Andrea and I both were like, "Wow. There's someone else out there who heard that Trump had some kind of disgusting illicit sex in Russia that has been taped and will possibly be released to the world." So yeah. The beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah. That's what I tweeted. I tweeted, "Trump sex tape," launching the hashtag #trumpsextape and Sarah popped in my DMs and our lives have never been the same.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah. It's really, really beautiful. Trump sex tape, Manafort Mafia scheme. That's the bonds of an enduring friendship right there.

Sarah Kendzior: So David Corn publishes this article. Meanwhile, the New York Times is publishing a bunch of propaganda about how the FBI says that Trump has nothing to do with Russia and wasn't investigating it, which we know is a total lie. Steele was also horrified allegedly by that New York Times article. Since then, Steele has largely been in seclusion. There have been a number of reports that his life has been threatened. All that time, the information about his relationship with Ivanka Trump was kept secret. So here's a summary of what that relationship entailed, according to the inspector general's report.

Sarah Kendzior: "Steele called the allegation that he was biased against Trump from the start ridiculous. He stated that, if anything, he was favorably disposed toward the Trump family because he began his research because he had visited a family member at Trump Tower and had been friendly with the family member for some years. He described their relationship as "personal" and said that he once gifted a family tartan from Scotland to the family member." So now we know the family member in question was Ivanka Trump who had, at that time, hit up Steele to work with the Trumps on their business interests, aka their Mafia activity, which Steele did not do, but the two of them stayed in touch.

Sarah Kendzior: This relationship started around 2007, which would place it right after Ivanka had flown to Moscow with mobster turned sometime FBI informant turned mobster again, Felix Sater, right after Manafort moved into Trump Tower in 2006, right after Alexander Litvinenko, the Russian dissident and former intelligence member was poisoned to death in the UK also in 2006. That was a case that Christopher Steele in his capacity as an intelligence officer was examining. This was also right when Ivanka and Don Jr. were getting more involved in Trump family real estate and money laundering schemes, most notably Trump Tower Soho, for which she and Don Jr. were nearly indicted for felony fraud in 2012 until their family lawyer gave a hefty donation to the campaign of Cy Vance who was overseeing the case.

Sarah Kendzior: That's a lot of information, but I want to know what exactly was going on here. There are a lot of theories out there. The main one that seems plausible to me is that they are each possibly trying to honey trap each other, that if Steele is investigating the KGB, the Russian Mafia, their incursion into Western states, the Trump family would be of interest. They were just in the Kremlin. Ivanka was just spinning around in Putin's chair. I mean that's an actual thing that happened. They were working with Mafia-affiliated actors like Felix Sater. Meanwhile, Ivanka would be interested in Steele.

Sarah Kendzior: She would be interested in compromising him. Ivanka is not this innocent actor or this sort of sideline character that people like to portray her as. She and Jared have been central to crime family activity from the beginning and she was trained to continue to carry out this operation. As I've said many times, this is the pattern of kleptocracy is to put the family into executive power. You put the family in the business. You put the family in office. It keeps the money flowing and you also use your younger family members, the ones who are more amenable to the media, to gloss over what is a criminal endeavor. At that time, that's what The Apprentice was doing.

Sarah Kendzior: That is what Ivanka was doing on The Apprentice. She was an assistant with no particular role much as she's an assistant with no particular role in the White House and her real role is to gloss over these Trump crime family endeavors. She's now, I think, failing at that, but it certainly worked back in 2016, 2017. The media blew off this threat. Anyway, what are your thoughts on this relationship?

Andrea Chalupa: Ivanka Trump, like you said, she's very much involved in this crime family. She's a pillar of it. She's the favorite child, as we know. The endgame of this is to make Ivanka Trump the first woman President, using the same coalition of corruption that stole the election originally for her father. So if Donald Trump does step down eventually, I think they're going to pull all the punches out to steal this next one because they need to so he doesn't get indicted and thrown into prison, and the Kremlin needs to avoid sanction. So the stakes have never been higher for them.

Andrea Chalupa: Lavrov visiting Trump this week is very much a strategy session certainly in that direction without question because the impeachment crisis for the Trump crime family is heating up. Public opinion is changing. This is excellent television. Everybody loves a good crime drama. As we've always said from the beginning, that's why we need impeachment hearings because everyone loves a good crime drama. Ivanka Trump, the fact that she's always escaped accountability and she doesn't get the same scrutiny. I mean she was running the transition team, which Mike Flynn said the Trump transition team told him to reach out to the Russian ambassador.

Andrea Chalupa: So Mike Flynn gets into criminal liability there, but Ivanka doesn't even though she's the leader? There's some weird misogyny at play where Ivanka Trump being the right kind of woman. She has that nonthreatening, little kitten tone of voice. She wears high heels. She dresses like a Barbie. She basically has trained herself to always appear a certain way, very clearly to win her father's approval and affection. She's always seen as the operator that has her father wrapped around her finger. She very much lives by the Trump brand. I read somewhere that when her parents were divorcing, Ivanka was really crying, distraught over whether or not that meant she'd have to lose the Trump last name.

Andrea Chalupa: She's her father's daughter. She's all about branding first. I think in one of her ghost-written books there's a line about how perception is stronger than truth.

That's how they operate. They're just a house of cards. The Trump brand is built on lies. It's really interesting that she would build this relationship with Christopher Steele given all the businesses that she was helping the family forge in these post-Soviet states that were ripe with the Russian Mafia. The fact that at the time Steele was actively running the Russia desk in London for MI6 and here was Ivanka Trump cozying up to him and he was to her. I mean he gave her quite an intimate gift, a family tartan, which is just a pattern in Scotland that's known to represent the many different well-known clans, families of Scotland.

Andrea Chalupa: That is a very clever gift that Christopher Steele gave her, which basically acknowledges that Ivanka Trump treasures her family. The family is a business for her. The family is protection. The family is what helps her evade accountability. Ultimately these authoritarian regimes like you had in Ukraine, Yanukovich and his cronies, including his sons, they're known as the family in Ukraine, stealing and pillaging taxpayer money, and Putin and his court of oligarchs. So Christopher Steele coming in with this personal gift of a family tartan was very much an acknowledgment ... He nailed Ivanka Trump's psychology right then and there, like any good spy.

Andrea Chalupa: I think the fact that they didn't end up working together even though Christopher Steele took his expertise private and they could have worked together, I think Ivanka Trump probably saw that he was too good, because they surround themselves by a cesspool of people like Felix Sater and that type. They're comfortable among their own kind. So Christopher Steele would be like a Boy Scout among them. So I think ultimately that's why no professional relationship worked out there because Ivanka Trump's like, "No, you'll probably get me in trouble eventually one day," and he did. He broke protocol. He went from being an informant for the FBI to being frustrated with the FBI for not doing enough or doing really much of anything to stop the Kremlin's patsy from becoming president in 2016 and went and talked to David Corn.

Andrea Chalupa: After that, the FBI was very careful in how they worked with him after. So I think Christopher Steele's heart was in the right place. I think, like anybody in this horrible saga, I think he was someone that came from this optimistic outlook. He was there at the fall of the Soviet Union, when the Berlin Wall fell. He was part of that generation. He came up through that with his career being based in, I believe, Russia at the time or he's definitely traveling in the post-Soviet states at the time in the years after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He must have, like so many from that generation, thought, "Here's our happy Hollywood ending. We're going to have that reset button in 2009 and things are going to move forward."

Andrea Chalupa: No, it doesn't work like that. So I think he, like so many others in his generation, has had a rude awakening that the fall of the Soviet Union wasn't the end of something. It was the start of an even bigger monster, which is this global nuclearized threat of growing kleptocracy.

Sarah Kendzior: Yeah, absolutely. I mean we've discussed this on the show before. The Soviet Union didn't fall per se, it mutated. Aspects of it went into hiding and the worst qualities of it, a surveillance state, remained while other qualities of it that had been unable to fully emerge before or during the Soviet period, like organized crime, were allowed to flourish because those actors were able to leave the former USSR and go wherever they want. They didn't have to do, for example, what Semion Mogilevich did. He was from the former Soviet Union, so he got a passport from Israel under the Right of Return law and exploited that law, and then from Israel went to the West and began setting up organized crime networks there.

Sarah Kendzior: At this point, they can go everywhere, which is why the phrase, Russian oligarch, is often very misleading. These men, the people who are involved in this organized crime network tend to not have any real fealty toward any country. They are tied to the Kremlin. They are an apparatus of the Kremlin. They're a leg of the Kremlin in the sense that they help hold it up and the Kremlin helps hold up it. So oligarchs, Mafioso, and the KGB are intertwined. But the objective is extremely different than it was during the Cold War period. This is not a battle of nation-state. This is a battle between a tiny group of billionaire elites with sadistic impulses, highly involved in money laundering from over all the world.

Sarah Kendzior: This is not a group that you can track by ethnicity or even by country of origin or anything like that. They work together. It is a transnational crime syndicate and its victims are everyone else. Its victims are governments. Its victims are private citizens. Its victims are ordinary people just trying to live their lives. That is what the West missed when the collapse of the Soviet Union happened. They got very cocky. They assumed they won. They assumed that Russia and other dictatorships from the newly-independent states of the former Soviet Union would seek to emulate the West in the same way that, for example, the Baltic states genuinely did. That was not true. Instead, they saw total lawlessness.

Sarah Kendzior: They saw an opportunity to carry out crime in plain sight and call it hyper capitalism, call it getting used to a new way of doing things. They were aided in these endeavors, as you've said, by people like Manafort and by multiple heads of the FBI and by a lot of Western consultants who sought to profit from this chaos and from this corruption themselves. That's gone on unimpeded. Now it's out in the open. Now we have this question of, well, what exactly are we going to do about it? Which side is going to win? I think it's revealing that Christopher Steele, who did a lot to bring this to public view who, as you've noted, went to the press, put aside institutional norms to make this public, to make this threat public.

Sarah Kendzior: He's in hiding. Someone like Lisa Page is denigrated and was in hiding. Someone like Reality Winner, who brought forward proof of election interference is in prison while Sergey Lavrov sits in the White House. That is the state of affairs today. That is the moment that we're in now. That is why I fear for our wasted time over the last few years as people struggled to just come to grips with the minimal facts of this horrific story.

Andrea Chalupa: It's just going to be a matter of committing ourselves generation by generation to unraveling this mess. No one's coming to save us. It's up to each and every one of us showing up to save ourselves and doing the work that is required and staying vigilant now until our final breath. That is the commitment now because no one else is doing this work. We must do this work. We saw it here in our own country when Obama, first Black president, 2008, a euphoric moment for our country. We all celebrated, and then we went home. Then over those two terms, Karl Rove and the American far right engineered a massive hijacking state by state, turning all these state governments deep red and chipping away at the progressive infrastructure that got Obama elected in the first place.

Andrea Chalupa: So the time of sleepwalking is over. All of us have to stay engaged. We're in the fight of our lives. We cannot be in autopilot. We cannot be sucked into some Facebook machine thinking that we're making a difference by arguing with random people on there. You have to go to the Gaslit Nation Action Guide on gaslitnationpod.com. Choose one area on the action guide and dedicate yourself to it. Show up. Nothing is stronger than showing up, going out in your community, building your community, fortifying your community. As we're entering 2020, it's not about which candidate. Any candidate will stop the bleeding in 2020.

Andrea Chalupa: What it is about is a generational effort to confront what got Trump elected in the first place, from corruption to white supremacy to rampant misogyny to a massive, alarming decline of newsrooms across America. The reason why we're always going on and on about Elizabeth Warren is because she is the one more than any candidate, in our opinions, that is presenting it this way.

Elizabeth W.: We have built a democracy on the premise of a free and independent press. We count on a press coming in from the outside and holding our leaders accountable, doing the independent investigation, holding the rich and powerful's feet to the fire, but particularly our political leaders. It is a critical part of who we are and what we do. It is part of the reason I want to call out in particular the death of Khashoggi at the hands of the Saudis. It's not only that the Saudi government and the Saudi leader was clearly involved. The evidence shows clearly involved in killing someone who was working in the United States and of course ends up in Saudi Arabia. But it's that he was a journalist.

Elizabeth W.: It's that a powerful political regime said, "Who threatens us the most?" It's a journalist. It's someone who investigates and is determined to reveal the truth and that that ultimately is what undermines dictatorships. It's what undermines the powerful who are trying desperately to hang on to power. So I believe we need a free and independent press. Part of it is I don't think the president of the United States should be directly attacking the press. How about that one for an opener? I don't think the President of the United States should be withdrawing press credentials from solid places that are out doing investigative journalism, but to do it as punishment because the president doesn't like the coverage that he's getting.

Elizabeth W.: I also want to just mention one more part. I'm really worried about buying up the press, different outlets, particularly what this means for local reporting. We talk about this some at the national level, and a president who's clearly trying to undermine a free press. But it also matters in small towns. It matters in rural communities. Shoot, it's starting to matter in mid-size and big cities. When you lose the local press, you lose the local accountability. You lose someone who really will investigate what the school board is up to. Look, most of the time they're doing good stuff. But it's good to have the press there to check it out and to make sure that everyone is informed.

Elizabeth W.: So this is a place where we could have a direct effect in policy. The mergers that the Department of Justice continues to approve, that just mean fewer and fewer reporters at the local level and more and more predigested, one point of view that's really shoved into the system by a bunch of local newspapers that are all, in fact, not local any more and all owned by one national outfit, not only undercuts competition, it undercuts our free press. So I'll enforce the laws on that. I hope that's helpful.

Andrea Chalupa: Our discussion continues and you can get access to that by signing up on our Patreon at the Truth Teller level or higher.

Sarah Kendzior: We want to encourage our listeners to donate to RAICES, a Texas-based nonprofit agency that provides free and low-cost legal services to underserved immigrant children, families, and refugees. They're helping with the crisis facing migrant families at the Texas border and need your support.

Andrea Chalupa: We also encourage you to donate to help critically-endangered orangutans already under pressure from the palm oil industry. Donate to The Orangutan Project at theorangutanproject.org.