

## **Gaslit Nation**

Malcolm Nance, Malcolm Nance on Asymmetric Warfare - Part II

Andrea Chalupa  
Sarah Kendzior  
Malcolm Nance

### *Theme Music*

Sarah Kendzior: Hi, I'm Sarah Kendzior. I'm a journalist, a scholar of authoritarian states, and the author of the book *The View from Flyover Country*.

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

Sarah Kendzior: And you are listening to *Gaslit Nation*, a podcast that examines corruption in the Trump administration and the rise of autocracy around the world.

Andrea Chalupa: We are speaking today with Malcolm Nance, a counterterrorism and intelligence expert, and the author of *The Plot to Hack America: How Putin's Cyber spies and WikiLeaks Tried to Steal the 2016 Election*, as the Kremlin's attack of our election was taking place, and *The Plot to Destroy Democracy: How Putin and His Spies are Undermining America and Dismantling the West*. Nance is also the author of the upcoming book *The Plot to Betray America: How Team Trump Embraced Our Enemies, Compromised Our Security, and How We Can Fix It*. With over 34 years of experience in intelligence activities, including providing both covert and clandestine anti and counterterrorism support to national intelligence agencies and assets, Nance is here to explain where we are, how we got here, and where we're headed, and what we can do about our current state of events before it's too late. This is part two of our interview with him.

Sarah Kendzior: I mean one of the things that's frustrating is that, you know, you picked up on this in 2016. We did as well, and since then, we have the same racist, demagogue con-man, now installed in an executive position, and then in addition to that, you were naming some of the people who are most on the ball in terms of investigating the Russian mafia and the broader transnational crime syndicate that surrounds this, people like McCabe, Strock, Lisa Page would be another, they have been purged. The courts have been packed. It looks like we're heading in the direction of show trials. I'm just curious: what's your take on where this is going and who is left to protect us now? Who can actually protect our sovereignty and our national security from a threat that is now well-entrenched inside the country?

Malcolm Nance: Well, I've said this many, many times before, and it's the only way it's going to be said. We are our last defense. We the people, that 60% of the public that did not vote for Donald Trump, that are consistently rating him as the worst president, and that show him that he is a real hated entity. But you have to understand: he has under his belt people that have learned to game the American democracy. Every trick that has ever been carried out short of secession in American history, he has these experts on them. Right? They were just showing a clip of Trump and Clinton's debate on MSNBC a second ago, and Trump takes this, turns his back on Clinton with this dismissive look and sort of walks away from her, like, "Why should I even bother with you?" That is a very powerful, powerful

way that people see women in this country. And that dismissive, who cares what you think, b, attitude played to that tribe, and that tribe is fighting. That tribe has money and resources and experience. Look at Barr. Bill Barr was supposed to be the middle of the road guy, an institutionalist. He is literally the assassin of American democracy. He was invented to kill the American judicial system. No joke. Alright? I don't use those words lightly. He was sent to put the fix into that report. Remember when I was on Joy Reid? You were on with me that day. I said, "There was no way that Bill Barr would cover up the greatest scandal in American history by carrying out the greatest scandal in American history." He said, "Hey, I'm going to cover up all of this. This is my job." This man does not care about how he's seen in our history, which is objective history. He cares about how he is seen in the dominant tribe's history. Okay? These people think they will be dominating the history when the history books are written.

Andrea Chalupa: Certainly birtherism, which was a racist movement that Donald Trump fed and grew, that was also an active measure, wouldn't you say, in terms of intimidating and harassing and stoking his base while terrorizing his opponents. I mean, that was ongoing harassment of the first black president. So wouldn't you say birtherism, and then followed by pizza-gate with that whole Michael Flynn and his son and Kremlin bots pushing that conspiracy theory that a family pizza parlor had links to some pedophile ring in the basement or something. That was to harass Hillary Clinton, and both movements, or whatever you want to call them, both propaganda, terrorist movements, they're very much operated like Kremlin active measures, to harass, to divide, to leverage people's worst instincts, to create a threatening atmosphere.

Malcolm Nance: Because I wrote so much in this new book, I actually had to cut out a chapter called "American Active Measures." What it was a short study of how the right wing carries out the exact same active measures Russia does. And I think that they're just techniques, and they understand that these techniques work, and they don't care what the source of those techniques were. But I do believe that many of these people really, really live in an alternate reality. I mean, they view this reality of where they are the dominant tribe and that birtherism is not a joke. After a while, they come to believe it.

Andrea Chalupa: There's certainly this toxic environment where people just refuse to face facts, refuse to learn the history and see that all of Donald Trump's ties to the Russian mafia and the Kremlin go back several decades. They remind me of antivaxxers. The antivaxxer movement. It's exactly who they remind me of.

Malcolm Nance: Well, guess what? My entire, everything I have ever said in the media is called Section 1 of the Mueller Report. Everything I've written has been validated by the Mueller Report. Every damn word, and I came out with it. The Plot to Hack America was written in September 2016. The second book on Trump-Russia that came out was Luke Harding's, 15 months later. The third book was Russian Roulette, which came out 23 months after I had written The Plot to Hack America. So now there's like 500 books. Are we all fantasists? Are we all conspiracy theorists and liars? No. We can all be crazy, right? There's only one person, one or two people, not marching to the tune of the man. And that is Glenn Greenwald and the rest of these guys who have some position that they're invested in. I don't care about them one way or the other.

Andrea Chalupa: Yeah, it's almost like the horseshoe theory. There's so far left that they're far right. They're trigger-happy from a place of, I don't know, it's just bizarre why you would root for the spread of global kleptocracy. History, if you study, as you do of course, the last

100 years or so, there's always a Glenn Greenwald. I made a film on Glenn Greenwald. It stars Walter Duranty, the Pulitzer Prize winner of the New York Times who covered up Stalin's genocide-famine in Ukraine. Greenwald would've been backing up Duranty at the time. He would have been, you know, he would have been whitewashing Stalin if he were around. He's a sad embarrassment to The Intercept, and Intercept staffers have come out to even leak that to the press. So our thoughts and prayers are with them. [laughter] But I do want to say, the geopolitics of this, I want to take the macro view now. The Hollywood happy ending of America winning the Cold War, or so everyone thought, and everyone thought the Soviet Union was going to get this Western market capitalism shock to its system, and it was going to reform, and everything would be all is well, but instead the KGB, now the FSB, stayed strong, and essentially, to summarize very quickly, unites with this burgeoning Russian mafia. You have oligarchs emerging from all this, and now it's just gone global. It's gone global, and the mafia in the 21st century is borderless. So with that said, could you talk a bit about the geopolitics of, let's say, starting from 9/11 and Bush's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, and how you write in your book *The Plot Hack America* that you saw this big turn away from monitoring Kremlin aggression, and all the resources were quickly pulled onto the Middle East. And I've heard that as well the regret of that is sort of why Bush's wars just sucked us in, that we couldn't fight other bad actors that were just as determined to destroy us as ISIS, like the Kremlin. I remember back in like, I think it was late 2014, in an off-record chat with someone high up in Obama's defense department, very high up, who said to me, "Look, Russia is just not a priority. Our priorities are the Middle East." And that was a fact. It was the Iran deal. It was Syria. It was watching embarrassing John Kerry thinking he could negotiate with Lavrov, his counterpart at the Kremlin, to strike some sort of deal to get Assad gone, and instead the way the Kremlin does deals, the way Putin does deals and the way Stalin did deals, is they want all of it. They push for all of it. There's zero compromise, and now Putin has Syria. He has his base on the Mediterranean in the form of his puppet Assad, and Assad gets to stay. And Assad's human rights abuses are escalating there in Syria now. Could you talk a little bit about that macro view of sort of all these destabilizing forces that sort of helped lead us here? And sort of the compromises and blind spots the U.S. had in navigating all this all these years.

Malcolm Nance: Technically, I could blame it on two people. Everything that's happening to us. First is Osama bin Laden. The 9/11 attacks were done for, you know, and I've written, most people think, "Oh, Malcolm's written two books." I've actually written eight books, and my first six books were about terrorism, including an ideological study of the philosophy of Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda in a book called *An End to al-Qaeda*. And it was really about his strategic viewpoint, his battle strategy for what he wanted to do with America, and what he expected after the 9/11 attacks. Bin Laden was a very interesting character. He was a student of the philosophy of Samuel Huntington, and Samuel Huntington came up with the philosophy of the clash of civilizations, in which, you know, Huntington of course wasn't saying that it would be religious civilizations. It would be rich and poor, north and south, these power poles around the world. Bin Laden extrapolated that into believing that there would be a clash of civilizations between Islam and Christianity, but to do it you would need to topple all of the Muslim states to create a super-state of Muslims that would of course go on to a war, a clash of civilizations with the West, with Christianity. Now of course, I fought against these guys. I studied these people. I've collected for almost a decade and a half against them. It's a crazy thought, but bin Laden truly believed this. So the thing was, when he carried out the 9/11 attacks, it was designed to get the United States to do exactly what it did, which was to attack all around the Middle East, but particularly South Asia. He wanted us to invade Afghanistan. He had

in his mind that Islam had broken the Soviet Union, and that they would economically break us, too, with an unwinnable war. Does that sound familiar? Bin Laden carried out the 9/11 attacks, and then of course wanted to carry out attack everywhere, and he wanted us to come there and commit atrocities, to invade countries, and to prove to the Muslim world that we were precisely what he said that we were, which was crusaders coming in to seize Muslim lands. And then of course they would form a caliphate, and with the combined resources of the Muslim world, take on Western civilization. Didn't happen. Bin Laden got a bullet to his face. But George W. Bush is the other player. By invading Iraq, he gave bin Laden precisely what he wanted, which was a jihad in the heart of historic Islam, by invading Iraq. He also unleashed Iran in its entirety, and I'd work missions against both sides, Iran, Iraq, and Afghanistan. I mean, it's just utterly mind-boggling how those two people fulfilled this destiny. Now, Bush was a lot less sanguine about it than what we have now. Obama tempered it down, started putting the brushfires of the wars out. But Trump is a firm believer in the right-wing Christian philosophy that there must be a clash of civilizations between European Christendom and the United States, and Islam. He believes precisely what bin Laden believes. Remember that speech he gave in Poland where he talked about a clash of cultures that would eventually arise? That's precisely what he was talking about when. He's talking about this. Russia views itself, and this was part of their seduction of the evangelicals in around 2010, as these people who would be partners in a war, a clash of civilizations that would bring the Eastern Orthodox state together with the American evangelical and European Protestants and would create eventually, as I call it, an axis of autocrats, who strategically would eventually bring Islam to heel. And I see all of these things popping up. These are those little dots that I keep telling you about. I've actually spoken on C-SPAN about this, where I said, "They view this as a long-term goal." But you know what? I think many of them also view the Handmaid's Tale as a role model for the nation, and they think that they're within grasp of it. All they had to do was harness the hard tribalism of the right-wing constituency, and they would be able to take on the other 60%, bring them to heel, make this alignment between right-wing nations in Europe and Moscow, and then even starting a war with Iran would be a good start for their clash of civilizations. It's horrible, but you see all the moving parts. I mean, it's not a conspiracy theory. They tell us this is what they want to do. Brexit is a component of that. It's a response to the immigration from Syria, which if I were Putin, I would have encouraged, too. You know? Throw Europe off balance. Make them all a bunch of racists. And now, here we are.

Andrea Chalupa: And Putin, of course, under him there was this Russian pride parade, that nationalistic parade that launched and got quickly taken over by the neo-Nazi types. And one black reporter from British media went over to Russia to study the far right in Russia, and he just couldn't take it. He couldn't take it. He went in kind of being like a Westerner abroad, kind of laughing at it, and then it just got to him. It was just so disgusting and dark, and so yeah, it's very much an ideology of hate that we're up against, and it's got this doomsday religious component that is absolutely frightening. Mike Pompeo, Secretary of State, has been on record attacking gay rights. He's an evangelical who speaks very openly about religious fervor.

Sarah Kendzior: His apocalyptic kind of aims.

Andrea Chalupa: Exactly. As the American secretary of state! There have been interviews with him back in the day where he knew who Russia was, like he knew what we're up against with Putin. It's like the ideology trumps all that, and so people have to understand that the age of ideology is back. We have a president of the United States, that at least

according to Ivana Trump studied Hitler's speeches, kept Hitler's speeches by his bedside, has admired dictators like Orbin and Kim Jong Un. My God, the list is so long. Tell us please: how do we then get out of this? How do we avoid the ideology of apocalypse from snuffing out the world?

Malcolm Nance: What we're really engaged in right now is the defense of democracy, the defense of the constitutional republic we call the United States of America. I think this next year you're going to be hearing these calls get louder and louder, because people are already becoming complacent. If Nancy Pelosi can't even go forward with her constitutional duties and is betting the entire balance of the history of the United States against an election, right, that he's going to lose. Okay, that's insane. That is absolutely not what the founders built the system for. And also it means that she says that whatever is happening right now is fine. All of these crimes, the obstruction of justice, do not rise to the level of impeachable offenses, that they are not high crimes and misdemeanors, which means that any Republican president from now on can get away with that. So here's my rallying call, you know, being from Philadelphia, is that sunlight and shouting is the only way this is going to get done. We have to rally our people. We have to get people aware of what's going on. We need to make people aware of what disinformation is. You guys know on Twitter I'm always one of the first people to start calling out active measures in campaigns that people are doing, and speaking frankly about these things. This is not a time in American history to pull punches. If the Boston massacre had occurred in front of us, one third of this nation would be like the Tories. They would be supporting the mass murder of a group of liberals if it occurred, and don't think that it might not occur. So we have to defend what this nation is truly built on, not the fantasy that Donald Trump has created and crafted, of which one third of this country now believe. They believe that, that everything we say is a lie crafted by George Soros, and that progressives and conservatives, moderate conservatives, and moderate liberals, are actually bloodthirsty revolutionaries who are going to kill people in the streets. I don't know if you guys have seen it. Actually, Sarah I was in St. Louis just before the election, and there were TV commercials out there showing Antifa, you know, in black masks, destroying glass, and it was actually the G7 thing, and Hillary Clinton is the most evil person to ever run for president. I could not believe that this was an alternate reality which was dominating local news channels.

Sarah Kendzior: Oh yeah. They brought it back for 2018 and McCaskill, then she was in Antifa. I mean, it's ridiculous, but go on.

Malcolm Nance: Yeah. Well, my point is that we need to shout louder. We need to expropriate patriotism from these people. And I said, "We need to fight in defense of the Constitution." Right? We need to take back the American flag, and that we're defending American democracy, and we've got to start calling the opposition for what they are. You have to shame them. You follow a man that loves an ex KGB officer. You guys are following an autocrat a dictator. You know, King George, King Donald the Fourth, whatever you want to call him. I like Benedict Donald myself. But you've got to start using terminology they use. These are called meta-narratives. Meta-narratives are Hillary Clinton evil, Donald Trump good. That's what the 2016 election came down to. We don't argue with that level. We all want to get into nuance and have long discussions. No! You are following a man that's a traitor, or you are betraying the Constitution. You are betraying the nation. Those people, when they call us traitors—Donald Trump uses that out there—they are thinking violence beyond their words. We aren't, but in their minds, they're been conditioned to believe that we're the zombies from The Walking Dead and that all they

need is enough ammunition. I've got a bunch of people where I live that are like this. These guys stockpile ammunition, and not because they think that they're going to have it out with us, but they say for Antifa. And it's like, do you even know what that is? To them, it's everyone on the left. Go read their writings. And that's why I do a lot more stuff about right-wing extremism.

Andrea Chalupa: We have a question from one of our Patreon supporters, actually, that we have to ask quickly first, where he asks, "Any list of the evils that led to 2016 that doesn't include a discussion of Brad Parscale and Project Alamo is only telling part of the story." So could you explain why Brad Parscale and Project Alamo are important to understand how we got here and where we may be headed?

Malcolm Nance: Brad Parscale was the head of the data team at Project Alamo, which was a Republican Party data team. You have to understand: those guys were not the principal players. The principal players were Steve Bannon, Jared Kushner, and the Mercer family. They funded and invested in, and technically broadened out Cambridge Analytica. Cambridge Analytica was a dirty tricks organization masquerading as a data analysis group. There's no way that you can convince me, and again, I wrote another part of a chapter of a book on this in both books that the information that they saw on the Internet, they were not part of the megaphone. Now whether they were completely aware that this data was Russian, I don't think they care. You have to understand another thing. Steve Bannon? Steve Bannon is really sort of a poorly dressed Bond villain himself.

Andrea Chalupa: He's like a Bond movie corpse.

Malcolm Nance: Well, he is. No, he's like the worst Bond villain, right? He's the kind of Bond villain that Bond would not want to do anything other than shoot, because he's fat, he's slovenly, he has no taste, he has no class, but he has an ideology. This is the man who weaponized gamers by essentially selling cheap and little tricks and things like that, by using Chinese gamers to accrue all these online gaming points, and then would sell them to white, American teenagers, and it made him hundreds of millions of dollars. And the forums like Discord and Reddit where these people would share information, he weaponized them and turned them into what is now known as the alt-right. Steve Bannon created this from teenagers who were almost exclusively white, almost exclusively nerdy. I would even attribute incels to him, too, involuntary celibates. But he harnessed their ignorance and gave them a platform where people could discuss this stuff. But he made a lot of money off of that, and he was the one who saw that information and data could influence people at a level never seen before. So he went to work together with Jared Kushner and the Mercers, essentially weaponized Cambridge Analytica, and then that data was turned over to Brad Parscale and Project Alamo. And all of them were using megaphone propaganda in order to target very specific profiles of people so that those people would be brainwashed. I always said this on TV: the DNC was not what was really hacked in the 2016 election. It was the mindset of American voters who saw Donald Trump as acceptable.

### *Music*

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.